

### **Cross-eyed thinking**

[Exodus 20<sup>1-17</sup>; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1<sup>18-25</sup>; John 2<sup>13-22</sup>]

*For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom,  
and God's strength is stronger than human strength.  
[1 Corinthians 1<sup>25</sup>]*

One the 'modern myths' that is perpetuated is that no decision to bless or baptise a child will be made until they are old enough to make up their own mind. The fatal flaw in that argument is that no-one is brought up in a moral or religious vacuum: what they are taught by what we say and, much more importantly by who we are, teaches them what matters to us.

The parallel would be to suggest that you were going to bring a child up to make its own mind up about food. You can't let them starve, so what you feed them and how you nurture their taste buds develops what they will like and what they will be prepared to try in later life.

Having moved away from the Church for this service, we are forced to strip back the tradition and the drama that often surrounds events in the Church and it makes us think about what is left. I suppose, for this baptism today, it is this:

- ✦ The trust God places in us and the trust we place in God. Thanksgiving for children is at the heart of baptism and of us wanting to do the best for the children trusted to us. We recognise that we can't do this on our own - we need human support and we need divine support.
- ✦ The claim of the cross. Anyone who has listened to sermons at baptisms knows that, for me, the most important and moving part of the service is the signing with the cross with the words, 'Christ claims you for his own.' The cross is at the heart of our faith: it is the priceless evidence of the love God has for us; it is the costly intervention of a God who absorbs the fall-out of our carelessness; it is the unchallenged exercise of God's power against the futility of evil.

The cross is the sign and symbol that makes clear God's claim on us and his protection of us.

- ✦ The water that restores. Traditionally, in baptismal theology, it was held that the water of baptism washed away original sin. But in the New Testament, baptism is a symbol of resurrection. Either way, it is a beginning again - of the reset button being pressed, of starting anew in God's eyes. The challenge is always how we move on from this - it is trusting the wisdom of God in how we should live for our wellbeing and fulfilment.
- ✦ The light that is carried out into the darkness. Faith isn't kept in a box like a memento of a rite of passage - it is something that is carried out and then lived out. Faith makes a difference to us - at best, it makes us more like Jesus - and then it makes a difference to the world around us as who we are and what we do, inspired by what we believe, lives out God's priorities of love, justice and mutual support. This isn't just being 'good' people, but people who take as their model Jesus and his self-giving.

The very foolishness of the act of baptism becomes an expression of our trust and hope. You can keep your moral vacuums, your superstitions and the belief you can outwit God in life and death: the submission to God and letting him hold us, however, foolish, is a much sounder choice.