

~ Notices ~

**Prayers** - Prayers are said daily for the welfare of our community, our nation and the world. If you have any particular issue that you would like to be prayed for, do please email me on [frkevinobrien@me.com](mailto:frkevinobrien@me.com) or call me on 065 672 4721.

**YouTube** - our YouTube channel now has over 120 videos, comprising services, talks and sermons. Please do visit the channel by searching for **St Columba's Church Ennis** and do *subscribe* if you can, we are aiming to reach 100 as soon as possible - we stand at 86 at present. Also visit our **Facebook** page:

#### Drumcliffe Church of Ireland Ennis

**Services in the New Year** - as the situation regarding Covid 19 measures remains fluid please note we shall put notices on our website, Facebook and email concerning the opening or closing of our churches. Our online services will, of course, continue.

**Rector:** Email: [frkevinobrien@me.com](mailto:frkevinobrien@me.com) Tel: 065 672 4721

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#### - Mission Charities -

The two charities being supported this year are below. Women's Aid gives support and sanctuary to women and children suffering from domestic abuse - which has sadly greatly increased during the Covid 19 pandemic. Jigsaw supports young people who are struggling with their wellbeing and mental health - also a prevalent problem during so many months of lockdown and isolation.

**Womens Aid** [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie) **Jigsaw** [www.jigsaw.ie](http://www.jigsaw.ie)

See the diocesan website for the Bishop's address:  
<http://www.limerick.anglican.org>

#### As we mourn the events of this week in Washington, USA, we might offer this prayer from the USA Episcopal Church BCP for the unity of the country

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



## The Baptism of Christ 2021 (Year B)

### Collect

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: may we recognize him as our Lord and know ourselves to be

your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

**Suggested Hymns** - For the online service you might like to view these hymns with lyrics on YouTube.

1) God is love

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYWW\\_P9MH4&t=10s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYWW_P9MH4&t=10s)

2) O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBEEmXFkwOE>

3) Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUMCjVFsbUE>

4) On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRd-g6i8pmE>

### Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

### Psalms 29

Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ♦  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦  
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; ♦  
the God of glory thunders; ♦

the Lord is upon the mighty waters.

The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; ♦

the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; ♦

the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf ♦

and Sirion like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;

the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; ♦

the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe

and strips the forests bare; ♦

in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'

The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; ♦

the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.

The Lord shall give strength to his people; ♦

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

### Acts 19: 1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

### Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

### Commentary

Genesis 1:1-5

This passage answers the question: how did the world come to be? But, being written long before the dawn of modern science, it is obviously not, and cannot be, scientific in our terms. Even so, it is valuable. We ask: did life arise when elements in the primeval ooze by pure chance formed DNA? Even if our answer is yes, we maintain that, behind all of creation, is a transcendent being (supernatural and involved in earthly affairs) whom we call God. He has total control of creation.

Vv. 1-2 were first translated as a sentence in the 200s BC, but in Hebrew these verses are a phrase. A modern translation is: "When God began to create heaven and earth – the earth being formless and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep, a wind of God sweeping [hovering] over the waters – then God said ..." Vv. 1-2 are the when clause, and v. 3 the then. "Heavens and earth" is a way of saying everything. (Hebrew cosmology held that there were multiple heavens, with God living in the highest one.) Non-existence of the earth involved darkness and deep waters. Even at this time, God was in control: his wind, breath, rushing-spirit, ruah, were here. The text is orderly (note "God said ... God saw ... God separated ... God called ...", a pattern repeated through the six days of creation); and so too are God's acts. Vv. 3-5 are the events of the first day. His first priority is to overcome darkness: he creates light. Rather than destroying darkness, he relegates it to night-time: it too becomes part of the good, godly world, and is declared so by God. Naming night and day show God's mastery of them. Jewish feast days begin at sun-down, so "evening" is first. This pattern is repeated for five more days. On the seventh day (the Sabbath), God rests. Is this account unscientific? The writer worked with the cosmology of his day to show divine power and purpose, and the unique place of humans. Unlike other ancient Near East peoples, Israel's story of how humankind came to be is peaceful, effortless (all God does is to speak); what is created is good, beautiful. God intended that the world be wholly good

### Psalm 29

This psalm is probably based on one to the Canaanite god Baal, the storm god, who brings the annual thunder-storm, the source of fertility for the land. In Israelite hands, it expresses God's supremacy and universal rule. In vv. 1-2, all other gods are invited to acknowledge the Lord's supremacy and the glory due to him. (Israel was not yet strictly monotheistic.) Vv. 3-9 give us a picture of the storm. The "voice of the Lord" (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7-9) is thunder (repetitious claps). The storm is first seen approaching over the Mediterranean (v. 3); it sweeps in to the land, breaking the tall "cedars" (v. 5), as it advances across southern Lebanon. It vents its power on Mount "Lebanon" (v. 6) and then on Mount "Sirion"; it proceeds on into "the wilderness" (v. 8, the Arabian Desert). ("Flames of fire", v. 7, is lightning.) "Kadesh"

(v. 8) is probably Kedar, part of the desert. The Word of God is indeed mighty. In v. 9, "all" the gods do acknowledge God's supremacy; they cry Glory be to the Lord! God rules over all from his throne (v. 10). May the Lord strengthen Israel and give it peace.

### Acts 19:1-7

Luke, also the author of Acts, has just told us, in 18:24-25, about Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, "eloquent ... well-versed in the scriptures [the Old Testament] ... instructed in the Way of the Lord" who "spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John" the Baptist. When Priscilla and Aquila (a couple) heard him speak in the synagogue, they explained the Word of God "more accurately" ( 18:26) to him. He went to Achaia (in southern Greece) where he showed from scripture that Jesus is the Messiah, the saviour ( 18:28). Apollos was already on the way to becoming a Christian.

The "disciples" ( 19:1) of John whom Paul found at Ephesus did not know the scriptures ( 19:2), for the Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament. They had been baptised into the belief that when we admit our fault and promise to amend our ways ("repentance", 19:4), God will forgive us. Paul tells them that the one of whom John spoke, "who was to come after him", is already here: he is Jesus; in him they should believe – as a natural consequence of following John. They are baptised into the church, and when Paul lays hands on them, are empowered by the Holy Spirit, with particular spiritual gifts (speaking in tongues and prophecy). Apollos and the "twelve" (v. 7) both come to accept Christ, one through the scriptures and the witness of a couple, the twelve through hearing the good news from Paul and others. We do not know whether Apollos was baptised; he may have been an effective messenger for Christ, perhaps outside the church.

### Mark 1:4-11

This gospel begins with the messenger whom God sends ahead of Christ, to prepare the way. John is the forerunner of Jesus. Tradition says that John baptised near Jericho, in an arid region. People came to him in large numbers, repenting (changing their mind sets), "confessing their sins" (v. 5), resolving to sin no more, and (probably) dipping themselves in the River. John dressed like a hermit or prophet (v. 6). In Palestine, some species of "locusts" were eaten. Mark does not tell us why Jesus was baptised by John, but what follows is important. The opening of the heavens symbolizes the start of a new mode of communication between God and humankind. Perhaps "like a dove" (v. 10) is an allusion to the spirit hovering in Genesis 1:2. To Mark, the "voice ... from heaven" (v. 11) confirms the already existing relationship between God and Jesus. (The Greek word translated "Beloved" indicates God's choice more than his feelings.) Part of Jesus' message in Galilee (v. 15) is "repent, and believe in the good news."

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