

Sermon Summary
The Baptism of Jesus
8th January 2012

- The accounts of Creation (Genesis 1:1-5) and of Jesus' Baptism (Mark 1: 4-11) share three themes: creative work by God, the spirit, separation.
- Creative work: God makes a new order within creation
- The Spirit: fundamental to such work: the Heb *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* mean all of- wind, breath and spirit.
- Separation: the new order is made by separation- the light is separated from dark, and the baptised from the world.
- The Orthodox call baptism the "ordination of the laity".*
- Their ministry is to be separated from the world as visible witnesses of the presence and power of God.
- Our baptism follows the shape of Jesus', and our witness His (the baptism with which he is baptised- Mark 10:38)
- With this understanding of Baptism as the ordination of the laity comes a different way of looking at all orders.
- We tend to look on them as hierarchical- a chain of command. The higher the order the greater the power or authority.
- The orthodox see them rather as complementary and mutually dependent. They are based on relationships and the values which benefit relationships: trust, respect, love. In Orthodox tradition, popular acclaim is a significant part of the recognition of the office of bishop, ritually indicating dependence on them. We, too, have this in our ordination rites: when the people are asked for their assent to an order being conferred.
- We all know the difference in quality between structures based on power and authority, and those based on relationships.
- Perhaps one of our problems as a church is that we use a power model, in which we see ourselves as superior first to the those outside the church, and then have our own pecking order.
- I am not taking a pop at any one order. Any order (laity, deacons, priests, or bishops) is capable of lording it over others.
- Perhaps if we made more of an effort (the current buzz word is *intentional*) to work as a group founded on relationships, we would find that we functioned better and more effectively, conformed more closely to Jesus' model of servant-leadership.

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* These ideas are drawn from John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004,209-246.