

MONDAY
4 JANUARY
 1 John 3:7-10
 Psalm 98:1. 8-end
 John 1:35-42

TUESDAY
5 JANUARY
 1 John 3:11-21
 Psalm 100
 John 1:43-end

WEDNESDAY
6 JANUARY
 Epiphany
 Isaiah 60:1-6
 Psalm 72:[1-9]
 10-15
 Ephesians 3:1-12
 Matthew 2:1-12

THURSDAY
7 JANUARY
 1 John 3:22 – 4:6
 Psalm 2:7-end
 Matthew 4:12-17.
 23-end

FRIDAY
8 JANUARY
 1 John 4:7-10
 Psalm 72:1-8
 Mark 6:34-44

SATURDAY
9 JANUARY
 1 John 4:11-18
 Psalm 72:1. 10-13
 Mark 6:45-52

REFLECTION

Several of this week's readings come from 1 John. Despite its name, the letter does not reveal who wrote it and there are differing views about its authorship. However, it has clear similarities with the fourth Gospel and has traditionally been considered the work of the apostle John.

Our readings teach that real faith is shown in practical love for one another. We are encouraged to “love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action”, and that this should be our response to the great love God has shown in sending us his Son.

Some verses, however, are not as straightforward, such as: “Those who have been born of God do not sin.” Does this mean that the writer expects us to never do anything wrong? Fortunately, the rest of the letter shows this is not the case, for there are other verses which encourage Christians to confess their sins and teach that we deceive ourselves if we think we are without sin. The difficult verses in our readings, then, are probably best understood as exhortations to take sin seriously and as a further call to ensure our faith is reflected in how we live.

PRAYER

Help us, Lord, to appreciate the great love you have for us, which you demonstrated by sending your Son as a sacrifice for our sins.
 May this love you have shown us, flow out from us to others, and inspire and enable us to lead a godly life.



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BAPTISM

PART I – HISTORY AND SACRAMENT

An initiation to the Christian faith, baptism is a profound sign of change. As a sacrament, “a visible sign of an inward grace”, it marks the entrance to the community of God’s faithful people who are called to live in a radically different way. Until recently, baptism in the UK and other “Christian” countries was something that happened to a large proportion of babies as a matter of course. One priest is on record as saying that the only time his training for ordination touched on baptism was when he was given instruction on how to hold a baby!

In more recent times, the number of adults being baptised has greatly increased, and perhaps it is this trend that has led to a renewed interest in thinking about both the meaning and practice of baptism.

Christians have been baptised since the very beginning of the Christian faith, but ceremonial washing with water is mentioned in Jewish tradition long before Christ. In Exodus (29:4), as part of the ordination of priests, Aaron and his sons were brought to the entrance of the Tent of the Meeting (or tabernacle) and washed with water. They were then required to wash in water contained in a special bronze basin whenever they entered the tent or approached the altar. In the New Testament, the story of baptism begins with John the Baptist’s ministry, including the baptism of Christ himself.

After the resurrection, Christ commissions his disciples to make disciples and to baptise them with the Trinitarian formula: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19), while in John’s Gospel the disciples baptise during Christ’s ministry on earth (John 4:2).

Once we reach the Acts of the Apostles, the familiar pattern is established, of coming to Christ followed by baptism. Paul was baptised (Acts 9:18) as was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38). Baptism soon settled into a set liturgy and today *Common Worship* provides forms of baptism, both within and outside a Eucharist.



The Baptism of Christ, by Piero della Francesca

LIVE
 the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
 THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and
 Heather Smith

Second week
 of Christmas
 Epiphany

Monday 4 January to
 Saturday 9 January
 2021

WEEK