

Seventh after Pentecost-Holy Baptism review

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Romans 6:3-11

Baptized into a New Life

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Fellow-Redeemed,

Quick, what is your date of birth? I suspect all of us except our very little ones can pull the date off the top of our heads. It is a date we often need to reference in things like making a doctor's appointment. Now, quick, what is the date of your Holy Baptism? When did God adopt you into his family of faith through the sacrament? I suspect many of you would have to look up that date. Please, do that. The date of your Holy Baptism is eternally the more significant.

God gave you physical life the instant he conceived you in your mother's womb. God gave you spiritual life through Holy Baptism. He gave you eternal life then as well. Because Holy Baptism is such a miracle and significant event that belongs to all Christians, we encourage parents to have their child's baptism in the divine service, or have a *Public Recognition of a Private Baptism* when the baptism took place at another time, most likely in the hospital.

The Apostle Paul delineates in Romans 6 the meaning of baptism in my daily life. Join me in reviewing his words that assure us we are **Baptized into a New Life**. Now we are dead to sin; free from sin's power; alive with God in Christ.

A pastor friend posted on FB what I dare say all pastors think, "One of the greatest joys in the public ministry is being able to perform a baptism." That is what I think. Who would not be joyful performing a miracle? Holy Baptism is a miracle God does not an emblem of faith man does.

The Word of Christ, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," when connected to simple water creates saving trust in Christ the Savior. Where that faith exists there is the forgiveness of sin, new spiritual life, and eternal life in heaven.

God the Holy Spirit works this miracle of sanctification, taking me out of unbelief into the church, entirely on his own without any cooperation from the baptized. I am the recipient of God's pledge of my new good conscience toward him because he has removed the guilt, power, and punishment of sin by the death of Jesus Christ. Christ's resurrection is the assurance of those benefits. Holy Baptism endows those benefits as it connects me to Christ's righteousness, to his death, and to his resurrection.

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Since we share in those things with him we now count ourselves "dead to sin." Paul wrote, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with."

It is the sinful flesh with its sinful nature, which Jesus Christ killed with his death. When one person tells another person, "You are dead to me," it means I am not going to have anything to do with you. You have no rights or privileges over me, or claim on me. As far as I am concerned, you do not exist.

That is what Christ has done to our flesh and sinful nature through Holy Baptism. They are dead to us. They have no rights or privileges with us. They do not exist, not as a denial of their presence, but as a rejection of their claims on us. To God it is as if they never existed.

God has in our connection to Christ by Holy Baptism expunged, erased, forgotten the entire body of work that is my sin; not only in the past but also in the present and the future. So we say daily to our Old Adam, "You are dead to me. I enjoy a new life free from your power."

Holy Baptism crucified our old self "that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Think of a former slave now standing as a free man before the former master. No longer must he obey. No longer must he fear being sold or fear death. The master might continue to command him, and threaten him. But the free man ignores those commands and threats secure in the knowledge of his freedom. His freedom gives him power over his former master rather than the other way around.

This is our power through Holy Baptism. We still must stand in the presence of sin in our lives. It commands us to disobey, and then threatens us with hell when we do. But we are free because we are buried with Christ

and as the Father raised Jesus from the dead he has given us new life. Our new spiritual life is possible because of Jesus' resurrection.

Our new life is freedom and power over our sin, our former master. "Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." Jesus was bearing our sins when he died. When he rose, he left our sins and their guilt and punishment behind in his grave which is our grave. We left the baptismal font free men and women with power over sin because Christ rendered sin powerless by his death. Jesus rose from the dead through the Father's glory to show this victory is complete.

When I reflect daily on my Holy Baptism, I drown the Old Adam and put to death its evil deeds and desires. I use the power I have in connection with Christ's one death and one resurrection. There is only one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Yet that one baptism is my daily repetitive power over sin in life and my daily assurance of the forgiveness of my sins when I foolishly listen to the devil, the world, and my own sinful flesh.

God the Holy Spirit has baptized me into a new life of God's hatred for sin and his power over sin. Through Holy Baptism I am alive to God in Christ. "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him...the death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Being alive to God means that I do not let sin reign over me. We do not offer the parts of our bodies to sin but in service to God in righteousness. "The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." [Galatians 2:20] Now that is a miracle for sure.

Holy Baptism is a miracle. It is a means of grace. I daily remember that as a baptized child of God no sin excludes me from God's family, and as a member of God's family, I want to commit no sin. I received the miracle of Holy Baptism on May 2, 1948. On what day were you "buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we may live a new life?" Amen. <SDG>