

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHNS CHURCH



ST MARYS CHURCH



ST JAMES CHURCH

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THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, YEAR A: 11 JANUARY 2026

For the early church, this gospel incident provided something of a puzzle. Why would Jesus, the sinless One, submit to baptism by John? Why be immersed in the waters of the River Jordan as though he were a repentant sinner?

The answer gives us great hope.

Right from the start of his public ministry, Jesus wanted to be identified with the great mass of humanity who *are* sinful.

In other words, this being plunged into the waters of the Jordan was for Jesus a great act of solidarity with you and with me.

He wanted to identify with those of us who have become conscious of the fracturing of our relationship with God, and have sensed the need to turn our lives in a better direction.

But what I want to focus on is Jesus' mystical experience as he emerged from the waters of the River Jordan. '*Suddenly the heavens opened.*' Heaven and earth are communicating again! If heaven appeared closed to humankind it is now open again in this great act of solidarity by our saviour.

'And he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.'

Jesus was a Jew. He would have been steeped in the first lines of the Jewish scriptures which portray the Spirit of God hovering over the waters of chaos. He would have also been aware of the great story of Noah. When the dove fluttered over his ark he knew that the earth was safe for humanity again.

So, it is not surprising that Jesus, a Jew, experienced the presence of the divine Spirit of God 'in dove-like fashion', 'like a dove does' – a sense of being hovered over by this Divine presence.

All this was a prelude to a heavenly intuition: '*and a voice spoke from Heaven: "This is my Son, the beloved, my favour rests on him."*'

In the Jewish tradition this sort of sensation is called the *bat qol*, the daughter of a voice, a whisper echoing heaven.

All these sensations had a great impact on Jesus, leaving him with a deep sense of intimacy with his heavenly Father which enabled him, humanly speaking, to persevere throughout his ministry.

This is part of what it meant for Jesus to be baptised in the River Jordan. But what does this Gospel mean for us? Each of us has shared in the baptism of Our Lord. Each of us has been incorporated into *His* baptism.

At whatever age you received baptism, the heavens were opened: divine love and power streamed from heaven to earth. At that moment, heaven and earth were as one in each one of you;

the Holy Spirit, Divine lover of humanity, hovered gently over you;

and deep down, at the intimate wellspring of your life, the Divine voice was heard whispering:

'*You are my beloved daughter*' or '*You are my beloved son,*' '*My favour rests on you.*'

That is our true identity as adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

Of course our Heavenly Father in his boundless compassion finds other ways to communicate divine life to billions who never get the opportunity to be baptised, or even to hear the gospel.

But, oh what a special privilege! What a great gift to have been incorporated into the baptism of the Lord.

What a difference it would make if we re-called each morning the heavenly whisper at *our* baptism and then re-echoed it in *our* lives. **Fr Michael Tate**

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

After the Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove, and the voice of the Father thundered: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God, who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him, solemnly declared him your beloved Son, grant that your children by adoption, reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, may always be well pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING*Isaiah 42:1-4. 6-7*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom my soul delights.
I have endowed him with my spirit
that he may bring true justice to the nations.

He does not cry out or shout aloud,
or make his voice heard in the streets.
He does not break the crushed reed,
nor quench the wavering flame.

Faithfully he brings true justice;
he will neither waver, nor be crushed
until true justice is established on earth,
for the islands are awaiting his law.

I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right;

I have taken you by the hand and formed you;
I have appointed you as covenant of the people
and light of the nations,

to open the eyes of the blind,
to free captives from prison,
and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.
The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 28:1-4. 9-10. R v. 11*

R. *The Lord will bless his people with peace.*

1. O give the Lord you sons of God,
 give the Lord glory and power;
 give the Lord the glory of his name.
 Adore the Lord in his holy court. (R.)
2. The Lord's voice resounding on the waters,
 the Lord on the immensity of waters;
 the voice of the Lord, full of power,
 the voice of the Lord, full of splendour. (R.)
3. The God of glory thunders.
 In his temple they all cry: 'Glory!'

The Lord sat enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits as king for ever. (R.)

SECOND READING *Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household: 'The truth I have now come to realise' he said 'is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.

'It is true, God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ – but Jesus Christ is Lord of all men. You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how he began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.'

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The heavens were opened and the Father's voice was heard: this is my beloved Son, hear him.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL*Matthew 3:13-17*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. John tried to dissuade him. 'It is I who need baptism from you,' he said 'and yet you come to me!' But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that righteousness demands.' At this, John gave in to him.

As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. A voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the offerings we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son, so that the oblation of your faithful may be transformed into the sacrifice of him who willed in his compassion to wash away the sins of the world. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

PREFACE; EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Behold the One of whom John said: I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished with these sacred gifts, we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord, that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son, we may be your children in name and in truth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

Today's feast of the Baptism marks a swift transition from Jesus' infancy and childhood to the event that inaugurates his adult public ministry.

The First Reading, from the first Servant Song in Isaiah (42:1-4, 6-7), is presumably chosen because, with some variation in the language, the divine declaration concerning Jesus following his baptism ('This is my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on him' [Matt 3:17]), seems to derive from its opening lines ('Here is my chosen one, in whom my soul delights' (Isa 42:1).

The Song records the divine address to a chosen person, seemingly a royal figure. Endowed with God's Spirit and in contrast to the usual, dominating way in which authority is exercised in the world, he will 'establish true justice' by quiet, gentle, yet persevering encouragement of those who are crushed and downtrodden. Beyond being 'a covenant to the people' (Israel), he is to be 'a light to the nations', leading them out of the darkness in which they are imprisoned into the light of God's day. This role foreshadows the mission of the Church, to be sent by the risen Lord to 'make disciples of the nations' (Matt 28:19) – a universalist note picked up also in the extract from Peter's address in the house of Cornelius, appearing as today's Second Reading (Acts 10:34-38).

The Gospel, Matthew's account of Jesus' Baptism at the hands of John (3:13-17), catches up these emphases. As in all the accounts of this episode in the gospels, what is most significant is not so much the baptism itself as what happens immediately afterwards when Jesus is addressed by the divine voice from heaven. Nonetheless, Matthew's account underscores the significance of Jesus' undergoing baptism at the hands of John by prefacing the action with a little dialogue between them. Recognising Jesus as the Messiah whose coming he had proclaimed, John calls for a reversal of role: Jesus should be the one doing the baptising, not he. But Jesus insists that his undergoing of baptism, in

solidarity with all the people who submit to this rite of repentance and conversion of heart, is necessary in order to 'fulfil all righteousness'.

In the Gospel of Matthew 'to fulfil all righteousness' means to live out the covenant obligations in the way that God wants. Later, in his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus will provide multiple illustrations of what this means in practice. Here, in an anticipatory way, he personally enacts that later instruction. God's will is that he fulfil his messianic role, not through the exercise of power and domination in the conventional way of rulers throughout the world, but through solidarity with the sinful, suffering, and burdened mass of humanity. Submission to baptism is the first gesture he makes in that direction. It sets the pattern and direction for the ministry which he is now about to begin, and, more remotely, foreshadows the voluntary humiliation of his passion and death.

The experience he undergoes as he emerges from the water following the baptism gives confirmation and reassurance that this chosen path is indeed what God wants. In fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah, God 'endows' him with the Spirit and addresses him as 'Beloved Son, on whom the divine favour rests'. As throughout the New Testament (see Rom 5:5; 8:15), the experience of the Spirit is primarily an assurance of God's love. Everything that is now to follow in the ministry of Jesus will derive its origin, its impulse, and its meaning from this sense of deep, familial intimacy with the Father.

But the echoes of the Servant Song and hints of other ways in which Israel is addressed by God – especially the image of the dove (see the Song of Songs) – suggest also that it is not only Jesus who is being addressed in these terms. Beyond him personally, the divine address of choice, love and favour reaches out to his people (Israel) and to all those who will subsequently become members of his people through faith and Christian baptism. Drawn into the familial intimacy with God that is his, they too will cry out 'Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

For this reason it is appropriate to read this particular Gospel at every baptism. Each and every Christian has the right to hear, 'You are my beloved son/my beloved daughter, on whom my favour rests', personally addressed to him or her by God. Would it not make a difference if that was the first thing we allowed ourselves to hear on rising every morning, if we began our day, our work, our ministry with that divine address ringing in our ears – not because we deserve it or have earned it but simply because we know that that is how God looks upon us and loves us



ONLINE GIVING

Internet donations to assist our parish are always welcome. Details for donating online via Electronic Funds Transfer BSB: 032582 Account Number: 810033 [Surname, parish envelope no]

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for the Sick: Miriam Scherger, Toni Murphy, Kathy Leseberg, Ava Blay, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravalin, Ron Weekes, Margaret Donges, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolai, Graham Courte, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Matt Mohorovic, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Catheral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Fotka Mijic, Donna Ellis, Fran Eckersley, Anita Gooley. **Anniversary:** Debra Lockhart, Stephen Ricketts, Anthony Ricaplaza. **Pray for:** Kristen Rooke, John Drum, Kerry Jones, Marcus Sims. All the suffering souls in Purgatory especially the dec'd members of F.O.S.S.

MASS TIMES:

Sunday Masses: Yamba: 5:30pm (SAT); Maclean: 8:30am (SUN); Iluka: 10:30am (SUN).

Weekday Masses: Wednesday, 9:30am: Yamba; Thursday, 10:00am: Iluka; Friday, 12:00pm, Maclean; First Saturday: 11:30am, Maclean.

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday, 11:00am, Maclean; 5:00pm, Yamba

Sunday, 8:00am, Maclean

Wednesday, 10:00am, Yamba

Thursday, 10:30am, Iluka

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:

First Wednesday: 10:00am, Yamba

First Saturday: 12:00pm, Maclean

MINISTRY ROSTER: 17/18 JANUARY 2026

Readers: Yamba: R Tory/ G Drummond; Maclean: B McGowen/ J Moloney; Iluka: T Sullivan.

Commentators: Yamba: M Dee, Maclean: S Winter, Iluka: I Durham. **E Communion:** Maclean: J de Roos. **Count team:** Smith.

READINGS: 17/18 JANUARY 2026

First: Isaiah 49:3. 5-6; **Second:** 1 Corinthians 1:1-3;

Gospel: John 1:29-34.

NEWS & EVENTS

Emergency contact: In case of emergency outside of parish office hours, contact Fr Roland 0401 508 812.

Fr Roland's annual leave: Please note Fr Roland will be on annual leave from December 29 for 4 weeks. During this time, visiting priest, Fr Proencio Bognay will be assisting with weekday and weekend Masses.

Parish bulletin online: Our bulletin is now uploaded weekly to our website <http://stmarysparish.org.au>

Farewell Lucia and Family: Our parish secretary is relocating to Sydney. Please join us to farewell Lucia and her family on Wednesday 14 January in Ted Howe Room, Yamba after 9:30am Mass. Everybody welcome to attend!

POSTPONED Renovation work to St James

Church: Further updates will be provided as more details become available.

Parish Secretary position: With Lucia and her family relocating to Sydney in mid-January, our parish is seeking a new Parish Secretary. This is a permanent part-time role, hours negotiable, and is based at the Maclean Parish Office. For more information, speak to Fr Roland or Lucia E: office@stmarysparish.org.au P: 02 6645 1188

St James Church Restoration Fund: We have decided to continue with collecting cans/bottles to provide funds for ongoing restoration works in Yamba and throughout the parish. Please remember the cans/ bottles must have the 10c symbol on them and no crushing! For queries, please call Fran 0401 303 522.

Schools' Newsletter: Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools is pleased to present the latest edition of its newsletter; copies are available at each Church. To stay up to date with the latest in Catholic education, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/492bBr3>.

Did You Know? – 1st & 2nd Collections: The First Collection supports our priests and the clergy of the Diocese. The Second Collection contributes to the upkeep and running of our parish, including expenses such as electricity, insurance, building maintenance, and church equipment. A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our parish through planned giving and weekly collections. Your generosity sustains the mission and pastoral life of our parish community.

Safeguarding: If you or a person close to you has been abused by someone working or ministering within the Diocese of Lismore, we ask you to contact us. We will listen to you respectfully: offer support and discuss options you have available to you. Contact the Safeguarding Office – Phone: (02) 66219444 or Email: safeguarding@lismore.catholic.org.au

