

## Homily (Trinity 5)

This is a big day for me and an even bigger one for Ava Lily! My first go at administering the sacrament of Holy Baptism in this huge Church and Ava's first and, last, Baptism. What we are about to do for Ava cannot be done again because its symbolism and efficacy is enough to last and enjoy for a lifetime. When Ava learns to read and, much later, says: 'Where is my Baptism certificate?' ...she will find this special prayer on the back:

"Loving God

Thank you that in my baptism

I became part of your family.

Help me to find out more about following you

And to share your light in the world around me.

Bless my family and godparents,

And give them wisdom and love

As we walk the amazing journey of faith together,

In Jesus' name.

Amen."

It is, in the eyes of the Gospel, a Mary-moment rather than a Martha-moment. The best prayer is reflective and thoughtful and never rushed. To be baptized is to belong to an international community of faith and witness which is also local: St Mary the Virgin, Woodbridge which also includes, St

Mary's, Great Bealings. We are part of a specific family in time yet never restricted or bound by just one; we move on, we grow up; we find new parishes and make new friendships where the sacraments of Word and Baptism and Eucharist continue to flow and refresh us.

So the second part of our prayer today says we need help 'to find out more about following you' and that is a huge challenge for all of us in our churches today – urban, rural and anything in-between. What kind of nurture and educational support are we providing for those who ask of us: what are you about, whom do you follow, what help is there along the way to make our journey of faith develop and grow?

I think it is well known that confirmation numbers are in a state of crisis so perhaps we need to get excited instead about a first Communion programme for children, aged 7 years and above? I think this would be a positive response to that transition period between key stage 1 and key stage 2, when children want to be part of our church family and hold out their hands to receive God's food and drink for the journey. I also think that we are blessed with a nearby C of E Primary school so if we can become more involved in reaching out there, acorns do indeed grow and flourish for all around to see.

I haven't mentioned other possible areas and times to reflect but please let me know your thoughts. Do we need a more catholic 'Alpha course' available, for example, and something

which ends after week 6, with a huge, relaxing, communal meal? There are many Church success stories up and down the country to encourage us.

And now the final part of our baptism prayer. It is a call to keep on praying for those close to us and for the gifts of wisdom and understanding, especially when these sometimes fail us or stretch us. Godparents play a huge supportive role here and perhaps combine the Mary and Martha roles – the reflective moments and the practical ones too. Babysitting and child care from your best friends is as precious as the gift of prayer – just being there as helping, supportive hands, and not a little help even - with the washing and ironing!

The family of the Church is no different. She needs the balance of prayer and Christian action in equal measure and I hope you can see that beginning to grow in what we are doing mid-week here, as well as on Sundays. To share the light of Christ in the world around us in every season is a wonderful calling.

That calling begins for Ava today even though she does not yet understand what all the fuss is about and even though she cannot yet articulate what Mary and Martha knew for themselves in different ways. Christ is our light and guide, companion and friend, who walks alongside our 'amazing journey of faith together'. And Christ's light shows us the sheer depth and breadth and energy of His Father - God's fountain and outpouring of love for us all.

Amen.