

## Reflection for the Baptism of the Lord

There are moments in life that make you stop and think and think much harder about things than is usually the case. The current pandemic has certainly been one of those 'moments', certainly lasting longer than a moment should do, but let's stretch a point. The events at the Capitol building in Washington DC this week is another moment but also one that has been fermented for a while by those who have their own reasons. You may have your own views, but I believe that the truth and therefore the common good has been compromised. This has had domestic and international consequences. Whilst there is no leader or government that doesn't make mistakes or need correction, if foundational institutions and values are undermined everyone is at risk. I always come back to those words in the prayers for the feast of Christ the King at the end of the Church's year the Sunday before Advent. In naming the eternal and universal kingdom that Jesus came to establish they resonate in the darkness of the world's new year crises: *"a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace."*<sup>1</sup> Although imperfect the Church is the instrument of this kingdom, *"the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery"*<sup>2</sup> and is constituted by those *who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are constituted the people of God who have been made sharers in their own way in the priestly; prophetic and kingly office of Christ and play their part in carrying out the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.*<sup>3</sup>

Baptism is the Sacrament through which we become members of the Church and join the mission of service to truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace to help build the kingdom in the world. Through his own baptism Jesus shows us that he will give himself totally to us, by his death on the cross. Jesus spoke of his passion as a baptism: *"There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over."*<sup>4</sup> It is through the gift of his life to us that we can share in it through baptism and the other sacraments. The Church is the body of Christ and since we form one body *"the good of each is communicated to the others... But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head... Therefore, the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments."*<sup>5</sup> Before his Ascension into heaven Jesus gives this mission to his closest followers: *"Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."*<sup>6</sup> Often we are baptised when we are very young, and it would be impossible to take all this on board. Even as an adult its difficult to appreciate its depth and significance. Our baptism is a moment to make us stop and think, not only when this celebration comes round but also on the anniversary of our own baptism.

I cannot now remember who it was who said that if the baby cries when the baptismal water is poured on its head then this is a good sign to all present that we too should 'wake up' as members of the body of Christ and to the mission of the kingdom., whatever the circumstances. Although in lockdown, we can still be wide awake.

God bless you, Canon David.

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<sup>1</sup> Preface: Christ, king of the universe, Roman Missal, page 546

<sup>2</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Second Vatican Council November 1964

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:50

<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church. Paragraph 947

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28: 19-20