

1 **Evangelical Lutheran Worship Volume 2**
The Christian Life: Baptism and Life Passages
Session 4: Welcome to Baptism

Pastor Bruce Dillman

2 **Martin Luther's Morning Prayer**

(Make the sign of the holy cross and say:)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

3 **The Christian Life: Baptism & Life Passages (ELW Vol 2) 3-3-3**

- 1 • Baptism: Wellspring of the Christian Life (#1, Mar 5)
 - The Place of Baptism in the Church's Worship (#2, Mar 12)
 - The Shape & Practice of Holy Baptism (#3, Mar 19)
 - No class Mar 26
- 2 • Welcome to Baptism (#4, Apr 2)
 - Affirmation of Baptism (#5, Apr 9)
 - Corporate & Individual Confession and Forgiveness (#6, Apr 16)
 - No class Apr 23
- 3 • Healing (#7, Apr 30)
 - Funeral (#8, May 7)
 - No class May 14
 - Marriage (#9, May 21)

4 **Introduction**

- In most Christian traditions where infant baptism has been the primary way that people have been received into the church, conversion is considered to be a gradual process.
- Lutherans pride themselves in educating children in their faith: Sunday school, 1st communion programs, vacation Bible school, church camps, children's choirs, youth group, etc.
- By high school age, time to "Confirm."

5 **Introduction**

- But typically, congregations have been slow to develop programs for older youth and adults who enter the church and approach baptism later in life, and who come with little or no background in the Christian faith.
- Churches have been slow to offer resources to those who have not yet developed a basic vocabulary for the faith.
- The gaps between what many people need and what many congregations offer to adult newcomers seem to be widening even further.

6 **21st century realities--**

- Many communities have grown more diverse.
- Fewer people are fluent in the biblical tradition.
- Many people in our times describe themselves as spiritual but not religious.
- People do not feel tied to neighborhoods and traditions of previous generations.

In sum, newcomers to a congregation may know little about Christianity, that denomination or congregation and have little or no desire for lengthy Bible study.

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7 **Making Disciples, Forming Faith**

- As we move into what many are calling a "post-Christian era," perhaps helpful to look back to the "pre-Christian era" (before Christianity became the religion of the state under Constantine in 313 A.D.)
- "Catechumenate" was a process of formation and education leading to baptism and integration into the Christian community.
- Early "catechumenate" developed into "catechisms" to teach the faith. (Lutheran SC and LC)

8 **Renewed Interest in a Baptismal Process**

- Most people recognize that the overall cultural climate in North America has become less overtly Christian in recent decades.
- Increase of "unchurched" and "dechurched"
- When people show an interest in church, they come with little or no sustained exposure to the Christian faith and its teachings (quote from Loren Mead "The Once and Future Church")

9 **Renewed Interest in a Baptismal Process**

- RCC has taken the process most seriously in developing "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults" (RCIA), but similar processes developed in the Episcopal Church, United Methodist Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).
- ELCA has been in an exploratory phase regarding baptismal formation processes, but resources exist.
- Baptismal renewal has followed liturgical renewal in ELCA.

10 **Shape of a Baptismal Process**

- Recognition of baptismal conversion as a process that occurs over some length of time, rather than being a single event.
- Consists of several phases or periods, with liturgical rites marking movement from one phase to another.
- "Welcome to Christ: A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate (1997) names four phases: Inquiry, Catechumenate, Baptismal Preparation, Baptismal Living.

11 **Inquiry**

- Congregation offers several inquirers' classes or meetings so that those interested in church membership may come and ask questions about God, the church, and be invited into a process of faith formation
- Process of faith formation: scriptures, patterns of prayer, integrating faith into service to others.
- When an individual is ready to proceed, they are invited to take part in an order of welcome that takes place within a regular worship service of the congregation.

12 **Catechumenate (training, education or formation)**

- Period of time determined by the congregation where "catechumens" meet with sponsors, pastors and leaders who use Scripture (perhaps the lectionary) to teach Christian faith. (Some churches have them leave after the Word portion of Sunday worship for study)
- 10 commandments and Creeds are studied during this time, as are ways to live lives of Christian service.

- "Rite of Enrollment", usually on 1st Sunday of Lent, concludes this phase.

13 **Baptismal Preparation**

- During the 6 weeks of Lent, the "candidates," as they are now called, continue to meet in small groups with sponsors and pray, examine the Lord's Prayer (which they memorize) and Apostles' Creed (which they learn is a summary of trinitarian faith).
- Prepare for the Easter Vigil, where the candidates are baptized.

14 **Baptismal Living**

- Continue to meet during the Easter season, as a time of reflection on having received both of the sacraments.
- The early church called this the time of "mystagogy" or being led into a deeper appreciation of what it means to be joined through baptism to the paschal mystery (the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ).
- Not a time of learning so much as a time of reflection.
- Also develop a life of discipleship (vocation, service, etc.)
- Liturgical rite (Pentecost) of "Affirmation of Christian Vocation."

15 **ELW: "Welcome to Baptism"**

- Rite of ELCA to use with adults and older children who are involved in an instructional process leading toward baptism; can also be used when parents of an infant to be baptized are going through instructional preparation.
- "Welcome to Baptism": meant to convey that although the sacrament of baptism takes place on a single day, the journey to and from that day is rich and varied.
- Public acknowledgment of the journey of baptism where the assembly can pledge their support.

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25 **Other Services Related to Baptismal Formation**

- Provisional orders in "Welcome to Christ."
- Whether or not specific orders of worship are used with those being welcomed into a deeper exploration of Christian faith and life, it is important for congregations to be mindful of the presence of these people and their need for support throughout the process of becoming a full part of the Christian community.