



CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING

In the exhortation to the godparents who agree at Baptism to assist the parents in the Christian upbringing of the child, one baptismal ritual reads, "Moreover, after this child has been baptized, you should at all times remember him in your prayers, put him in mind of his Baptism, and, as much as in you lies, lend your counsel and aid that he may be brought up in the true knowledge and fear of God and be taught the holy Ten Commandments, the Christian Creed, and the Lord's Prayer; and that as he grows in years, you place in his hands the Holy Scriptures, bring him to the services of God's house, and provide for his further instruction in the Christian faith, that, abiding in the covenant of his Baptism and in communion with the church, he may be brought up to lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ."

The question put to them is suitable for us all: "This, then, you intend gladly and willingly to do?"

AFLC Evangelism & Discipleship

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

Plymouth, MN 55441

www.aflc.org/evangelism

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Text by Rev. Omar Stuenkel

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"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:20

Baptism IS NOT Magic



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RELATIONSHIP

Some who seem to prize Christian Baptism may take too much for granted. They treat Baptism like a magic ritual which produces a permanent effect just because it was performed.

They do not realize that Baptism establishes a relationship which can be ended by neglect or rejection. If the line to a gas furnace is broken the fire it feeds will die. The new life in Christ which Baptism creates or confirms can also be snuffed out by lack of fuel.

If Baptism is not followed by Christian growth, even its saving effect may be lost: not that its power gradually wears off or runs out, but rather that the bond by which God rejoins man to Himself can be foolishly severed by man.

When Baptism has been received and then becomes an isolated experience, its effect cannot endure. Rather than isolate it, those who receive Baptism should make it one of the stable realities of life on which to build. For Baptism enacts and accomplishes the saving action of God in human lives in a specific way. In Baptism their sins are forgiven and heaven is opened to them.

But there is more.



POWER

Baptism is not simply a ritual of consecration; it is a God-ordained act to claim men for God by His action. When the sacrament is validly administered and properly received it has great power. But many who would never omit Baptism for their children nor postpone it long after birth consider Baptism only a comfort, not also a power. They do not build on it.

Baptism is a start, a beginning, an initial step. Its benefits can never be exhausted. These benefits are supported by the other means of grace God uses, but Baptism never falls short of giving us God's full grace. But Baptism is not magic. Its power lies not in ritual, but in relationship.

Without continuing contact with God in other ways the baptized person will in time find his washing with water and the Word to be meaningless also. Baptism must start the growth which follows throughout life. Only by continuing use of God's Word privately and in church and through the sacrament of Holy Communion can Christian life reach its intended strength.



CHRISTIAN DUTY

Parents who accept the necessity and the importance of Baptism for their children do well. But they will answer to God for gross default of Christian duty if they do not teach their children to pray, if they fail to instruct them in God's commands and promises, to use other ways of Christian teaching through the church, and by word and example to lead their children to worship and seek the Lord's Supper.

Just being baptized, important and essential as this is, does not insure anyone an unconditional guarantee of salvation, regardless of what he may do or neglect to do. Through Baptism comes new life in Christ. But neglect of continued contact with God's Word after Baptism can cause Baptism to lose its effect in the life of the one who does not walk in the Christian faith into which he was baptized.

In Romans 6:4 Paul the apostle states it this way: 'We are buried with Him (Christ) by Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.'