



First Sunday after the Epiphany

9 January 2021

The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Athens, Ohio--seeking to know and serve Christ in loving service to the campus, the community, and the world.

The Lessons

Lessons for the First Sunday after the Epiphany: The Baptism of our Lord: Isaiah 43: 1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8: 14-17; Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22. <https://www.lectionarypage.net>

The Collect

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

The Gospel

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."



Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The Sermon



The Dove

Long ago, in the earliest days of what would become known as the Church, followers of Jesus had a unique way of recognizing each other. These days were so long ago the cross had not yet become the universal symbol for a Christian, so those very early followers had other symbols they used to identify themselves. This was a time before the Church was associated with the rulers of nations; long before the Roman Emperor Constantine decided to convert. It was a time when it was against the law of the land to believe in any God besides the gods of Rome, so Christians didn't walk around publicly advertising their belief in one God and in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They didn't tattoo symbols on their bodies or wear distinctive jewelry or T-shirts, or uniforms like many modern followers of Jesus. Instead, when they encountered someone they suspected might be another Christian, they would use their walking stick to draw a symbol in the dirt of the road or ground.

Perhaps some of you remember from a Church History or Confirmation class that the symbol they drew in the dust to show their Christian faith was a fish. This originated from Jesus' call to the disciples when he said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." But what some of you may not remember is that the fish was not the only symbol the earliest Christians used to identify themselves. There was another. The symbol of a dove.

Throughout antiquity, the dove has been a consistent symbol of the loving character of divine life. In Roman culture birds in flight were considered omens of status. The dove is deeply woven throughout the salvation stories in both the Old and New Testaments. Starting with the story of the Flood. After those long forty days and nights of continued rain and being isolated in the ark with his family and the animals they had saved, Noah sent out a dove to check and see if the new world was ready for them. The first time Noah sent out the dove it returned, and Noah knew that meant the world was still underwater. The second time Noah sent the dove out it returned with an olive branch, and he knew that meant the waters were receding and new life was growing and

starting to flourish. The third time Noah sent out the dove it did not return, and Noah knew the new earth was ready for them. The dove played an important role in the story and came to symbolize peace. Not necessarily peace that is the absence of conflict, but peace that God's judgment was over, and life had begun again on earth.

Doves also featured in the Levitical law as an offering for atonement or purification. We see this when Joseph and Mary brought a pair of doves to the temple for Mary's ritual purification after childbirth and Jesus' ritual circumcision. The dove was the least expensive offering for such occasions, thus symbolizing solidarity with the poor and showing the law made room for everyone to participate, including those who did not have the funds to purchase expensive offerings like lambs.

Prophets like Isaiah wrote the cry of the dove sounds mournful, sad, and represented God's sadness when people suffered. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus himself advised his followers to be "as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves" when interacting with people. It was his way of saying be aware of the deceit that many practice, but it is definitely not okay for any of his followers to be deceitful.

The dove is intimately connected to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which we see in today's Gospel. Every year the Church commemorates the Baptism of Jesus on the first Sunday in the Season of Epiphany. That means we hear of Jesus' baptism so often we can easily take it for granted and miss the details each Gospel writer intentionally included to help us see the wonder and joy in the occasion and what it means for us all.

Each Gospel is slightly different, and that is okay. That doesn't mean the writers were at war with each other or competing to be right. Instead, they were written at different times and reflect the theology of the different small communities of early Christians. All four Gospels include Jesus' baptism, which leads Biblical scholars and historians to agree this event did happen. It is not an allegory or metaphor. Jesus really did wade into the water in the Jordan River and John the Baptist really did immerse Jesus in that water. And when Jesus emerged something extraordinary happened. Heaven and earth met again, like when Jesus was born. Only this time there was no star nor angels singing to shepherds. This time there was a voice from heaven and that familiar of symbols, the dove. All the Gospels have the voice and mention the dove. But only in Luke's Gospel is the dove mentioned as an actual embodiment of the Holy Spirit. The others say the Spirit descended like a dove, but in Luke's Gospel we heard the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove. It's a slight difference, but an important one.

The author of Luke highlighted Incarnation, embodiment, as often as they could. For Luke, the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus was not symbolic, it was a physical embodiment of the Holy Spirit that could be seen and touched and heard. It was palpable, it was tangible. It was really real.

For the author of Luke, Jesus' baptism is, like all the other Gospel writers, the beginning of his ministry here on earth. But Jesus' ministry isn't like that of a celebrity preacher or entertainer. Jesus' ministry was part of the Incarnation, the manifestation of God's love here on earth. It was God with us in Person and Spirit. It was important to Luke that all of us who read this Gospel understand that, because it is intended to show us what God is like.

In today's Gospel we also heard John the Baptist distinguish his baptism of repentance as distinctly different from that of Jesus, who, John promised, would baptize not with water, but with fire and the Holy Spirit. John's words are that of judgment. And

Jesus will judge. But his judgment is not like that of the rulers of Rome. The judgement of Jesus is forgiveness, healing, restoration of the broken, new life on the other side of death.

All the things symbolized by the dove, the embodiment of the Holy Spirit that came to Jesus as he was praying. The Incarnation of the Word Made Flesh dwelling among us was not violent, it was like that of a dove: gentle, associating himself with the poor not the wealthy nor the prominent in society, healing, restorative, whose pure sacrifice for sin opened the way for all people of all walks of life to return to God who is waiting for us. The embodiment of the dove at Jesus' baptism is also foreshadowing the event of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection and ascension when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' followers embodied in wind and tongues of fire.

When followers of Jesus presented the symbol of the dove to each other they were not identifying themselves as members of a secret club. They were remembering their own baptism into what would become the Church and their vows to commit to a life much like that of Jesus: to embody the love of God here on earth by caring for each other, by practicing gentleness and compassion, forgiving each other, and loving as God loves us through Jesus. This is not easy; it wasn't then, and it isn't now. But it is good, it is the embodiment of God's love here on earth, the continuation of God's Kingdom Jesus brought near through his life, death and resurrection.

In just a minute, we will renew our baptismal vows to both remember our baptism into Christ's life, death, and resurrection, the ritual that binds us permanently with Jesus as God's beloved child, and to renew our commitment to live into our vow to embody Jesus to the world in what we do and what we say. Every time we do this, I ask you to pay attention to a word or phrase that stands out to you as that can be the Holy Spirit calling you to focus on a part of your life. Today I invite us all to also renew our baptismal vows in the spirit of the latest statement from our Presiding Bishop the Most Rev. Michael Curry who spoke on Thursday, the Feast of Epiphany, about the need for the Episcopal Church to transform and look more like Jesus. To focus more on Jesus, his teachings, and Way of Love. To practice selflessness and the self-giving way of the cross. To come together in prayer. To reclaim our Christian identity as Spirit-driven, counter cultural, and break away from the dominant systems in society, especially ones that operate on inequality, privilege, and abuse of power. To recommit to be a bold witness to the values of Jesus embodied in that dove: to point to the reality of God's Kingdom seeking and striving to live the Gospel by making our community a beloved community that celebrates and respects the dignity of all persons.

I know it sounds like a lot, but this is not a goal for a month or a year, it is a way of life for all our lives and that of this parish. One that we do not embark on alone, but with each other and the Holy Spirit, that continues to be in our midst through all the changes and chanced of life.

** Source of image -- pigeonpedia.com



[Watch a video of Mother Deborah's Sermon HERE.](#)

The Rev. Deborah Woolsey, a Sermon for the First Sunday after the Epiphany, January 9, 2022

Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Follow this link for audio of today's [Renewal of Baptismal Vows](#) by the congregation.

Please include in your prayers

In our world, we pray for Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, and for Michael, our Presiding Bishop; we pray for peace with justice throughout the Middle East. We pray for the victims of the coronavirus. We pray for all people affected by natural and environmental disasters. We pray also for the people who are suffering from war, especially all asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. We pray for Joe our President, Kamala our Vice-President, Mike, our Governor, the Supreme Court and the members of Congress.

In our diocese, In our diocese, we pray for our Provisional Bishop Wayne, the search process for a new bishop, and for Kenneth, Nedi, and Wendell our assisting bishops.

In our parish, we pray for Good Shepherd's continued growth, for our Rector Rev. Deborah Woolsey, for our Associate Priests, Rev. Leslie Flemming, Rev. Katharin Foster and Rev. David McCoy, for our ministry to students, the university, and the community. We pray for our friends at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Merida, Mexico.

Those Whom our Prayers are Requested: Belle, Bill S., Bud and Carol, Chris L., Elena, Gloria R., Gordon, Jan S, Lacey, Land and baby Rispone, Laura, Miriam, Sharon, Bill, Annie and Kathleen, Tommy, Linda Ahrens, Jeannet Barratt, Danny Cain, Zelma Coleman, Lee Kembell-Cook, Glinnis Davies, Dick Dean, Phyllis Dean, Richard DeNune, Caryl Docherty, Chris Eaton, Ben Foster, Norm Fox, Jan Gault, Jennifer Hall, Barbara Harnish, Susanne Hill, Debbie Hunsberger, Nancy and Bob Jackson, Peter Kachenko and family, Monya Monroe, Julie Nehls, Linda Nippert, Lauren O'Brien, Doug and Michelle Parsons, Jane Patton, Dale Paul, Dan and Nancy Reedy, Ann Shelly, Michael Vaughn, Consuelo Walker and family, Emily Woolsey, Canon Bob Wright, Zita Zolpys, and we pray for all who care for them. **

Birthdays: Ella Cottrill (1/12), Emilie Walker (1/13), Geoff Buckley (1/14), Gregory Proctor (1/14)

** Full names for this section are normally not published online but since there is not a printed Sunday Bulletin or in-house 10:30 service, for the time being we will publish full names unless requested otherwise. If you have a name to be added to the prayer list, Lynn Graham maintains this information. Lynn may be reached at **740-593-5098** or grahammowery@aol.com.

Music for January 9, Epiphany 1 – year C 2021

Prelude – [When Christ came to the Jordan river](#) (Dietrich Buxtehude)

Gloria – [S280](#)

Offertory Hymn – [Hymnal 121 "Christ when for us you were baptized"](#)

Communion Music -- [Chorale-prelude on a chant for Epiphany](#) (Gerald Near)

Sanctus -- [S130](#)

Postlude -- [When Christ came to the Jordan river](#) (Johann Pachelbel)

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At-Home Worship

Christ Church Cathedral Cincinnati live streams via Vimeo its services Sundays at 10 a.m. These are saved and can be watched later without having to log in.

<https://vimeo.com/event/4306>

Though the doors of the National Cathedral in Washington are, like ours, temporarily closed, there's much to explore at the the Cathedral's online portal.

<https://cathedral.org/worship/>

Coming up on the Calendar

Coming Up:

Wednesday, January 12, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting at Julie Nehls

Sunday, January 16, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Thursday, January 20, 7:00 p.m. - - Vestry Meeting

Sunday, January 23, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Wednesday, January 26, 9:30 a.m. - - Prayer Shawl Meeting at Julie Nehls

Sunday, January 30, 10:30 a.m. - - Holy Eucharist

Sunday, January 30, After Service - - All Parish Annual Meeting

CrossRoads Café now open Sundays after church service and Monday - Friday
9:30 - 11:30 am.

Notes



CrossRoads Café Now Open

CrossRoads Café returns from break and is now open Sundays after church service and Monday - Friday 9:30 - 11:30 am.

Now that winter weather is with us, CrossRoads will be in Nehl's Hall at the end of the ramp near the chapel entrance. Due to the rise in Covid-19 cases in the county, there is no seating and coffee and tea are **To-Go** only. Masks/Facial coverings are mandatory.

For the first week of classes, we are welcoming our neighbors with a **double special**: all coffee and tea is just \$1 and you get a coupon for a free coffee or tea with every purchase.

**Yesterday was a good day for using
the church as a set for movie making.**



Contacts, Information

Quick Links

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[Sermons](#)

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[Contact us](#)

[Campus Interest](#)

[E-News Guidelines
and Back Issues](#)

[Diocese S Ohio](#)

[\[E\]Connections](#)

Pandemic Notes:

[Link to the DSO guidelines for returning to in-person worship](#)

As of August 5 the Diocese COVID Guidelines request all persons wear masks inside the church building regardless of vaccination status.

Office Hours: 10:00 a.m.– 2:00 p.m.,
Monday through Thursday.
Masks are required.

The **Church Building** is not open for public meetings and gatherings but during office/CrossRoads hours the **thrift shop** and **chapel** are

**CrossRoads Café is only open Sundays
after the service until the news school year.**

Contact Information

For pastoral needs, please contact The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895 (cell) or 740-593-6877 (church), or by e-mail at revdebwoolsey@gmail.com.

To find out more about Good Shepherd and other matters, please contact Alex Buckley, Senior Warden, at 740-593-5513 or by e-mail at macbuck@yahoo.com.

For maintenance matters, please leave a note at the office or contact Ted Foster, Junior Warden, at 740-593-8615 or by e-mail at foster.theodore@gmail.com. **For emergencies**, please call The Rev. Deborah Woolsey at 937-689-8895.

NON-emergency messages can be left on the church's answering machine (740-593-6877). The parish office administrator is Barbara Martin (740-593-6877) or barbara@chogs.org.

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[DONATE to Good Shepherd](#)

This takes you to the Parish Home page where you can donate on-line via PayPal. If you have a preference, please indicate on the the "Add special instructions to the seller" section the purpose of the donation -- e.g. organ fund, plate collection, etc.

Check out the Church's [YouTube Channel](#).

LIKE us on Facebook [Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd 45701](#)

Office Hours:

10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Monday - Thursday

Masks are required.
