



**The Sacrament of
Holy Baptism
Handbook**



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What to Expect on the Day of Holy Baptism

The baptism typically takes place at the beginning of the Divine Service. During the Rite of Holy Baptism, the individual(s) to be baptized, or the parents, sponsors and child will be asked to stand before the congregation. They will then proceed to the baptismal font with the pastor. The Rite of Holy Baptism is found in the Lutheran Service Book, on page 268. You will bring your hymnal with you to the baptismal font.

The pastor will begin the Rite in the name of the Triune God. Following a scripture reading, the pastor will ask how the individual(s) or child will be named, and using the name, the pastor will make the sign of the cross on the individual/child's forehead and upon the heart, saying a blessing upon the one(s) to be baptized.

Martin Luther's Flood Prayer will then be said by the pastor and the Charge to Sponsors will be proclaimed. The sponsors will then take their oath and a scripture passage will be read, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Before the baptism, the pastor will ask the baptismal candidate(s) /parents & sponsors of the child questions regarding renouncing the devil and his works and the confession in the Triune God.

When it is time to perform the baptism with water, typically one of the parents will hold the infant up to the baptismal font as the pastor sprinkles water on the child's forehead. In the case of a child and adult, simply step forward and lean over the baptismal font. The pastor will sprinkle water over the forehead three-times.

The candidate(s) will receive a white garment that signifies Christ's righteousness that covers all sin. A small candle lit from the paschal candle will then be presented to the candidate(s)/parents or sponsors, signifying the Light of Christ. The newly baptized candidate(s) will then be welcomed by the congregation.

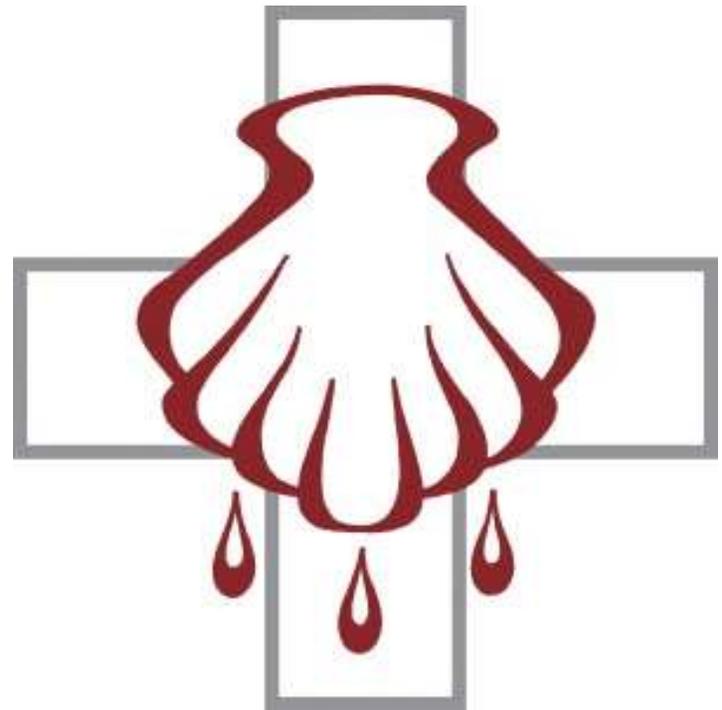
The baptismal party will return to their seats for the remainder of the service.

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Introduction

Baptism is something that God has given us to show his love to all people, both adults and children. Members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church have been baptized at many various ages. Whether you are reading this handbook because you are considering baptism for yourself or for your child, it is our privilege to bestow God's blessings on you in this very special way.

If you are an adult inquiring on Baptism for yourself, make sure to check out pages 13-14 in this handbook to see what Baptism does for you and your spiritual journey in life.

If you are inquiring on baptism for your child, Bethlehem Lutheran Church shares the joy and excitement of the new life that has been entrusted to you or that soon will come into your life. Whether by birth or by adoption, one of the most exciting events in our lives is a child entering the family. Whether this is your first child or last child or one in-between, as Christians we look at life as a gift coming from God. As such, we understand the lives of our children do not belong to us; rather they are entrusted to our care.

The objective of parenting is to nurture life in order that it may develop and grow into responsible adulthood. As God's people, there are added responsibilities to our parenting. Through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we belong to the Holy Christian Church. God provides a way for us and for our children, even infants, to receive the same saving faith, so that they too can be numbered among God's people even at the very beginnings of their life. That way to these most wonderful blessings is the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

This handbook is designed to help you think and pray about this important means of connecting you or your child to God's grace in Jesus Christ. It will also answer questions, share information you should consider, and assist you in planning for the day you or your child is born again by water and the Word.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact any of our pastors at (920) 452-4331.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church Baptism Application Form

In obedience to my Lord Jesus Christ, who instituted Baptism, saying in the last chapter of Matthew: **“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”** I/We bring this child for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Child's full Name: _____
Birth Date: _____ Place of Birth: _____
Father's Full Name: _____
Mother's Full Maiden Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
Telephone: _____

Date & Service Time Desired for Baptism: _____

Sponsors' Names:

I/we understand that through baptism God gives this child salvation (Tit. 3:5, 1 Pet 3:21), repentance (Acts 2:38-39), regeneration (John 3:5, Tit. 3:5), remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Eph 5:26), good conscience (1 Pet 3:21), communion with the saints (1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3:26-29), the putting on of Christ (Gal 3:27, Rom 6), and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5-6; Acts 2:38).

I/we understand the Scriptural reasons to baptize this child:

1. Babies are included in “all nations” (Matt 28:19),
2. Babies need baptism (Ps 51:5, Jn 3:5-6),
3. Baptism gives forgiveness (1 Pet 3:21),
4. Babies can believe (Matt 18:6, Luke 1:41),
5. Baptism is the only means we know of by which God gives his grace to babies (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38-39), and
6. Baptism in the Bible was for entire households (Acts 2:38-39; 16:15, 33).

I/we intend to bring up this child in the Christian faith, realizing that the faith given here can be lost due to our neglect to nurture it. We will do this by reminding him/her of this baptism, instructing him/her in the truths of God's saving Word, and making faithful use of the assistance offered by the church (attending worship, Sunday School, etc.)

Parent[s] Signatures:

Date: ____/____/____

Date: ____/____/____

Please turn this form into the church office



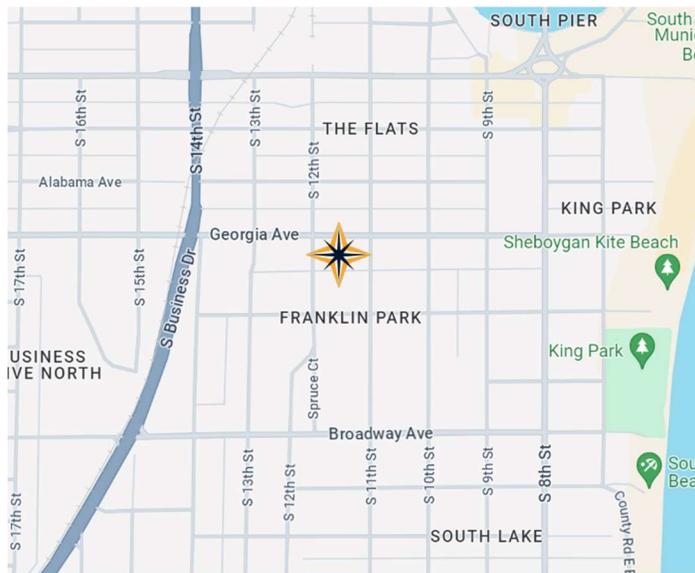
A: There is Sunday School, which has the goal to build a foundation of faith by teaching the Bible stories of both the Old and New Testaments. Catechism instruction – a study of the teachings of the Bible - begins in sixth grade and builds on the foundation by focusing on the doctrines of Scripture as taught by the Lutheran Church. Catechism instruction culminates in the rite of Confirmation for eighth graders as they make public confession of their faith and receive Holy Communion for the first time.

Middle School and High School youth events also directly assist parents in their responsibility to raise their children in the Lord. Check with our Youth Coordinator for information on upcoming events.

Ultimately, the weekly worship services of the congregation are the best place to start. Keep bringing your baby to church regularly after baptism and establish a solid family practice of worship attendance which will serve you well throughout your lives.

Bethlehem also has a Lutheran grade school and middle school that is available for all children. Bethlehem is also in association with Sheboygan Area Lutheran High School.

MAP – Bethlehem Lutheran Church – 1121 Georgia Ave, Sheboygan, WI 53081



Why Baptism?

Why baptize a child or an adult at all? That’s a good question! Some churches reject the baptism of children. Sometimes it seems children are baptized because it is a custom, or merely at the urging of a relative. Adults who have already been brought to faith may wonder why they should be baptized, if they already believe.

The New Testament is filled with passages speaking to the importance, meaning, and power of Baptism. Jesus himself says in Matthew 28:18-20,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all things I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”

Why baptize? While it is certainly not the only reason - as you will see in the Blessings of Baptism section - we baptize because Jesus told us to. He told us to because it is one of the ways he promises to give his undeserved love, forgiveness, and perfection to people. The other ways that God gives us these things are the message of who Jesus is in the Bible and in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The Blessings of Baptism

Baptism is more than a ritual. It is more than a ceremony. It is more than a symbol or reminder of God’s blessings. It is not just a christening. Baptism is a “Means of Grace,” that is a way in which God gives people his blessings. The baptized really do receive the blessings of God listed below - as the Bible says.

SALVATION

God saves people from an eternity of suffering through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Titus 3:4-6

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”

1 Peter 3:21

“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

REPENTANCE

God turns people around from a life of sin to him by means of baptism. Another way of saying this is he works repentance in the baptized.

Acts 19:4

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance..."

REGENERATION

Through baptism God gives us a second birth. We call this being “born again” or “regeneration.”

John 3:3-6

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’

“‘How can he be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’

“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”

Titus 3:5

“... He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,”

asked to pledge itself to assisting the parents in raising their child in the baptismal faith they had just been given through water and the Word.

Q: Who is able to perform a baptism?

A: Typically our pastors perform the baptisms in our church because they are called by us to do so. Essentially, anyone can perform a valid baptism by using water and the correct Word of God (“*I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*”). This could be necessary in a delivery room, if the life of the infant is in danger and the pastor can’t be reached in time or in some other extreme circumstance.

Q: Is there a charge for baptizing my child?

A: No.

Q: Is a baptismal certificate given?

A: Yes.

Q: What time should we arrive for a baptism?

A: Please be at church fifteen minutes prior to the start of the worship service in which the baptism is scheduled to take place. The pastor will meet with you briefly to explain at what point you should come to the font, and what will happen then.

Q: Should I invite friends and relatives to the baptism?

A: Of course! It is a day of true celebration when a person is brought into the kingdom of God.

Q: Will I or the sponsors we choose be asked to say anything in the rite surrounding the Sacrament?

A: The entire congregation, including parents and sponsors, is asked to pledge themselves to doing what they can with what God provides to help the baptized child remain a child of God throughout his or her life.

Q: After my child is baptized, what ministries does Bethlehem have to assist me in the nurture of his or her faith?

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do you have to be a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in order to be baptized or have your children baptized there?

A: The short answer is no. God's grace is for all, since Christ Jesus died for all. Realize also that Baptism is but the beginning of a faith-relationship with God. Any relationship must be nurtured in order for it to grow and flourish. Parents bringing their children to Baptism at Bethlehem are encouraged to make it their church home so as to take advantage of all it does to assist them in guarding and growing the flame of faith given their children in Holy Baptism.

Q: How long should I wait to have my child baptized after their born?

A: God gives his greatest blessings through the Sacrament of Baptism. Parents do not want to deprive their children of these things (see the list starting on page 5) unnecessarily. Christians take seriously the Lord's command, **"Let the little children come unto me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"** (Mark 10:14). In short we encourage you to have your child baptized as soon as practically possible. This does not mean heroic efforts on the part of recuperating mothers are required. It also does not mean putting it off for months. It simply means regarding your child's baptism with the high and holy importance Scripture assigns to this precious Means of Grace. Many try to get their children baptized within a month of their births.

Q: Are all of Bethlehem Lutheran's baptisms done during church services?

A: No, but the vast majority are. Sometimes emergency circumstances require the pastor to come to the hospital to baptize babies. Other times a private baptism ceremony is arranged. On the whole we want our baptisms to be done before the congregation in worship since it is not only good for Christians to be reminded of their own baptisms, but also they are able to welcome another soul into the family of faith. In fact, in the rite our congregation uses to baptize people, the entire assembly is

REMISSION OF SINS

God forgives sins (what we do wrong before God and thus become imperfect and unworthy) through Baptism.

Acts 2:38,39

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Ephesians 5:26

to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

GOOD CONSCIENCE

When we are baptized the grace of God we receive works in a sanctified response of a good or clear conscience toward God. In other words we are not afraid of God because we know he loves us as our Father and that we stand before him as perfect because Jesus was perfect for us. Because Jesus has made us perfect by his sacrifice, we hold no guilt on our conscience before God.

1 Peter 3:21

"and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Through Baptism God the Holy Spirit makes us part of the body of Christ, that is the Holy Christian Church or the family of believers.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

THE PUTTING ON OF CHRIST

God clothes us in Christ when we are baptized, wrapping us in his righteousness and thus viewing us as his saints (perfect) through faith in his Son.

Galatians 3:27

for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Through Baptism God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is another way of saying he creates saving faith (trust in Jesus as our Savior from our sin and imperfection) in our hearts.

Acts 2:38

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:4-6

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior”



How to Schedule a Baptism

If you contact the church office when you have given birth, the pastor will come to the hospital to share a few moments of God’s Word and prayer with you. With this handbook that was given to you, you will be able to schedule the baptism.

Baptisms may be scheduled for any worship service of the church except Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

Fill out the Baptism Form and return it to the church office at least one week prior to the service you have chosen. The form can also be emailed to infochurch@ourbethlehem.com.

Adults wishing to be baptized should contact the pastor directly at (920) 452-4331 to set up an appointment to discuss the Sacrament and the class requirements (see Adult Baptism section on page 15-16).

Sponsor / Godparents

The use of sponsors or “godparents” is a custom originating in the early church when converts to be baptized were “sponsored” into the congregation by the assurances of others as to the candidate’s fidelity to the Christian faith. Over the years the custom has taken on other means. Today it is common in our churches for infants to have other adults, in addition to their parents, looking on as they are baptized. The church regards them as witnesses.

If parents desire to use this custom with their children, they should consider carefully what they are actually asking the sponsors to do. Typically sponsors/godparents act as witnesses to the baptism and then as Christian role-models and encouragers throughout the child’s life. If this is your intention, you would want to consider the faith and practice of potential sponsors so that they are not contradictory to the faith and the example you are setting as parents.

EIGHT REASONS THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BAPTIZED BABIES

The baptism of infants was done in the church for as long as the Christian church has existed. While there is no single passage that says, 'Thou shalt baptize babies,' the Scriptures give clear reason to do so.

BABIES ARE INCLUDED IN "ALL NATIONS"

Jesus does not tell us to exclude from baptism people under a certain age.

Matthew 28:19

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

BABIES NEED BAPTISM BECAUSE OF SIN

The Bible says all people are born with "original sin." We are not born neutral toward God, but rather we are born opposed to him. We inherit the sinful condition of humanity from our very beginnings.

Psalms 51:5

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

John 3:6

"Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.'"

Genesis 5:1-3

"This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.' When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth."

Romans 8:7

"the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."

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GOD FORGIVES SIN THROUGH BAPTISM

Through baptism God forgives sin and its guilt even for babies.

1 Peter 3:21

“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

BABIES CAN BELIEVE

Jesus says babies can believe, and the Bible records an example of a miracle God performed to make a yet-to-be born baby believe in the yet-to-be-born Jesus. Faith always takes a miracle of God to ignite in the heart of an adult or a child or an infant. Same loving God. Same miracle working power. Same saving faith.

Matthew 18:6

Jesus said, “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Luke 1:41

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb...”

Additionally, realize that a church’s doctrine and practice in regard to the baptism of infants (some do it and others are against it) shed clear light on how they truly think a person is saved.

The Lutheran practice of infant baptism and the doctrines upon which it rests clearly demonstrate our belief that a people are saved by what God does for us in Christ, not by what we do for God or by how much we love God. Because of God’s grace given in Christ we are confident of our salvation, and the salvation of our baptized children.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church Adult Baptism Application Form

In obedience to my Lord Jesus Christ, who instituted Baptism, saying in the last chapter of Matthew: “**Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**” I desire to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Full Name: _____
Birth Date: _____ Place of Birth: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
Telephone: _____

Date & Service Time Desired for Baptism: _____

Sponsors’ Names:

I understand that through baptism God gives me salvation (Tit. 3:5, 1 Pet 3:21), repentance (Acts 19:4), regeneration (John 3:5, Tit. 3:5), remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Eph 5:26), good conscience (1 Pet 3:21), communion with the saints (1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3), the putting on of Christ (Gal 3:27, Rom 6), and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5, 6; Acts 2:38).

I intend, with the help of God, to continue my walk with God in the Christian faith through Bible study and regular worship, realizing that the faith here given can be lost due to neglect to nurture it.

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Please turn this form into the church office



Adult Baptism

Adults are to be instructed in preparation for Holy Baptism. This was the practice of the apostles, whom Jesus instructed and sent out. It was only after the proclaimed Word had had its effect that those who gladly received the Gospel were baptized on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:14-21). Likewise, the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35-37), Cornelius (Acts 10:34-38), Lydia (Acts 16:15), and the jailer at Philippi (Acts 16:30-33) were instructed and gave evidence that the Word had successfully worked in their hearts before they were baptized. The baptism of adults is typically done during the public worship services of the congregation.

Bible Information Class

Bethlehem Lutheran Church offers the Bible Information Class as a typical prerequisite for adult desiring baptism, although in some circumstances instruction can be given less formally. Arrange to meet with the pastor to discuss an adult baptism.

Rebaptism

The Lutheran church does not re-baptize people who have been baptized in other Christian churches. We view baptisms done **“in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** as valid regardless of denominational affiliation. Only those baptized by groups which clearly deny the Trinity, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Christian Scientists, the Unitarian-Universalists, etc., would be considered to have received an invalid baptism, and thus would be eligible for baptism in the Lutheran church.

People who do not know if they’ve been baptized are regarded as unbaptized and invited to be instructed prior to receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. Faith cannot find an anchor in one’s baptism if one is unsure about its validity or even its occurrence.

BAPTISM IS THE ONLY MEANS OF GRACE WE KNOW OF FOR BABIES

The message contained in the Word of God must be understood in order for it to have effect. One does not reap the benefit of the Scriptures by rubbing it on one’s head or by literally eating its pages. Only through listening/reading and understanding can one receive God’s grace through the Word. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is only for Christians able to repent, recognize the real presence of the body and blood of Christ, and intend to lead a more God pleasing life. Baptism is the only means of grace God does not put such limitations and qualification on.

Matthew 28:19

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

Acts 2:38-39

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."

BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE WAS FOR ENTIRE HOUSEHOLDS

While there are not explicit examples of infants being baptized in the Scriptures, there are inferences. The church, however, does not set its doctrine and practice on the Bible’s descriptions, but on its prescriptions. Jesus told us to baptize all nations. Descriptions of it happening are illustrative of believers carrying out his prescription.

Acts 16:15

“When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:33

At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; and immediately he and all his family were baptized.

MARTIN LUTHER ON BAPTISM – SMALL CATECHISM

As the head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in his household

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God?

Christ Our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Second: What does Baptism do for us?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

What is God's promise?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Third: How can water do such great things?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the

water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism. God's Word makes it a washing through which God graciously forgives our sin and grants us rebirth and a new life through the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

