



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (17th September) 2023

The following is a version of the homily, which will be preached at the Mass.

Baptism is a very simple thing - it is the pouring of water over a person whilst a form of words is spoken. Over the centuries, however, the Church has added other things. These are not part of the Baptism, but actions to help explain what is happening at the Baptism.

One of those things is the inclusion of the great Easter Candle. The candle is blessed and lit for the first time as we celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead. It is not the candle itself which is the important bit, but the flame, which burns on it. We see in this flame a sign of the goodness of Jesus shining in a world darkened by the bad things that people do.

We also use little candles, which look like baby Easter candles. We light these from the flame of the big Easter candle and give them to the people who have been baptized. We do this to show that baptized people should carry with them the story of Jesus' rising from the dead.

To understand this a little bit, we can go back a few weeks to a day when Abigail and Scott came to visit Saint Matthew's to find out a little bit about the Baptism for which they had asked. We started by looking at the great window behind me and the pictures of Jesus and Mary, which are set into each half of the window.

We could see the pictures clearly, because the daylight was shining through the windows. If it had been dark outside, at best we would have seen a only shadow of Mary and Jesus; and it would have been very difficult to work out who they were.

By being baptized, Scott and Abigail are made into a sort of window, which people look at. If the light of Jesus is shining through their lives, if they live according to the teaching of Jesus, then people will see them clearly as God wants them to be seen.

The little candles we give to Abigail and Scott today are a sign of the light of the risen Jesus, which we hope and pray will shine through their lives after their Baptism. As the years pass, they will have to make lots and lots of choices about how to behave. When they decide to follow Jesus' teaching, that line will shine through their lives and people will see them as God wants them to be seen.