



'Worship at home' January 8th 2023



Although the celebration of Christmas is over, the season

of Epiphany reminds us of the many ways in which God is present with us, revealed in our everyday lives.

As you come to worship you might bring a **small bowl of water** to reflect on as we consider Jesus' baptism and his empowerment for ministry.

Opening

In the celebration of Christmas, we come to know **God with us**. In Jesus' baptism we powerfully see **God with us**.

In our everyday lives, we are empowered by the Spirit, **God with us**.

This day and every day, may we live in love; **God with us**.

**Unexpected joy
bursting in
birthing new beginnings
creating love
renewing life
All will be well
God is here**

- Rev Sue Ellis



Reflect on the water in your bowl.

Water is one of the essentials of life, and all living things depend on it in some way. Water cleanses, refreshes, and restores us. Water quenches our deepest thirst.

Water can be scarce, precious, highly valued.

Water can be powerful, evident in the floods sweeping across our country. Sometimes water cannot be contained.

Water shapes continents, creating and sustaining rich resources.

Water has many uses:

drinking, washing, cooking, cleaning.

Water is beautiful and awe-inspiring.

Water is essential for growth and new life.

Water baptises us into new life in Christ, allowing the Spirit of God to cleanse, shape and restore and empower us.





John baptised Jesus with water in the river Jordan. Jewish people had a number of rituals for worship, with sacrifices, fasting, feast days and ritual washings for purification. However, John seems to be the first to baptise by immersion in water “for the forgiveness of sins.”

Each of us think, say and do things that can be hurtful or harmful to the wellbeing of ourselves or others. These can separate us from each other, and from God.

Take some time to reflect on the things you have thought, said or done for which you are sorry.

Ask God for forgiveness, then wash your hands in the bowl of water to symbolise cleansing and purification.



**Hear God’s words of grace to you:
YOU ARE CLEAN,
YOU ARE LOVED,
YOU ARE FORGIVEN**



Dip your finger in the water once again and make the sign of a cross on your own forehead, and be assured of God’s forgiveness.

Each time you use water this week, you might make the sign of the cross and give thanks to God for the gift of life that comes through water and baptism.



Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John

consented. As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

New International Version

Why did Jesus go to the river Jordan to be baptized? Did he need to be re-born? Did he need washing from his sins? We don't believe so. But he went anyway, so that you and I might simulate this ritual of death and re-birth. Just to conquer the fear of death? More than that, I think. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "...those who drink of the water that I will give them, will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." With the Samaritan woman I say, "Give me some of this water!" Let me come from the waters not only cleansed, renewed, reborn, but let me try to comprehend that this "living water becomes in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." 'Within them!' Within me! Within us!

- Suzanne Guthrie <http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/epiphany1a.html>

This event affirms Jesus as God's beloved son: human, yet divine; divine, yet human. In his baptism, the Spirit of God comes upon him, and Jesus Christ is indeed revealed as 'Emmanuel, God with us.'

The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son. - John 1:14



Zelenka, Dave. Baptism of Christ., <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Baptism-of-Christ.jpg>.

Jesus' baptism appears to have occurred before he began his public ministry. In this act, he is empowered by the Holy Spirit to do God's work of loving, healing, forgiving, making all things new. God invites each of us into this same relationship, affirming us as beloved children. We are challenged to respond by turning from our ways and seeking God's forgiveness, and by making a commitment to following God's ways. The sacrament of Baptism continues to be a sign of God working in our world, revealing God's grace, making us one with Christ and one with each other, in love. In so doing, we too are empowered with the Holy Spirit to participate in the ministry to which we are called: healing the broken, feeding the hungry, releasing the prisoners, teaching the nations, and bringing Christ to all.



Pray for:

- those most impacted by the floods in our nation
- those feeling despair and uncertainty after Christmas
- the people and leaders of Ukraine and Russia, and other countries where there is unrest and conflict

Closing

God of grace and glory,
you call us with your voice of flame
to be your people,
faithful and courageous.

As your beloved Son
embraced his mission
in the waters of baptism,
inspire us with the fire of your Spirit
to join in his transforming work.

We ask this in the name
of our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns
for ever and ever. Amen.

~ *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers*
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