

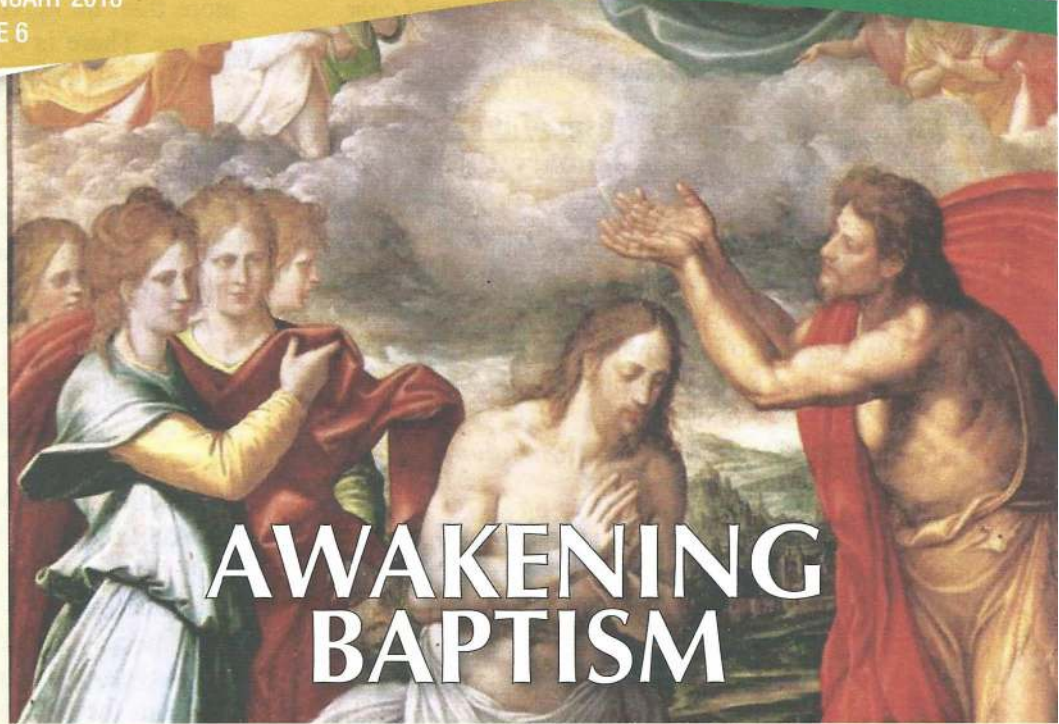
# Parish Newsletter

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD | 7 JANUARY 2018  
YEAR B | ISSUE 6

**O**n every pilgrimage I've been part of to the Holy Land, we visit the River Jordan. The place visited by most pilgrims is definitely not the geographical location of the Gospel, but a pleasant place with a Kibbutz and restaurant and shop, trees to give shade and chirping birds, and a few baptism areas to gather people at.

I wade in to baptise and to be baptised. Some brave souls come into the river as well, others stay at the river edge. We renew our baptism promises together and lower each other carefully under the water. I like it – as I always have a sense of being together and connected in our weak humanity. More importantly – that God understands and knows our lives intimately. God muddied his feet just as we do at the Jordan, he became a baby, needed changing, faced illness and disease and death. And it matters – God won't dismiss our problems and struggles. God knows, as he had a human body.

At least our Jordan experiences were not as eventful as the childhood stories I read on St Patrick where he baptised King Aengus of Munster at Cashel. Sometime during the rite, St Patrick leaned on his sharp-pointed crozier and inadvertently stabbed the king's foot. After the



## AWAKENING BAPTISM

baptism was over, St Patrick looked down at all the blood, realised what he had done, and begged the king's forgiveness. Why did you suffer this pain in silence, the Saint wanted to know. Aengus merely replied that he believed it to be a part of the ceremony, and did not appear to consider any suffering of consequence at such a moment. Not surprisingly there were no records of any other baptisms that day!

But sometimes things go wrong, as it did for me last June when I entered the waters of the Shannon a little less voluntarily than I did at the Jordan or hundreds of other times, I was knocked off a boat. I went under, spluttered, lost spectacles and vision and the first thing I felt was my friend's arm from a neighbouring boat gripping mine and a reassuring voice as I surfaced with a splutter, "I got you, buddy."

Perhaps the most beautiful words I

shall ever hear and his was the most beautiful face to see! Baptism, apart from a plunging or covering with water, involves two anointings with the Oil of Catechumens and Chrism. It always reminds me that my inner life may have become dry and weathered and needs smoothing. The perfumed Chrism asking... do I need to breathe in an aroma strong enough, gentle enough, to waken me to the fragrance of God's presence all around me? Today's feast rouses us – like a welcome splash of water to a tired face.

– Tom Cox

### THIS WEEK (8-14 JANUARY)

- 8 **Mon** St Thorfinn
- 9 **Tue** St Adrian of Canterbury
- 10 **Wed** St Peter Orseolo
- 11 **Thur** St Silvanus of Amiens
- 12 **Fri** St Benet Biscop
- 13 **Sat** St Hilary, bishop and doctor
- 14 **Sun** SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS



1 Samuel 3:3-10.19  
Psalm 39:2.4.7-10  
1 Corinthians 6:13-15.17-20  
John 1:35-42

### Reflection

In which ways do you identify Jesus? Make a list of answers to the question, "Who is Jesus?"

### Lesson

The heavens split open is God revealing himself: a new awareness of God breaking into the human consciousness of Jesus and through him into the world.

### Prayer

Lord, give confidence to all candidates for baptism and keep the wavering flame of faith alight. Amen.