

The Baptism of our Lord

THE LORD'S PRAYER – THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be Thy name.

This is, indeed, somewhat difficult, and not expressed in good German. For in our mother tongue we would say, “Heavenly Father, help us in every way so that Your name may be holy.”

“But what does it mean to pray that His name may be holy? Is it not holy already?”

Answer, “Yes, it is always holy in its nature, but in our use it is not holy.” For God’s name was given to us when we became Christians and were baptized [Matthew 28:19]. So we are called God’s children and have the Sacraments, by which He connects us with Himself so that everything that belongs to God must serve for our use [Romans 8:16–17].

Now, here is a great need that we ought to be most concerned about. This name should have its proper honor; it should be valued holy and grand as the greatest treasure and holy thing [Heiligtum; relic] that we have. As godly children we should pray that God’s name, which is already holy in heaven, may also be and remain holy with us upon earth and in all the world.

“But how does it become holy among us?”

Answer, as plainly as it can be said: “When both our doctrine and life are godly and Christian.” Since we call God our Father in this prayer, it is our duty always to act and behave ourselves as godly children, that He may not receive shame, but honor and praise from us...

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

So, and even much more, you must honor Baptism and consider it glorious because of the Word. For God Himself has honored it both by words and deeds. Furthermore, He confirmed it with miracles from heaven. Do you think it was a joke that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty [Luke 3:21–22]?

I encourage again that these two—the water and the Word—by no means be separated from each other and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as the water that the servant cooks with. It may indeed be called a bath-keeper’s baptism. But when the Word is added, as God has ordained, it is a Sacrament. It is called Christ’s Baptism. Let this be the first part about the holy Sacrament’s essence and dignity...

So you see plainly that there is no work done here by us, but a treasure, which God gives us and faith grasps [Ephesians 2:8–9]. It is like the benefit of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, which is not a work, but a treasure included in the Word. It is offered to us and received by faith. Therefore, the “new spirits” violate us by shouting against us as though we preach against faith. For we alone insist upon it as being so necessary that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed.

So we have these three parts, which must be known about this Sacrament, especially that God’s ordinance is to be held in all honor. The Sacrament alone would be enough, even though it is an entirely outward thing. It is like the commandment “Honor your father and your mother,” which refers to bodily flesh and blood. In these words we do not think about the flesh and blood, but God’s commandment in which flesh and blood are included, and on account of which the flesh is called father and mother. So even if we had only these words, “Go and baptize,” or such, it would be necessary for us to accept them and do them as God’s ordinance. Now there is not only God’s commandment and injunction here, but also the promise. Because of this, Baptism is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained. It is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot understand it. But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not lacking, but this is lacking: people who grasp it and hold it firmly.

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