

Sermon preached by the Rev'd. Cynthia Jackson, St. Mary's Wimbledon, 19th February 2017, 2nd Before Lent, 9.30 service, Sung Eucharist and Baptism.

The account of creation in the book of Genesis is an encouraging reading as we hear how God created the heavens and earth. After each aspect of creation we hear the words, "...*that God saw that it was good.*" We are told that God created humankind in his image, '*...in the image of God he created them male and female and God blessed them...*' We also hear that , ... '*on the sixth day of creation God saw everything that he had made and indeed it was good...*'

As God rejoiced over his creation so we rejoice with the parents of Kit Jensen and Annabelle McLintock as they bring them to be Baptised today at the start of their Christian journey. You do not have to pay a membership fee to become a Christian; you become a Christian by virtue of your Baptism.

God gave responsibility to men and women to care for the world he created. As we look around the world today we can see many places where men and women have cared for God's creation. They have been good stewards of the resources that have been given to them. But also we can see parts of the world where men and women have not cared for God's creation; the land has been despoiled and people suffer as a result.

In the same way as God commended his creation into the care of men and women, so today the parents and godparents of Kit and Anabelle, and we, as members of the Christian Church, have responsibility for the care and nurture of Kit and Annabelle following their Baptism.

The first step of Kit and Annabelle's Christian journey has been taken by their parents as they present them for Baptism. Their parents will have the prime responsibility for the nurture of Kit and Annabelle in their Christian faith as they grow up. Opportunities exist at St Mary's for encouraging children in their faith. When children are little there is the Toddler Praise Service on a Wednesday morning and Sunday School during term time. At special times of the year, for example on Good Friday there are activities and worship for children.

Godparents too have responsibilities for their Godchildren beyond the Baptism service. They have a duty to pray for them and encourage them to be prepared for Admission to Holy Communion, and when they are ready, to seek Confirmation. As a Godparent myself I really enjoy buying books of prayers or Bible stories, or DVDs, for my godchildren.

A Baptism service is a good opportunity for each one of us too to recall our own Baptism. Many of us will have been Baptised as babies and will only hear about the occasion from our parents or relatives. It will have been later on that we will have taken the responsibility for these Baptismal promises for ourselves as we presented ourselves for Confirmation before the Bishop. If however, as an adult, you have not taken that step yet do think seriously about Confirmation. The clergy are always available to answer any questions.

Alternatively some of you will have taken the decision to be Baptised at a time when you could make the Baptismal promises for yourself. This occasion will be a memorable one for you.

Whenever we were Baptised we are all called to renew our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ to day. Whether we are members of this church, or other churches, we all have a responsibility to pray for Kit and Annabelle as they begin their journey as members of the Christian church.

Just as we are all responsible for caring for God's creation so we have responsibilities as Christians to nurture all new Christians in their faith. What we can all do, whatever our age, is to pray for Kit, Annabelle and their families in the coming months.

Today is the Second Sunday before Lent so it is a good time to think about what we could do during Lent to deepen our Faith. As you will see from our notice sheet the Parish will be studying Rowan Williams book '*Being Disciples*' and copies of the book are available to purchase in the Baptistry after the service. Even if you cannot get to the lectures then do please read the book. Another opportunity for Lent is to come on the 4th March to St. Matthew's for a Quiet Day on the theme '*From Wilderness to New Life*'. There will be some input, but mainly time for silence and opportunities to explore different ways of praying. We shall end the day with an informal Eucharist. There are flyers at the Cross Aisles.

In today's world there are many temptations that can take us away or distract us from practicing our faith so we need all the help we can get. That is why belonging to a Christian fellowship is so important, when we are feeling strong we can pray for others who are feeling weak and when we are ill or in need of support we know that we have fellow Christians praying for us. And of course we are renewed each week by this service of Holy Communion as we are strengthened by the love of God; the redeeming power of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.