



St Marylebone  
Parish Church

## **Baptism of the Lord 2019, 11.00am Choral Eucharist and Holy Baptism**

Today's Feast of Christ's divinity completes the feast of Christ's humanity.

You can be forgiven for being dizzy.

Together with the Church across the world we've leapt from Christmas to the finding in the temple of the adolescent Jesus the Sunday after Christmas.

Then back to the Epiphany. And now here we are and the 30 year old Jesus is being baptised in the Jordan.

I knew a wonderfully holy old priest who dropped his sermon notes in the pulpit one Easter Morning. Flustered, he picked them up and carried on preaching in the random order that he had picked them up in. It was quite an experience. We've haven't dropped the lectionary and carried on as we picked it up. I promise.

Instead these days of *Epiphany* are proving just that: they are days of Revelation. Following the celebration of Christmas, by living the Church year we remember why we celebrated in the first place, and we inhabit that reality more deeply.

All babies are lovely. But we didn't all get days off work, and ate and drank ourselves silly when Carolyn was born. Our celebration of Christ's birth is because of *who* this baby is. At Christmas we celebrated God becoming man.

At Epiphany we celebrated our coming to *realise* that. And our being drawn into relationship with Christ our God. A relationship that defines everything we are and everything that we do. That relationship starts today for Carolyn in a wonderful way.

And today as we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord, God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

These days of revelation unpack for us *why and who* we celebrated in the first place, and they invite us deeper into relationship with Him.

So you see, it is this **Feast of Christ's divinity that completes the feast of Christ's humanity**. Christmas, Epiphany, the Baptism of Christ. Like beams of light illuminating the central truth of who God is and what this means for Carolyn and for us. Each in their own way these beams combine to illuminate a greater reality: a truth and a relationship that defines everything we are and everything we do.

There is one more thing.

There is one piece of the jigsaw I haven't mentioned. The other beam of light that is not mentioned today, but will be in the lectionary cycle of readings in some years, and was mentioned by Fr Stephen's bidding prayer at the crib on Epiphany. Does anyone know which other event is a beam of revealing light that traditionally goes with the Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus?

It is the wedding at Cana in Galilee. Today's feast also often includes the account of Christ's *first* miracle. Another instance in which his divinity is revealed. A wedding feast that runs out of wine. Shock. Horror. There was a time a while ago when I offered a guest a gin and then thought for a brief horrific moment that I didn't have any left in the flat. No greater shame can come upon a clergyman than running out of gin. I know how the wedding couple felt. Also, don't fret, I know you're worrying - I did have an emergency bottle of gin in the cupboard.

Anyway, they've run out of wine. And Jesus turns around 150 gallons, or 680 odd litres of water into wine. And we're told, 'good wine'. That's a lot of good wine...

We see Jesus' divinity in this foreshadowing of the banquet of the Eucharist, and the party is taken to a whole new level of joy.

And that's something of the point I wish to finish with:

These great festal days combine like shards of light pointing to a central reality: the truth and the relationship that define everything we are and everything we do. We pray today that Carolyn's life will be full of joy.

In Baptism, for Carolyn today and for all of us, we are made a people for whom our default setting is joy. We aren't called to be Cheshire cats grinning at the world and ignoring pain or life's struggles for ourselves or others – that is not joy, quite the opposite. But nonetheless, because of who God shows Himself to be, because of who we are in relation – deep and abiding joy is the most honest place to be. Brothers and sisters, we are invited by Christmas, Epiphany, the finding in the temple, Jesus's Baptism and the wedding at Cana to become a family under God known for its *joy*. That the world may look on and say – 'those Christians, what is it that they have such joy?' And 'how can I get some of that?' Because this is a joy in Christ to which every people and nation is invited, and our joy is their invitation. What might it look like for the world's first thought of us to be 'O they're the people full of Christ's joy?' That's our question as we begin 2019 together.

So it is with the joy of the Gospel that it is time to baptise this beautiful daughter of God.