

## The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

### 1. The Nature of Baptism

First

*What is Baptism?*

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's word.

*Which is that word of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." [Matt. 28:19].

#### **239. What does the word baptize mean?**

Baptize means to apply water by immersing, washing, pouring, and the like.

832 **Mark 7:4** When they [the Pharisees] come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing [baptizing] of cups, pitchers, and kettles.

Note: To baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11) means to "pour out" the Spirit (Acts 1:5 and Acts 2:17-18).

#### **240. What is so special about the water of Baptism?**

"It is nothing else than a divine water, not that the water in itself is nobler than other water but that God's Word and commandment are added to it" (Large Catechism IV, 14).

#### **241. Who instituted Holy Baptism?**

God Himself instituted Baptism, for our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His church to baptize all nations.

833 **Matt. 28:19-20** Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

#### **242. What does it mean to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"?**

It means that in Baptism, God, the Holy Trinity, receives me into communion or fellowship with Himself.

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

### 243. Who is to baptize?

Normally the called ministers of Christ are to baptize, but in cases of emergency and when no pastor is available, any Christian should baptize.

834 **1 Cor. 4:1** Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (NKJV).

Note: For a short form of Baptism in cases of emergency, see the end of this section.

### 244. Who is to be baptized?

"All nations" are to be baptized, that is, all people, young and old.

### 245. What distinction is to be made in baptizing?

A. Those who can receive instruction are to be baptized after they have been instructed in the main articles of the Christian faith.

835 **Acts 2:38-39** Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-for all whom the Lord our God will call."

836 **Acts 2:41** Those who accepted his message were baptized.

Bible narratives: The Ethiopian was instructed before he was baptized (Acts 8:26-39). The jailer was instructed before he was baptized (Acts 16:25-33).

B. Little children should be baptized when they are brought to Baptism by those who have authority over them.

837 **Mark 10:13-15** People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

### 246. Why are babies to be baptized?

Babies are to be baptized because

A. they are included in the words "all nations";

838 **Matt. 28:19** Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

839 **Acts 2:38-39** Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.

B. Jesus especially invites little children to come to Him;

840 **Luke 18:15-17** People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have Him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child, will never enter it."

C. as sinners, babies need what Baptism offers;

841 **John 3:5-6** No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

842 **Eph. 2:3** Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

D. babies also are able to have faith.

843 **Matt. 18:6** If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Bible narrative: John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (Luke 1:15), and even before birth (1:41-44).

### 247. Why does the church encourage the use of sponsors at Baptisms?

Sponsors witness that those who receive this sacrament have been properly baptized. They also pray for them and in the case of children, help with their Christian upbringing, especially if they should lose their parents. Only those of the same confession of faith should be sponsors.

844 **Matt. 18:16** "Every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

845 **Eph. 4:16** From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

## 2. The Blessings of Baptism

Second

*What benefits does Baptism give?*

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

*Which are these words and promises of God?*

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" [Mark 16:16].

### **248. What great and precious things are given in Baptism?**

Baptism

A. works forgiveness of sins;

846 **Acts 2:38** Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

847 **Acts 22:16** Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away.

B. rescues from death and the devil;

848 **Rom. 6:3, 5** Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ... If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection.

849 **Gal. 3:27** All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

850 **Col. 1:13-14** He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Compare Col. 2:11-12.)

155. gives eternal salvation.

851 **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

852 **1 Peter 3:21** This water [of Noah's flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

853 **Titus 3:5** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

### **249. If Christ has already won forgiveness and salvation for us and gives us all this by grace alone, why do we still need Baptism?**

Christ has indeed won full forgiveness and salvation for the whole human race with His perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He distributes this same forgiveness in Baptism. (Baptism is a means of grace.)

854 **1 Cor. 6:11** You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

855 **Titus 3:5-7** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

### 250. To whom does Baptism give all these blessings?

Baptism gives these blessings to all who believe God's saving promises.

856 **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

### 251. Is it possible for an unbaptized person to be saved?

It is only unbelief that condemns. Faith cannot exist in the heart of a person who despises and rejects Baptism against better knowledge. But those who believe the Gospel, yet die before they have opportunity to be baptized are not condemned.

857 **Mark 16:16** Whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Bible narratives: The Pharisees and experts in the Law in unbelief rejected John's baptism (Luke 7:30). The thief on the cross was saved without Baptism (Luke 23:39-43).

### 252. Why are we not to seek a "baptism with the Holy Spirit" in addition to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism?

Beyond sacramental Baptism we are to seek no other "baptism" because

A. there is no other God-given Baptism today beside the Sacrament of Holy Baptism;

858 **Eph. 4:5** One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Note: The "instruction about baptisms" (Heb. 6:2) does not mean that there are several Christian baptisms, but that the one true Baptism must be clearly distinguished from the many religious washings which were common in the ancient world (see for instance Mark 7:4).

B. the sacrament is not a water-only or a Spirit-only baptism, but a water-and-Spirit Baptism

859 **John 3:5** No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

860 **Titus 3:5** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Note: Matt. 3:11 speaks of baptizing "with water" and "with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The difference here is not between sacramental Baptism and some sort of "Spirit baptism," but between the preparatory mission and baptism of John the Baptist and the full, permanent mission and Baptism of Jesus Christ. While John's baptism also gave the forgiveness of sins, it was different in that it pointed forward to the redemptive work of the Savior.

C. the special signs granted by the Holy Spirit were not another "baptism," but they proved the truth and power of the apostles' preaching.

861 **Acts 19:6** When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

862 **2 Cor. 12:12** The things that mark an apostle-signs, wonders and miracles-were done among you with great perseverance.

Note: See question 164.

### 3. The Power of Baptism

Third

*How can water do such great things?*

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus chapter three:

"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." [Titus 3:5-8]

#### **253. How does baptismal water work forgiveness of sins, rescue from death and the devil, and give eternal salvation?**

God's words of institution put these great blessings into Baptism. Faith, which trusts this word of God in the water, takes the blessings out and makes them our own.

863 **Eph. 5:26** Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

864 **Gal. 3:26-27** You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

#### **254. Why do the Scriptures call Baptism the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit?**

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit works faith and so creates in us new spiritual life with the power to overcome sin.

865 **Rom. 6:6** Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (NKJV).

866 **Titus 3:5-8** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.

# An Explanation of The Small Catechism

## 4. What Baptism Indicates

Fourth

*What does such baptizing with water indicate?*

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

*Where is this written?*

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: "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. 6:4].

### 255. What is the Old Adam?

The Old Adam is the corrupt and evil nature that we inherit because of Adam's fall into sin.

867 **Eph. 4:22** Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (NKJV).

### 256. How is this Old Adam to be drowned in us?

The Old Adam is to be drowned by daily contrition (sorrow for sins) and repentance (faith), by which we resist and overcome evil desires.

868 **Luke 9:23** If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

869 **Gal. 5:24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

### 257. What is the new man?

The new man is the new spiritual life and nature, created in us by the washing of rebirth.

870 **2 Cor. 5:17** If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

### 258. How is this new man to emerge and arise?

The new man emerges and arises as we daily live and grow before God in true faith and good works.

871 **Eph. 4:24** Put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness (NKJV).

## An Explanation of The Small Catechism

### 259. How does Baptism indicate the daily drowning of the Old Adam and the emergence of the new man?

By Baptism we have been made to share in Christ's death and resurrection. As He has buried our sin, so we too can and must daily overcome and bury it. And as He is risen from the dead and lives, so we too can and must daily live a new life in Him.

872 **Rom. 6:3-4** Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus 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.

### 260. With which words do we regularly remember our Baptism?

The words "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" come from the baptismal command (Matt. 28:19) and are known as the Trinitarian Invocation. By repeating these words, in church or by ourselves, we recall, claim, and confess before heaven, earth, and hell all that God the Holy Trinity has given us in our Baptism.

873 **Rom. 8:38-39** I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Bible narrative: The three persons of the blessed Trinity revealed themselves at the Baptism of our Lord (Luke 3:21-22).

Note: The Trinitarian Invocation may be accompanied by the sign of the cross, made at our Baptism upon our foreheads and hearts to mark us as "redeemed by Christ the crucified."

### A Short Form for Holy Baptism in Cases of Emergency

In urgent cases, in the absence of a pastor, any Christian may administer Holy Baptism. Take water, call the person by name, and apply the water, saying: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

If there is time, Baptism may be preceded by the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.