

Parish of Ribbleton

St. Mary Magdalene (SMM) The Ascension (ASC) -Longsands (LS)

Sunday 10th January

The Baptism of Christ

Alléluia, alléluia.

*A voice came from heaven:
"You are my Son, whom I love;
with you I am well pleased."*

Alléluia

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Eternal Father,
who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son,
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit,
that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted
children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

FIRST READING (Genesis 1:1-5)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was
over the surface of the deep,
and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
And God said,
"Let there be light," and there was light.
God saw that the light was good, and he separated the
light from the darkness.
God called the light "day," and the darkness he called
"night."
And there was evening, and there was morning—the
first day.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Psalm 29)

The response to the Psalm is:

**The Lord gives strength to his people;
He blesses his people with peace.**

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. **R/**

The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord thunders over the mighty waters.
The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is majestic. **R/**

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.
The voice of the Lord strikes
with flashes of lightning. **R/**

The voice of the Lord shakes the desert;
the Lord shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
The voice of the Lord twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!" **R/**

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord is enthroned as King forever.
The Lord gives strength to his people;
the Lord blesses his people with peace. **R/**

SECOND READING (Acts 19:1-7)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

GOSPEL (Mark 1:4-11)

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."



Sunday Reflection

...*the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep...*

Words from our opening reading, of the start of creation.

It perhaps feels like that today as we see society in turmoil and our normal structures dissolving in the face of darkness.

The darkness that is the pandemic, the darkness that is riots and insurrection in a major democracy, the darkness that is a breakdown of trust between governments and citizens.

But the spirit of God was hovering over the waters...

...and God said...

In our psalm, *the voice of The Lord...*

the voice of The Lord seems to be a source of damage and destruction – not at all comforting, though the psalm ends with the promise of blessing and peace.

In our gospel we return to John the Baptist, the last of the old testament prophets.

Like so many of them, he sees God's people in turmoil and disarray, in the darkness of sin – that is separation from God.

He too calls them to "repent".

Repentance is so much more than just saying sorry.

Yes, it is an admission of failure, but it is also a turning from the failure, the sin. And it is a turning to a new beginning, a turning to God's light.

Then he calls them to be baptised.

In the Jewish faith and law, sin was dealt with by atonement – paying a price or sacrifice – and by a washing in natural water – living water if you like – to wash away ritual impurity, to put a person right with the law and with society.

So it meant total immersion in a river or a lake, not a polite sprinkling with warm water.

It wasn't particularly an initiation ceremony into the faith, these baptisms could and would be repeated as often as necessary.

Into this comes Jesus. Jesus the man, and he is baptised by John.

And we have *epiphany*.

We have the showing to John, to those around, just who Jesus is.

The Spirit of God that hovered over the deeps of creation, the Voice of the Lord that called light from darkness and thunders, shakes and breaks the earth, are present as Jesus emerges from the water.

God tears the heavens open, and is fully present with his people, in the person of Jesus.

God who speaks of love, who speaks of pleasure, and comes as peace.

This is the baptism that we receive.

Not a baptism of repentance, though we talk of that in our baptismal vows.

But a baptism of faith, of love and of power. A baptism of belief. (You may like to look again at the baptismal service [here](#))

So, the darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

We have been asked, yet again, to suspend our church services in the face of the escalating spread of the coronavirus.

For many this can seem difficult to bear, but as Fr Keith so often says, the church isn't the building.

The psalmist assures us 'The Lord sits enthroned over the flood' and 'In his temple all cry, "Glory!"'

By your baptism you became the temple of The Lord.

Wherever you are, whatever you must deal with, 'In his temple cry "Glory!"'

Love and prayers,

Barbara

Intercessions

Lord Jesus, Eternal Word, you were proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner. Guide all who proclaim your word in the paths of wisdom and love.

We pray for the leaders of your church in its many forms throughout the world, among them our bishops, Julian, Jill and Philip.

In our parish, we pray for Fr Keith, Fr Chris, Captain David and Linda, and for our parish wardens, Jacqueline and Ron. Encourage and strengthen them for their difficult task of maintaining our church and community life under lockdown.

We ask your blessing on Fr Keith as he plans and prepares for his future.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, you baptise with the Spirit and with fire. Strengthen your people to withstand all the trials of our faith.

We pray for all who find their lives threatened or disrupted because of their faith, among them the Christian communities of Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria.

We ask your blessing on those called by you to work in difficult and dangerous situations to bring your light to a dark world.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, you were humble and obedient in your baptism, ready for service.

Grant to those who rule and govern, the courage to uphold justice and mercy. May they lead the nations in the paths of righteousness.

We hold before you our own government as they make decisions affecting the lives, health and welfare of us all.

We pray for the people and leaders of The United States of America. May peace and order be restored and the transfer of government proceed without further incidents.

We ask your blessing on those whose lives are damaged and destroyed by violence and warfare or by extremes of weather. We hold before you the people of Syria, Lebanon and Yemen – and all struggling to live in refugee camps and makeshift accommodation.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, you call all to come to you and make no distinction between people. Teach us our dependence on your grace.

We pray for all who live and work in our parish, and for those who work for our comfort, health and well-being.

We hold before you those in our communities who are without work or home, and those struggling to hold families together. We pray too for those who use the Community Pantry and foodbanks in our city.

Where families are struggling to reconcile the needs of work and family, the care and schooling of children, and the stretching of limited resources, may your Spirit bring comfort and hope.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, you fulfil the promises of old. You give hope to all who suffer or are ignored.

We pray for those who are sick in body, mind or spirit and those unable to care for themselves, and ask your blessing on those in the presence of death or bowed down by grief.

We hold before you those named on our prayer list, those known to us and those known only to you who need the touch of your healing grace.

We ask your blessing on those who work to bring healing, comfort and relief, praying for the staff of our NHS hospitals, our emergency services, and those caring for the frail, vulnerable and elderly at home or in residential homes.

Wherever lives are afflicted by the coronavirus, may your light shine in the darkness, may compassion, mercy and hope be renewed.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, source of all hope, you share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life.

We remember before you those who have died sudden and violent deaths in the conflicts and disasters of our world, and pray for those who have died alone and unprepared.

In our parish we pray for those who have died recently, and for those whose anniversary is around this time.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord,
and let light perpetual shine upon them.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father, you anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit.

Transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory.

We bring to you now the silent prayers of our hearts for ourselves and those we love.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you would like to sing:

Morning has broken

<https://youtu.be/VL9xXyLrq00>

Hail to the Lord's anointed

<https://youtu.be/EkrepBvrLI4>

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

<https://youtu.be/plr21lLgFpg>

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?

<https://youtu.be/PTfypuXwrMA>

bonus track:

<https://youtu.be/vTNUlpLQ360>

Readings for Sunday 17th January

1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 139:1-5,7-12

Revelation 5:1-10; John 1:43-51

The COMMUNITY PANTRY continues to open on Tuesdays 10am -12noon and is very busy. Donations of Food can be dropped off at the Ascension Church on Monday or Tuesday 9am - 1pm, or at SMM on Wednesday 10am -12noon.

An important notice

As you are aware, the coronavirus is spreading rapidly and we are currently in lockdown, though public worship is still permitted.

However, the Lancashire Directors of Public Health have asked the religious bodies to help restrict the spread by suspending public worship and prayer. In order to protect our communities and our congregations it has been decided that worship services will be suspended for the present – details are below.

The Church of the Ascension is closed as of today, except for the Community Pantry.

St Mary Magdalene's will close after worship this morning, but will be open for private prayer only on Sundays and Wednesdays from 10am to 12 noon.

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