

Remember Your Baptism with Water and the Word

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Richard E. Lauersdorf

“Every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and practice all his life,”¹ Luther once wrote. Luther was writing about Baptism as we know it and as Scripture emphasizes it, Baptism with water and the Word. The past decade particularly another Baptism has come to the fore and made its influence felt in practically every kind of church body. This is the neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Lutheran Churches also have felt the impact of this Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In May of 1971 it was estimated that there were over 200 pastors in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who claimed such a Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Even our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has felt the impact of this movement. We know of at least one of our congregations which has had to deal with this phenomenon and if any of you have done any counseling with college students, you would have found it there, too.

We are not going into a detailed explanation of this phenomenon called Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Nor are we going to examine the Scripture passages which are used to support it. That has been and will be the scope of other papers presented to you. Still a brief statement is in order. Briefly stated this movement claims that “1) in the early church those who came to faith in Jesus Christ were baptized with water. But then as a second or succeeding step they expected also to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. The normal (although not the only) sequence of events was repentance, faith, water baptism, and baptism in the Holy Spirit. 2) Ordinarily this baptism in the Spirit was an experience that happened at a definite moment in time and was readily recognizable to all who were present since it was accompanied by manifestations of the Spirit usually speaking in tongues.”²

When we read the literature of these charismatics, several things, or perhaps we should say, several danger signals jump out at us. Perhaps we Lutherans are more open-eyed to these danger signals than others, but the signals are there. One is the danger of downgrading the Means of Grace. What does all this stress on a Baptism of the Holy Spirit do to the precious, priceless Means of Grace? Of these Means of Grace our Lutheran Confessions strongly state, “Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments.”³ Through these Means of Grace come all the blessings that are ours in Christ. No supplemental means are needed.

Another danger, closely connected with the foregoing, is the Holy Baptism which Scripture calls “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost” might very well be downgraded. When spiritual maturity is equated with having received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Baptism with water and the Word soon falls to second place, if not lower. What else can you expect but that people would devalue and downgrade the wonderful benefits of Holy Baptism when this so-called Spirit Baptism is said to grant powers and blessings which Holy Baptism cannot. “History indicates rather clearly that those denominations that in the past have placed particular emphasis on Spirit Baptism have also considered water baptism to be of less significance.”⁴ There are other dangers which we see with our conservative eyes. There is the danger, the real danger to the all sufficiency and completeness of Christ's redemptive work. For the neo-Pentecostals seem to teach two encounters – one with Christ for forgiveness and one with the Spirit to receive the power to lead the Christian life. There is the danger, the real danger to the Bible teaching of conversion. For the neo-Pentecostal seem to consider conversion as incomplete, needing a subsequent Baptism in the Spirit. There is the danger, the very real danger to the objective character of the Gospel (we might say to Justification) and the very real dangers from the subjective, emotional appeal or experience of such Spirit Baptism. For the neo-Pentecostals seem to stress emotional experience rather than the objective promises of God, a mistake which can lead only to sinful

¹ *Triglote*, Large Catechism, IV, paragraph 41, page 743.

² *Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology* CTCR, page 9.

³ *Triglote*, Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VIII, paragraph 10, page 497.

⁴ *Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology* CTCR, page 27.

pride or gloomy despair. There is also the danger to the Bible doctrine of fellowship. For the neo-Pentecostals cut across denominational lines looking only whether those with whom they fellowship confess faith in Jesus Christ and are seeking the Spirit's gifts.

All these dangers concern us, but there is one area that particularly concerns us in this paper – that downgrading and devaluing of Holy Baptism with water and the Word. Perhaps the church is partly responsible for this downgrading of that wonderful Sacrament. Perhaps one factor behind the rise of the stress on the Baptism of the Spirit has been the lack of or little stress on all the blessings which are already ours in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Perhaps it is time that we lead ourselves and our people back for a serious look at our Baptism with water and the Word. As we gain a fuller, more complete appreciation of what God did and still does for us in that Baptism, we will feel less and less need for the other Baptism which is so promoted today, that Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We'll learn to say positively, "Look at what God has already given us in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. What more do we need?" So today we say

Remember Your Baptism with Water and the Word

I. First of all, *Remember the Blessings of Your Baptism*. Luther described those blessings as well as anyone ever might when he said, "Baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe as the words and promise of God declare." Putting it simply, Luther said that the blessing of Baptism was salvation since what else would you call forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and giving of eternal salvation.

This reminds us that Baptism is pure Gospel. What a gift of God's super-abundant grace Baptism is. The preached Gospel is God's Word to many people at one time, but the Sacrament of Baptism is God's Gospel right to me in the midst of many people! In Baptism, God's promise of grace in Christ is individualized. It is the promise of forgiveness brought right to me, the individual. Not only does Baptism bring that forgiveness to me; it makes that forgiveness my very own. For Baptism is a washing of regeneration. It is a Means of Grace, a power tool, which God the Holy Spirit uses not only to offer forgiveness to me, but to work faith in my heart to receive that forgiveness. It has this operating power because it has the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God's dynamite unto salvation, connected with it. As Luther once said and as we have well memorized, "It is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word."

Christ pointed out the tremendous blessings and power of Holy Baptism in His word of institution. He commanded us "to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Ghost." These words deserve closer attention than we sometimes give them. They are packed with meaning. When Christ said to baptize *in* the name of the Triune God, He was stating more than that we were to baptize at the command of the Triune God. Such an interpretation would make those words redundant. Then the passage would say that Christ *commands* us to go "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them at the command" of the Triune God. Then the passage would have God's Son commanding us to do something at the command of the Triune God. Rather those words of institution mean "*into* the name of the Triune God."⁵ The Greek preposition *eis* is used. In Koine Greek *eis* was often used in place of *en*. Yet *eis* expresses close connection whether you translate it "into" or "in connection with."⁶ Either way it means that Baptism brings us into an intimate and blessed relationship with the Triune God. In Baptism He brings us into His name. What this all means Luther beautifully pointed out in his explanation to the three articles in the Apostles' Creed. By Baptism God established a covenant relationship with us. He promised to be our father and adopted us as His children. He made us members of His family and sharers in all the blessings of His grace. What tremendous blessings were offered and made ours at our Baptism.

Scripture speaks of the glorious blessings and great power of Baptism again and again, and we rightly read most of these passages in our Baptism Order of Service. Galatians 3:26 says that in Baptism we have put on Christ and all His merits. 1 Peter 3:21 says that Baptism saves us. John 3:5 says that a man is born again of water and of the Spirit. Ephesians 5:26 declares that Christ sanctifies and cleanses the Church by the washing of

⁵ *Senior Dogmatics Notes*, Volume II, Prof. J. P. Meyer, page 37.

⁶ *Concordia Theological Monthly*, E. Koehler, April 1943.

water with the Word. Acts 22:16 says that Baptism washes away our sins. Romans 6:4 states that we are buried with Christ by Baptism into death. All these passages remind us that the precious washing of Holy Baptism is connected with Christ's mighty, converting Gospel and thus regenerates us, makes us children of God, gives us all the blessings of His grace in Christ Jesus. All these passages remind us that Baptism "works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe."

Luther in his article on Holy Baptism in the Large Catechism sums up the blessing of our Baptism very well when he writes, "Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever. Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem Baptism, because in it we, obtain such an unspeakable treasure."⁷

II. How highly and precious do we esteem our Baptism? Indeed, when was the last time we thought of our Baptism or put it to use? Somehow the tendency is there to view Baptism as something that has happened in the past and has little bearing on the present not to mention the future. Yet nothing could be farther from the truth. It is true, that Scripture tells us to receive Baptism only once. The Lord's Supper Scripture commands us to use frequently, but nowhere does Scripture command us to be baptized over and over again. For Baptism is complete. Just as a child is not more born when he is six months or six years old, so our Baptism is complete at that moment and need not be redone. All the gifts of God's grace were made ours then. The point is, we need not have our baptism repeated, but we are to make repeated use of our Baptism. *We Are to Remember to Use the Blessings of Our Baptism Daily*. Luther wrote, "A truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism once begun and ever to be continued."⁸ In short, Luther would remind us that Baptism was not the end for us, but the beginning, something we are to use daily.

This daily use of our Baptism is very scriptural. A brief study of some of the passages cited under Baptism in our Small Catechism shows us this fact. One excellent daily use of our Baptism is to find strength in it in the face of temptation. In Romans 6:3-4 Paul wrote, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with sin by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Note Paul's words carefully. He wasn't telling us how Baptism was to be done he was speaking of the meaning and power of Baptism. In Baptism Christ's death is applied to the individual. The Old Man, that old sinful, nature of mine, is crucified with Christ and the New Man, the Christian part of me, rises with Christ. Thus Baptism starts that life-long ten rounder with the Old Adam in one corner and the New Man in the other. On and on the battle rages and never ends till I reach eternity. Baptism began this battle and most important, assured me of victory because it clothed me with Christ and His strength.

A closer reading of the first part of Romans brings some insight into Paul's words, here in Chapter Six. In earlier chapters (3-5) Paul had set forth the comforting doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ. There was the danger that some might abuse this doctrine saying as in 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace might abound?" The thought might be, "Let's sin all the more so that God's grace can really shine." Paul says, "No!" Rather he warns them to remember the great blessings God had given them in Baptism (v 3) and also to remember the high demands Baptism makes on the believer's life (verse 4). He reminds them in verse 11 to "reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In brief, he reminds them to use their Baptism daily as an aid against temptation. Daily they were to deplore and repent of the many sins which still clung to them and then use Baptism's strength to fight against these sins. That Christians so often fail in this battle does not belittle the power of Holy Baptism, but rather their little use of Holy Baptism. What ammunition the Christian would have when the devil comes knocking with his temptations if he would only make daily use of his Baptism.

⁷ *Triglot*, Large Catechism, IV, paragraphs 23-26, page 737f.

⁸ *Triglot*, Large Catechism, IV, paragraph 65, page 749.

Let's be more specific. You sit in school taking a test. You need an answer and your classmate's paper is so visible. You go out on the playground. Someone starts an argument in the kickball game; you want to argue back. You need a dollar for something. Your classmate has one in her desk. You are in with a crowd; the talk gets rather seamy. You feel out of sorts when you get up in the morning; your wife makes a hapless remark. You make out your income tax; you might avoid listing this or that income. You hear remarks about another servant of the Word; talk turns to him or her. "Remember your Baptism," Luther used to say. Draw upon the strength God promised you there to fight temptation. Remember your Baptism daily in the midst of this cold, impersonal world where people have become numbers, not awe. Let your Baptism remind you, "I am Richard Lauersdorf, Christian. I belong to God and God to me. Whatever my color or my country, whatever my job or situation in life, whether I as Republican or Democrat, whether I support the Packers or the Bears, the Brewers or the Cubs, I am called by God to live as a Christian. When I face temptation, my strength comes from remembering who I am, a baptized child of God." Luther's answer for time of temptation and crucial moments of decision was simply and triumphantly to say to himself, "I am baptized."

Another daily use for our Baptism is to aid us in living the Christian life. We've already touched on this subject when we spoke about using our Baptism to fight against temptation. Now let's unfold it more and in a positive fashion. In 1 Cor. 6:11, Paul wrote, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Paul's words obviously refer to Baptism and obviously regard Baptism as an effective Means of Grace by which sinners are sanctified and justified (aorist tenses). We look at this passage because of the context. The Corinthians permitted fornication and other sins to continue in their midst. Paul told them, "This must not be." They were washed and sanctified and justified. They were made holy and were to act that way now. It is interesting to note that in the New English Bible the word "sanctified" is translated "dedicated" God. The negative aspect of their Baptism was that it washed their sin away; the positive aspect of their Baptism was that it dedicated them to God. See how Paul went back to their Baptism when he appealed to them for Christian living.

In Ephesians 5:25-26 we find somewhat the same appeal. We read these words at every wedding, but how often do we stop to wonder why? Paul writes, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." In passing this verse reminds us what Baptism is a divine washing of water by the Word. But Paul especially uses Baptism in this verse to encourage husbands in Christian living. If a home is to be Christian, it needs to be filled with Christian love and peace. Paul's thought sequence is this – Christ loved us so much he died for us. Christ loved us so much He cleansed us by Baptism. We who are His disciples now have the compulsion of divine love behind us moving us to love our spouse and fill our home with peace and life. What an aid to Christian living in our marriage and in every area of our daily lives we can find in our Holy Baptism.

Again let's be specific. There is the compulsion of divine love in the Christian's life of sanctification. A Christian "must" lead a life of sanctification. In everything he does, he is moved by his love to God through Christ and by his love to serve his fellow man. But we forget! And we grow tired! We look upon those studies, those daily tasks as chores. We look upon that lesson plan, that sermon preparation, that 8 to 5 existence, that punching the clock and bringing home the proverbial bacon, that working and sweating as a mere means of making a living, of earning our rapidly shrinking dollars and maybe a few more for our family. Labor becomes a drag, something we would like to exchange or get rid of completely.

Here is how a daily remembrance of our Baptism can help. When we grow weary in Christian living, let our Baptism revive us by telling us, "You have been forgiven. You have been adopted by God. You bear the name of His Son. Your life is now for Him and your neighbor. You live to serve Him in gratitude and faithfulness in every area of life. Remember your baptism."

Another daily and vital use for our Baptism is to use it to assure us of our forgiveness. In Galatians 3:26-27 Paul wrote, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." How wonderfully Paul stresses salvation by grace through faith in Christ with these words. My blessed condition as a child of God through faith in Jesus is intimately connected with my Baptism. In Baptism I put on Christ, that is, through faith as it was either worked or strengthened in me

by Baptism I was given all the merits of Christ. In Baptism I have all that I need for my salvation. The Galatians did not need the good works which the Judaizers were promoting, neither need I anything else. Christ and all that He is, Christ and all that He seems for the sinner completely covered and still covers me.

Titus 3:5-7 also points out this assurance. Those verses show that we owe our whole Christian life, its beginning, continuation, and blessed end, to Baptism. Those words tell us that God “saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Our regeneration, our sanctification, our assurance of eternal life we owe to God’s grace given to us in our Baptism. How we need this comfort and assurance of daily forgiveness, we who are Christians and at the same time sinners.

These two references remind us that in Baptism God made a one-sided covenant with me that cannot be removed from me. I may fail, but God cannot. I may fall out of the boat of Baptism by unbelief, but God remains true to the covenant of grace which He established with me at my Baptism. There He sits on the sea of my life in that Baptism boat. He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Always He sits there with all the blessings of Christ in His hands and again and again brings me back to those blessings when He draws me through repentance back into the boat of baptism.

Again let’s be more specific. When I’m mean to my brother, when I think nasty thoughts about my teacher, when I gossip about a friend, when I shirk some duty, when I love filthy lucre, when I fall into sinful pride, when I get my life mixed up, my baptism can help me get back on the right track. In Baptism God promised (and He cannot deny Himself) that He would take me back whenever I am truly sorry for my sin. In Baptism He promised to forgive my sins and give my heart peace. Every time I turn to Him asking for forgiveness, my baptismal relationship with Him comes into use. Each time I in thoughtful penitence pray, “Forgive us our trespasses” I am using my Baptism. Only when I no longer sin daily will I no longer need to use my Baptism daily to find the assurance of my forgiveness.

In 1 Peter 3:21 we find another daily use of our Baptism. Peter wrote, “Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Our King James Version translates ἀποκρίσιν as “answer.” Luther rather more correctly translates it as “*Bund*.” It is actually a lien or legal claim on something, backed up by authority. Baptism saves us by giving us a good conscience before God, something we can have only when our sins are forgiven and we have peace with God. Baptism is our claim for a good conscience brought about by Christ’s work.

Back up, though, and look at what Peter had been talking about. He had spoken to those Christians in Asia Minor about suffering (3:17-18). In the Old Testament the Christians also suffered, but were saved by the Lord as for example Noah who was saved by water. So we have the sure hope that since we have been saved by Holy Baptism, Christ will not forsake us in suffering, but will preserve us unto eternal life since He is raised, at God’s right hand, and all creatures subject unto Him: (3:21-22). In Baptism we have a ready source of comfort for all the trials and tribulations of this life.

Again let’s be more specific. When I wrestle with the devil, the world, and my flesh, when doubts about my being an heir of salvation come sneaking in, when life’s problems seem to have pounded me into the ground, when death, the greatest trouble of all, draws near me, I need to remember my Baptism. I need to remember how in that prayer after my Baptism God was asked to strengthen me with His grace. I need to remember that God became my Father at my Baptism and as such does not want me to fret about anything. I need to remember that if He is for me who can be against me? Yes, I need to remember my Baptism for when I realize God has pledged His love to me, I will find release from worry.

When the oldest son of King James of Scotland was baptized in 1594, his sponsors gave him two cups of pure gold and a golden casket in which lay a note promising the infant prince 5,000 Dutch golden each year. Those golden gifts were nothing owed to the blessings Baptism offered us. Let us not lose those blessings through neglect or failure, but by God’s grace use our Baptism daily to fight against temptation, to aid us in living the Christian life, to be assured of our forgiveness, and to find the antidote for the trials of life.

Luther stressed the importance of our daily use of Baptism. He wrote, “Thus it appears what a great, excellent thing our Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God’s own, suppresses and takes away sins and then daily, strengthens the new man and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory. For this reason let everyone esteem his Baptism as a daily dress in which he is to walk constantly that he may ever be found in the faith and its fruits, that he oppress the old man and grow up in the new.”⁹

III. From the foregoing we can plainly see that Baptismal education is very much needed, I need all my life instruction that will unfold the real nature of any Baptism and richly apply its blessings to my daily life. Thus the third part to this paper *Helps in Remembering the Blessings of My Baptism Daily*.

Here we notice a lack. Books written to stress the blessings of Baptism can be found in abundance. Books written to help in teaching the daily use of Baptism’s blessings are harder to come by. Or else I didn’t look in the right places. We might begin by talking about stressing Baptism in our daily devotions. As I worked through the devotional literature, I was struck by the absence of prayers concerning Baptism. The only prayer for the remembrance of daily use of Baptism I could find in our Liturgy book was the short collect for the Epistle on the 6th Sunday after Trinity. In the old A.L.C. book of “Collects and Prayers” I found none for Holy Baptism, but plenty for Confirmation. In the new “Prayers for Public worship” put out by the L.C.A. and edited by Uehling, there is a short prayer on page 144 for “those who have just been baptized.” That prayer brought a thought to mind. I know we have a prayer in our Agenda following Baptism in which we ask God to keep that child in its baptismal grace, but why not set aside one Sunday a year, perhaps the last Sunday, in which we pray for all who have been baptized that year and all the years gone by.

In personal prayer booklets, a few more prayers were found. “My Prayer Book,” put out by C.P.H. has a good prayer for Baptismal Grace which could well be adapted for church use. The old “Lutheran Book of Prayer” also put out by C.P.H. had no such prayer, but the new one does on page 47. Dobberstein’s “A Lutheran Prayer Book” has a section on pages 54-56 in which he stresses remembering Baptism. There you will find a longer prayer I enjoyed plus three shorter ones. Again adaptation can be made for public use.

In Dr. Richard Jungkuntz’s book “The Gospel of Baptism” there is a section in which he strives to show the close connection between Baptism and the Lord’s Prayer. He sums it up this way “Our father—whose children we becomes through Baptism—Hallowed be Thy name—into which we are baptized and through which name alone we have a life to dedicate to its hallowing; Thy kingdom come—through the Baptism that translates us from the kingdom of sin, darkness and death, into the kingdom of Christ with forgiveness, light, and life; Thy will be done—Baptism binds us to that gracious will of Him who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth and it leads us to pray; Give us this day our daily bread—including above all the bread of life in the sacramental meal which nourishes us and strengthens us for pursuing our baptismal way; Forgive us our trespasses—for they are washed away by Baptism’s cleansing waters; Lead us not into temptation—especially the greatest temptation of all to abandon our Baptism; Deliver us from evil—in the power of Christ’s victory over Satan, which through Baptism becomes our own and assures us that we shall safely reach our goal.”¹⁰

In devotional literature for the classroom I found little. There was nothing to be found either in “Little Visits with God” or “More Little Visits with God.” Wm. Lochner in his book “Good Shepherd” (1929) has only one reference in connection with the story of Christ’s baptism. Wm. Kramer in his book “Devotions for Lutheran Schools” has a section on Baptism with good prayers, correlated readings, hymn verses and catechism references.¹¹ “At Jesus’ Feet” by Schramm had only one devotion which spoke of daily use of our Baptism in connection with the story of the naming of John the Baptist. Perhaps there are sections in other books of which you are aware that you might use in teaching daily use of Baptism, but I found the pickings mighty slim. I did find a section in an early issue of our N.P.H. Meditations, written on the Catechism, in which Baptism was

⁹ *Triglot*, Large Catechism, IV, paragraph 83f, page 751.

¹⁰ *Gospel of Baptism*, R. Jungkuntz, C.P.H. pages 130-131.

¹¹ *Devotions for Lutheran Schools*, Wm. Kramer, 1960, C.P.H. pages 248-254.

nically stressed. That was the issue of July-August 1959. These devotions could be adapted for use in the classroom.

Constant preaching from the pulpit would be another tool for stressing the daily use of Baptism. Our Standard Epistle Series contains four texts in which Baptism plays a major role. Second Christmas Day with its beautiful text Titus 3:4-7; New Year's Day with Galatians 3:23-29; Sixth Sunday after Trinity with gowns 6:3-11; and the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity with Ephesians 4:1-6. Discount the use of Second Christmas Day and you have only three texts on Baptism, for the whole year in that series. In our preaching we need more references to Holy Baptism than this. Indeed when we preach about forgiveness, conversion, repentance, sanctification, eternal life, we can legitimately make mention of Baptism. We need to do more than say the Spirit works through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. We need to spell out in clear tones what the Means are and how wonderful they are. We need to stress the daily benefits of the treasure called Baptism.

Perhaps a series of sermons on the Catechism might be a good change for our people. Catechism is based on Holy Scripture so there would be no shortage of texts. Or we might use a series on Baptism perhaps in the Trinity Season or on the Sundays in which we prepare for Pentecost with its stress on the Holy Spirit. A four part series could stress I. The Use of Baptism, Matthew 28:18-22 (Catechism Questions 328-340); II. The Benefits of Baptism, Acts 2:38 (Catechism Questions 341-348); III. The Power of Baptism, Ephesians 5:25-26 (Catechism Questions 349-355); IV. The Significance of Baptism, Romans 6:3-11 (Catechism Questions 356-367). Other texts and other themes could be used. A sermon on Baptism and death and resurrection with Christ might well fit Easter Sunday.

Above all, use Baptism when preaching at a believer's funeral. Luther said, "When our last hour comes, we intend to clothe ourselves in the vestment of baptismal grace and hear the absolution of faith and pass away."¹² Reference to the Baptism of the deceased and what through it God's grace offered for life and death can be most comforting. It can also help prepare those who mourn for their own blessed departure.

Our Hymnal is rich in material to aid in stressing the daily use of Holy Baptism. Unfortunately we again seem to reserve some of that material for the day of Baptism instead of putting it to wider use in the classroom and the pulpit for prayers and illustrations. How fitting when preaching on repentance to quote verse 4 of Hymn 298, "My faithful God, Thou failest never, Thy covenant surely will abide. Oh, cast me not away forever, should I transgress it on my side, Tho' I have oft my soul defiled, do Thou forgive, restore Thy child." How fitting when stressing the Christian life or when speaking on Christian stewardship to quote verse 5 of that same Hymn 298 "Yea, all I am and love most dearly, I offer now O Lord, to Thee. Oh, let me make my vows sincerely and help me Thine own child to be. Let naught within me, naught I own, serve any will but Thine alone." How fitting in a funeral sermon or at a deathbed to quote verse 8 of hymn 598, "Once in the blest baptismal waters, I put on Christ and made Him mine, now numbered with God's sons and daughters, I share His peace and love divine. My God for Jesus' sake, I pray, Thy peace may bless my dying day." We mention only these few, there are more nuggets in the gold mine of our *Lutheran Hymnal*.

Another aid in teaching the daily use of Baptism's rich benefits is that Order for Holy Baptism in our Agenda. We may not appreciate every part of it; we may wish for some changes in it, but we can use it to teach our people daily use of Baptism. I regularly in the course of the years go through it with all the societies in any congregation point by point. Confirmation Class, both Children's and Adult's, is a good forum for discussing the Order for Holy Baptism. The concluding prayer with its thanking God for granting the child the new birth in Holy Baptism and making it a member of our Lord Jesus Christ and an heir of God's heavenly kingdom and its asking God to keep the child in its baptismal grace that he may be faithfully brought up to lead a godly life and finally obtain the promised inheritance in heaven, gives you good chance to stress both the benefits and daily use of Baptism.

Even such a thing as encouraging Baptisms to be held in the public service can serve to teach the use of the benefits of Baptism. A Church Baptism reminds us of our own and shows God's promise "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." At Jefferson we place that baptismal font right down before the chancel steps to

¹² "What Luther Says," Plass, Volume I, C.P.H. page 61.

remind people each time they sit in church how they entered the kingdom and to serve as a visual question mark asking them how they are using their Baptism. Some churches place it near the door of their earthly church to show how they enter God's Church. I suppose you could question the use of such visual aids, but there the font and symbol of Baptism stands for all who want to remember or be reminded.

In the home there are several things we can do to teach the daily use of our Baptism. Some churches give a baptismal candle to those who have been baptized, perhaps as a visual reference to the virgins with the lamps filled with oil and ready for the Lord's coming. Such a candle can be used in the horns each year on the anniversary of Baptism. It can be used on Confirmation Day or on death day as a reminder of the Savior who made us His own in Baptism and who will light the way through life, even in death. God needs no reminder of the everlasting covenant He made with us in Baptism, but we do. However you observe it, a great day like our Baptism deserves an annual celebration.

Belgum in his book *Great Days for the Family* has another suggestion.¹³ He suggests that we use the first Sunday after Easter, "Quasimodogeniti Sunday," "New Born Babes Sunday," to stress our Baptism. We might get out all our family baptismal certificates, think about how God made us new born Babes, stress how Baptism washes us clean from sin, use the daily use of water to remind us of how Baptism washes us clean and quenches our spiritual thirst.

Our Baptism Certificates perhaps could serve as another reminder. Maybe those old German parchment certificates, framed and hanging on the bedroom walls of our grandparents, were there more than just to be available when Grandpa died and Grandma had to know his baptismal date so that the preacher would have it right for the obituary. Maybe we ought to frame our certificates and our children's certificates and hang them on the bedroom walls. Maybe that last glance at night could remind us "I am God's child, He forgives for His dear Son the Ills that I this day have done," and that "He will either my soul keep or take if I should die before I wake." Maybe that first glance in the morning at that certificate could remind me, "I am His child; He will go with me this day to sustain in temptation and strengthen for Christian livings."

Another way in which to teach daily use of Baptism is by putting proper stress on Confirmation. Confirmation can be a mighty reminder of the covenant God made with us in our Baptism. It can hardly be a renewing of that covenant since it was and always is one-sided, all the work done by God. It adds nothing to Baptism, but can be used to stress Baptism's importance, to enable the believer to make public confession of the Christ who has cleansed him in Baptism and to remind him to make daily use of His Baptism. Beyond this we need to be careful lest Confirmation become a sort of second Baptism or augmenting of Baptism.

No doubt there are other ways to teach the daily use of our Baptism with water and the Word. The more you and I by God's grace know about our Baptism, the more we go back and study its benefits, the more we use its benefits daily, the more reminders we have to use those benefits daily, the less interest in and need for any other kind of Baptism will we feel. For in Baptism with water and the Word we have been given Christ and all He has by faith. And when we have Christ, you and I also believe that we have the Holy Spirit with all that is necessary for life on earth and in heaven.

And that brings us right back to Luther's words, "every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and practice all his life." May the Lord by His grace lead us to learn and to practice all our life.

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