



Each month, the newsletter includes the “Baptismal Birthdays” of our members reminding us we are **“born of the water and the Spirit” (St. John 3:5)** in Holy Baptism. As we are Baptized into the name of The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are given the saving benefits of Jesus' work of redemption and salvation on the cross. Baptism is the Means of Grace through which God conveys to us, what Jesus has accomplished by His death and resurrection. At the beginning of The Divine Service, we are also reminded that we have been baptized into the name of the Triune God as the Invocation is spoken and we make the sign of the cross. This reminds us of the sign of the cross made over the forehead and heart at our Baptism, “marking us as redeemed by Christ the crucified.”

Through the baptizing of John and the appearance of Jesus, the ministry of Christ is begun. Jesus submits to John's Baptism, which is **“a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” St. John 1:4**, not because Jesus needs forgiveness of sins but to identify Himself with sinners and their sinful condition, showing His willingness to make payment for their sin on the cross. The Baptism of John administers to Jesus, brings Jesus to His atoning death on the cross to pay for the sins of all. The Triune God is present at the Baptism of our Lord; the Father speaks from heaven, the Spirit descends in the form of a dove and Jesus is baptized to fulfill all righteousness **(St. Matthew 3:16-17)**.

Baptism gives the forgiveness of sins: **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” Acts 2:38**. Baptism also rescues us from death and the devil: **“He (God) has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” Colossians 1:13-14**. Baptism gives eternal salvation: **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” St. Mark 16:16a**. The book of **Titus 3:5-7** also teaches as the sacred writer says: **“He (God) saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”** In the second part of Baptism, in the Catechism, Luther asks the question: “What benefits does Baptism give? Answer: It works the forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.” Then Luther asks: “Which are these words and promises of God? Answer: **Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” St. Mark 16:16**. From the Word of God itself, we rightly believe that the “water included in God's command and combined with God's Word” (Catechism pg. 285, 2017 edition) gives eternal salvation.

With Lent beginning in the middle of February, we are right to remember what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us by His death and resurrection to bring forgiveness which is then given to us in Baptism. In Baptism, we are given the forgiveness of sins and rescued from death and the devil. Lent reminds us of the extent of God's love and the abundance of mercy from Christ our Savior. Through Baptism, we are connected to Christ and His cross and the blessings He earn for us which is then bestowed through His Means of Grace; Holy Baptism. Paul writes in **Romans 6:3-5**, **“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.”**

The next time you read your Baptismal Birthday in the newsletter take joy that God has made you His own child in your Baptism. The next time you make the sign of the cross upon yourself and hear the words of Invocation in church or elsewhere, give thanks to God for His GRACE (God's Riches At Christ's Expense) that works the forgiveness of sins and gives eternal life and salvation. During Lent, when you are reminded of Christ's suffering and death, see the Gospel, that is Christ's willing sacrifice for you that sin would not destroy you eternally. The Lenten Hymn speaks of what Christ has done for us who makes us alive in Him as we read:

**Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ, the death of death our foe,  
Who, Thyself for me once giving To the darkest depths of woe;  
Through Thy suff'rings, death, and merit, I eternal life inherit.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.**

**LSB “Christ, The Life of All The Living” verse 1**

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt