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ON TAKING ONE'S DAILY DIP IN THE FONT: BAPTISMAL PIETY

The wife of a faculty colleague of mine has a serious problem with hip deterioration. Daily she goes to the local "Y" for a swim. For her a pool plunge is a matter of life and health. Most baptismal fonts are much too small for such a daily dip. At best they might serve as a bath for robin redbreast who like all birds knows how to bathe in the shallowest of pools. Whether as a pool plunge or as a sprinkling bath, a daily dip in baptism's font is a matter of spiritual life and health. Such a daily dip is ever so much more than baptismal piety if piety means only ritual practice and devotional activity associated with baptism. Such a daily dip has theological grounding in the meaning of baptism. Taking one's daily dip in the font is necessary when you have been baptized. Baptismal piety can help the daily dip take place.

I

Many people shower every day. If only they were as faithful in taking a daily dip in the font! They are not because they do not appreciate the significance of baptism for their daily lives. The church I belong to in St. Louis is a predominantly Black congregation. In the Black community the custom at funerals is to include an obituary in the order of service. An obituary is a Black literary form which outlines the significant events in the deceased's life.

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At a recent funeral service which I attended for a member of my congregation the obituary listed as the significant religious event in the life of the deceased, not the date of his baptism, but the date when he was confirmed. If there was any question about it before, now you know that the deceased was a Lutheran! In popular piety among many Lutherans confirmation has replaced baptism as the significant Christian event. It is regarded as the completion of baptism.

Lutherans are not alone in replacing baptism with other ritual acts. The Lutheran focus on confirmation is an instance of Western Christendom's varied ways of separating out the laying on of hands, anointing, and communion from the baptismal action. Of course, as is so often the case, the Lutheran focus was not Luther's. In his *Large Catechism* Luther criticized the separation of baptism from the Christian's ongoing daily life. He wrote:

. . . we regard Baptism only in the light of a work performed once for all. Indeed St. Jerome is responsible for this view, for he wrote, "Repentance is the second plank on which we must swim ashore after the ship founders" in which we embarked when we entered the Christian church. This interpretation deprives baptism of its value, making it of no further use to us.

Whatever we may think of Luther's historical assessment, many in Western Christendom have made of penance a "second plank," a sacrament in its own right with only tenuous theological connection to baptism. Many who bear Luther's name have replaced the "second plank" with a third, looking to the Lord's Supper for absolution, a still further distancing from baptism.

Luther saw clearly why baptism is so little appreciated: "...we regard Baptism only in the light of a work performed once for all." Such is the view of baptism which still prevails among many who espouse the traditional teachings about baptism. Those teachings

do invest baptism with great significance. Baptism is seen as a major event, a genuine happening with consequences for the one baptized for time and eternity. Baptism gives everything the Gospel offers. It washes sin away. It incorporates into Christ and so gives a share in his death and resurrection. It initiates one into the church as a member of the body of Christ. What baptism does it does for all --for infants, too. For baptism is God's work, not ours. It is "necessary for salvation," as the *Augsburg Confession* affirms, for "the grace of God is offered through Baptism" and those "being offered to God through baptism . . . are received into his grace."² Once bestowed baptism is irrepeatable.

Those who affirm baptism as a major, irrepeatable turning point in the life of those baptized raise serious objections to any call for rebirth after baptism. They insist you have no right to tell someone, "You must be born again," if that person has already been baptized. Such an appeal contradicts what baptism has already done for the person. But as Luther understood, if "we regard Baptism only in the light of a work performed once for all," then "our Baptism is something past which we can no longer use after falling again into sin." The preoccupation with baptism as a once for all event of the past prevents us from seeing what meaning baptism can have for being "born again" later on. It blinds us from seeing what use our baptism has for our day-to-day living. We turn instead to other resources--to confirmation, to penance and absolution, to holy communion. These are among the resources considered necessary for sustaining the Christian life into which baptism has launched us.

Not all Christians espouse the traditional views about baptism. Some Christians affirm conversion rather than baptism as the major

constitutive event of the Christian life. For them what is necessary for salvation is not baptism but rebirth. They point out that Jesus himself said: "I tell you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3) Rebirth is in fact the condition for baptism. Only believers should be baptized. Baptism is the public profession of faith and commitment by those born again who now believe. Baptism only symbolizes what has already taken place. Therefore anything other than believers' baptism, especially infant baptism, is lifeless ritual. It must not only be avoided as useless. It must be opposed because it obscures from seeing the need for the climactic event of rebirth through the Spirit of God.

The advocates of believers' baptism focus on conversion rather than baptism as the once for all event of the Christian life. In conversion faith receives everything the Gospel offers. Through conversion sins are washed away. The one born again is incorporated into Christ and shares in his death and resurrection. Rebirth initiates into the church as a member of the body of Christ. What baptismal traditionalists and believers' baptism advocates have in common is their affirmation of a once for all past event as constitutive for the Christian life. And like the baptismal traditionalists the believers' baptism people have a hard time seeing the significance of the once for all past event for the day to day Christian life. The preoccupation with the climactic conversion experience is so all-engrossing that it is impossible to see the need for regular, ongoing conversion. To be born again is so important it is difficult to see that rebirth must take place day by day. Since baptism is only a symbol, it cannot serve as a resource for the ongoing Christian life.

II

The word "initiation" is being widely used to describe the process and the rite that makes one a Christian. Why not the New Testament word, "baptism"? While "initiation" cannot be a life-long process, "baptism" dare not be considered as a one-time event of "initiation." The evangelical stress on conversion and rebirth should be instructive to those who advocate traditional teachings about baptism. It is not enough to have been baptized as a once for all event. What happened in the event of baptism must happen again and again each day of the baptized's life. But it is also not enough to have been born again as a once for all event. Rebirth must be not just the foundation experience of the Christian life but a daily reoccurrence. It is true: we must be born again--and over and over again through a lifetime of repentance and renewal. That is so because of what baptism does. Baptism gives command and promise for each day of our life.

What does baptism command and promise? First, it commands and promises dying and rebirth all life long. The preoccupation of some Christians with rebirth is appropriate. Rebirth is a major meaning of baptism. The apostle Paul reminds us: "For surely you know this: when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4) In another place he writes: "For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised him from death." (Colossians 2:12)

Because baptism involves in death, burial, and resurrection, some argue that the appropriate way to baptize is by immersion. In the *Large Catechism* Luther wrote: "(Baptism) consists in being dipped into the water, which covers us completely, and being drawn out again. These two parts, being dipped under the water and emerging from it, indicate the power and effect of Baptism, which is simply the slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new man. . . ." ⁴ People of the sixteenth century did not have much need for poolsized fonts since nearly all baptisms were of infants. But their fonts were more than bird baths; they were big enough to immerse children in water. The act of immersing symbolizes the death and burial and the rising to new life which baptism accomplishes.

But the action of baptism is not a one-time event. Luther in the *Large Catechism* goes on to say ". . .the slaying of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new man . . . must continue in us our whole life long." ⁵ For as the apostle Paul has said, because we have died with Christ, we are now to think of ourselves "as alive to God in union with Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:11) So in the *Small Catechism*, on the basis of Paul's words, Luther tells us that our baptism means

that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence. ⁶

Our baptism commands us to make happen each day the death and resurrection that happened to us in baptism. As in baptism "our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross" (Romans 6:6), so we must continually "put to death (our) human nature, with all its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

Baptism's dying and rebirth is not just command but also promise. Death and resurrection are possible each day of our lives. We can

become what we are not. According to the apostle Paul, we can "put off the old self with its habits" and can "put on the new self. . . which God, its creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, to bring (us) to a full knowledge of himself." (Colossians 3:9-10) According to the *Large Catechism*, "the longer we live the more gentle, patient, and meek we (can) become, and the more free from greed, hatred, envy, and pride."⁷ For we are not functioning with human life alone. We share in the new life to which Christ was raised from the dead. Christ now lives in us, and so we can live out his life in our own. Our baptism promises that it is so. And it is so when we trust the promise and act on it in our lives. Life is ever new.

The meaning of baptism is not exhausted by the imagery of rebirth, just as from the beginning immersion has not been the only way to baptize. Baptism can take place through pouring or sprinkling water. Just as water is wet and cleans, so baptismal water means washing and cleansing. Baptism is a bath which imparts the Holy Spirit of God. So from the beginning imposition of hands and prayer for the Holy Spirit accompanied baptism to signify its meaning. It therefore commands and promises repentance and renewal all our lives long.

In one of his short stories, John Cheever tells about the Pomeroy's and the family reunion they have at their summer place on the New England coast. To their surprise their youngest brother also comes to the reunion with his family from their home in Cleveland. "Tifty" they called him when he was a boy. For that family reunion "Tifty" was a terrible wet blanket. He refused to join in their fun and games; he wouldn't drink cocktails with them; he complained about everything; he even predicted that the summer house would be eroded

into the sea. The family members found themselves going to the beach more frequently than usual. There on the sand they would grouse and complain about how awful "Tifty" was. And then one by one they would go into the water for a swim. When they came out, they didn't complain anymore. Instead they talked kindly about "Tifty" and tried to figure out things to do that would please him. It was, the narrator comments, "as if swimming had the cleansing force claimed for baptism."⁸

The story illustrates the meaning of baptism. Baptism is for repentance and renewal and for receiving the Holy Spirit. In the second of the two accounts of Paul's conversion in the Acts of the Apostles Luke has Paul report his conversion. Paul tells us that as he lay blind in Damascus Ananias came to him, gave him back his sight, told him about the work God wanted him to do, and then said, "And now, why wait any longer? Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away by calling on his name." (Acts 22:16) Baptism is for washing away sins, and that, as Luke tells us in the first account of Paul's conversion, is that Paul might "be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:17) Christian baptism is like the baptism of John the forerunner of Jesus in that it calls to a washing of repentance; it is different from John's baptism in that it pours out not just water but the Holy Spirit. It is therefore, as the letter to Titus asserts, "the washing by which the Holy Spirit gives us new birth and new life." (Titus 3:5)

What baptism gives it commands. Ours is to be a lifetime of repentance and renewal. "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,'" Martin Luther told the world in the first of his ninety-five theses, "he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."⁹ Repentance means making a 180 degree turn in the way

we live, walking with God instead of away from Him, doing the works of the Spirit instead of the deeds of the flesh. Baptism accomplishes that for us in washing away sin and in giving us the Holy Spirit. But baptism commands us to do it again and again. "Repentance," Luther tells us in the *Large Catechism*, "is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned."¹⁰ So, he tells us "the third sacrament, formerly called Penance . . . is really nothing else than Baptism. . . . If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but produces, begins, and promotes it."¹¹

Baptism promises what it commands: the day-by-day cleansing of repentance and renewal and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Not only does it tell us we should grow up as Christians; it tells us we can. We don't have to be "children, carried by the waves, and blown about by every shifting wind of the teaching of deceitful men, who lead others to error by the tricks they invent." We can be mature, "reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature." (Ephesians 4:13-14) We can be forgiven; our life can be changed. There is always adventure ahead for us until finally we stand around the throne of God in the company of the 144,000 who have "washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14)

Along with death and resurrection and repentance and renewal in the Spirit baptism has another major meaning. That meaning accounts for the ancient and traditional custom of chrism or anointing in baptism.¹² Jesus' baptism is responsible for it. Given all the explanations for the origin of Christian baptism, it seems clear that Christians baptized not just because John did but because of

what happened to Jesus when he was baptized.¹³ Of all the evangelists Luke makes it most clear: God baptized Jesus with his Spirit, claiming him by that action as his son and so anointing him to the office of Messiah.

In Jesus' baptism the first Christians found reason and meaning for their own. To be baptized in the name of Jesus meant to be inducted into the work of carrying on the Messianic mission. They were to follow in Jesus' steps and like him announce the coming of the kingdom of God and give their lives in suffering service to the world as instruments of God's rule. So in some communities Christians anointed those baptized, the oil serving as symbol of the induction to the Messiah's work.

Baptism summons to discipleship. It requires that day by day we follow in Jesus' steps. It commands us to participate in the mission of God to the world carried out by Jesus. Therefore we are to go to people everywhere and make them disciples of Jesus, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded. (Matthew 28:19-20) We are to fill out the sufferings of Christ for the world. Like death and resurrection, like repentance and renewal, induction into Christ's mission has profound ethical implications that are not just personal but corporate and communal, indeed cosmic.

Baptism's command is also its promise. It assures us that as Jesus was faithful to his calling, so we can follow in his steps. The outcome of Christ's life of service will be ours. "If we share Christ's suffering, we will also share his glory." (Romans 8:17) Like him we will reach the thrones of glory through humble

service; we will find our lives as we lose them for others. Crucifixion is the way to resurrection and the life of the world to come. God's kingdom will come through us.

Baptism has at least one more major meaning which gives command and promise for each day of our life. It incorporates those baptized into Christ as members of the Body of which he is the head. It inducts those baptized, once strangers and foreigners, into the people of God. Through it God adopts those baptized as members of his family. Luke does not tell us whether the apostles held a eucharistic celebration immediately after the 3,000 were baptized on Pentecost. But he does tell us that those baptized continued daily in the apostles' teaching and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers. It is not at all strange that the earliest extant description of a baptismal rite culminates with the celebration of the supper of the Lord. For participation in its bread and wine is participation in the body and blood of Christ and actualizes and demonstrates the reality of Christ's body, the church, the people of God. So it is also not strange that for more than a millennium in both East and West, and in the East since then, infants who were baptized were welcomed immediately to the table of the Lord.

Baptism continues to command what it gives--participation in the body of Christ. You cannot be a Christian by yourself. Your baptismal calling is to live out your life in the Christian community. Baptism requires regular and faithful participation in that table act in which the holy communion of Christ's body is actualized and demonstrated. More, baptism requires that we share the gifts which the Spirit has given us with others in Christ's body and that we receive the gifts of others so that

the Body of Christ may be whole and grow as the Spirit intends it should. Our one baptism has therefore ever so much to tell us about what to do about our divided altars.

Also in our participation in the body of Christ baptism promises what it commands. As we trust the promise it will come true. We will be strengthened and nourished by the spiritual gifts of others. We will have gifts of our own to share.

III

Let me summarize the point I have been making. We need to take a daily dip in the baptismal font, though we have not been assisted by either traditional Christian teaching on baptism or by the emphasis on believers' baptism to see baptism's significance for our daily lives. The reason for the daily dip is because baptism gives us command and promise for each day of our life. It calls and invites us to ongoing dying and rebirth, repentance and renewal in the Holy Spirit, exercise of Christ's messianic mission and participation in the body of Christ. If the why of the baptismal dip is clear, we need to ask how do we do it.

How do we make the daily plunge into baptism's pool? How, robin-like, do we take our daily baptism bath? We do it by remembering our baptism each day so that we can be stimulated to act on its command and promise. Like the ancient psalmists who recalled God's mighty acts in Israel's history we consciously work at recalling that we are baptized and what our baptism means. We look for ways to make the connection between our present lives and the act of our baptism. We find opportunities to remember the command

our baptism lays on us. We provide resources to remember baptism's promises. What resources?

We need to identify the number and variety of resources that are already available to us. Among these are the resources in the church's liturgy. As a Lutheran my focus will be on the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, though similar resources are there in liturgies of other denominations. As Mark Bangert, a faculty colleague of mine, has pointed out to me, the key to the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is baptism. A renewed emphasis on baptism lies behind the formulations of the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness, Morning and Evening Prayer, and the Holy Eucharist.

In past Lutheran worship books the Sunday morning service without communion was a service of instruction, the Holy Communion was too readily identified with confession and forgiveness, Matins and Vespers highlighted the reading of Scripture. In the liturgical revision the Holy Communion is a genuine eucharist in which the people of God exercise their royal priesthood to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving in a holy communion around the Lord's table. Morning and Evening Prayer have been expanded to serve as vehicles for daily renewal. On Sundays the Paschal blessing in Morning Prayer makes a direct connection between our Lord's resurrection and the Christian's baptism. In Evening Prayer the theme of Christ's light connected with praise for the exodus deliverance is rooted in baptism. Use of these forms in services at church or for devotions at home can help to recall the meaning of baptism regularly.

The rite for Holy Baptism is intended for use in the congregation's Sunday worship, and instructions are given for integrating baptism

as part of the worship on special occasions, such as the Vigil of Easter, the Day of Pentecost, All Saints' Day, and The Baptism of Our Lord. An order for the Affirmation of Baptism is provided for reception into membership, in which confirmation is included as an instance of baptismal affirmation. References to baptism abound in the three-year lectionary. The lessons for Lent lend themselves to preparation for Easter baptisms. In short, there are many resources in the liturgy of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* to recall baptism and to stress its significance in the Christian life.

An additional resource for remembering baptism is Individual Confession and Forgiveness, which the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession* includes among "the genuine sacraments."¹⁴ The *Large Catechism* has already recalled for us absolution's connection to baptism. Through encouraging individual or private confession and absolution it is possible to make happen again and again the repentance and renewal in the Holy Spirit which was the gift of baptism. The counseling which is a major function of pastoral ministry today provides opportunity for individual confession and absolution. However, opportunity for confession and absolution needs to be provided apart from problems which require pastoral counseling.

It is not enough just to say that the pastor is available for individual confession and absolution. People have to be encouraged to re-enact their baptism on a periodic basis through confession and absolution. One way to introduce the practice to a congregation is to include confession and absolution as part of the Lenten preparation for Easter. Having explained the procedure beforehand, the pastor could make himself available in the church's chancel on a day or days in Holy Week. Lenten use could then be expanded

to a time in Advent and ultimately to more frequent use. Since the rite in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* doesn't do so, it would be helpful to make an explicit connection between baptism and individual confession and absolution for the penitent.

Another resource for recalling baptism is the form of morning and evening prayer which Luther advocates in his *Small Catechism*. We need to recognize the value of this resource because of its beautiful simplicity and the opportunity it provides for daily use:

In the morning, when you rise, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then kneeling or standing, say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Then you may say this prayer:¹⁵

Then follows Luther's beautiful morning prayer with its commitment to God of "body and soul and all that is mine" and its petition for angels to guard against "the wicked one." The instructions for evening prayer follow a similar format.

Luther's form of morning and evening prayer repeat on a daily basis key actions of baptism. With the sign of the cross individuals pronounce the very words of the baptismal formula on themselves and thereby make an act of commitment to God for either the day or the night that lies ahead. Faith is affirmed through the same creed spoken at baptism. The Lord's Prayer assures of the Father's presence and power. Only a little instruction is needed to encourage Christians to use the prayer forms to remember their baptism with its command and promise at the beginning and end of each day. Whatever other devotional aids are encouraged, people should be encouraged to use this one so baptism can be prominent at the beginning and end of each day.

The rite for Holy Baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* encourages certain actions and visual signs which can help to point out baptism's ongoing meaning in our daily lives. One is the laying on of hands to accompany the prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the sevenfold gifts. Another is the marking of the sign of the cross on forehead and breast, with oil for anointing the forehead. Another is a lighted candle presented to the one baptized. Though not suggested in the rite, still another is a white robe signifying the inclusion among those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The actions and signs provide ample means for instruction prior to baptism. In *By Water and the Spirit*¹⁶ Eugene L. Brand and S. Anita Stauffer have provided excellent pre-baptism instructional material.

There is validity to the concerns of those who want to assure that there is sufficient instruction prior to baptism about its meaning--for adults who are candidates for baptism and for the parents and Godparents of young children. I simply want to plead for not limiting catechesis to the time before baptism--for adults as well as children. I am arguing that baptism is not a once for all event which, once it has been performed, is an event of the past. What happened in baptism must happen over and over and over again for those baptized. And so, catechesis must be ongoing, too.

Surely it must be ongoing for children, who need to be helped to appreciate the profound meaning of their baptism. But it must be ongoing for all baptized who at each stage of their life and in their day-to-day living need to discover baptism's command and promise.

As Lutherans we have a tradition of confirmation which for pastoral reasons cannot simply be set aside. We have all the resources we need in our tradition to change its meaning. The theological booby traps in continuing confirmation can be avoided by a proper focus on baptism and accepting children as full-fledged members of the Christian community long before they are confirmed. Confirmation can become one stage in an ongoing process of catechesis, one affirmation of baptism among others, as the *Lutheran Book of Worship* affirmation rite proposes it should be. That assumes that we will not stop the catechesis at a particular age level, but will find appropriate means to continue instruction for young people and adults with the reference to baptism always clearly made, and regular opportunities for affirmation of baptism.

Besides the resources already available to us we need to be creative in finding other means to recall baptism and its significance. Some have adopted the custom of celebrating baptism birthdays in home and school and church. Such celebrations can be especially inviting to children, who are eager for annual birthday celebrations. For celebrations at home the candle presented in baptism can be lighted, the baptismal robe displayed, the certificate of baptism reviewed, and the event itself relived with invocation and sign of the cross, appropriate Scripture, confession of the Apostles' Creed, and prayer. Since gifts are often the highlight of birthdays for children, baptismal birthdays provide an excellent occasion for gifts of prayer books, Bibles, hymnals, or art objects--providing another link of daily life to baptism.

An experienced Lutheran teacher calls the attention of parish schools and Sunday Schools to a variety of ways of marking

baptismal anniversaries:

One school has initiated a program in which at the beginning of each school year, there is a study unit on Holy Baptism. The emphasis changes from year to year as a new concept is introduced and previous concepts are reviewed and enlarged. Projects which provide visual and tactual reminders of the importance of this event are worked out in the classroom: e.g., booklets, candles, plaques, crosses, symbols. The actual event is re-enacted in the classroom using dolls or flannelgraph figures or in the sanctuary by going through the order of Holy Baptism customarily used. The high point of the celebration is the recognition which takes place in the daily school worship in the sanctuary. The child may wear a chrisom as a reminder that at his baptism he put on Christ's righteousness. Some children speak to the group on the meaning of their baptism. The "baptism birthday" child kneels in prayer with the pastor or officiant at the altar rail. Always the Church in that place and at that hour joins him in praising God for his great action in Holy Baptism. Each child takes home either something which he has made or a gift¹⁷ which is a visible reminder of his birthday.

In my home congregation our Board of Education is observing baptism birthdays regularly in the services of the church. On the first Sunday of each month those whose baptismal anniversaries fall during the month are recognized during the service. Each person is presented with a simple necklace consisting of a string to which a small clam shell has been attached as a pendant. The ceremony provides opportunity to explain what baptism should mean today for the celebrants.

The rite for the Vigil of Easter in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* suggests that during the confession of the creed "the minister may sprinkle the congregation with water from the font, using a green bough."¹⁸ I was personally skeptical of the value of the traditional practice of Asperges until I experienced it during a service recalling the meaning of baptism. Several times since I have felt the gentle drops of water sprayed on my head and face

and have found it to be a moving and powerful symbol. When water makes you wet, it is difficult not to remember your baptism. Sprinkling water can be an effective tactile symbol for use with the form for Affirmation of Baptism.

Another way to recall baptism is through water made available to worshippers at the entrance to the church's nave. In our chapel we have no nave. But as you enter our chapel, right before you stands our version of a baptismal font: a wooden stump, holding a large rock, in which stands a shell filled with water. Worshippers in our chapel are encouraged to dip their thumb into the water and to trace on themselves the sign of the cross as a way to recall their baptism as they enter the chapel for worship.

The use of the sign of the cross can help to recall baptism and its meaning. The baptismal rite calls for tracing the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast of those baptized. Martin Marty has described the significance of making the sign of the cross:

This salutary act is a work of repentance; his old self has died and a new day for a new man begins. It is a mark of dedication; it quietly turns over this body from its own pursuits to God's working. Most of all, it is a mark of identification. Once the cross was signed over this body with the water and the word. A name was given. A person was dying, being buried with Christ so that he might live with him. The cross left no visible mark; its arcane, secret quality¹⁹ calls him to the act of faith afresh each day.

Creative and resourceful people can find all sorts of ways to recall baptism and to use the occasions to remember baptism's command and promise. Devotional material, like George W. Hoyer's *Child of God: The Lord Be With You*,²⁰ provide good resources. Worship centers or art objects in the home which

feature baptismal themes can help. All serve to bring about the daily dip in the font, and the end result is more than baptismal piety.

NOTES

1. *The Book of Concord*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p. 446.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
3. *Large Catechism*, *loc. cit.*
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 444-445.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 349.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
8. John Cheever, *The Stories of John Cheever* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 10.
9. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 25.
10. *Op. cit.*, p. 446.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
12. For an analysis of how anointing in baptism was done because of the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit at his baptism see Gabriele Winkler, "Considerations on a New Study of Liturgy," *Worship*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (May, 1979), pp. 244 ff.
13. See the argument by Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 126-135.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 211.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 352.
16. A student and a pastor's edition have been published by Parish Life Press, Philadelphia, in 1979.
17. Dorothy Ressmeyer Hoyer, "Growth in the Baptismal Covenant," *American Lutheran*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 5 (June, 1965), pp. 13-14.
18. See *Ministers Desk Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), p. 152.
19. Martin E. Marty, *The Hidden Discipline* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 93-94.
20. Published in St. Louis by Clayton Publishing House in 1977.