



An Baya

Together we can make a difference

Reflection 1 week beginning Monday 22nd June

This week is a really special week in the school year. It is Golowan Festival week which always starts with a civic procession from St John's Hall to St John's Church. Children's leaders from St Mary's C of E School always take part in this procession. We walk with the mayor of Penzance and town dignitaries and the children take part in the service. This year we are missing this. This made me feel sad at the weekend.

So why do we have Golowan?

A little history

Golowan is a Cornish word meaning Feast of St John. Golowan celebrates the feasts of St John the Baptist (24th June). This time of year which is also the time of midsummer (21st June) was vigorously celebrated in Penzance until the mid 1880s. Many places in Europe have celebrations at this time of midsummer and the Feast of St John's the Baptist marking the occasions with fires, dancing and singing. In Estonia, *Jaaniõhtu* – St John's Eve – is marked today in many towns and villages with bonfires, singing and dancing. In Finland, for *juhannus*, bonfires are lit near lakes and the sea, and many homes place branches from birch trees either side of their doors to welcome visitors. *Jāņi* is celebrated in Latvia with great enthusiasm, incorporating fires, decorating houses with leaves, singing and dancing. In Bulgaria, fires are lit with daring barefoot dances on the hot coals. Some French towns still create tall bonfires that are lit on St John's Day.

There is a long list of places that mark midsummer and the Feast of St John the Baptist with fire and tradition, in which Golowan in Penzance plays its part.

But why do we celebrate Golowan in Penzance?

We celebrate Golowan, the Feast of St John in Penzance because the name Penzance is linked to the story of St John. ***Pen Sans* was the original name for the town of Penzance. The name comes from the old Cornish language wherein 'Pen' meant point of land, or headland, and 'Sans' meant sacred or holy place to do with a church or religious site**

Ok, but how does this link with John the Baptist?

It links to John the Baptist due to a grisly pun linking Pensans 'Holy Head' with the 'Holy Head' of John the Baptist. The town corporation chose this image in 1614. It was used on Penzance coat of arms until 1934. It is still use on the seal of the town council and the chain of office worn by the mayor.

So who was John the Baptist?

John the Baptist was born about the same time as Jesus. He was a prophet, someone who tells of the future of the scriptures. He lived simple life spending a lot of time in the desert thinking about God. He encouraged people to ask for forgiveness from God and repent their sins.

He said, "I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."



One day Jesus came to the River Jordan to be baptised



John did not feel he was qualified to do such an important thing and he said,

“I need to be baptised by you.”

Jesus replied, “Let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness.”

John finally agreed and baptised Jesus.

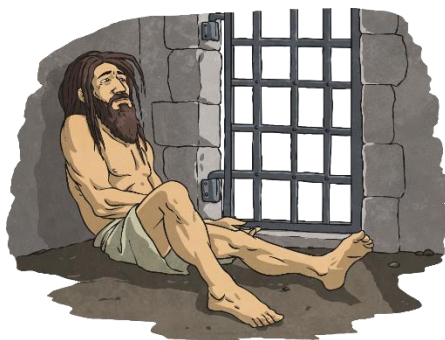
As soon as Jesus was baptised, he came up out of the water. Suddenly, Heaven opened, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove. A voice from Heaven said,

“This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Jesus was baptised for a few reasons. He was confessing to sin on behalf of all the people, and by being baptised, he was setting an example to his followers.



John the Baptist was outspoken. When he thought things were wrong he said so. He was critical of King Herod marrying his brother's wife. (this is NOT the same King Herod as the wise men met in the Christmas story). King Herod put him in prison.



On his stepdaughter's birthday King Herod promised his stepdaughter anything she wanted. She asked for the head of John the Baptist on a plate. As King Herod made this promise in front of so many people, he felt he had to keep it. John was beheaded.



This is one of 8 images of John the Baptist in Penzance. This is in Voundevour Lane. Can you find any more when you are out of a walk? Send them into school with the name of the street.

Although this story is the stuff of Horrible Histories, the messages of hope that John the Baptist gave are powerful. He gave people a message of hope, he told people about the coming of Messiah, about the coming of Jesus.

Reflection

I wonder what message of Hope you would bring to Penzance today as we start to 'unlock' from Covid-19?

Can you make a dove from a paper plate or an origami dove and write your message of hope on this? Drop your doves into school in our Messages of Hope Box in reception area.

Dear God,

We thank you for the life of John the Baptist and his message of hope to all people.

As we emerge from lockdown, help us to be messengers of Hope in our communities.

Help us to make our school and Penzance a place of Hope.

AMEN