The Baptism of the Lord 2020

One of the things I love about belonging to the church is that we are throughout the year presented with new beginnings. Advent is one, Lent is another and this feast ‘The Baptism of the Lord’ is another. It marks the start of Jesus’ public ministry - the beginning of the words and actions that will transform human life for ever - that will bring hope, challenge, death - to all those things that must die, and life for those things that are worthy to live for ever. Our Lord’s baptism is such an optimistic beginning - the reading from Isaiah sets the tone - ‘Faithfully he brings true justice’. St Benedict picked up two vital phrases from this passage of Isaiah when he wrote his rule - when he was instructing his abbots how to use their authority in the community:- ‘do not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame’. Not everyone is equally strong; not all parts of us are equally strong. What is weak needs encouraging, what is wounded needs healing. This is the sort of saviour who has come among us.

Jesus can be discovered all over again each day - we may think we are familiar with him - but really we never are. There is always something new there to be discovered, something life-giving to once more give us hope. We should never tire of praying to him; of meditating upon him; and especially to reading about him in the Gospels - a perpetually rich resource for us.

We stand at the beginning of a new year - plenty of people are happy to fill us with dismay. Jesus never is. He challenges us to look to the future with optimism - and yes that can be a challenge. It takes less energy to be pessimistic, to decide that the future is full of gloom. Once again we wake to a new day, a new stage of our journey. Let us set out with our dear Lord and Saviour once more, with hope and confidence.