

buried in consecrated ground at least it doesn't today in the Church of England. Again historically myths and traditions have been developed!

So as we witness Baptism this morning ~ where do each of us stand? As we refer to our map of faith, the signposts and compass, do we need to adjust the direction of the journey we are making? We have the opportunity to do that in joining in the renewal of our Baptism promises with the girls ~ Not washing the dirt from our bodies and lives but pledging afresh to have a clear conscience towards God and sweeping away anything that blocks the path, being able to walk round obstacles and not walk into them, delaying or stopping our journey!

Where is that journey taking us? John writes about Jesus teaching that there are many rooms in His Father's house and that a place is prepared for each one of us ~ a final and eternal resting place. A place of peace, celebration and rejoicing in God the Father's presence. You and I spend an earthy lifetime journeying towards or away from that resting place ~ Baptism symbolises our intention to journey towards it, with the aid of the Holy Spirit guiding and governing the route we take, prompting us to recognise the obstacles and blockages and deal with them. That is the Holy Spirit that Jesus promises for when He is not with us but actually is still in our hearts. (we encounter that absence yet presence in bereavement). How will you know the Spirit is at work?

You ask God for something like patience and you will be given situations that test your patience to the extreme! Tell God you have no patience and he will reveal to you that you really do! Tell God you can't do something and He will tell you that can in His strength ~ and when you don't believe Him He will patiently stand with you and you will discover that you get through somehow, maybe you really can't do something yourself but you will look back and see that through others and the Spirit your journey continues. You will discover that in Knowing Jesus ~ you can make him known.

Amen.

Ministry Musings (21<sup>st</sup> May 2017)

## Alleluia He is Risen



Ask yourself this morning ~ if I am a witness for the Lord ~ what am I witnessing? What are your false gods today and what altars have you set up to worship them? (Start with the false gods that are the material things you tell yourself you cannot live without!)

As Peter bids us ~ do you revere Christ as Lord in your heart which enables you to

know hope and tell others about it ~ by sharing what you know of Jesus? Can you do this with gentleness, respect and a clear conscience ~ not worrying about suffering ridicule and the rejection of the words or deeds that you offer?

Have you ever experienced the Spirit working through you ~ finding yourself sharing when your human nature would normally stop you? Watch for the Spirit working in us as we worship ~ it happens often and is there to encourage us!

Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit so we should be eager to receive her in our lives. Being baptised in the Spirit is not about removing dirt from our bodies but pledging to have a clear conscience toward God, (removing all that hinders our relationship with Him) naming the false gods and seeing them for what they are. Luke says that the altar to the unknown god has its value ~ why because when you recognise how you worship things that will not save you, you will know how to worship the Lord that offers that salvation!

**Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known**

Readings : Acts 17:22-31 NT page 134  
1Peter 3: 13-22 NT page 231  
**John 14: 15-21** NT page 105 & All Age  
version

So this morning we have the Baptism of Celine and Evelin and Nathaniel and we need to understand what we are doing ~ the promises that we are supporting parents and godparents in making on their behalf and that we are invited to renew with them. How might we encourage these two families as they bring up their little girls and help them to understand that God loves them so much that he offers a permanent relationship with Him. We can only encourage from what we ourselves understand and share from what we have experienced from what has been true for us. So take a moment now to consider what your Baptism means to you. Many won't remember being Baptised as we were simply too little for the event to form as a memory. Some will have chosen as young people to seek to be Baptised and will have had firm reasons for doing so and a few I know have been re-Baptised so that the commitment that had been made on their behalf symbolically became their own. For individuals that can be extremely important as a statement in their lives, however, as a priest in the Church of England I have to stand by the Anglican teaching that this is not a favoured practice as Baptism is considered once and for all and does not need repeating to be effective! We all know that sometimes parents seek Baptism for all sorts of historical reasons and it is the church's responsibility to help them sift out the differences between what the world thinks Baptism does and what the church recognises it is doing! Some of the differences journey happily together ~ having a celebration, an excuse for a party. Celebrating the person's creation and the expectations for their life but also celebrating what God offers each of us ~ the opportunity to journey with Him, to live by Jesus' example and to be led and encouraged through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Journeys take preparation and planning, they need equipping and they need to be paced, which includes times of rest as well as times of exertion. A journey or pilgrimage needs a map and signposting or we can easily get lost or take a wrong turn. So as we prepare for a Baptism we clear the path of some of the myths. Godparents may well be the deputies for parents if the parents are not around for some reason ~ but that is not the reason for selecting them! You chose godparents because you trust that they will act as map and signpost as well as travelling companion. That trust may be honoured or, maybe, the chosen folk will take wrong turns in their lives too ~ it is an act of trust. If I asked every Baptised person here about their godparents or sponsors each would be able to talk of the ones they never hear from and the ones who acknowledge their special function in their lives directing them to know more of the risen Christ. Being a Godparent is a challenge as well as a blessing and an honour. If you are already a godparent when did you last check on your godchild's spiritual well-being?

Being Baptised does not ensure you are loved and received by God! God loves and receives all His children even if they deliberately walk away and refuse to come to Him. Baptism is the symbolic beginning of the journey and whether those Baptised decide to walk with or away from God is something God leaves to each individual ~ He is always there, waiting with outstretched arms ~ longing to welcome each and every one. It is a great sadness to God if anyone chooses to deny and reject Him but His promise is of eternal life for those who chose to receive Him in their lives and journey with Him.

Being Baptised does not ensure that you get into a school, college or profession of your choice. Historically Christian foundations may have made this an entrance requirement ~ but today they would be more interested in how being Baptised has effected the person's life, how they are journeying and growing in their faith.

Baptism doesn't ensure that you can be married in church or