

**Lectionary readings: Genesis 1: 1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19: 1-7; Mark 1: 4-11**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Genesis 1:** Nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness, a watery abyss - attempts to describe the nothingness before the earth was created. Over all this the Spirit of God was hovering. When God spoke, light resulted, day and night, evening and morning. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the nothingness and breathed life into it, so He hovers over the chaos of our lives and wants to breathe light and life into us, bringing order out of our chaos, light out of our darkness, fullness out of our emptiness. Let's not be afraid of the Spirit of God, but open ourselves for Him to do all He wants to do in our lives that we might reflect more and more His life.
- **Psalm 29:** The Psalmist urges us to '*worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness.*' (v2) If God reveals His power in nature, then He can reveal His power in our lives and give us His strength. Let's call on God, at the beginning of this year, to help us, whatever we have to face, and to give us strength and courage to cope with life's problems. One verse in 'Psalms for Praying' reads: '*Love invites all to the dance of freedom, to sing the Beloved's song of truth.*' Let's respond to God's invitation to join Him in the dance of freedom, for God wants to set us free from all that would weigh us down and prevent us from receiving all the gifts He wants to give us.
- **Acts 19:** The believers at Ephesus had never heard of the Holy Spirit and so, when they turned to God and

were baptised, they didn't know about God coming to dwell in their hearts and empower them. We believe that God lives in us through His Spirit and we can experience a new power within us, enabling us to do what we, by ourselves, could never do. The Holy Spirit sets us free to be fully ourselves as God intends us to be, through being filled with His life. This is the new creation that Paul speaks of in Romans. Do we realise that we have within us '*mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit*'? (Ephesians 3: 16) Repentance is not enough; we need to open ourselves to God's presence within us and let His power remake us from within. How might this transform each one of us and Christ's church throughout the world?

- **Mark 1:** At Jesus' baptism these words were spoken by God to Jesus: '*You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you.*' (v11) This is what God says to each one of us: 'You are Mine. You belong to Me. I love you. I delight in you.' Rather than being afraid of God, or blaming God for whatever misfortune occurs, we need to let the Holy Spirit open our inner ear to hear God's words of acceptance, love, approval. This is the kind of love that sets us free to be fully ourselves, to be the new creation. How many people there are who have little or no sense of self-worth, no sense of a purpose in life. God's first word brought light and life. God's word of love and acceptance, when heard and believed, lights up our lives and fills us with new life, new power, a new freedom, an inner transformation. Why not write out these words on a piece of paper and carry them through the week with you:

***'You are My beloved child, and I am fully pleased with you.'***