



**DURHAM
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 10 January
The Baptism of Christ*

During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family. We are delighted that we have been able to reintroduce congregational worship here at the Cathedral. Durham Cathedral is also open for private prayer and quiet reflection.

If you'd like to come to the cathedral for worship and/or prayer, there are some important measures we'd like you to know about, to ensure the safety of members of the public and staff. You can find this information on our website: www.durhamcathedral.co.uk We will continue to live stream services as well so that, if you can't re-join us yet, you will still be able to engage with us online.

Gospel

Mark 4. 1-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Michael Everitt

Do you have a bucket list? It is a relatively recent term (2004) referring to things you want to do before you die. Whilst I do not have a formal list, there are certain things that I have done that fit the category. Doing a parachute jump, seeing the Victoria Falls, floating on the Amazon in a dugout canoe.

Some of these I would I love to repeat, others fit into “a once in a lifetime experience.” One of the latter was using the expertise of the then Queen’s Guide to the Sands, Cedric Robinson. Morecambe bay on the North west coast is a beautiful location. Cockle Picking is still a major if hazardous activity which sadly in February 2004 saw 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned, trapped by the combination of quicksand and the incoming tide. The Queen’s Guide is to take people across the bay, avoiding the quicksand and fording the river Kent, often with the water still flowing at waist height.

It was a charity fundraiser for a cathedral, their Dean, a suffragan bishop and me as archdeacon along with a flamboyant vicar dressed as a pirate with a rubber ring around his middle led the way and about 100 including all my family followed. Cedric briefed us all. We were to follow him at all costs, he had already walked the 8 or 9 miles from Cumbria and marked out the route.

We simply needed to follow him and laurel branches that marked the route, to listen for his whistle and to do as he said. The tide he explained would come in faster than a horse could gallop and the laurel markers were the safe route, the quicksand changing their location with each tide, thus requiring the experienced eye and guide.

Whilst crossing the river Kent felt like a biblical experience, stepping out in faith, the final mile through marshland put the whole endeavour into the “once only” category. (Not helped by my parking the car at the wrong railway station and forcing the family to do an extra three miles.)

Shifting sands with perils all around, temporary markers showing us the safe route, yet there still being risk and a mixture of personal fear and collective responsibility and an act of faith that was truly immersive. The resonances with both the current situation and the theme of today are strong. There are some dynamics that increase in volume.

The Queen's Guide lives in a tied cottage near to the endpoint; thus, he comes to the people who are embarking on the journey to be with them. He does not simply leave them to their devices, as sadly the risks would be so great that they would perish. He comes at a specific moment to ensure that the guiding laurel branches are in the right location and that there is indeed a safe passage over the sands. He remains with those he is guiding, showing them the way and also speaking with them, whether they be the Duke of Edinburgh, well known celebrities or as with my children 13- and 11-year olds.

He doesn't carry you, unless you become injured. Whilst you are protected by him, the crossing through the river still involves getting wet and at the end when all is nearly done there is still the marshy liminal area between the bay and the shore that increases the delight when arriving at the destination. And for every participant it is a unique experience, even when done in a group. The circumstances are never the same and the impact of the journey is always different, even if the endpoints and the guide have been shared.

There is, as with all analogies, a point where it breaks down. Cedric Robinson and his successor are ordinary fishermen, called and commissioned to fulfil this role. As with the disciples or even John the Baptist they are not the ones who completely link heaven to earth within who they are, that is what Jesus is revealed to be at his baptism.

Not just a guide, not simply a teacher, but the beloved son of God, in whom the father is well pleased. Whilst we might see the result of God's creation, at his baptism

God is revealed as being immersed into his creation, as well as being the spirit being seen interacting within and the father being involved and interested with it. To journey through dangerous and changing terrain, with the confidence of a trusted guide is comforting.

In Christ's baptism we experience something more, the transformation of the desolate places into the habitation of God. The kingdom of Heaven not just a future hope, but a reality breaking into his world.

A Form of Intercession for the Baptism of Christ

Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Washed clean by the waters of baptism,
let us pray that we may live the life to which he has called us.

Lord Jesus, eternal Word,
proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,
hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, baptizing with the Spirit and with fire,
strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,
teach your Church dependence on your grace.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,
give hope to all who suffer or are ignored.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,
anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,
share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life.

Lord of truth,
hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
in you the Father makes us and all things new.
Transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory.
Amen.

Calendar of Holy Days

<i>Monday 11 January</i>	<i>Mary Slessor, Missionary in West Africa, 1915</i>
<i>Tuesday 12 January</i>	<i>Aelred of Hexham, Abbot of Rievaulx, 1167</i> <i>Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth, Scholar, 689</i>
<i>Wednesday 13 January</i>	<i>Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, Teacher, 367</i> <i>Kentigern (Mungo), Missionary,</i> <i>Bishop in Strathclyde and Cumbria, 603</i> <i>George Fox, Founder of the Society of Friends</i> <i>(the Quakers), 1691</i>

Hymn

The sinless one to Jordan came
To share our fallen nature's blame;
God's righteousness he thus fulfilled
And chose the path his Father willed.

Uprising from the waters there,
The voice from heav'n did witness bear
That he, the Son of God, had come
To lead his scattered people home.

Above him see the heavenly Dove,
The sign of God the Father's love,
Now by the Holy Spirit shed
Upon the Son's anointed head.

How blest that mission then begun
To heal and save a race undone;
Straight to the wilderness he goes
To wrestle with his people's foes.

Dear Lord, let those baptized from sin
Go forth with you, a world to win,
And send the Holy Spirit's power
To shield them in temptation's hour.

On you shall all your people feed
And know you are the Bread indeed,
Who gives eternal life to those
That with you died, and with you rose. Amen.

G B Timms

Christ is revealed in the waters of Baptism

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, for your gift of water in creation

we give you thanks and praise.

For your Spirit, sweeping over the waters, bringing light and life

we give you thanks and praise.

For your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, baptized in the river Jordan

we give you thanks and praise.

For your new creation, brought to birth by water and the Spirit

we give you thanks and praise.

For your grace bestowed upon us your children,

washing away our sins

we give you thanks and praise.

So, Father, accept our sacrifice of praise.

By the power of your life-giving Spirit

bless these waters of your new creation.

Lord, receive our prayer.

May we your servants who have been washed in them

be made one with your Son, who took the form of a servant.

Lord, receive our prayer.

May your Holy Spirit, who has brought us to new birth

in the family of your Church,

raise us in Christ, our anointed Lord,

to full and eternal life.

Lord, receive our prayer.

For all might, majesty and dominion are yours, now and for ever.

Alleluia. Amen.

A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer of St Basil the Great

O Lord our God, teach us, we beseech thee,
to ask thee aright for the right things.
Steer thou the vessel of our life towards thyself,
thou tranquil haven of all storm-tossed souls.
Show us the course wherein we should go.
Renew a willing spirit within us.
Let thy Spirit curb our waywardness
and guide and enable us unto that which is our true good,
to keep thy laws, and in all our works evermore to rejoice
in thy glorious and gladdening presence.
For thine is the glory and praise
from all thy saints for ever and ever.
Amen.

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The next issue of *Praying Together*
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