

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE

General Comments:

This is the second talk given on Saturday, and the first Pastor's talk of the day. The theme for Saturday is "The New Life in Grace." The purpose of this talk is to show how God is made available to us in the Sacraments, which are signs and seals of the new life we live in grace. Indeed, these sacraments are themselves illustrative of the many ways God's spiritual presence is known in our daily lives.

Introduction:

As we begin to talk about the Sacramental life, we need to acknowledge that it is life related to the Sacraments. Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." Frederick Buechner suggests, "A sacrament is when something holy happens. It is transparent time, time which you can see through to something deep inside." Both are saying similar things: "**a sacrament is an event through which we perceive (sign) a deeper reality, which at least for a moment make us different (seal), i.e., we are changed.**"

What is understood, but not said is that it is God who does this, comes to us, who claims us, who changes us in these events. **It is not so much what we do as what God does to connect with us.** "Here," says God, "is a place for you and me to meet. Here is where I can connect my life with yours." There are two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are signs of God's grace to us. Participation in and around these events enables us to experience and/or re-experience that great grace.

1. Baptism

- A. **Baptism is our adoption into the same family (in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).** That makes us truly brothers and sisters with the same last name (the Trinity). Martin Luther whenever he was worried or distressed would repeat the Latin phrase: "Baptismus sum." (I am baptized; I belong to *God*. *God* has never yet lost anything that belongs to him.).
- B. **Baptism is our ordination into the "priesthood of all believes."** As baptism was ordination for Jesus, so it is for us. We are commissioned for service after the model of Jesus.
- C. **Baptism is a sign of the incredible gospel of God's love.** We baptize children, who are the most self-centered beings on earth. They truly care only about their own needs, yet God claims them. If God can claim them, there is hope for us! That fact reminds us that **our salvation is dependent on how God feels about us, not how we feel about God. And Jesus Christ is how God feels about us!** Baptism lays an obligation upon us to teach and share the gospel with all of God's children, with all who are baptized, whether they are 5 or 50. All of this is in response to the one who claims us with undying love. But baptism is once for all; the other sacrament is the repeatable one.

2. The Sacrament of the Meal

- A. The sacrament of the meal has several names: the Lord's Supper, Communion, and Eucharist. **The Lord's Supper reminds us that Jesus is host,** that we meet him, that our eyes are opened, that he suffered and died to forgive us, that we are made righteous because he eats with us.
- B. **Communion reminds is that we are linked with Jesus** (I am the vine. . .), that he nourishes us as a vine nourishes the branches. It reminds us that we are also linked with one another.
- C. **Eucharist means "thanksgiving." It is the celebration of God's great love for us, a meal eaten in anticipation of the great banquet of the Lamb.**
- D. The miracle of the sacrament said Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century church father) is not how the bread and wine are changed or not changed. The miracle is that this group of people, so diverse in background, politics, theology, education, interests, and life-style are made one body, because they eat from one loaf and one cup. **"The Eucharist is dangerous food, because you are what you eat. And since you eat the body of Christ, you are the Body of Christ in the world."**

3. Sacramental Living

- A. Most of all, the sacrament is a model of how we are to live: we are to take what God gives us with thanksgiving and freely share it with one another. It reminds us of what Buechner said about a "...transparent time, time which you can see through to something deep inside." It reminds us of all the various ways in our daily life that we encounter God's grace:
- 1) in such a simple things as a shared meal where we pray "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest. . ."
 - 2) or the profound experience of the care for us of another human being.
 - 3) personal illustrations of sacramental moments

Conclusion:

And why would God so present himself to us? Why would Christ seek to meet us, claim us, serve us, free us from our sins? It is simple: **It is because God loves you!**