

Homily. 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 14/15 January 2023.

In the usual course of events the water of baptism was poured over our heads long ago, a sign of being born again into faith and a sacrament marking the arrival of a new member of the body of Christ, the Church. For many people, too many really, this is often as far as it goes. Their Christian birth becomes, effectively, the death of their time with us.

We who are gathered here are different. Through myriad experiences and influences we've let God's divine water of life soak deeper into us until, like a thirsty plant, it has reached our roots, that deep essential part of us that makes us both human and spiritual, called our soul. At least two things become clear from this; that baptism is a life long process which doesn't end with the ceremony and a party but goes on growing into a new way of seeing and of living as Christ does; and that God's water always needs topping up much as we have to regularly water a garden.

Christ's baptism marked a complete change in his way of living. After the Jordan River experience he began his public ministry in the strength, light and power of the Holy Spirit. Living no longer quietly in Galilee, he began to speak up and act as God willed, healing, forgiving, freeing people and teaching them the truth. He nourished this by his regular participation in Jewish Synagogue worship along with his prayer and good works.

We are no different and to act as if we are is foolishness. We need our Church fellowship, its worship and wisdom. We need to read and to hear the scriptures and to participate in the sacramental life of our community. We need to be involved in ways of serving and helping others, both in

here and out there beyond these doors and walls. This is the way the water and life of baptism sinks ever deeper into us. It's the way that we grow into the likeness of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, helping to change people's confusion and fear into peace and their meanness and miserliness into generous grace.

Like I've said, Jesus baptism set him loose and sent him into action for us and for all. In that event he was affirmed as Son of God, his deep identity beyond that of being the son of Mary and Joseph the carpenter from Nazareth. Our true identity is now discovered in him. No longer do we simply think of ourselves as being so and so from such and such family and place. We are now have confidence, which is another word for faith, that we are Christ's own sisters and brothers, the children and family of God which comes before and is beyond being anyone or anything else.

This is what God says and thinks of us from the moment of our baptism onwards. As we set out again in this new year our call is to realise this Christian reality in our minds and our deeds and way of living. For God's gift to us of this new birth and a whole new way of being in the world, we give our thanks today. As well as this we pray that the holy baptismal water and oil might sink ever deeper into our souls until we are aflame, like a candle shining in the darkness, with nothing but the pure spirit and bright light of Christ himself.