

Epiphany 2 – Year B – 14-01-2017  
SSJM

Baptism

People sometimes say that Whitsunday, the story of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit 50 days after Easter, is the Birthday of the Church. I tend to think of it rather as the "coming of age of the church" – the day when the apostles and followers of OLJC were given the keys of the door – i.e., the power and strength and authority to go out in Jesus' name, to share with others the good news of Jesus, to bring people to know and to love him.

This story we've heard today, the 2 friends of John the Baptist, Philip and Andrew meeting and talking with OLJC, is the true beginning of the story of the Church.

For you and I, Christian people, are people who have in some way or other heard about Jesus - perhaps from home, perhaps from Sunday School, possibly even from day school, perhaps from a friend - and having heard, we have come to him to see for ourselves who he is - or at least have begun to see, for the full process of getting to know him and who he is takes a lifetime. Like those two, we have taken time to be with him and we continue to take time - why else are we here today?

But also we, having come and seen, are expected to follow OLJC and to invite others to come and see. For God depends on the Church, on us, to make Jesus known in the world today through our life and witness. For Christ has now no hands but our hands...

What a challenge this is to the Church! So it's worth reflecting, Do our words and deeds bear witness to OLJC? When/if we do get round to invite people to come, will they be able to 'see' him in us, in our congregation? Will people be able to say, Yes, he lives here, is here - yes, the Spirit that rested on Jesus is at work here, in the church of God that is in Seedfield, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (taking up St Paul to the Corinthians) - OR: will they go away, still looking?

In many churches at the start of the new year this prayer was used by people wanting to renew and deepen their relationship with OLJC – it's a very good prayer to make our own today, and at any time of the year.

Lord God,  
in our baptism you called us and brought us into your Church,  
commissioning us to witness to the faith of the crucified Christ  
and to be his faithful disciples to the end of our lives;  
so now with joy we take upon ourselves the yoke of obedience  
and for love of you engage ourselves  
to seek and to do your perfect will.  
We are no longer our own, but yours.

**All:**

**We are no longer our own but yours.  
Put us to what you will, rank us with whom you will;  
put us to doing, put us to suffering;  
let us be employed for you or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you or brought low for you;  
let us be full, let us be empty;  
let us have all things, let us have nothing;  
We freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your  
pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are ours and we are yours.  
So be it.**

**And the covenant which we have made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven.**