

***This, too, is about Jesus!***

Isaiah 43<sup>1-7</sup>; [Psalm 29; Acts 8<sup>14-17</sup>;] Luke 3<sup>15-17,21-22</sup>

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine  
[Isaiah 43<sup>1</sup>]*

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Christ with the sacrament of Baptism.

Today, we also celebrate with Rizwan his decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ, leaving behind the Islamic faith into which he was born, and we will look forward to his Confirmation on Trinity Sunday this year by Bishop David (there may be others considering confirmation, so do talk to me).

Today we will act out the full drama of baptism

- Rizwan will be submerged into the water as a symbol of his death to all that he has been
- then he will be resurrected to a new life, a new life that is in Christ. Rizwan will not be in control of what happens - and perhaps that is the best symbol of what this faith is.

This isn't about Rizwan - this is about Jesus!

Certainly, our readings from the New Testament teach us about the theology of Baptism as a Sacrament:

- ✦ With the coming of Jesus, Luke teaches that Baptism is no longer just about repentance, but it about following Jesus.
- ✦ Luke also teaches that Baptism is our submitting to God's will for us and looking for his affirmation: **You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased.** After his baptism Jesus begins his public ministry, knowing that it would lead to death and to glory! Baptism, if you will forgive the pun, is a springboard into God's future for us and not an end in itself.

- ✦ Acts (read it) teaches us that Baptism is accompanied by the gift of God's Holy Spirit - from this moment we have the gift of God's power to live God's life.

But we turn to Isaiah as we explore the meaning of our Baptism (however it is administered):

- ✦ What we are celebrating is what God has done in our lives. **Do not fear, I have redeemed you.** God has bought us back! We pawned ourselves into sin and God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus bought us back! He bought our freedom.
- ✦ Isaiah's reference to **When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you,** is a reference to the Exodus. Just as God took a nation safely from savagery into freedom over the Red Sea, so God will take us safely through the death of baptism to the resurrection to new life - no longer slaves but free!
- ✦ When Isaiah says **When you walk through the fire you will not be burned** speaks about the ongoing refining process that we all go through as we allow that gift of the Holy Spirit, given in baptism, to make us more like Jesus.

What is so vital for us to accept is, that as we follow Jesus, God affirms us too.

God said to Jesus as the Jordan. **You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased.**

He says to us as his people, **You are precious in my sight. I love you.**

What a great way to celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, with a reminder of our own baptism and with celebrating Rizwan's baptism too.

God raises us - if he doesn't it's pointless trying to raise ourselves! That's why it is all about Jesus!