

A Recipe for Daily Living

Epiphany 1 C

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

**Rev. Dr. Laura Blazek
St. Michael's Episcopal Church
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Reading today's Gospel about John baptizing Jesus in the River Jordan, got me thinking about baptism in general. My understanding of baptism began in confusion as my father was Roman Catholic and my mother was Southern Baptist. Because of their divided views on how baptism had to be done for it to "take" or be real, I was both sprinkled with holy water as an infant and dunked in the baptismal pool sitting high at the front of a Baptist church. In college, I found myself sitting in an Episcopal confirmation class with the priest looking at me quizzically as I shared the stories of my baptisms. It was there that my confusion became an epiphany as I realized that the sacrament of baptism was more than the method. It doesn't matter whether you are sprinkled, immersed, or have the sanctified water poured over your head because the water is an outward sign of an inward, spiritual grace that gives us new life.

Our catechism describes this grace as a union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and a new life in the holy spirit. We are beloved children of God, accepted by God as we are. God holds onto us with a fierce love whispering in our ear that we are his child with whom he is well pleased. In our baptism, we join hands with the Holy Trinity- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Baptisms and even the occasions when we renew our Baptismal Covenant are times of celebration and great joy. But how often do we think about the words spoken and the promises made once we walk back into our everyday life?

Living out our baptismal covenant as we go through the ordinary, mundane parts of life is one of those challenges we face as we walk the way of love that Christ has called us to walk. Baptism is a blessing, but it is also a responsibility and an invitation to help build the Kingdom of God. Consider what our world might look like or how our lives would be different if we used our baptismal covenant as a recipe for daily living saying to ourselves, "Today, I will...."

Today, I will...continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. The apostles' teaching is the words of The Apostles' Creed which is a statement of our belief in God. Boiled down into simplicity, it is I believe in the Holy Trinity- God the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and God the Holy Spirit. Stepping out into the world with this belief firmly rooted in your being can allow you to see the world in a whole new way. The Holy Trinity is at work in the world. Once

we begin seeing the Holy Trinity in the world around us, we begin to sense a fellowship where we are part of something greater than ourselves.

Today, I will... continue in the breaking of bread and the prayers. Breaking bread together at Christ's table during Holy Eucharist allows us to support one another in our life through Christ. Using the daily office as a structure for your prayers can help ground you as you are faced with decisions and choices throughout the day. I can already hear the mental groans out there, "*But Morning Prayer is sooo loooong!*" If you open your prayer book to page 136, you will find daily devotions for individuals and families which are simple and short. Consider changing it up by using the New Zealand Prayer Book or anyone of several daily prayer options. If your prayer book isn't handy, use an Anglican rosary. Daily prayer doesn't have to be and shouldn't be a burden. It is time of joy spent in communication and relationship with God. God wants us to have a relationship with him and with each other.

Today, I will... persevere in resisting evil, and whenever I fail, I will repent and return to the Lord. Life is a constant challenge to walk the way of love. Temptations abound. And we will all, at one time or another, fail to resist the siren songs of the world that cause us to fall into sin. None of us are immune. But we are called to strive to do our best to follow Christ's command to love one another and to love God. We need to acknowledge when we messed up through apology, asking forgiveness, and making things right to the best of our ability.

Today, I will... proclaim the Good News of Christ in all that I do and in the words I speak. Ultimately, this is about acts of random kindness that share the light and love of Christ and treating others as you want to be treated. Daily living of our baptismal promises means that unconditional love is the driving force behind all that we do and say. The love of Christ that fills us gives us strength to find the courage to stand up for others. To walk with them on their own journey and encourage them along the way. Our choices matter and should always be considered through the lens of agape love.

Today, I will... seek and serve Christ in everyone, loving my neighbor as myself. As the song goes, "They will know we are Christians by our love." The unconditional love that we receive through our baptism is meant to be shared. This is a sacrificial love that requires courage and strength. Taking time to see Jesus in every person you interact with during the day changes your view of them or at least allows you take things in stride. For example, seeing Jesus in the person who cut you off while driving can bring an inner calm because it is harder to fall into road rage if you are looking at Jesus. Acts of unconditional love bring us together. They help others to believe that they are also a beloved child of God with whom God is well pleased.

Today, I will... strive for justice and peace among all people. How much better would our world be if everyone started their day with this conviction? There is so much injustice in our world that the mere thought of striving for justice can seem overwhelming. Perhaps, we even think that we can't make a difference, our contribution is too small. But it is important to remember that, like acts of random kindness, when we stand up for justice, it makes an impact in some way to someone. Justice and peace go hand in hand. Where there is justice born out of unconditional

love for our neighbor, there is peace. And there can't be true peace without justice for all. Today, I will... respect the dignity of every human being. If we are to live this part of our baptismal promise, then we must see everyone as a beloved child of God. While this may seem easier to do than performing acts of justice, it goes beyond mere acceptance and acts of charity. It is about being intentional in our interactions so that the person across from us feels seen, heard, and loved. Taking time to be present with one another so that we find common ground where we can share our experiences together. Accepting each person for who they are rather than trying to stuff them into a mold of who we think they should be. Believing that everyone is worthy of the love of God, of honor and respect, and then ensuring that our actions speak louder than words.

Baptism isn't just a one-time thing; it is a way of living. The "today, I will" recipe seems complex, but it becomes simpler by remembering that it is all about unconditional love. As we renew our baptismal vows, let the words fill your soul. Make them part of your daily life. Let the unconditional love that God has for you become the driving force behind your words and actions. Know that you aren't alone as you try to fulfill the promises you make. Let this knowledge give you hope and courage. Together, and with God's help, we can build an inclusive world filled with the love and peace of God.

Amen.