

Baptism of the Lord

The first major event in the life of faith is baptism.

Here in Darwen there are many baptisms

This is often a major family celebration

Dates are chosen

People invited to the event

However the actual sacramental rite

Is potentially but a small part of baptism

Baptism does not end after the party. When all have gone home.

First there is the baptism rite

Then there is the life of baptism

The sacrament is then lived

The consequent potential to whatever level is then realised

In 1959 I was taken to St Bernadette's Church in Whitefield with my Parents

With my God parents, Uncle Victor and Auntie Elsie.

You were not there

But here and now you witness my baptism

to whatever extent I have been capable of realising it.

My baptism lived as an alter server in a familiar community

Moving on to a catholic education based upon Christ given dignity

Then becoming a priest in a further sacrament of ordination

With many years following being able to celebrate the faith within the Roman Catholic community

Look at me dressed in the ancient robes and living my baptism

Look at you dressed in your Sunday best and living your baptism.

Many of you celebrated the sacrament of marriage

The wedding is often a major family celebration

Dates are chosen

People invited to the event

However the actual sacramental rite

Is potentially but a small part of the marriage

Marriage does not end after the party. When all have gone home.

First there is the wedding rite

Then there is the life of marriage

The sacrament is then lived

The image of the romantic young couple

Soon evolves into the more beautiful and real

Working partnership

The very shape and form of each body changes

The character of the relationship is moulded together by circumstance, children , challenge

Within this sacrament of marriage over the years the couple become different

Within this relationship potentially the dignity of the love we believe in

Is given a place to take on practical expression and growth

I look at you and see the living sacrament of your wedding

Not on that nervous day years ago but here and now.

Indeed even for those who have been separated by death

A lot of who and what you are

was formed by that marriage.

And is still influencing what you are now

Even a more regular encounter with the divine such as the sacrament of reconciliation. The sacrament of confession is far from being confined to the confessional box

But is lived

In each day

In each moment

Sadly often the first reaction to naming of this ritual

Is the notion of sin

But sin is limited

It consequences destructive

This sacrament however is about forgiveness

Those who have ever celebrated this act of humility

Will have begun again

Indeed deep within the subconscious of the Roman Catholic is not only the fear of sin

But the aspiration of knowing

That we can begin again

We can begin again

and deal with the consequences

On this the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus

Recognise that you gather on Sunday for something you live each day.

That baptism like birth is the opening of life

That marriage is a living construction

That forgiveness

Is a part of the development and liberation of that life.