



CELEBRATING YOUR BAPTISM, EVERY DAY

By Marilyn Sharpe

Baptism bracketed Jesus' public ministry. Before he began his ministry, John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. Jesus was claimed as God's son, with whom God was well pleased. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus, like a dove, giving him the power to do God's will. This month, we celebrate The Baptism of Our Lord. Jesus final words to his followers were about baptism. We baptize because Jesus commanded us to do so.

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.

Matthew 28:19

God has some very special gifts to give to us, too. In baptism, we are named and claimed as children of God, promised forgiveness of sin and eternal life, and given the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why would we not want to receive those gifts for ourselves, for our children? Baptism is truly a faith milestone.

But didn't that happen once? Isn't that faith milestone over and done with? Jesus certainly didn't see baptism as the end, but as an entrance to a way of life. Luther helped us to understand baptism as how we live our life in Christ. We daily ask for and receive forgiveness of sins. We put down our guilt and shame at the foot of the cross and use our precious life energy to serve God's family, to continue to learn about the God, to help God's kingdom come here and now.

How can we help our children say "I'm sorry" to God, to know they are forgiven and called to forgive others? Model saying "I'm sorry" to your child, your spouse, your friend, and to God in prayer. It will be contagious. In shared prayer, invite children to ask for God's forgiveness and for a heart willing to forgive others. Remind them daily that the Holy Spirit lives in them as the way Jesus is with them always.

To make baptism a way of life, use every opportunity to unpack God's gifts, to talk about them with your children. Put a bowl of water on the supper table and invite all present to play in the water, remembering their baptism, making the sign of the cross on their own forehead or on one another.

Take godparenting seriously. Select godparents who will help you nurture faith in your child, remember them in prayer, stay connected. Equip godparents with a baptism class, a godparenting book, an invitation to their godchild's baptism birthday. Yes, a baptism birthday is a great occasion celebrate a re-birthday, an annual faith milestone.

(If godparents have disappeared from the life of your child, re-invite them to participate. Tell them how important they are and what you'd like them to do. If they don't respond, find adults who already love your child, nurture faith in your child, and will pray for your child.)

Here are more ways to celebrate baptism:

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Research and record the baptismal dates of all of the members of your household. Plan to celebrate them at a family meal, lighting the baptismal candle, purchasing new ones for those who didn't receive them (or have no idea where they might be).
2. Connect or reconnect with godparents or baptismal sponsors. Ask them to tell the story or write a brief account of their godchild's baptism. Ask them to be part of the life of their godchild now and in the years to come.
3. Together, read a book on baptism. *Water, Come Down; Come Right In, You're Home;* and *God Chose You* are all terrific books, enjoyed by all the generations. (All titles are available from The Youth & Family Institute at 800-239-2492.)
4. As you shower or bathe, remember your baptism. In the waters of your baptism, you were washed from more than the day's grime, splashed with God's promise, and given the gift of the Holy Spirit.
5. Nightly, make the sign of the cross on one another's forehead, saying "Jonathan Adam, child of God, you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. Jesus loves you and so do I."

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