



Today (at 10:30) we baptize two infants into Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Jesus commanded us, in Matthew 28, to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." That instruction comes down through the ages to us in our age and in this place and time. Baptism, instituted by Jesus in the Gospels, and thus what we call a sacrament, is an outward and visible sign that we are Christians. We are followers – or disciples if you will – of Jesus the Christ.

Baptism connects us across denominations with other Christians. We are all part, therefore, of Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church as baptized persons. The Episcopal Church believes that there is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism and so a baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and using water is accepted by us regardless of where that baptism was performed and regardless of whether the baptism was by full immersion or by pouring or sprinkling with water. In an emergency, any baptized person may baptize another.

Symbolically, the water we use represents the new life that Jesus offers to us through his own life, death and resurrection. A reminder that eternal life with Jesus is what we all seek. Peter, in our reading from *The Acts of the Apostles*, is speaking to those gathered in Judea. Peter reminds them that God has not – and will not – abandon believers to Hades, what we call Hell. Rather, God through Jesus has made known to us the ways of life and makes us full of gladness with the ongoing presence and support of the Risen Christ. Similarly, in the *First Letter of Peter*, he says that we have been given a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We have been offered an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading. We can have confidence that whatever our trials on earth, there is more ahead than behind us because we believe in the Risen Christ.

Baptism is a reminder of these things and it includes the support and promises of this congregation. As a congregation, we stand with the parents, the godparents and other friends and family in pledging to raise these infants in the faith. The challenge is laid squarely at our doors: will we lead a life that witnesses to the love of Jesus in our life?

This is not always an easy task. In the Gospel lesson we have the familiar story of Thomas who needs to see Jesus and the holes in his hands and feet. Each of us has had some instance where we doubted what we were told. Doubt is nothing new and it is nothing of which to be ashamed. In fact, we pride ourselves on not leaving our brains at the door. We encourage questions – another word at least at times, for doubt. Questions raised can lead to deeper, more authentic and

grounded faith. A deeper faith that can sustain us when the winds blow and our lives are turned upside down. A deeper faith that can sustain us at the hour of our death. A belief in the value of education is one reason this parish thrives. We are not afraid to ask hard questions. We are not afraid to participate in Bible Study or other endeavors where we can learn from each other. When you think of Jesus and his ministry, what words come to mind if someone asked you what Jesus did? Heal. Preach. Teach. Fundamental to Jesus's time of earth and to his ministry was his teaching. And, Jesus was not simply a talking head. He often answered a question with a question, so that the answer became the springboard for the message.

Baptism grounds us in this faith. It makes us one in the body of Christ. Baptism calls us to love one another as Christ has loved us. **Amen.**