

St Edmundsbury Cathedral 28.7.10 Pr. 12 Yr C Luke 11. 1-13 Baptism of Benjamin Roberts

It is such a pleasure for us all to take part in Benjamin's baptism today. And we pray that he will grow and flourish in the love of God that comes to him through his parents, his family and the great family into which he is baptised today, the worldwide Christian church.

Babies, very young children know only one thing at first and that is what they need next. This is either a feed or a nappy change - and sometimes both, followed by a good cuddle. And when do they want it? Now! And they won't rest, and neither will you, until they get it.

Jesus is talking about just the same persistence in today's gospel reading. He is teaching his friends and disciples about their prayer to God and about the importance of simple persistence in prayer.

Jesus's illustration of persistence is of someone going to the house of a friend and knocking on the door at midnight asking for bread. The friend might try to turn over and ignore it but in the end he gives in to the knocking, just to get some sleep. Now Christine and I only occasionally had people at the Rectory front door after midnight but, - going back to young children and their needs,- there was a time when the urgent request for food or drink came from a very small person in the next bedroom at midnight or at 2am or 3am. And – it was usually Christine – you get up and you see to whatever is needed. “Ask and it will be given to you,” said Jesus. And if you have lived or worked with children you will know what he is talking about.

The truth is that we are not born trusting people, lying there as a child, quietly and patiently hoping that something will happen. It may not! Trust has to be learnt, as Benjamin will be learning it now, in response to the kindness and love shown to him by his family and his church family too, all the people who are loving him into loving and trusting him into trusting.

This is why Jesus said what he did to his disciples and gave them the one prayer he left all of us – just one – which begins of course “Our Father... “ or Mother if you like, and contains the clear and rather important request, “Give us today our daily bread”. It is a simple prayer, to be said every day - quietly and persistently – and little by little it helps us to grow in the trust in God that unlocks so many treasures.

The other thought connected with simple persistence comes in relation to the apparently endless and certainly persistent requests that come from charities we support. I am sure you get them too. They arrive by email or drop on our doormat - all the time! What do you do with these endless requests? How many do you sit down and open and read, and how many go straight in the bin?

“Ask and it shall be given to you,” said Jesus. When a charity writes to me - Embrace the Middle East (a charity we support from this cathedral) or Mediciens Sans Frontieres or Crisis or whoever I know one thing: that they are writing to me because the needs of the people they are engaged with are constant and unrelenting, 365 days a year. They have to go on asking, all the time, in hope, in faith.

We read here in the Embrace magazine of a little girl in Gaza in the Palestinian territories, whose mother takes her to the only well baby clinic there in the small Christian hospital which is supported by Embrace. This little girl is a real person. She has a name. Ramsha. She happens to live a long way away but Ramsha is just as real as Benjamin here. The name is so important. One of the central acts of this baptism is to

confer on Benjamin his name, a good Bible name in his case, as we shall in a moment. In so doing we affirm Benjamin as we all are, a unique and precious child of God and held in his love for ever.

This is why we care about Benjamin and this is why we are asked to care about Ramsha and all members of God's family, especially those in need. Because God cares and we know He cares, because of Jesus.

God bless Ramsha. God bless Benjamin in his baptism and all God's children everywhere.

And now let's not delay a minute longer and get straight on with Benjamin's baptism into the endless love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen