

Wednesday of Judica, A ✕ D 2009

John 15:1-10 1“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.

In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1 You’ve been baptized. Now what? Once it’s been done, baptism isn’t over. It lasts. It endures. It’s your new reality. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ 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” (Ro. 6:3-4). Baptism is not the end; it’s the beginning.

2 Baptism is the end of the devil’s tyranny over you. Having been snatched from his hellish grip by the Lord through the water and Word of Holy Baptism, you have a new master. But baptism thus marks the beginning of the devil’s war against you. Now that you no longer belong to him, he will stop at nothing to entice you away from your Lord. And the devil is not without allies. He will use the world to entice you into sin, and he will use your old, sinful flesh, which—remember—was drowned in baptism—to pull you back into the sin which so easily ensnares.

3 Baptism is not the end but the beginning of the Christian life. What does such baptizing with water indicate? It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. “[Baptism] is nothing other than putting to death the old Adam and affecting the new man’s resurrection after that. Both of

these things must take place all our lives. So a truly Christian life is nothing other than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be done without ceasing, that we always keep purging away whatever belongs to the old Adam. Then what belongs to the new man may come forth. But what is the old man? It is what is born in human beings from Adam: anger, hate, envy, unchastity, stinginess, laziness, arrogance—yes, unbelief. The Old man is infected with all vices and has by nature nothing good in him. Now when we come into Christ's kingdom, these things must daily decrease. The longer we live, the more we become gentle, patient, meek, and ever turn away from unbelief, greed, hatred, envy, and arrogance" (Large Catechism, IV, 65-67).

4 Sin is the way of the old Adam, your old sinful flesh. It is not the way of the baptized, those set free from sin. "We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin...So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Ro. 6:6-7, 11-14).

5 Daily contrition and repentance are the way of life for the baptized. To be without these is to find yourself outside the waters of Baptism. But to repent is to return to the waters of Holy Baptism, to return to trusting the Lord who claimed you as His own therein.

6 "In this way one sees what a great, excellent thing Baptism is. It delivers us from the devil's jaws and makes us God's own. It suppresses and takes away sin and then daily strengthens the new man. It is working and always continues working until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory. For this reason let everyone value his Baptism as a daily dress in which he is to walk constantly. Then he may ever be found in the faith and its fruit, so that he

may suppress the old man and grow up in the new. For if we would be Christians, we must do the work by which we are Christians. But if anyone falls away from the Christian life, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy Seat, does not draw back from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. Therefore, if we have received forgiveness of sin once in Baptism, it will remain every day, as long as we live. Baptism will remain as long as we carry the old man about our neck” (LC, IV, 83-86).

7 Every day. Your baptism affects you every day. It gives you godly sorrow over your sins every day. It holds you in communion with God every day. It covers you with the forgiveness purchased with the Blood of Jesus every day. It drowns the sinner and raises the saint. Every day. Baptism is your new reality.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria
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