

## Reflection for the Baptism of the Lord Year B

The pictures from Washington DC earlier in the week have left many people struggling to find the appropriate words for the carnage that took place on Capitol Hill. Many would have thought such an act impossible to conceive. It is difficult to imagine the legacy that it will leave in the history books. Deaths and injuries appear to be been lost or forgotten about as the world tried to make sense of what took place. It will be a moment in history that we will never forget for years to come. The broken face of humanity was revealed to the world as events unfolded through online footage and as news channels beamed pictures of the carnage throughout the world. Many watched in horror and disbelief.

Closer to home, lockdown saw places of worship being closed as the virus spreads in an alarming way throughout the country. Although we celebrated Christmas as best as we could within our respective communities, once again, we need to press the pause button and our online ministry must be our way of staying connected with as many people as possible. Many people find these challenging times difficult to accept. We are aware that loneliness and isolation have increased throughout society as peoples' interaction is much less as so many of them are frightened to leave the security of their own home. The winter weather, picturesque from a distance, does not help peoples' confidence for fear that if they decide to leave their home, they are frightened they may fall and hurt themselves. It is difficult to find God in these different expressions of a broken and wounded humanity during a pandemic which takes no account of anyone's status, creed or colour. For those who live in the northern hemisphere, it is winter and the dark and cold nights make the challenges of the pandemic even harder to face. The next few weeks are going to be difficult for us. We are having to adapt to a lifestyle that for many is a struggle both emotionally and psychologically. Many people are trying to see a route out of lockdown to some sort of new way of life. The questions of faith are tough and the answers are not easy. The lens through which we have viewed our faith in the past may have become redundant. There is now a new landscape in which we may need a different lens of faith to make sense of our fragile world. Our compass on our map of faith needs a different path so that we can move forward and face the challenges that we are to face today. We cannot stand still or run on the spot. A culture of encounter is needed even when we feel fragile or broken because it is often through these experiences, that our faith dares to speak to us. People want to find ways to reflect and pray that can engage them in the ways of faith. These last number of months have suggested that people are looking for something that might be a pattern of prayer or a willingness to reflect on a post-pandemic world. It may also mean we need to consider a post-pandemic Church and a post-pandemic faith. These answers are not something that happen overnight but will take patience, courage and goodwill. A bit of encouragement, too, will also help us on our way. Let us take some comfort from Pope Francis with a few words from his latest book:

"Discerning in the midst of conflict requires us sometimes to pitch camp together, waiting for the skies to clear.

In nineteenth century Argentina, at a time of frequent wars between strong local governors known as caudillos, the story is told of a caudillo who was beating a retreat in the midst of a torrential downpour. He gave the order to pitch camp until the skies cleared. But as it was passed from mouth to mouth the order took on a deeper meaning, a wisdom that expressed what his people were living through, wise counsel for times of tribulation and conflict.

Time belongs to the Lord. Trusting in Him, we move forward with courage, building unity through discernment, to discover and implement God's dream for us, and the paths of action ahead."