

### Living the Word: Psalm 29

To get the feel of this psalm with its poetical beauty and vigorous power, remind yourselves of your reactions to a thunderstorm with its crashes and flashes of lightning. We experience shock, fear and awe. The writer or compiler of this psalm wants us to have the same sensations as we contemplate God. The tremendous force of the terse and moulded sentences rumble along like the very voice of thunder whose purpose is to fill the mind and heart of humankind with holy fear and trembling at the overwhelming majesty of the Living God. But the artistic power of the psalm is not what matters most, but the God who appears in the tumult of the elements and shows forth his breath-taking glory. Our response is to enter and feel this psalm with all its energy and passion, pray it and worship the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All in his temple cry, 'Glory!' But given this is the Baptism of Christ when we read and hear the words of the Gospel about the voice of God which acknowledges Jesus – 'This is my Son, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased' – we are asked to compare the voice of God who said these words to Psalm 29. If we want to know what the voice of God sounds like at the Baptism of Jesus it is a voice which thunders, and breaks cedar trees, it is powerful and majestic, it shakes the very deserts, it twists solid oaks and strips forest bare. This is an awesome voice, this voice of the Living God. But just as the psalm manifests the glory of God through the forces of nature, the Gospel wants us to grasp that this same God will manifest his glory through his only begotten Son. We had better listen and we had better respond! The psalm ends asking God to bestow upon his people his strength, blessing and salvation, and of course this is what God the Father does in the Person of his Son Jesus Christ. He reveals the full and complete content of the Father's blessing, revealed at Christ's baptism, manifested in his earthly ministry, and completed through his crucifixion and resurrection – the Paschal Mystery.

### Collect of the Day:

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ did take our nature upon him, and was baptised for our sakes in the river Jordan: mercifully grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may also be partakers of thy Holy Spirit; through the same Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## The Baptism of the Lord

2024



In this holy season we give thanks that God came among us in perfect humility and simplicity of life. He did not come in triumph and splendour (which would have been fitting for God) but revealed himself unfittingly, as a vulnerable human being. The Wisdom and Truth of God (the Divine Logos) comes towards us; we don't need to search any longer. John the Baptist acknowledged him long before and now hails him as 'the Lamb of God', the Servant of God coming towards him on the banks of the River Jordan. He feels unworthy to even untie the strap of Christ's sandals. But the Lord wants this to happen. 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' The Lord blesses his people with peace and opens the eyes of the blind, he frees captives and all those who feel lost. In the Baptism of Jesus a pattern of life is revealed to us. God comes towards us. So to remain in his presence for ever we only need to acknowledge him for who he really is: the Divine Son of God.

### From the Fathers:

Today let us do honour to Christ's baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed. Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom his every word and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, lights shining in the world.

*From a sermon by Saint Gregory Nazianzen (329-90)*