



Message by Juleen Partridge

Matthew 3, 13-17.

Today we celebrate the baptism of Jesus. Christmas seems so long ago; however, it was only a few weeks, we now have hot cross buns and Easter eggs in the shops already. With the birth of Jesus, God comes to us in human form as a tiny baby, he lived among us, experiencing the same things we experienced, human, yet divine by nature.

Jesus understands our struggles our human failings, he supports and encourages through all of our everyday ups and downs.

What does baptism mean to you personally, what captures your imagination? What do you feel at a baptism, whether it is a family member, friend or stranger is there something that jumps out at you at a baptism? Anyone like to share? For me it's about new beginnings, about turning to God, entering into a special relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. I always like to see the OT reading coming from Isaiah, as these readings relate well with the Gospel reading. It gives continuity, it is a prophecy and brings the Gospel reading to life. We see Jesus as a gentle person, Isaiah, 42, 1-3

*"Here is my Servant, whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice."*

Jesus always encourages us no matter how many times we might turn away, he always encourages the faint hearted and supports the weak, he is always prepared to strengthen us on our journey and he teaches us to seek new beginnings and move on with him as our Lord and saviour. We see many examples of Jesus behaviour throughout the Gospels. We see Peter as a wavering flame, he denies Jesus three times when he should have borne witness to Jesus. How many of us are wavering flames from time to time, we are usually full of good intent, and there is

no way that Jesus would snuff us out, for Jesus none of us are so morally weak that he would do that, he is always trying to fan that feeble little spark of goodness into flame. We also read about Saul who persecuted Christians, Jesus sees that this zeal can be turned around and used to lead his people into the future, so Saul becomes Paul, we all know the story of Saul on the road to Damascus and his encounter with God, he certainly turns to Christ and leads the church into the future, Jesus could see the potential in this man. He does this with each and every one of us, he sees our potential, we are made in his image and he will seek us out and love us into life with him.

In today's secular world we are often defined by where we live, the car we drive, the clothes we wear, the people we mix with, however the reality for Christian people is that we are defined, as the gospel reminds us loud and clear, that we receive our identity as children of God through our baptism. Most of us are baptised as small children and therefore have no recollection which I personally feel this is a pity, we confirm the commitment made by our parents as we grow and we accept Jesus into our lives ourselves through our confirmation, which is in my opinion still a bit young to really understand.

The church now encourages young people to be confirmed a little later so that they do develop an understanding of what they are doing. These are my opinions and not necessarily to opinions of the Anglican church.

I have a friend in Singleton who was baptised as an adult and he related to me what an amazing experience his baptism was, as an adult he said it was very powerful.

So here we have Jesus fronting up, lining up as one of the crowds at the river Jordan, to be baptised John the Baptist, Jesus previous thirty years had been spent growing up as a carpenter in Nazareth, leading a private and obscure life developing his relationship with God. There are only a few references to Jesus as a child in the scriptures. Baptism was a significant turning point in the life of Jesus, it marks a change in direction, the end of his time of waiting and the start of his public ministry of service to God's people.

And so, it is with us, through our baptism we turn to God, we accept him into our lives and this is a new beginning for us, the beginning of a unique yet common journey, as we journey on a personal level with Jesus and we also journey on a community level to provide encouragement and support to each other in Jesus' name.

We need to remember it not all about the end of the journey, it's also about the stops we make along the way, the time we take to just be, the time we take to be still and listen to the voice of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen