

# The Gift of Baptism

“William Michael, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

It is a holy time as we gather around a new child of God and splash the water and make the sign of the cross. It is here that God claims, and promises forgiveness and salvation. What a privilege it is to be part of the Sacrament of Baptism...as pastor...as grandparent...as both.

What a privilege...and also what a responsibility. We give a variety of gifts on this day. There may be a candle or a handmade baptismal cloth ...even a faith chest from the congregation. Family may share heirlooms or other precious items. But the greatest gift we bring, whether as family or gathered community of believers, is the promise to teach the faith.

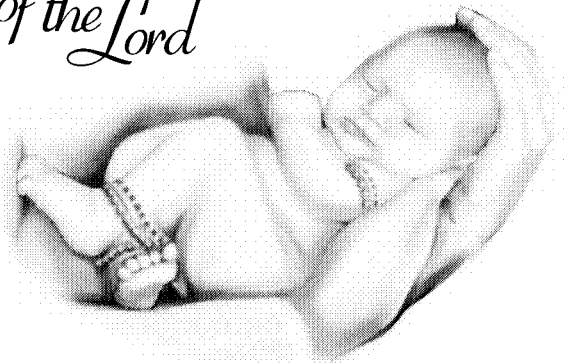
*We baptize into Christ crucified, died, and risen. That is not something to take lightly...to sleep through.*

Peter Gomes shares a baptismal tradition from the Greek Orthodox Church. After the child has been baptized, the priest takes a large pectoral cross and literally strikes the child's breast. It is done with such force that it leaves a mark...and the child might well cry. How different from our experience when we often prefer that the child sleep through the whole experience.

The symbolism of the Eastern baptism is obvious. We baptize into Christ crucified, died, and risen. That is not something to take lightly...to sleep through. Birth takes place with no little fanfare. Rebirth promises nothing different. What happens at that font will have an impact for all of eternity. And you and I are called to bear that message.

William Michael, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.

*Baptized  
in the name  
of the Lord*



Shalom,

*Heck*

Harold Usgaard  
Bishop

