

Pope Francis once said that faith isn't about certainty – it isn't about being right; he said that the Church shouldn't be about certainty either. And it's true: because knowledge leaves no room for faith; on the other hand, doubt makes faith possible. If you absolutely know something, you don't have to believe it.

No one absolutely knows why Jesus allowed himself to be baptised by John – it certainly wasn't necessary. Some say that by doing so he instituted the sacrament of baptism; others that it was so that the scriptures could be perfectly fulfilled; others again that he was confirming his Jewish rabbinic roots, which included ritual baptism and sacrifice.

Any or all of these may be true or partially true, but I don't honestly think it matters. The image of Jesus descending into the waters then rising up out of them again – and the voice of God calling him 'beloved' – has enough meaning and beauty in itself to need any theological analysis. That's the problem really and not just of our age: trying to explain everything – to know, to be sure, to have the facts; but life isn't a detective story and some things can't be explained, some things don't need an answer, some things aren't factual. They are, however, true.

The head says: Is this true? Wait – let me investigate, let me analyse, let me ascertain the facts...

The heart says: Yes, it is true. I understand it.

There is a form of Japanese poetry called Haiku, which describe images that are meant to be understood by the heart in just this way. Each Haiku is only three lines long

and has to have a particular number of syllables. It is like a tiny painting in words. When you hear them, you *feel* them. They express an emotion, not a thought. Here's a few examples:

*An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond—
Splash! Silence again.
(Matsuo Basho)*

*A world of dew,
And within every dewdrop
A world of struggle.
(Kobayashi Issa)*

Night; and once again
and while I wait for you, cold wind
turns into rain.
(Masaoka Shiki)

The events and experiences and happenings in the life of Jesus in the gospels are sometimes like a little Haiku poem: you don't try to explain them, you *feel* them. That's the whole point. A Haiku on the baptism of Jesus might go something like this:

Beneath the warm water
Holding his breath
Rise up again, Beloved.

A dove in the sky
A man in the water
God's voice.

I think this kind of heart-based grasp of today's gospel is a good way to enter it and let it enter us.