

Almighty God,
who sent your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of your Church:
open our hearts to the riches of your grace,
that may bring forth the fruits of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace.

Our text may be found in today's reading from Paul's Epistle to the church at Ephesus, chapter 4 and verse 5:

‘ . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, . . . ’

Today, Sunday 2nd August, the 9th Sunday after Trinity, is a very special day for Lily Taïga Anne Mayet who is going to be baptised during our service this morning. Do you remember your baptism ? Perhaps not if you were a baby but I do because I was baptised as an adult by total immersion and I was foolish enough, having just affirmed my belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not to close my mouth as the Baptist minister lowered me backwards into the water. Fortunately for Lily, an Anglican baptism is normally simply a matter of pouring a little holy water on her head.

As today is special for Lily and her family, let's briefly consider what Paul is saying to us in the first paragraph of today's Epistle. Paul is in prison. He's been

arrested because of what he believes and the sharp opposition to that belief from people who believed in something different. Now what is odd about our church here in Dinard is that our congregation at St Bart's is made up of Christians from several different traditions: not only are we Anglicans – members of the Church of England – but we may be Catholic or Protestant: Methodists, Brethren, Eglise Reformée and other denominations I've failed to name. But though we may belong to different branches of our Christian faith, we are essentially one and the same – i.e. we all believe in today's text that we have ' . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, . . . '

So what does it mean to have one Lord ? Simply, that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Saviour. Simply, that we believe in the Trinity – in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the Holy Spirit. Simply that we believe that God is a loving parent just as Laurent and Kate love their daughter, Lily. We believe that Jesus, his son, was born, lived, died and rose again some 2,000 years ago so that we might come at last to our home in heaven. We believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives encouraging and inspiring us to be the sort of people we can truly be.

So what does it mean, to have one faith ? It means we trust in a God who loves us, who speaks to us through the Bible, through the Church, through the lives and witness of Christians through the centuries, heroes of our faith, saints past and present and still to come.

So what does it mean to have one baptism ? It means that though the individual rite in different churches may differ in detail, the underlying value of the symbols are the same: water to wash away our sin just as having a shower in the morning or washing our hands will get rid of any dirt or sweat or bad smell. Baptism is a public recognition that we have made a step of faith and confirmation of the promise that the Holy Spirit is with us. Baptism is the outward sign that we are in fact Christians.

Today, then, is special for Lily because it marks the day of her baptism and the fact that she shares with us the belief in one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. And may the day be special to all of us as a reminder that though we are, each of us, individuals with so many differences we still have this in common – a shared faith that unites us as the body of Christ, fit to do his will.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

2nd August, 2015

G: Sermons 32 : All one

