

TRINITY NEWS

Epiphany II

The Baptism of Jesus and our Baptism

The 20th century witnessed a great deal of research into the Scriptures. This yielded a mass of historical information and the enlargement of our understanding of the biblical texts, especially in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. The negative side was a tendency to devalue the worth of the biblical text in itself, with some methodologies used with non-biblical lenses to decide for example what Jesus did or did not say in the Gospels. A over-zealous use of **metaphor*** to describe such things as the Birth of Christ, the Cross and the Resurrection tended to gloss over the historicity and the veracity of the reporting of these crucial happenings in the Gospels. 'History' as such is more applicable to the Cross than to the Resurrection, but the biblical evidence is powerful in itself. The implications of the biblical texts go far beyond any literal reading of the texts. We still need to ask questions about why the Gospels were written in their particular form. The contents of the Gospels were apparently meant to be inscribed upon the memory of the Body of Christ in the world, the Church. We also need to assess afresh in every generation what the writers were trying to convey. Why were they so fascinated with Jesus of Nazareth? What were the underlying essentials of their faith in him as The Christ? How do we use the Scriptures and the best of our reason soaked in SPIRIT and LIFE to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in the 21st Century.

Today we get a glimpse of the Baptism of Christ from the viewpoint of John's Gospel. It does not have the immediacy of the account in Mark, the atmosphere of prayer in which it is enacted in Luke, or the questioning about status that passes between John the Baptizer and Jesus in Matthew's account. All four Gospels think that it is a crucial moment in Jesus of Nazareth's emergence as the longed for Messiah, the "anointed One" in Israel. The readings that follow Christmas and the Epiphany of Christ to the Gentiles via the Wise Men from the East bring us straight into another beginning, the commencement of the Ministry of Christ. February 2nd will bring us to the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. But here we have the testimony of John the Baptist about the Baptism of Jesus: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have believed that this is the Son of God" (John 1: 32-34). Through the eyes of the Baptizer we are brought to

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We are baptized into his baptism. Irina Ratushinskaya, the Russian writer and poet, had no teaching to lead her to God. But one day she sensed a presence that she could not describe or trace to its source. She discovered that her grandmother had taken her down to the sea at Odessa and baptised her, making the sign of the Cross in the Russian manner on her forehead to declare that she was Christ's own forever. Huda, a young Coptic believer of Lebanese descent said of her daughter when she was baptized "She entered the water a natural child and she emerged as a child of Christ". Great theology! Huda knew that her daughter would have to make it her own to relive the potential of the seal of Baptism, but she also knew the power of the Holy Spirit to enlarge holy symbols to mark and refresh a spiritual journey. We look forward in the readings today to the Baptism of Jesus, but we also look back to our own baptism. Let the Spirit bring the Word that was in the Water, as Luther said, into our lives afresh as food for the journey!

Bishop Arthur Jones

*A metaphor is "a word or phrase used in an imaginative way to describe somebody or something else, for example 'heart of stone,'" retaining some sense of the original.

THIS WEEK:

Jan. 17, Tuesday.

- Bible Study, 10am

Jan. 19, Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10am

Jan. 20, Friday

- **Prayer for Christian Unity, 7pm, Santuario de San Antonio.**

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Jeremiah 3:21-4:2; Psalm 130; 1 Corinthians 7:17-23; Mark 1:14-20

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

January 29, Sunday.

- Annual General Meeting, after the 9:30am service.
- Election for new Vestry members. Nomination forms are available at the Church entrance and in the Parish office. Deadline for submission of nominations will be next **Sunday, 22nd Jan.**
- Please check the names of registered members on the bulletin board. If there is an oversight, kindly inform the office. Thank you.

*We formally congratulate Simon Bewlay, MBE. It is a wonderful thing to be honoured by one's own country! - **From everyone***