

Titus 3:5-8
Monthly Matins Thursday
Holy Baptism
January 15, 2026

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It's been almost two months, since before Christmas, Advent, and even Thanksgiving (and all the illness that came with these two months), that we last gathered for Monthly Matins. It may be easy to admit that we can't recall where we left off or even what theme we were meditating upon! So, let's review:

Our focus for the year is "The Catechism *in daily life*"... and we had meditated upon each of the first three chief parts (Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer) to consider how each chief part actually plays out in your own daily life. It's important to be confident in that; it's not just a theology to mentally assent to but don't see how it's relevant. It actually plays out in your daily life!... and we have considered that *partly* based on how we saw these theological truths playing out in the daily life of the Scriptures.

This morning, we continue that theme by looking at the fourth chief part and Holy Baptism. This last Sunday, we focused much on Baptism, but primarily by addressing the question of the purpose of Christ's baptism and how Jesus' baptism (though different than ours) nevertheless relates to ours. Today, the focus is

different: What does it mean to see Holy Baptism as a part of “the Catechism *in Daily Life*”?

First, that the act of Baptism, the actual washing, is practiced in the *Church’s* daily life. Do we actually see that in the Church today, and – to show such is not without historic precedent – do we actually see that from the Scriptures... namely, from the very first days and years of the early Church? Why should it be important to the Church today if not to the early Church? And if it *was* important to the early Church, then why would it not be central to the daily life of the Church today?

Some who downplay Baptism’s divine work and promises try to claim that the Baptismal act itself, that Baptismal washing, is not so widespread in the Scriptures. But, a little mental exercise shows *just* how widespread Baptism was in the early Church! Of course, you won’t see much of it in the gospels because Christ doesn’t institute it until after his resurrection (though, even in the gospels, after Jesus’ own baptism, John records that Jesus and his disciples were baptizing. Already present! Of course, in the Old Testament, foreshadowed...). But, if you want to argue it’s not all that present in the gospels: as many refer to Pentecost as the ‘birth of the Church,’ then what happens on that day of the birth of the Church, but that 3000 were baptized! And immediately on the heels of that we hear of the baptism of the Samaritans (including Simon the Sorcerer), the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Saul, of Cornelius and his whole

household, of Lydia and her household, of the Philippian jailer and his household, of Crispus and his household in Corinth, of the twelve would-be followers of John in Ephesus. Indeed, it's incredible that so many enthusiasm-driven churches of our day who reject water and the Word and replace it with the hope of feeling the Spirit... it's incredible that so many of them say they want to live like the Church of the book of Acts, when the Church of the book of Acts depended so much on *Baptism*.

But it's not *just* the book of Acts. Consider how every one of the epistles seems to point the hearer and reader to *Baptism*. Baptism is brought up in the epistles to the Corinthians, the Romans, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, Titus... and of course also found famously in Peter's epistle, "Baptism now saves us," as well as in John's epistle and in the vision of Revelation.

So, never be tempted by others (many in American Christianity!) to downplay the significance of your baptism. For Baptism may be commonly found in the Scriptures, but that doesn't make it common, but divine! It's commonly found in the Scriptures precisely because God's holy work means birth into the Church; for, outside the Church, Baptism is not only uncommon, but it cannot be found. It can be mimicked; but it is not truly the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not the work of man, to do with as man pleases, but the work of God... found only where God is at work, only as He has promised in the life of His

Church, and thus as He has commanded His ministry, ‘Baptize all nations.’ Thus, as baptism is a normal part of daily life *in the Church*, what joy that it is a normal part of *your daily life*, for it means you are numbered within the family of God!... the family God Himself has created by Christ bleeding and dying for the life of His family. What joy, that you can point to that day on which you were baptized, and – flowing from that – you can point to each day and every day and say, “I am the baptized” ... for that special work of God is unique to the Church (in *all* creation!), yet for those *in* the Church, it is common among us all as beloved children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ – for, whether baptized in infancy or adulthood – we are equally adopted by God into the family of His household.

That’s all a resoundingly “Yes” answer to the first point: that the Baptismal act is practiced in the daily life of the Church, both in the early Church and now in the Church 2000 years later. Second, though, we ought understand that the Baptismal act – though happening once – that one-time act leads to *a daily life* filled by and with baptism. And as that is to be true in your daily life, we ought expect to see that first in the Scriptures. And don’t we, in those same epistles? Why do the apostles mention it in the epistles if not to teach the hearers how to live in the baptismal life?

For example, in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul exhorts the Corinthians that they must not become complacent toward sin, precisely toward the immoral among them... the immorality that had crept into their

congregation, and they were okay with it dwelling there, festering. And he says, “And such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Notice how he appeals to their Baptism so as to say regarding the daily life of the congregation, “Daily life is different now! It’s defined by your baptism! It’s defined by the fact that you were washed!”

Doesn’t he say the same thing to the Romans?: He rhetorically asks them, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still (supposedly) live in it (and dwell in it and let it fester among us)? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death (meaning, “In Him, we have died to sin”)... in order that... we too may walk in newness of life.”

And if those types of “baptism in daily life” teachings are explained by the apostles, shouldn’t it give us new appreciation for the *same* teaching in your Catechism? Yes, your catechism has the same teaching as that handed down by the apostles in the epistles to the early Church!

Where do we find that teaching?: aQuestion 4 in the Fourth Chief Part: “What does baptism with water indicate?”... meaning, “What does it mean *for daily life*?” And, of course, the answer:

“It indicates that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires; and that the new man should daily arise and live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Baptism in daily life is a constant war upon Old Adam. We don't just “admit Old Adam” and therefore “confess sins,” but then just allow him to dwell and linger and fester, but we also wrestle against Old Adam and all his self-serving desires! With faith in God's grace for *me*, I learn to not live *for me* (or, for Old Adam) but to live for *my neighbor*. And Old Adam hates that! But, the more New Adam is strengthened by Christ, the more he is sustained in his baptism and his clear conscience before God that Christ is his righteousness, the more he learns he does not have to live for himself and loves to live for his neighbor... the more he *learns* to live for his neighbor, in those wonderful fruits of the Spirit who was poured out upon the adopted child of God in baptism. And when the Spirit was poured out in baptism, his fruits of love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, patience, self-control, and the like – all those daily-life virtues – were planted in the adopted child, that that child might grow up into them and be strengthened in them for daily-life living of his baptism. Such a planting of daily-life virtues, of the fruits of the Spirit, for ongoing instruction in and growing in them to fight against the selfish habits of Old Adam... such a planting is the express result of the new life of the Spirit that sprouts to life when watered with divine waters.

Think of it! In Galatians, when Paul says to the Galatians that in Baptism we are given the Holy Spirit, that He might teach us to cry, “Abba, Father!”, do we just cry “Abba, Father: give me whatever I want!” Or do we cry, “Abba, Father: teach me to love Your holy will.”

Notice, the wrestling against sins begins and continues in daily life precisely because we are children of God (“Abba, Father!)... meaning, precisely because the individual is alive in Christ and not dead in trespasses and sins in which we once walked. We’re alive in Christ, which means such wrestling continues *widespread* among the faithful because the Church is alive in Christ. Christ purchased the Church and washed her with water – baptized you with water – that he might present you unto himself holy and blameless, and thus – rejoicing in that baptismal *salvation*, we desire to live in that baptismal *beauty*.

Each day of your daily life, Old Adam says, “I don’t want to be identified by baptism. I want to be identified by the world. I don’t want to *be* with Christ. I want to *be* with the world!” And that same day of daily life, New Adam says, “I don’t want to be identified by the world, but by my baptism... for it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me... precisely because He died for me, gave himself up for me, purchased and won me, and *baptized* me, that I may be His own.”

The world will never, never ever understand Baptism because the world has not been baptized into the Church, or – if it

once *was*, by the power of God in water and the word – it was quickly taught by false prophets to reject such things and live daily life without Baptism. But those who sit around you (whether today or Sunday morning), brothers and sisters in Christ, you may always rejoice with one another and over one another and on account of one another, and you may daily encourage another to be proud of those gloriously gracious words: “I am baptized into Christ.”

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

Rev. Mark C. Bestul
Calvary Lutheran Church
January 15, 2026