

FLOWING WATER, LIVING WORD:

A BAPTISMAL JOURNEY OF DISCERNING GOD'S MISSION
FOR THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

LENT 2: WORD OF SALVATION - YOU CALL US

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IN HOLY BAPTISM, THE TRIUNE GOD DELIVERS US FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL, PUTS OUR SINFUL SELVES TO DEATH, GIVES US NEW BIRTH, ADOPTS US AS CHILDREN, AND MAKES US MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH. CHRISTIANS CONTINUE IN THE COVENANT GOD MADE WITH THEM IN BAPTISM BY PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH, BY HEARING THE WORD AND RECEIVING CHRIST'S SUPPER, BY PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS IN WORD AND DEED, AND BY STRIVING FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN ALL THE WORLD.

THE USE AND MEANS OF GRACE, APPLICATION 14 AND 17C

Baptism initiates us into the shared life of God's faithful people. While union with Christ takes place at the font; the rest of one's life entails living into what it means for the baptized to share in Christ's priestly ministry. Samuel Torvend writes that baptism inaugurates an "invitation to live with the constant tension between a world in which the 'I' is at the center and the world in which the Holy Three and the neighbor pull us outward—in trusting faith toward God and in love toward one's neighbors" (*Flowing Water, Uncommon Birth*, p. 48).

In Luther's view, we are all consecrated priests through baptism (*Luther's Works* 44:127). For in Holy Baptism we are joined to the body of Christ as we serve one another and the world through our respective and differing vocations. The work of each member is of considerable value. Every baptized Christian, filled with the power and presence of God's Spirit, is called to recognize that one's work is the very means through which faith becomes active in loving service for the neighbor in need.

1 Peter 2:9: ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Galatians 3:27-28: ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

- What Biblical text or favorite hymn informs your understanding of vocation?
- What are the concrete ways that the Holy Spirit invites you to live out your baptismal vocation in daily life?
- How are we, as congregations and together as the Central States Synod, being called as the body of Christ "to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed" and to "serve all people, following the example of Jesus"? (ELW, *Affirmation of Baptism*, page 236)
- What is distinctive about your congregation's way of living into its baptismal identity? How might God be inviting us as a synod to do likewise?

Prayer

God-with-us, we give thanks that you are always for us and with us. Empowered by the gift of your Spirit in Holy Baptism, guide us to live each day with you, for you, and for others. Give us the strength to hear your persistent call and the courage to move beyond the safety of our own complacency and comfort zones as we strive to serve all in need. Help us, we pray, to boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and strive for justice and peace in all the world as we live into our respective baptismal vocations.

AMEN