

**1<sup>st</sup> December, 9.30 Baptism Eucharist**

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-end and Luke 21: 25-36**

**Father Tim**

I can claim to be baptised twice. Well sort of. When I came to be ordained in Leeds Diocese they asked for my Baptism certificate. I had to tell them I didn't have one. I had been baptised of the back of a boat, at an opportune time when I was away on a water sports weekend when I was 19. Not exactly traditional. To be honest, it's not very 'spiritual'. I was wearing a wet suit. I remember some men from a homegroup had taken me on the weekend when I was 19 to be kind, as I had been struggling to feel comfortable in church as it was so different from my social circle. For all its lack of liturgical properness, it was significant. And helped me on the road to a deeper engagement with faith

The church I attended did do baptism services, but they were laissez-faire about checking if it had been done properly and all the paperwork completed. Fast forward 18 years, I was asked by Leeds Diocese for my baptism certificate before I was ordained Priest. They didn't really know what to do with me. I don't think the Dean of the Cathedral where I was going to work could particularly get his head around it.

The only thing to do was to be baptised again, so I had the form to complete the priestly checklist. It's funny where our life takes us. I would have thought it was a fantasy that after being baptised of the back of a boat I would end up in the future being called Father Tim and working in a Cathedral in the Church of England.

This morning we'll hear a little bit from Marsel, Oly, Darren and Zena. Maybe this morning some of them might be wondering how did I end up in St Mary Abbots about to be baptised into the Church of England?

In baptism we take time to look and reflect that actually no matter all the twists and turns of life, the unexpected roads, the dead ends, the pain, the joys, the boredoms, the searching that God has been in our story all along, or put another way our stories are part of Gods story and what has been doing and is doing in the world. God weaved his story into mine, as he has with Darren, Oly, Marsel and Zena

In the Thessalonians reading NIV version it uses the line '*May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you*'. This idea of overflow connects us this morning right to the beginning of story, in creation

That the world was created out of an overflow of love, there was too much love in God. When we are baptised, it is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This can be a picture of overflow of the love that existed eternally between the 3 persons in God and lead to the creation of the world. Where God has sought to continue that loving relationship with us and the world. How this relationship with Adam and Eve, then Israel failed but the covenant of God was to reconcile us to him in Christ.

Christ is the centre of the story who held nothing back to restore humanity to God's original story of love. And the church, here this morning is the result of this restoration. In baptism our stories are incorporated into the cosmic drama of God

In Baptism we are taken into a drama where God has created us and others for a purpose. We find our true character by becoming a character in this drama. Our stories are all different but this morning we recognise how we are all caught up and included in Christ's redemptive story of friendship

That we don't rely on our own meaning but receive the heritage of faith and hope of God. So we celebrate and we hear this our candidates this morning and in their baptism recognise that God is now centre of their story.