

For the Life of the World

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The Baptismal Life

By Arthur A. Just Jr.

Baptism Is Not Simple Water Only

By David P. Scaer

Dr. Luther on the Pattern of Holy Baptism: Like Children Dying and Rising in Christ

By Travis J. Loeslie



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Baptism is the continuation of how God gave life to creation through water, but now in this sacrament He gives life to sinners trapped in death. Just as the water at the Creation was the means out of which the earth arose, the water of Baptism has become the means of grace in creating and sustaining faith. In water, creation arose and in the water of Baptism the Church, God's creation, was born.

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For Luther, the point is not that infants have faith. God creates faith where and when He pleases. The Church has never baptized on the basis of faith. We baptize because Jesus said so. Luther's Anabaptist opponents cannot prove that infants do not have faith. Infant faith is a great and precious mystery of God's handiwork. It is not on display for man to judge if it is there or not. Of course, infants may believe! When God speaks, it is so, whether He is speaking creation into existence, raising Jesus from His Easter tomb or giving faith to an infant in Baptism.

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— The — Baptismal Life

By Arthur A. Just Jr.



“Remember your Baptism.”

How many times have we heard our pastors tell us that? Yet for most of us who were baptized as infants, we can't remember our Baptisms. We remember them only through photos of that day and the memories of our family.

How many of us know the day we were baptized? I didn't know what day I was baptized until the day of my grandmother's funeral at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Providence, R. I., where her father, my great-grandfather, was a pastor, and where I was baptized. I looked it up in that old book of baptisms, confirmations, deaths and marriages. There it was—the 19th of July 1953, 43 days after I was born, the beginning of my baptismal life.

The day of our Baptism is the most momentous day in our lives, the day we got death over, dying with Christ and rising with Him to a life that never ends. Ironic that our baptismal life begins by dying, by crossing that boundary from death to life, from darkness to life. Baptism is a passover from death to life in Christ—our *pascha*—the ancient word for passover and for Easter. In Baptism we are joined to the Paschal Lamb who was slain and raised again. Baptism may begin with dying but it ends with Easter, with the resurrection of our bodies with Christ, who has conquered death by His death.

In the early Christian communities it was easier to remember your Baptism since most of the newly baptized were adults, and the entire life of the Church was ordered around evangelizing, catechizing and baptizing those who knew not Christ so that they might have communion with Him. Early baptismal liturgies were rich in biblical imagery, captured by Luther in his flood prayer that is now a prominent part of our baptismal liturgy. In Luther's prayer, we

remember believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all who were preserved on the ark, as well as the people of Israel who were led through the water on dry ground. Luther's prayer asks that those who are to be baptized be

Bless[ed] with true faith by the Holy Spirit, that through this saving flood all sin in them, which has been inherited from Adam and which they themselves have committed since, would be drowned and die . . . [and] that they be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church.

Now that is a memorable prayer!

Early baptismal fonts also reflected the realities of the baptismal life as dying and rising with Christ. In many early Christian fonts, those who were to be baptized descended down into a pool of water where they were immersed three times—in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—but also for the three days Christ spent in the tomb, showing how in Baptism they were buried with Christ by Baptism into His death. In Baptism the old Adam is drowned and dies a watery death by being joined to Christ and His suffering and dying. But after drowning and dying, the newly baptized would ascend out of this watery tomb, rising up from the font just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of Father.

Early baptismal fonts were also shaped like a womb to signify the rebirth of the newly baptized to newness of life, rebirth to the baptismal life. Baptism is both

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Anna and Nathan (CTS 2014) Neugebauer with son Karsten upon his Baptism by the Rev. Andrew Dzurovcik, Zion Lutheran Church Clark, N.J. Neugebauer served his vicarage at Zion.



Front row: *Ruth Schian, Finley Jonah Miller, Rachel Miller*
 Back row: *The Rev. Erich Fickel (CTS 1999),
 St. Paul Lutheran Church, Chesterton, Ind., Brandon Miller*



Erica Stephenson (CTS 2013-Deaconess) was baptized by Chaplain Eric Ebb (CTS 1999) at the Enduring Faith Chapel on Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, on Reformation Sunday 2006.

death and resurrection (Romans 6) and rebirth (John 3)—our tomb and our womb—capturing the two prominent images of Baptism in the New Testament. Easier to remember Baptism when fonts looked like tombs and wombs.

The baptismal life is a journey to full communion with Christ in heaven, a life lived under the cross, a life lived in Christ, hearing His holy Word and feeding upon the holy food of His body and blood that sustains us on our journey. The baptismal life is lived around a table where the same Christ, who united Himself to us by giving birth to us in a watery grave now feeds us the holy food of His very body and blood. Baptism begins with death and it continues with death in the Lord’s Supper, for as St. Paul says, “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

Many newly baptized are surprised that after Baptism their lives get worse instead of better. Suffering increases, the onslaught of the devil intensifies, temptations to sin become more acute.

To remember our Baptism during these times of trial is to remember to return to His table to be united to Him by eating His body and drinking His blood that sustains us on our journey and equips us for the battle ahead. As our liturgy of Corporate Confession and Absolution (*Lutheran Service Book*, 291) states, “Therefore, whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup, confidently believing this Word and promise, dwells in Christ and Christ in him and has eternal life.”

To remember our Baptism is to know that now, in Christ, our suffering has meaning. To be baptized in Christ is to share in His suffering, to see our own lives defined by His suffering. As St. Paul says, to live the baptismal life is to be “afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

To remember our Baptism is to know that we are not alone, that Christ goes

with us all the way and that if we are in Christ, we have the company of saints to help us remember that our baptismal life is the way to paradise:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1–2) 🏰

The Rev. Dr. Arthur A. Just Jr. (Arthur.Just@ctsfw.edu) serves as professor and chairman of the Exegetical Theology Department at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

