

## Baptism

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Eternal Father,  
who at the baptism of Jesus  
revealed him to be your Son,  
anointing him with the Holy Spirit:  
grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit  
that we may be faithful to our calling  
as your adopted children.

Our text may be found in today's gospel and is John chapter 1 and verse 46:

**"Come and see,"**

**"Come and see,"** is what Philip says to his friend, Nathaniel, encouraging our patron saint, Bartholomew, to put aside his prejudice about what good could ever come out of Nazareth and come and see Jesus, the son of Joseph, for himself.

There just aren't enough Sundays in the year to cover all the major festivals in our Christian calendar. January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Epiphany, falls this year on a Saturday. Last Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, was the Second Sunday in Epiphany when we traditionally celebrate the Baptism of Christ. But there is the possibility of transferring Epiphany to the nearest Sunday if we didn't have a service on the actual day. We didn't so we did and so last week we lost the chance of marking the Baptism of Christ. So this Sunday, if you don't mind, I'd like to take the

opportunity of asking the question why ? Why baptise ? Why should we follow Christ's example of being baptised ?

Well, if for Jews, circumcision is the mark of being Jewish then for us, as Christians, our distinguishing badge is being baptised. Baby Jewish boys are circumcised on the eight day; in many Christians churches, our children are baptised as babies though one of the fruits of the Reformation was the notion among some Protestants that baptism should be reserved for adults only, that baptism is something that a believer opts to do only when he or she are in a position to make up their own minds for themselves.

I was baptised as an adult, just before I went to university. It was my choice, my parents being kind enough to give me the space to make up my own mind on whether I wanted to be a practising believer or not. But though I can see why this is kind and generous, it also occurs to me that it is good if we can grow up as children as part of the church from our beginning and come to a personal faith because we are nurtured in the faith, on the inside, a part of the family of believers.

Well the choice is yours though that choice may have once been made for you. But, today, let me simply ask what baptism is.

Baptism is a threefold rite in the Church of England. We are anointed with holy oil with the sign of a cross; we are sprinkled with holy water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and we are given a lighted candle. All three are full of

symbolism. The water is a sign our sins are washed away and we stand pure and spotless, sinless before our God through his grace and love and the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of his son Jesus Christ. The oil symbolises the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the fact that in baptism we do receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives to inform, inspire and encourage us. And, thirdly, the candle reminds us that we will be mirroring the light of Christ through our lives in the darkness of this sinful world extending God's love to those who are be invited to come in and be a part of his Church.

Well I trust that helps. Philip says to his friend, Nathaniel Bartholomew, “Come and see,” and, by being baptised, that is precisely what we are doing: we are coming to Christ and seeing first-hand what it means to be truly Christian. Baptism, not circumcision, is the true mark of being a Christian. Baptism is an outward expression of the inward state of our hearts and minds, our bodies washed clean so that in mind, body and spirit, we may express the love of God to those he loves.

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

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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