

Reformation Reflections

BAPTISM

On a chilly Sunday morning in November, new parents Hans and Margarethe brought their infant son to church to be baptized. He had just been born the day before, the 10th, and yet here they were.



It was a special day at the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul that year in 1483. It was the feast of St. Martin of Tours. And as the day-old son of Hans and Margarethe was baptized, he received his name in honor of that blessed saint – Martin.



Years later, this would be a day that Martin Luther would hold most dear. Not because he had any memory of it but simply because of the wondrous gift he'd come to understand he'd been given that day by God.

He knew that there in the water of baptism, the Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — made His presence known through the spoken Word and decisively acted, claiming young Martin for Himself.

It was grace, pure and simple. **God's Riches At Christ's Expense** poured out abundantly upon day-old Martin, along with all who encounter the living God in baptism. As St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (6:3-4).

It is well known that in moments of great stress and anxiety, Martin would comfort himself — sometimes quite loudly! — by repeating to himself the words, “I am baptized! I am baptized!”

Here's how he explained it in the *Large Catechism*:

Thus we must regard baptism and put it to use in such a way that we may draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and say: “But I am baptized! And if I have been baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.”

Indeed! What comfort we have knowing that our salvation is in God's hands and not ours. What peace is ours resting in forgiveness of sins and new life that is ours in Christ. What joy we have in those three simple words: “I am baptized!”

I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the ✠ life of the world to come. Amen.

(Nicene Creed)

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