

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

'Console my people, console them.'

First Reading

Lord, my God, you are great indeed!

Psalm

The kindness and love of God our saviour for humankind were revealed.

Second Reading

Almighty, eternal God,
when the Spirit descended upon Jesus
at his baptism in the Jordan,
you revealed him as your own beloved Son.
Keep us, your children born of water and the Spirit,
faithful to your calling.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11; Ps. 103 (104); Titus 2: 11-14, 3: 4-7;
Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22



'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



The Baptism of the Lord
9th January 2022, Year C

'He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering lambs in his arms'

Today marks the end of the Christmas season, as we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. It heralds the beginning of Jesus's public mission: the work of teaching, preaching and healing. God's great love and mercy offer salvation to all through Jesus, by the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the **Gospel**, God proclaims Jesus as his beloved Son at his baptism in the Jordan. St Luke draws our attention to the descent of the Holy Spirit while Jesus is at prayer.

The **First Reading** offers hope and joy. God has seen his people repent and will bring them home across the desert. He is both their defender and their shepherd, who gathers, guides and nourishes.

The image of God gathering and nourishing is echoed in the **Psalm**. The Lord renews with his Spirit all who look to him.

St Paul (**Second Reading**) tells us it is entirely due to God's mercy, love and compassion that we are offered salvation; not for anything we have achieved. God's loving kindness is revealed through 'the cleansing water of rebirth' and renewal with the Holy Spirit in Christ.

Today is an opportunity to reflect on the gift of baptism. We remind ourselves that the words spoken at Jesus's baptism also apply to us. We, too, are beloved daughters and sons of God, called to make known the love of God to all we meet. Let's pray this week, and in the weeks ahead, for whatever grace God feels we need to help us.

Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you.

First Reading Isaiah 40: 1–5, 9–11

‘Console my people, console them,’ says your God. ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for, that she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes.’

A voice cries, ‘Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord. Make a straight highway for our God across the desert. Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley; then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all humankind shall see it. for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’ Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion. Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem. Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God.’

Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm subduing all things to him. The prize of his victory is with him, his trophies all go before him. He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

Coming to my quiet prayer space, I consciously place myself before the Lord and invite his Spirit to guide my prayer. What might I like to hand over to him for now? What do I feel in need of?

When I am ready, I allow my thoughts to slow down. The Lord is in no rush; simply delighted that I want to spend time with him.

I read the passage slowly and carefully, perhaps several times.

What words leap out at me? What images stay with me?

I ponder what they might be saying to me.

Maybe I picture the mountains and valleys becoming level and ‘*the glory of the Lord being revealed to me*’. Are there any obstacles in my life that may hinder this? I speak to the Lord without fear, listening to what he may say.

Perhaps I am struck by ‘*the Lord coming in power*’ and ‘*the prize of his victory*’. How do I feel seeing the Lord as a warrior fighting for me, protecting me?

Or maybe I am drawn to image of the Lord as a shepherd, gently gathering me to him in his arms and leading me to rest.

With a sense of gratitude for this time with the Lord, I close my prayer slowly, confident of his love for me. *Glory be ...*

Gospel Luke 3: 15–16, 21–22

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, ‘I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’

Now when all the people had been baptised and while Jesus after his own baptism was at prayer, heaven opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily shape, like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you’.

I prepare for this time with the Lord, as I always do, by becoming still, aware of God’s presence in everything around me. I invite the Holy Spirit to help me settle into my prayer.

I read and re-read this short passage prayerfully, pausing at any word or phrase that draws my attention.

It may help to place myself in the scene, watching what is happening.

Who are all those crowding on the banks of the river ... ordinary people, families, shepherds, soldiers, Pharisees, tax collectors ...?

I notice those jostling to get closer ... the tone of John’s voice as he speaks to them. I see the expressions on their faces. I watch John baptize all the people, Jesus among them.

Perhaps I find myself beside Jesus as he prays afterwards.

As the Holy Spirit descends, the Father speaks.

What do these words mean to Jesus ...? to me ...?

I might be drawn to repeat them, inserting my own name:

‘*You are my Child, [my name], the Beloved; my favour rests on you.*’

I share what is in my heart with Jesus.

Perhaps I ask him to help me pray for a greater understanding of what the Holy Spirit is offering me, and asking of me.

I sit in silence for a while, resting under God’s tender gaze, aware of and grateful for his unconditional love for me.

In time, I gently bring my prayer to an end. I may use the words of St Richard of Chichester, asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to *see the Lord more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly, day by day.*