

**“You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and  
marked as Christ’s own for ever.” Amen**

The emphasis during Epiphany upon Baptism is not only about Jesus’ Baptism. His Baptism is retold during Epiphany to remind us that just as Jesus’ ministry began with his Baptism, our participation in Jesus’ ministry—through our varied ministries—also began with our own Baptism. For in our Baptism we have been “sealed by the Holy Spirit...and marked as Christ’s own for ever.”

This is a cold time of year in Wilmington to think about Jesus’ Baptism in the River Jordan, much less contemplate our own. The only images that readily come to mind for me are the news accounts of polar bear plunges that sound equally brave and foolish. And we, of course, don’t dunk babies in ice water during Epiphany Baptisms. What the season of Epiphany encourages us, however, is to contemplate in such moments of worship our own Baptisms, when we’re called to ask whether our life as “Christ’s own” has been, or indeed should be, most like the snug infant during Sunday worship or more like an occasional plunge into the icy waters of a mid-winter dunk in the waters off Wrightsville Beach.

For the mark with which we have been in Baptism designated as “Christ’s own for ever” is the sign of the cross. And there are questions included in the service for baptism that are best answered in community—thus Baptism is the rite of initiation into the community of the church, within which our spiritual journey will be undertaken, and within which such questions are to be faced.

And these are questions that Baptism assumes can best be answered by those fed through the Eucharist, which gives us “strength and courage to love and serve” God compassionately. In Baptism we have been marked with new life and reconciling love of the very one who compassionately made us in God’s own image. Sealed by the Holy Spirit, we are already God’s own, for ever.

In next week’s column I’ll be writing a bit about Confirmation. In addition, if you are a tween or teen reading these columns and/or a parent of a tween or teen, please know that I’ll be leading a Confirmation Class entitled “I Will With God’s Help” for those who may be interested. The class may or may not result in a decision for confirmation; however, it could be well spent time with me as your rector and sharing conversation about our journeys together as God’s Beloved. This is a confirmation curriculum developed by The Episcopal Church.

*“Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saint’s Day and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (this upcoming Sunday). BCP p.312*

*If you or a member of your family has not been baptized and would like to talk about ‘what this means’ in more depth, please make an appointment with me and/or St. John’s Associate Rector, Eric Moulton.*

*Blessed Love blessing each of you, Nancy+*