

1st Sunday after the Epiphany  
The Baptism of Our Lord  
Grace Episcopal Church  
Rev Brian C Justice

Psalm 29  
Isaiah 42.1-9  
Acts 10.34-43  
Matthew 3.13-17

**In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen**

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### **Beyond Duality**

Our practice of the Christian Way sometimes feels easy and sometimes feels hard. A challenge to our practice is often the discrepancy between what we know and what we see.

We *know* that God is with us.  
We *see* the suffering of the world.

But the Christ story challenges us and invites us to a new awareness: there is no duality in or between what we know and what we see.

What we know and what we see are actually the same thing. It is all one.

I call this Incarnation awareness, Gospel awareness, Epiphany awareness, Baptism awareness.

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At this time in the Lectionary, we are celebrating the beginning of the Christ story. From Advent to Nativity, from Epiphany to Baptism.

The Christ story is the revelation of the true meaning of God: the Word became flesh and lived among us (John 1.14).

The story of Jesus is the story of “God with us” in human history.

It is the story of the Incarnation.

But this is what is crucial to know: the Incarnation of God in Jesus is a historical moment that reveals an eternal reality.

God is here. God is now. God is with us.

In this world *as it is*.

“The home of God is among mortals ...” (Rev 21.3)

The Incarnation is the foundation of Christianity.

The theological term “incarnation” means, in Latin, “in the flesh” or “in the body.”

That is where God is.

In the flesh. In the body. In the physical stuff. In *this* world.

In stars and flowers. In horses and dogs. In trees and rivers. In bread and wine. In us.

If Incarnation really means what it says it means, then that vulnerable baby in the manger with Mary and Joseph, that compassionate man who stood up in the waters of the Jordan River, that innocent man suffering the sorrow and dying the death of a criminal ... that is God.

That is what God is.

That is where God is.

In birth and death, in youth and age, in suffering and sadness, in joy and jubilee.

In all of our “sorts and conditions.”

There is no God hiding behind the curtain while the story takes place.

The story is God.

It is nothing less than the in-breaking of the divine into the human, of the spiritual into the physical, of the miraculous into the mundane, of the glory of wholeness into the sorrow of brokenness.

We *know* this from the Christ story because the Christ story has *everything* in it. The extremes of humanity and history meet in Christ.

There is suffering in the world ... what you see in the news, what you go through in the course of a life ... yes, it’s real.

But that is where God is. That’s what God is. That’s who God is.

God is not different from that. God is that.

Incarnation.  
Sacrament.

There is no duality. Only unity. Only God. In every bit of it.  
What we know and what we see ... it's the same thing.

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Today Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River. And the heavens are opened.

Today you are baptized in the sacramental waters of life. And the heavens are opened.

Now, you must live in those living waters, in the incarnate wonder of baptism, in the incarnate wonder of God with us, in the incarnate mystery of things. So ...

Go.

Feed the hungry.  
Care for the sick.  
Love the young and the old.  
Welcome the stranger.  
Sit in silence with the broken-hearted.

Go.

For it is God, in the flesh, who is waiting for you there.

Amen.