

## Homily of The Baptism of Our Lord 9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022

I wonder if you have ever heard the word 'squinty'? In Scotland growing up it was a word I often used to explain a lopsided picture on the wall or a far from straight line or a crooked path. It's almost an onomatopoeia where the sound suggests the meaning as in 'the buzzing of innumerable bees'. I remember seeing a drunk man as a boy and my pal said, 'Oh he is walking all squinty!' and indeed he was all over the place and very unlikely to make it home. We gave him a helping hand and luckily he lived only a few streets away and it was on our way home. You might say we helped keep him on 'the straight and narrow'.

In today's first reading the Prophet Isaiah in the Songs of Consolation foretells the entry on the scene of Salvation History of John the Baptist. The Baptist's mission would be to 'Prepare the way of The Lord and make his paths (not squinty) straight. The Messiah would save the people from their crooked ways, like a shepherd he will gather the stray ewes to His breast and through his Passion and Death atone for the sins of humankind. 'Every mountain will be laid low and every valley will be filled...' in order that the path of The Messiah be made straight for His salvific mission.

In the second reading of St Paul to Titus the Apostle to the Gentiles tells us how to avoid the squinty paths of life which can lead us away from the straight way of The Lord: lead humble lives, show self-control, practice Gospel virtues, always do good and love one another as God loves us.

St Luke's version of Jesus' Baptism sees Jesus at prayer when the voice of The Father proclaims: 'This is my Son, The Beloved, in whom I am well pleased...' and when The Holy Spirit appears like a dove. The importance of prayer therefore in keeping the Lord's path straight, and not squinty, must not be underestimated. It is through prayer that we discover what truly God wishes for us on our life pilgrimage. Listening, in prayer, to discern God's Holy will for us should be emphasised.

So just as at Creation so at the Baptism of Jesus and so today in The Liturgy of The Baptism of Our Lord, God shows himself/herself as three persons in one God Father, Word and Holy Spirit. This theophany, or manifestation of the Godhead, encourages us to follow Jesus, the perfect revelation of The Father, the light who illumines the darkness and who, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit who guides us along the straight path. We must therefore according to today's readings, avoid ambitious pride, be self-restrained, live good and faithful lives according to The Gospel, always do good and pray constantly. Above all we must know that Father, Son and Spirit are indeed the companions we need to pick us up when we stagger and fall on life's often squinty path.