

Parish of St. Theresa of Lisieux Stansted

The Little Flower Messenger

Year A - BAPTISM OF THE LORD - 8th January 2023

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Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

'As soon as Jesus was baptised he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him.'

Mass book (P. 118)

1st Reading:

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalms 28:1-2, 3-4, 9-10 r. 11:

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

2nd Reading:

Acts 10:34-38

Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia, alleluia! The heavens opened and the Father's voice resounded: 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him. Alleluia!'

Communion Antiphon: (P. 120)

Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

A thought from Fr Liam...called to bridge the gap

Dear Friends

Last Saturday as the bells were preparing to usher in the new Year in the midst of our Christmas Season, the news of the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI filled the world's airwaves as the Lord called him home. The familiarity of his funeral mass that was celebrated last Thursday in Rome reminds us not only of the same dignity that is afforded to each baptised person in the funeral rites of our Church, but that in death as in baptism we are all born equal in the eyes of God and loved and cherished by God with the same passion and depth.

What happens on our earthly pilgrimage between these two great 'beginnings' of our Christian journey is lamentably another matter as inequality and a lack of dignity too often shape and scar the lives of the most vulnerable, and define the growing chasm between those who have enough to flourish in this life and those who do not.

It is to this growing chasm in human dignity and justice, this widening disjunction between satisfaction and hunger, wealth and poverty across our human race, between our sisters and brothers, our fellow human beings, that our Church and our Popes have consistently called us to focus and address on our own earthly pilgrimage if we are to be faithful to the gospel of the new born King. It is this calling that we hear anew in Isaiah as we celebrate the baptism of Jesus and as we remember our own baptism - a calling that commits us together to restore and uphold the dignity and justice of each human being upon the entire journey of life.



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So as our Christmas season draws to a close and our decorations are packed away once more, we are reminded that 'the time has come for all of us to endeavour to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common' in which dignity and justice are shared fully by all people on this early journey. Thus as Thurman's *The Mood of Christmas* so poignantly underlines

*when the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and the princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost, to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations, to bring peace amongst people,
to make music in the heart.*

I wish you and yours every peace and blessing for this new year of 2023.

Liam

'Thought for the Week' from Pope Francis

'We are called to be a Church that worships a Jesus who is poor and that serves him in the poor.'

As a saintly bishop once said: "The Church supports and blesses efforts to change the structures of injustice, and sets down but one condition: that social, economic and political change truly benefit the poor" (O.A Romero, Pastoral Message for the New Year, 1 January 1980). Certainly, it is not easy to leave the comfortable warmth of worldliness to embrace the stark beauty of the grotto of Bethlehem, but let us remember that it is not truly Christmas without the poor.

Without the poor, we can celebrate Christmas, but not the birth of Jesus.' (24/12/22)

This Week's Good News

Dear Friends,

Today we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

This week I thought it would be nice to reproduce a reflection on this feast from Pope Francis that he gave in Rome in 2020.

Deacon Des

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

Once again I have had the joy of baptizing some children on today's Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. There were 32 today. Let us pray for them and for their families.

This year's liturgy offers us the event of the Baptism of Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 3:13-17). The Evangelist describes the dialogue between Jesus who asks to be baptized and John the Baptist who wants to prevent him and observes: "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (v. 14). This decision by Jesus surprises the Baptist: in fact, the



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Messiah does not need to be purified; indeed he is the one who purifies. But God is Holy. His ways are not ours and Jesus is God's path, an unpredictable path. Let us remember that God is the God of surprises.

John had stated that there was an abyssal, unbridgeable difference between him and Jesus. I am not worthy to carry his sandals (cf. Mt 3:11), he had said. But the Son of God came precisely to fill this gap between man and God. If Jesus is completely on God's side, he is also completely on the side of mankind and he reunites what was divided. This is why he answers John: "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness" (v. 15). The Messiah asks to be baptized so that all righteousness be fulfilled, that God's design which passes through filial obedience and solidarity with fragile and sinful mankind, be fulfilled. It is the path of humility and of God's complete closeness to his children.

The prophet Isaiah also announces the righteousness of the Servant of God who fulfills his mission in the world with a style that is opposed to the worldly spirit. "He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard on the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" (42:2-3). It is the attitude of meekness — the attitude of simplicity, of respect, of moderation and of hiddenness that is still asked today of the Lord's disciples. How many — it is sad to say — how many of the Lord's disciples boast that they are disciples of the Lord. Those who boast are not good disciples of the Lord. The good disciple is humble, meek, one who does good unobtrusively. In missionary work, the Christian community is called to approach others always offering and not imposing, bearing witness, sharing the concrete life of the people.

As soon as Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit alighted on him like a dove, as a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17). We rediscover our own Baptism in the Feast of the Baptism. Just as Jesus is the Beloved Son of the Father, we too, reborn by water and the Holy Spirit, know we are loved children — the Father loves us all! —, the object of God's satisfaction, brothers and sisters of many brothers and sisters, assigned with a great mission to bear witness and proclaim the Father's boundless love to all mankind.

This Feast of the Baptism of Jesus reminds us of our own Baptism. We too were reborn in Baptism. In Baptism the Holy Spirit came down to remain within us. This is why it is important to know the date of our Baptism. We know our date of birth, but we do not always know the date of our Baptism. Certainly some of you do not know it... Homework to do: when you return [home] ask: when was I baptized? When was I baptized? And celebrate the date of your Baptism in your heart, every year. Do it. This also does justice to the Lord who was so kind to us.

May Mary Most Holy help us to increasingly understand the gift of Baptism and to live it consistently in everyday situations.

Parish News

Encounter: The next meeting takes place on Friday 13th January here in the Parish Centre from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The talk and discussion topic is The gift of faith. Extracts from "Silence", the film which tells the story of two Christian missionaries who travel to Japan to find their mentor; Christianity was outlawed and their presence forbidden. Followed by a shared Lunch at 12.30p.m. All welcome for all or part of the event.



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Diocesan News

Emergency Winter Appeal: Bishop Alan has written to parishes asking for their support of the Ukrainian Emergency Winter Appeal.

Ukrainians remain resilient despite the circumstances of the war, but they are in the throes of a harsh winter. For that reason, a new Emergency Winter Appeal has been launched to provide food packages for the most vulnerable on the frontlines and in recently liberated regions in East and South Ukraine which is suffering from a severe humanitarian crisis.

The cost of one food parcel, providing enough food for two people for a week costs approximately £16. Each package contains the basics (grains, flour, pasta, meat and fish preserves, oil, canned vegetables, sugar, tea coffee, biscuits, etc.)

It is hoped that £160,00 can be raised to allow the supply of 10,000 food parcels to those most in need and I ask that you and your parishioners will consider supporting this Emergency Winter Appeal.

Funds can be remitted to:

Account Name: Ukrainian Catholic Church Central Fund

Account Number: 20927317

Sort Code: 20-92-60

Or by cheques made payable to **Ukrainian Catholic Church** referencing *Winter Appeal* in both cases. The address for cheques is Ukrainian Catholic Church in Great Britain, 22 Binney Street, London, W1K 5BQ.

Mass Times and Intentions

BAPTISM OF THE LORD - YEAR A		
Saturday 7 th January	Confessions: 5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	
Sunday 8 th January	Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish
SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A		
Saturday 14 th January	Confessions: 5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mass: 6:00 p.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	Michael Henry Aldridge Jnr R.I.P. (T. Aldridge)
Sunday 15 th January <i>Peace Day</i>	Mass: 10:00 a.m. <i>Livestreamed</i>	People of the Parish



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