

# Baptism

## A Washing that Unites

“I was baptized a Lutheran.” “I was baptized Presbyterian.” “I was baptized a Catholic.” We often hear people say such things. The fact that we hear those statements so often doesn’t justify the confusion they cause. We are not baptized into a denomination. Nor is Baptism a mere outward rite that places our names on the membership lists of particular congregations. Baptism is so much more.

The apostle Paul speaks of a unity that results from Baptism. “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13). Baptism is a divine washing that unites us to Jesus and to one another.

Remember the distinction between visible churches that exists this side of heaven and the reality of the invisible church of Christ. We confess in the third article of the Apostles’ Creed that we “believe in...the Holy Christian Church.” Those who have been baptized into Jesus and who, by the Spirit’s grace, are nurtured in this saving faith through the gospel are members of this mysterious unity, the body of Christ. This side of heaven, we heed Christ’s admonition to constantly be on guard against error and falsehood within visible churches. Yet we never deny the reality of the gospel’s saving power wherever it is proclaimed.

So rejoice in the gospel’s march around the world. Every Christian baptismal font reminds us of the wonderful unity that believers have in Jesus. Every public worship service calls to mind this unity. The invocation with which we open many Christian gatherings is also a vivid reminder of this unity. When we hear “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” we remember the name God placed upon us. In Holy Baptism, God has said to you and me, “You are my own dear child in Jesus.” We carry his name into the world as members of one family, adopted purely by grace. “In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves” (Ephesians 1:4-6).

Someday in glory we will see our Savior and all our brothers and sisters in the faith. Look ahead with excitement to that reunion. We will know everyone by name, for they are one with us through the power of Baptism.

