

To become a good craftsman you must meet and love your material. There has to be this epiphany. For me, it is stone. For other people it will be wood, clay, metals, leather, glass...Each of these will have a particular resonance..

The words of Paschal Mychalysin, a master mason, in this week's Church Times. In this scene of the baptism in the River Jordan, Christ is getting to meet and to know and to love his material – the material of flesh and blood and water, of flesh and blood and sin; all the elements that make up imperfect humanity. And by learning to work *with* them, rather than against he, in turn, becomes a master mason, able to shape his material into a new creation because he himself has been shaped by it. Or, once more in the words of Pascal Mychalysin,

After that (that epiphany); you have to accept the discipline of learning and accept to become another person, because you will be changed at every level. Not everyone accepts. Ego can get in the way.

Now, although Matthew presents Jesus as very much in control – in a somewhat imperious manner he puts John in his place – there is no trace of this in the other accounts; ego is not getting in Christ's way here; he wants to be as we are and so learn to be fully human. Immediately after this he will be tested, just as we are, in the desert of human experience so that he can lead us through this desert to salvation.

A master mason should be able to lead. 'Managing' is not the right word. You have to lead by example, and earn the respect of your peers. You have to become first among equals, respectful and appreciative of all your colleagues. No lies. It is inconceivable in a craftsperson.

Notice how this goes both ways. Jesus has to respect us just as we have to learn to respect him. He will earn this respect among his own people for a time, but a life of no lies is ultimately too difficult for them and he will be rejected. We so readily prefer deceit, a great mystery at the heart of being human. But he knows his material and bears this deceit for us and later, much later for many of us we come to realise just what it is he has done for us. All these texts are written in this light. We thought we were shaping him but in reality he was always shaping us. It's a sort of epiphany. We are children of God, after all, with Christ as first among equals.

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