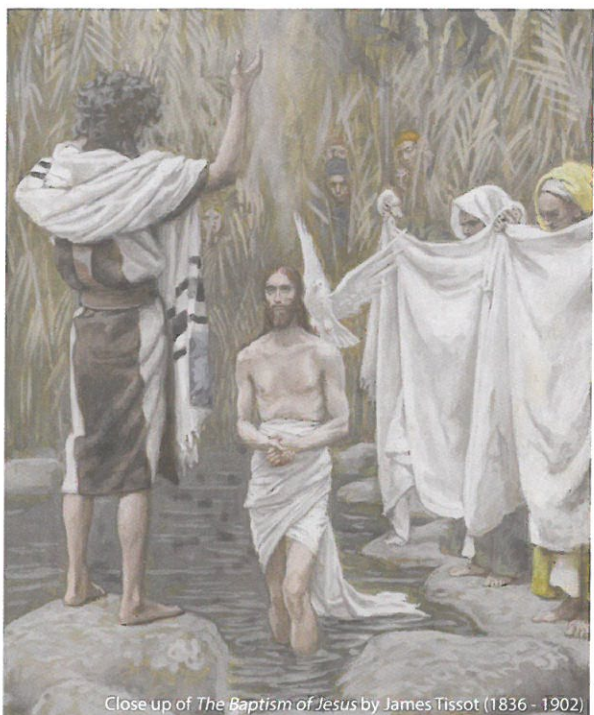


# SUNDAY PLUS



Beloved of God

A Year of the Word



Close up of *The Baptism of Jesus* by James Tissot (1836 - 1902)

## Who am I?

by Paul Higginson

**W**ho am I? It's an interesting question. We often define ourselves by what we do: an accountant, a shop assistant, a manager. Or perhaps by what we have: a home, a British passport, a BMW!

In today's Gospel we hear the truth. When Jesus is baptised he hears a voice saying: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

Jesus came to let us know that we are as beloved as he is. This is who I am. God is our first love. He knit us together in our mother's womb; he has written our name on the palm of his hand. God says, "You belong to me, you are my beloved."

We too must listen to the voice that Jesus heard by the river Jordan – the voice that calls me "the beloved". If we hear this message, claim it for ourselves and live it, if we understand who we really are then our lives can be transformed.

Hold on to this when life is going well and when the weight of the world is on your shoulders; when your faith is strong and when your faith is shaky; when you feel successful and happy and when you feel upset or alone. We are beloved sons and daughters of God. Claim that truth and live it; and the liberation that follows will enable you to be free to truly love others, which is what God intended all along.

Paul Higginson is the Assistant Principal at the Catholic Sixth Form College in Harrow and has been a parish catechist for more than thirty years.

## The smallest is also important

by Christine Clark

The Epiphany play rehearsal was in full swing at St Bernadette's Primary School – but Liam wasn't happy. He'd been hoping for a good part in the play: one of the three kings maybe, or at least one of their servants; a groom, perhaps, or the man who led the camel. But once again he'd been passed over and he was cast as a young lad who was just one of the party making their way to

Bethlehem. It was because he was so small, he supposed.

Miss O'Reilly saw just what was going on. She beckoned him over and said, "Liam, I've got an important scene for you. The camel that Melchior rides has a problem with his foot and we need someone with small and nimble fingers to put some ointment on it, to soothe it. Could you do that? It needs just the right person and without this help, there's no way the caravan will get to Bethlehem."

Liam's smile gave his reply. Perhaps being small was what was needed.

Christine Clark is a Christian mother and grandmother.

"[Children] have their own 'dialect', which does us good to hear! And Jesus advises us to be like them, to speak like them. We must not forget this language of children, who speak as they are able, but it is the language that is so pleasing to Jesus. And, in your prayers, be simple like them. Tell Jesus what comes into your heart, as they do."

Pope Francis

## Unexpected grace

by Daniel Kearney

I was on an ancient pilgrimage route in France looking for direction. But all I could see was the path ahead. At the base of Our Lady's statue I stopped at a familiar sight, the so-called "pilgrim cairns", created by balancing stones and pebbles upon each other. Initially, I ignored them but, after a while, I found myself stopping to place a pebble on a cairn and offering up a prayer. A habit or mere superstition, who knows, but this simple, daily act seeped in to me like a ritual. Taking time to place my stone and not bring the cairn crashing down was a responsibility, a participation in a collective act of homage with the myriad pilgrims who had gone before me. I felt a sense of community and fellowship. In some intangible way, I was beginning to reconnect with myself again. It was, as grace is, timely and unexpected.

Daniel Kearney is the author of *Adult Bullying* and *Childhood Bullying: caring for yourself and others*, available from Redemptorist Publications, [www.rpbooks.co.uk](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk)

Lord of hope and joy, sometimes it is hard to see you in the daily ups and downs of life. Please let me recognise you and your love even in the most unexpected people and places + Amen.

Called by God  
Reclaiming the  
meaning of Baptism

Ellen McBride &  
Sr Margaret Jones

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**Today:**  
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7  
Acts 10:34-38  
Matthew 3:13-17

**Monday:**  
1 Samuel 1:1-8  
Mark 1:14-20

**Tuesday:**  
1 Samuel 1:9-20  
Mark 1:21-28

**Wednesday:**  
1 Samuel 3:1-10, 19-20  
Mark 1:29-39

**Thursday:**  
1 Samuel 4:1-11  
Mark 1:40-45

**Friday:**  
1 Samuel 8:4-7, 10-22  
Mark 2:1-12

**Saturday:**  
1 Samuel 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1  
Mark 2:13-17

**Next Sunday:**  
Isaiah 49:3, 5-6  
1 Corinthians 1:1-3  
John 1:29-34

