

## MIDWEEK OCULI

Text: Romans 6:1-16

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

JESUS once said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever...”* For anyone who is truly honest with him or herself, these are frightening words. They are frightening because we know that every day we sin much. Therefore, these words of CHRIST speak the truth about us and condemn us. We are homeless slaves living under the reign of sin, deserving of only punishment and death, crying out with St. Paul: *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”*

Our text, this evening, from St. Paul’s epistle to the Church in Rome, offers the Christian the hope of deliverance from this **“body of death”** through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. For in this blessed Sacrament one finds life through death. Confused? Hear St. Paul again as he admonishes the Church in Rome and by extension, you and me.

*“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into CHRIST JESUS were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through Baptism into death, that just as CHRIST was raised from the dead by the glory of the FATHER, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*

You are baptized into the death of CHRIST. But what does this mean? It means that you are a dead man walking. It means that the Old Man, the Old Adam in you, your old sinful flesh, has been crucified, dead, and buried with your LORD JESUS; and dead flesh is also dead to sin. It also means that you are alive and vibrant, a new creation living a new life in CHRIST JESUS in His resurrection. For if your Old Adam shares in the death of JESUS—again, crucified, dead, and buried—then surely you share in CHRIST’s resurrection as a new creation living a new life free from sin. Therefore, death and sin no longer have dominion over you.

In this, can be seen the Christian Church as it has been defined by God. You see, Baptism is the fundamental sacramental rite of the Christian Church, but for the Christian, it is more than a mere rite of initiation, and it is certainly more than simply

keeping a new commandment given by a new Moses. You see, Baptism is pure Gospel, and it is literally synonymous with the entire life of a Christian from cradle to grave. Baptism defines us as Christians and sets the boundaries for our life within the *“communion of saints”*. Therefore the baptized community is the Church and the Church is the community of the baptized.

This means that Baptism is the foundational Sacrament around which the entire life of a Christian is lived. So, it is, that we understand Confirmation as the affirmation of our Baptism and Confession and Absolution as living out our Baptism in faith.

Even the Sacrament of Holy Communion is grounded in the fundamental mystery of Baptism. This is so because it is through Baptism that we are included in CHRIST’s death and resurrection and therefore, are made members of His own Body, the Church. Therefore, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are complementary and inseparable Sacraments with one leading to the other, but without either one being a substitute for the other.

In Baptism, we become part of CHRIST, and in Holy Communion, CHRIST becomes part of us. The HOLY SPIRIT, through Baptism, unites us with the God-Man, JESUS CHRIST, who, in turn, unites us with His FATHER. Being united with the Triune God through Baptism, we are marked with the Name of the FATHER and of the SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT and are found acceptable to share in JESUS’ sacrifice through the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Yet, this is not all there is to your Baptism. Because you are immersed in CHRIST’s death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, your own death, burial, and resurrection from the dead are the fulfillment of your Baptism. The sainted Dr. Martin Luther, in speaking of our journey at the end of life to the life beyond, writes this: *“This journey begins in Baptism. And as long as there is faith, man continues on this course until he completes it through death.”* (Luther’s Works 24:42) Thus, for a Christian, life in this world begins and ends in Baptism.

Because this is so, we Christians live a baptismal life, such that, Baptism is always there, ever ready to refresh and forgive when we stumble and fall; ever calling us back to new life in CHRIST JESUS.

Again, JESUS once said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever...”* but His Words did not end there. He continues, *“...but a son abides forever. Therefore if the SON makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”* A son, that is, an heir, abides forever. Through Baptism You are sons and daughters of the King and heirs of eternal life and salvation in the Kingdom of God. This has been accomplished for you through the holy, innocent, bitter

sufferings, and death of the SON, JESUS CHRIST, in your place. JESUS, the SON of God, has set you free. JESUS overcame death and gives you life. Through Baptism, then, you are no longer slaves to sin, death, and the devil. You are God's own child, baptized into CHRIST. JESUS gives you *"salvation free Lasting to eternity."* (LSB 594)

On Good Friday your sins were laid upon JESUS. They killed Him. Through Baptism, you and your sins died with Him. On the third day, JESUS rose again from the dead conquering death and the grave forever, and through Baptism you rose from the dead with Him. In JESUS, death and sin are dead, and life lives!

This is the beginning and the end of the Christian life as it is lived out in JESUS who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the eternal CHRIST who has set you free giving you the gift of salvation and eternal life. This is the JESUS who announces this awesome gift to you with the words *"I Baptize you..."*

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

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