

St Peters Ealing
Sunday 4th December 2016
Advent 2
Baptism of Alice and Henry Baker

We are a new creation

Last week Fr Harold in his sermon drew our attention to the bitter sweet nature of Advent. Today we reflect on the Advent as new creation, new beginnings. As if to emphasise this we have the joy of baptising Alice and Henry today as they with their parents, family and friends begin their new journey with Christ Jesus.

The new creation, the new beginning of Advent is one where accepted norms are turned on their heads, they are challenged and we are encouraged to see the world in a new light.

The prophecy of Isaiah we heard read this morning expresses this new order this new creation under the rule of God. In this new beginning wolves lie down with lambs, bears eat grass and a small child will have the authority to guide and lead them. This comes to pass as the salvation of creation comes real under Gods reign. This reign is one not of tomorrow, not of some other time but of today.

This new reality, this grace of God is what we are all baptised into. This is the promise given to Alice and Henry. This promise is one where God is at the centre of everything; where, as Christians we are encouraged to live a new life in a new way. Through baptism we are a new creation, one that proclaims the living God, revealed in his son, our saviour Jesus Christ.

What then is this new creation of which we are apart, what is this new God centred life? In today's epistle from Paul to the Christians in Rome, this new God centred life is one in which we welcome one another, where we live in harmony with one another and live by all that such a way of living entails. When we live as one, when we live in this new, God centred world God fills us with all hope and joy and peace in believing.

The question that leads on from this understanding is how do we live such a life? How do we live a God centred life in this new creation of which Isaiah and Paul both write? Not to worry, I shan't be drawing on the example of John the Baptist as a way of living. Some are called to lives of austerity and simplicity but not all. But calling upon the power of the Holy Spirit is a good start. By seeking

the way of truth, through reading your bible, through having a regular prayer life, through praying for each other and being prayed for, by receiving regularly the sacraments of the bread and wine at the holy Eucharist we will build up our relationship with God and continue to make God the centre of our lives.

This too is on offer for Alice and Henry today through their baptism. Bringing them to baptism gives them this promise. In this new life we all have a part to play in helping them to learn to pray, to read their bibles, to pray for others and to become members of the body of Christ, the church through which they will learn about the God that loves them and the sacraments through which they will receive God's grace. As we then bring them to baptism let us pray that God will fill their lives, and let us pray for each other that we will renew our relationship with God who is the centre of our being too.