

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Text: Isaiah 6:1-7; Romans 11:33-36; St. John 3:1-15

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

The Gospel of St. John the Divine is the good news of our Salvation in JESUS CHRIST, our Savior. At the center of his Gospel, John places Baptism, and particularly the Baptism of JESUS, as a foundational element upon which our salvation rests, for *“unless one is begotten of water and the SPIRIT, one cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”* For St. John, the Sacrament of Baptism, just as the Sacrament of the Altar, lies in, with, and under the story of our salvation in JESUS (Dr. William Weinrich, Concordia Commentary, John 1:1-7:1).

Therefore, Baptism is not optional for our salvation, as though one can choose to be baptized, or not to be baptized. One *must* be begotten of water and the HOLY SPIRIT if one is to enter the Kingdom of God. For the believer, Baptism is *“...the washing of regeneration and renewing of the HOLY SPIRIT, whom He [God] poured out on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

As such, Baptism is a *“begetting”* from above through which a believer moves from death to life, *“...not by works of righteousness which we have done...,”* but solely by the grace of *“God our Savior.”* Baptism is not a renewing as in making an old life better or more acceptable to God, nor is it simply a religious rite that demonstrates our obedience to God; it is the begetting from above of a new creation, a new life in CHRIST. It is in Baptism that life truly begins!

Thus, through Holy Baptism, one’s nature is transformed, the worldly nature giving way to that of the Spirit. Having been baptized, the believer is in the world but not of the world, begotten of water, which itself has been transformed by the bloody sacrificial death of our LORD JESUS, and the HOLY SPIRIT, the Comforter, who bespeaks the newly begotten Christian righteous. One may rightly say, that just as a child is born of a mother’s womb, coming forth in water and blood, a Christian comes forth from the womb of the Church, begotten of water and the HOLY SPIRIT to new life. Therefore, God is our FATHER, the Church is our Mother, and the Baptismal Font is the womb of the Church, and as the womb is to the embryo, so is the water of the font to the begotten where one is formed and given life.

Baptism is necessary because *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* We are conceived in sin and *“cannot by [our] own reason or strength believe in [God] or come to Him.”* Nor do we even desire Him, but instead, we hate Him. We have lost the image of God and therefore, we are no longer capable of being or living as God intended. We are born of flesh with desires of the flesh, and what is of the flesh receives only that which the flesh can give, and in the end, flesh receives only what the flesh deserves—God’s verdict against all flesh—death!

Yet, that which is begotten of water and the SPIRIT receives that which is of the SPIRIT—God’s grace and mercy; that which is begotten of water and the SPIRIT receives faith and life! These new creations live in the SPIRIT as disciples of JESUS. Begotten from above, the spiritual man remains man, that is, the spiritual flesh remains flesh but lives as a child of God and a brother or sister and disciple of CHRIST.

Thus, Baptism vivifies the flesh making it truly alive. Yet, being begotten of the SPIRIT man does not become spirit but is and remains flesh living in the light of the new life granted by God as a child of God, through the SPIRIT of God, receiving salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of the SON of God.

When we baptize, we do so in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT. Spoken by the pastor, the newly begotten is given his or her first words which will forever be theirs as a child of God. These words are the language of the Church because they are the language of the faith. They are the language of the new creation made evident in the application of God’s Name and are given the newly begotten through the application of water by God, the HOLY SPIRIT. With these words, the newly begotten receive entrance into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the life of every Christian begins in the same manner as did the life of the Church and the ministry of Her LORD—in the waters of Baptism and the receiving of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Yet, *“How can these things be”?* They can be, indeed, they are only possible, through the exaltation of JESUS; through His being lifted up to draw all mankind to Himself, *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”* This belief is made possible through Baptism, for it is in Baptism that one is given eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to believe. Unbelieving Hearts and hearts that relied on the Law, hearts harder than the stone upon which the Law was written, are removed and replaced with hearts that look to the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

Through Baptism, the HOLY SPIRIT reveals to God’s children the true nature of God who is love. He reveals that God loved us even while we were yet His enemies. He shows us that God loves us by dying for us. He tells us that our salvation comes from above, not by any merit or work on our part but as a gift freely given even as it is freely received.

Now we speak what the HOLY SPIRIT has given us to know, and we testify what the HOLY Spirit has given us to see, and we lift our eyes and fix them on the One whom God lifted up. We come to His altar and receive from the hands of His servant the fruit of His labors; His Body given into death for us, His Blood poured out for us. We are invited by JESUS to do this because we have already received in the waters of Holy Baptism the SPIRIT He gave up for us.

With the Church we confess that God is everything! He is the FATHER who provides all that we need for this body and life. He is the SON, through whom all things are made and by whom we are redeemed. He is the HOLY SPIRIT, who proceeds from the FATHER and the SON and is the holy breath of God who preserves all things in heaven and earth and keeps His Church in the one true faith. He is the Wind that blows “...*where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.*” He is the very breath of God breathed into the nostrils of man so that he became a living soul, and the SPIRIT poured over us in Baptism.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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