

There is something about the arrival of a child in a family – new birth speaks of future. It brings to mind the births of other members of the family. Grandparents remember the birth of the parents of this new child, their childhood and early development. There is that reaffirmation of identity as we welcome the arrival of one who is ‘flesh of my flesh’.

Who am I? Son of Gilbert and Kathleen Brew – and the line goes back through my grandparents and great-grandparents. We look at physical characteristics, temperament – even mannerisms – and we say ‘Don’t you see his grandmother in him?’

Baptism encourages to set this question of identity, ‘Who am I?’ in a wider context.

Most of our Gospel readings in this year B of the Revised Common Lectionary have been from Mark’s Gospel. for the next few weeks we will be reading from John, chapter 6. we started this morning with the feeding of the 5000 and in the weeks to follow we will hear John’s account of Jesus speaking of himself at some length as ‘the Bread of Life’.

The writer of John’s Gospel uses a very distinctive expression that we have translated as ‘I am’, *egw eimi*, - it is very emphatic, ‘I myself am’ So we have ‘I myself am’ *egw eimi*, bread of life, light, good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life.

egw eimi, I myself am, calls to mind Moses' experience at the burning bush and God's revelation of himself as Yahweh, I AM WHO I AM,

As we prepare to baptise this child, I ask 'Who am I?' Who am I, who are you, who are we before this great I AM, before Christ, in whose name we baptise this child?

We get the beginnings of an answer in the greeting we will all give to Isobel after her baptism:

**We therefore receive and welcome you  
as a member with us of the body of Christ,  
as a child of the one heavenly Father,  
and as an inheritor of the kingdom of God.**

We welcome you as a member with us of the Body of Christ – that is our fundamental identity as Christians that transcends age, gender, nationality, tradition – we are members of the Body of Christ in this place. In a prayer I would often use at the end of a funeral

Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting light

Called by Christ, redeemed by Christ, beloved by Christ. I often find myself turning to words of Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Isobel, as she grows up will discover her identity as a member of the Fanning family. May she also discover what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. That, like us, she is called to be the lips, the feet, the hands of Christ in the situations in which God places her

The Christ, the great I AM, we are called to proclaim, to show to the world, draws near.:-

In times of darkness, he comes to us as light along the way.

In times of uncertainty and confusion, he comes to us as the way, the truth and the life.

The bread of life comes to us to sustain us, to strengthen, to feed us..

In the words of an ancient blessing:

Our Lord Jesus Christ be near thee to defend thee,  
within thee to refresh thee,  
around thee to preserve thee,  
before thee to guide thee,  
behind thee to justify thee,  
above thee to bless thee,  
who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, God for evermore.