

10th August 2025, Trinity 8

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16 and Luke 12: 32-40

Mother Emma

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” How uplifting it is to hear such words of comfort proclaimed by Jesus to his disciples, and through Holy Scripture, to us this morning. In a time when many feel anxious about the horrifying scenes of violence we see unfolding across the world, or struggle with changes and challenges in our own society, we can hear the warmth and love in the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd as he reminds us that we are his *“little flock”*.

Today we celebrate the baptisms of Octavio and Shahrzad and we can each give thanks not only for their sacramental entrance into the Church of Christ, but also for our own belief that through the faith we share, it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Our first reading from Hebrews also opened with inspiring words which tie in closely with our baptismal faith: *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen.* Today Shahrzad will promise, and Octavio’s parents and godparents will pledge on his behalf, to turn to Christ as Saviour, to submit to Christ as their Lord, and to come to Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. The majority of us gathered here today have also either made these promises or had them made on our behalf as infants, as in the words of the Welcome, *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism: by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.* And this Body is not limited to the people who make their promises today, nor to those gathered here in this building, but it encompasses the Church of Christ which stretches across the world and across time – one faith in one Lord.

I have just got back from a holiday in which, for the first time in fifteen years, I took three consecutive Sundays out of my parish (thanks to my wonderful Associate Vicars!), and Jeremy and I were able to worship each Sunday in very different churches across the country and the continent. From a very high church congregation in Cornwall, with a priest who knew St Mary Abbots well, to a tiny church in the Lakes with just twelve people in the congregation, and on to the well-attended Anglican Chaplaincy in Ghent, Belgium, we joined with others who shared our baptism, our faith and our conviction in things hoped for, to give thanks and praise to the God in whom we trust. It was a good reminder of the extent of the church, its variety and yet its comforting familiarity. In each setting, thanks to the Revised Common Lectionary from which our readings are taken each week, we could know that we were hearing the same readings which were being heard and reflected upon here at St Mary Abbots each Sunday, just as the words of the Eucharist were also the same.

Our readings today will be shared, not only by Anglicans, but by Roman Catholics and Methodists across many countries of the world, as we learn what it means to be true followers of Christ, to whom God has given the kingdom.

First, we are called to be people of faith. As we remind ourselves that faith is confidence in things hoped for, we can be encouraged that God's promises to each one of us who share in baptism – the promises of love, forgiveness and eternal life with him – lie at the heart of what we believe.

The Hebrews reading listed all kinds of people from the Old Testament and the ways in which their faith was tested and yet held true. Perhaps most striking is the description of Abraham: *By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance and he set out, not knowing where he was going.* Perhaps for our baptism candidates, or for any of us, it can sometimes feel as we take new steps along our journey of faith, that we have no idea where this will lead us, but we place our hope and trust in God as we travel towards a better place, our hands held in his.

Journeys of faith can begin in many different places, whether, like Octavio at the very start of his life through the inherited faith of his family, or with a commitment such as that being made by Shahrzad, which she will describe to us in her own words shortly. Yet our Gospel reading tells us how we should undertake this journey, not by building up our treasures here on earth, but by placing our trust in the God who saves us and who will give us unimaginable treasures in heaven. We are to be ready and watchful at all times along our journey, listening constantly for God's call and his teaching, prepared to serve him and others, and to recognise him when he is clearly manifested in our own lives.

As we witness the baptisms of Shahrzad and Octavio this morning, may each one of us commit once again to the faith which gives us comfort and hope, and to the God who calls us into his Kingdom.