

WELCOMING IN CHRIST
Monthly Devotional Reflections
Anticipating the St. Paul's Anniversary Campaign

MARCH 2018

Lent with moods of reflection, introspection, repentance, preparation
St. Paul's highlighting members past, present, and future

TEXT: Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

REFLECTIONS:

Jesus' baptism is remembered by all four gospel writers—each with slightly different emphases, but all with the Divine affirmation. Baptism leads to the wilderness before security, temptation before faithfulness. But the Good News of God's love in Christ must be proclaimed and the invitation is to all: now is the time to repent and believe.

Our Baptism engages us in a community of faith where we are welcomed. As we grow in our baptismal covenant we learn to welcome others.

PRAYERS:

In this season of repentance and healing, we accept God's invitation to be ever-mindful of our sin and God's forgiveness. We look to the needs of others, offering our prayers on behalf of God's community in the church and the world. *Lord, fill us with your strength to resist the seductions of our foolish desires and the tempter's vain delights, that we may walk in obedience and righteousness, rejoicing in you with an upright heart. Amen.*

ART:

The Baptistry at Coventry Cathedral

What captures your imagination in this artistic expression? What is the artist seeking to say?

Please see <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=B> for daily scripture readings



Coventry Cathedral (1956-62) by Basil Spence. Showing the font (made from a boulder from a hillside near Bethlehem) and Baptistry window by John Piper. [from the Vanderbilt Divinity School Common Lectionary Resource]

Do you remember your baptism? Many were baptized as infants, under the faith of parents and the promise of a welcoming community to help guide spiritual growth until such a time as one would seek confirmation and membership. Who made promises on your behalf? Others have claimed a dramatic experience as a youth or adult. How do you keep your baptism?

ACTION:

During March/Lent consider the heart of Christian faith and practice in baptism and belonging. Why do we become members actively engaged with a community of faith? Who welcomed you in Christ? How has St. Paul's grown and prospered in faithful witness, worship, and outreach? Whose friendship or service has blessed your life? Take an opportunity to thank them. Remember members who have shared wisdom and commitment making the church more vital and faithful. How will you help to make St. Paul's a place of welcome for all?