

The Call of Our Baptism

by Fr. Mark Pavlik
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Is one of your new year's resolutions to learn more about your faith? If so, you are in luck! This week, we are going to begin a six-month project in which we will highlight the seven sacraments of the Church. There will be a bulletin article every few weeks that highlights a particular sacrament and a bit of the theology about it. At the same time, the curio cabinet in the ambulatory here at St. Olaf will have a display that will also showcase religious items that pertain to that sacrament.

Baptism is the first of three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life. It is the first step in our Christian journey and opens us to receive the other six sacraments. It is through baptism that we are claimed for Christ and having been baptized, we no longer belong to ourselves, but to Christ.

The principal effects of Baptism are purification and new birth. Through it, we are freed from all sin and are reborn as God's children. We become members of Christ's body, are incorporated into His Church, and are made sharers in the Church's mission. We also enter into the Lord's suffering and death, as we read in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life" (Romans 6:3-5)

As baptized persons, we share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. To be a "prophet" means that we are to talk to others about God with our words and deeds as we respond to our call to evangelize. To be a "priest" is to talk to God about others, by our life of prayer and devotion. To be a "king", is to live on earth with the dignity of a King, always remembering the tremendous value we have because of Christian faith, which should lead us to live a life worthy of our call.

By our baptism, we receive the seal of baptism, which is an indelible spiritual mark on our soul that signs us for Christ. No sin we commit can ever erase this mark. We are permanently and irrevocably claimed for Jesus Christ.

This weekend as we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and recall the beginning of his ministry following his baptism in the Jordan, it is a chance for each one of us to ponder our own faith and our call to ministry that began with our own baptism and continues to grow and develop. How do you manifest the ministry of your baptism? What challenges and joys do you find in living out your faith in the world?