

Today is a special day for us as we welcome our Moderator the Most Rev P.C. Singh into our midst. He will be consecrating our new believer's baptism font this morning. Because of this our theme for this morning's meditation is 'Thanksgiving for the Sacrament of baptism.' In baptism we become one with Christ. There are several metaphors which we can use to understand the sacrament of baptism. A sacrament by itself is an outward sign of an inward grace. One of the key pictures is that of grafting. When a new rose plant needs to be grafted then a branch which has no life of its own is cut and grafted on to the plant with a band around it with fertilizer. This makes the new plant to bloom because it was grafted on to the live plant. In the same manner we have been grafted to the body of Christ who gives us new life.

Another picture is that of Adoption. When a baby is adopted, the baby does not make any decision, rather it is the parents who decide that they would adopt a child. In the same manner God has adopted us. Paul writing to the Ephesians reminds them, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will" (Eph. 1:4-5 NIV). God wants us to be his sons and daughters. Paul writing to the Romans also says, 'The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.' (Rom. 8:15-16 NIV). It is the Holy Spirit of God who at our baptism affirms that we are indeed the truly adopted children of God.

A third picture that can help us is that of new birth. The gift of a child is from God himself, likewise spiritual birth is also a gift of Christ. John talks about Jesus as the Word who became flesh. He was and is the creator of the world and he brings in light and life to the world. John says that when Jesus came as the light of the world to his own people they rejected him but 'to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (Jn. 1:12-13 NIV). This morning we will be witnessing several people going through the waters of baptism. People who have received Christ as their Lord and Saviour and have become the sons and daughters of Jesus not through natural descent, or human decision but born of God.

Paul writing to the Romans says that we are saved by grace and grace alone but this grace should not be taken lightly and used as a license to sin. We have died to sin and therefore we cannot live in it any longer. The fourth picture that we can use is that of dying and rising with Christ. Paul tells the Romans that through baptism we have died to sin as all who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him 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. (Rom 6:1-4). Paul then continues to say that if we have been united with him in his death then we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. Our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should be no longer slaves to sin

On this day when we consecrate our believer's baptism font may we also remember our baptismal vows, that we have died to sin and have risen with Christ. We are not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies so that we obey its evil desires, but rather we are to offer the parts of our body to him as instruments of righteousness. May we rededicate our lives to him and follow him faithfully in body, mind and in Spirit.