**Morning Praise @ Home 12th January 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Luke 3:15 – 17, 21 – 22

### Reflection from John

At different points in life each of us takes on different roles and sometimes we even receive public recognition/authorisation for those roles.

* Certificates
* Uniforms
* Badges

When Jesus came out to the Jordan to be baptized, he came to be publicly identified as the one John had been proclaiming as the pivotal figure in the movement towards the kingdom of God.  His baptism was a sign that God was now taking steps through Jesus’ ministry to advance his plan. In that sense Jesus’ baptism was a sort of badge worn publicly, confirming what he was about and who he belonged to.

After Jesus is baptized, the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus in bodily form like a dove.  And a voice came from heaven saying, “You are my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Jesus’ baptism was another epiphany moment - as the Holy Spirit descends upon him… and he and others heard confirmation from God:  “You are mine.  Beloved.  I am well pleased with you.” “You are precious in my sight, and I love you.”  These are words the people of Israel heard - words that helped them to understand who they were, and whose they were.

Jesus’ baptism was his ordination! The affirmation of his calling.

Baptism is about knowing who we are - so we don’t waste  precious time searching frantically for an identity that something or someone else can confer on us - but instead, use our lives to live out our God-given identity.

The same Spirit that descended on Jesus - baptizes us!   We can live in confidence that, no matter how often we fall short or fail, nothing that we do or fail to do can change the fact that we are God’s beloved children.  This identity is something God gives us - as a gift. Okay, so what does all this mean?

Without the rest of Jesus’ life, his baptism isn’t something we can really comprehend.  We can only know the purpose of Jesus’ baptism when we look at the days and years that followed that day in the Jordan.  It’s when we see Jesus taking his place with hurting people that his baptism starts to make sense.

Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan foreshadowed his baptism on the cross.  Baptism was Jesus’ commissioning for ministry. A costly ministry.

During the week before his death, Jesus was challenged by the leaders of the temple:  “By what authority do you do these things?” Jesus answers by referring to his baptism:  “Was the baptism of John from

Heaven - or not?”  In other words, “I was baptised for this.  That’s how all this started.”  It was in the waters of baptism that Jesus heard the Spirit calling him to speak the truth and to live with grace as the Messiah.

Baptisms, like all beginnings, find their meaning after the event.  Beginning is usually fairly easy.  Finishing is usually harder.

Starry-eyed young couples who are in love come to the Vicar, and very often, they’re focused on having the perfect wedding.  It’s part of the vicar’s job to remind them that the wedding is just the beginning.  It’s the living out of the promises they make that’s the hard part...  the part that will make all the difference ten or fifty years from that day.

SO Baptism is the beginning of a journey.  We’re handed a map, but we have to take the trip.  It takes our whole life to finish our baptisms...  to fulfil what was started when we were baptized.

In baptism, God proclaims God's grace and love for us.  God claims us and marks us as God’s own.  We start to discover a new identity as members of the body of Christ.

So we are baptized and begin a lifelong pilgrimage with God...  a lifelong process of conversion and nurture that doesn't end until death, until we are at last tucked safely into the everlasting arms of the God who first reached for us in baptism.

God keeps on reaching out for us throughout our lives. God isn't finished with any of us yet.  Every day we are called afresh to live out our baptism. Every day we need to respond to God's gracious gifts in our lives...  open ourselves again to God's work in our lives...  say YES in all the big and little things we do.

A major part of God's daily saving work in our lives is God's gift of the Holy SPIRIT.  Just as God's creating Spirit hovered over the waters in the very BEGINNING, the Holy Spirit works in us...   leads us daily...  tugging at our lives until we are fully turned towards God.

In our baptism, we become part of a royal priesthood...  a holy nation...  in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of the One who called us out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

As followers of Christ, we're called to let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to God.

Every one of us gathered here has been given a particular set of gifts to use in God's service.  This community of believers is part of God's plan to bring good news of healing and freedom to a broken, hurting world. There are no passengers on the bus.

As we think about Jesus’ unique baptism we also remember our own.  We are reminded *who* we are and *whose* we are. How easy it is, in the midst of this life, to forget who you are…and whose you are. So the church is here to *remind* you that God has named us...and claimed us…and seeks us and LOVES us unconditionally. What a difference it can make in our lives when we know - deep in our souls - that we are God’s beloved!

Listen attentively for God’s call. Go on and be the minister God has called you to be.  Use the gifts God has given you as a sign of the outbreaking of the kingdom of God. Take on new challenges in your ministry. Rely on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower and uphold you. As you go out into the world, be the minister that God has called you to be - ordained you to be.  **Amen**

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**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. We give you thanks and praise that you brought us to baptism. Thank you for our parents who brought us up in the faith and to baptism, thank you for those other people whom you used to bring us the gospel, and thank you for our teachers in the faith.

We pray for all people, that the good news of Christ will be proclaimed and heard by all people, and that many will believe and be baptised. Send and support pastors, missionaries, teachers, and lay people able to give truthful and loving witness to Christ.

We pray for peace and integrity in all negotiations in international conflicts. Hear the cries of the people of the world who have never known peace; bring healing to those suffering from the violence of terrorism and comfort those mourning the dead.

We pray you give strength to all those who are providing support to those affected by floods and fires. We thank You for the bravery and dedication of firefighters, paramedics, and other first responders. Protect them as they serve others, and bless their efforts to save lives and property. Fill them with wisdom and stamina in their work.

We pray for the sick, those who are disabled, those in hospital, those facing death. Provide helpers and carers and medical resources, and heal both body and soul.

We pray for those who are bereaved, that by casting their cares on you they may find the strength to face the days ahead.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**