

**Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC**  
**9<sup>th</sup> October 2014**  
**“Baptism”**

**Reading: Mark 1:9-11**

Have you ever thought that you were getting something good, and then you read the small print and realise that you aren't getting anything?

You might see a special offer for something free, but in the small print the catch will be that you have to spend more money than you would have if you had bought it!

You might think that you have won a prize, and then in the small print you find that you have only won a chance at a prize.

It is very easy to get fooled by the small print.

*(A picture of a \$500 note is shown on the screen)*

I wonder what you see in this picture?

Do you see five hundred dollars?

Because that is not what this is.

Not if you look at the small print.

The small print says these words: that the Bank “promises to pay the bearer on demand at its office here”.

So this isn't five hundred dollars. It is a letter, signed by the Chairman of the bank which says if you take it into the bank - they will give you five hundred dollars.

A long time ago, if you did that, they would give you five hundred dollars of gold. But today if you went in and asked for it, they would probably think you were very odd.

No, this is not five hundred dollars, it is a letter which represents that money, which represents wealth.

This week in our Assembly our theme is “Baptism”. What is baptism? Well before I talk about Baptism I need to explain something else.

A Sacrament. Baptism is a sacrament. A sacrament is a way in which God meets us, a way in which God comes to us and promises us that he will be there.

Part of a proper definition of a sacrament is that it is an “outward and a visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

In other words, it is something we can see, which gives us God’s grace, God’s love and strength, which we can’t see.

A little like that \$500 note. We see a piece of paper which represents wealth. A sacrament is something which we can see, but underneath is something else, God’s grace.

There are seven sacraments, and I will be looking at a few of them at some of our assemblies this year. But Baptism is the first of them, it is the gateway to all of the others.

The outward sign, the thing we can see, is water being poured on a person and words being said, that they are baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. That’s what we see. But underneath, what we don’t see, is the person becoming a Christian, beginning their Christian life.

And it happens in the waters of Baptism, often in a font like one of these. In this picture there is the font at St John’s Cathedral in the top left, and the other, larger fonts which people can actually get into and be fully covered in water.

And it can happen at any age. A person can be baptised as a baby, as a child, as a teen, as a young adult or as an old person.

I was baptised at the age of six weeks, and this is a picture of me on that day with my mother and father.

The oldest person that I have baptised as a priest was over 80.

The most memorable baptism I have done was one in the River Jordan in Israel, where Jesus was baptised. We heard in our reading today about that. Jesus didn’t need to be baptised, because he is God, but he chose to be to show his humility and his manhood.

This short selection of film clips shows baptism in different styles and for people of different ages.

If you remember what I said at the start, Baptism is a Sacrament which is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. It is something we can see where there is something else happening which we cannot see.

What we can see is the pouring of water on the person, and we hear the words of Baptism.

What we can’t see, but which is happening, is the washing away of sin, the grace of God being given, the person becoming a part of the Church, a member of the Church which is the Body of Christ on earth, and it is the entry into living a sacramental life of the Church, taking part in the other six sacraments.

Some of you will have been baptised. Some of you won't have been.

But during your time here at St Paul's, you have an opportunity to think about it and to consider if you want to be baptised. If you think you would like to be baptised, come and speak to me about it. There would be a short course of preparation, but if you want to take that step in your life, to become a member of the body of Christ, to become a Christian and accept Jesus Christ in this way, the opportunity is there. That invitation is to both students and staff. Even if you are not sure and just want to know more about it, come and speak to me.