

**January 17, 2010**

**Acts 2**

**Baptism: Following in the Apostle's Teaching**

Let us pray:

Everlasting God, we your gathered people are your Church, for without us the Church has no reality: guide us as we seek to discover the gifts you have given each of us that we might minister to others in your name through Jesus Christ, our Savior, the light of the World.\* Amen

Last week we began our sermon series on baptism as a way of life. The core of our proclamation was that Jesus was baptized with the water and the Holy Spirit. On that note he began his life's ministry of love which took him to the cross for us. We remembered how in the act of baptism on "baptizo" we are immersed into God's love, forgiveness and eternal union with God and the Saints. Through water, the Word and the Holy Spirit we are enrolled into a glorious yet mysterious relationship with the Most High from which we can never fall. God has befriended our soul for all time – we are his! What does this mean to our every day existence?

Ever wonder why your parents, grandparents, any adult in your life made you go to Sunday School and Church? I remember the days when the “church bus” would pull into the church parking lot crowded with people seeking church, seeking their baptismal call to God and hardly understanding why. Within the sacrament of baptism congregations, parents, family and friends promise to hold the baptized to the call of God in this world. While baptism is a glorious entry into an eternity long relationship with God, the engagement with the baptismal vows does not stop here. The vow to continue in the Apostle’s teaching and fellowship comes straight from Scripture as found in Acts 2: 42:

***“They spent their time in learning from the Apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and in prayers.”***

***Acts 2: 42***

Acts 2 describes the response of the baptized, the joy of the baptized, and the work of the baptized because of their love for Christ Jesus. These verses summarize a life pattern for Christians living out their baptism. The early Christians included a shared life of awe and wonders; believing together, sharing the Gospel message spending time in study and in the Temple, breaking bread at the altar together, praising God, loving each other and forgiving each other. Their baptism called the Christians to be a true

Community in Christ. Scripture tells us that this added to their numbers.

How do we measure up to this pattern of living as the baptized children of God, living out our baptismal calling?

The story of Higa San's Christian Journey is a remarkable example of one man's joy in his baptism, a joy taught to him by a community of lepers; a community which loses the ability to share in the Eucharist, a tangible celebration of their baptism because as lepers, they had no ordained clergy to establish a church in their community. When his disease was arrested and he was able to return to the outside world his first request was to attend church and receive communion. Such excitement to share the day, the meal the love of God with others! Such joy at greeting each other with "songs, hymns and spiritual songs". Such desire to put aside the world so that hearing and learning the Word of God comes before the temptations of the world! Such Sabbath rest, remembering the blessings of baptism together as a means of grace and celebrating that grace with each other at the altar of Christ!

Last week we remembered that in the water and the Word through God's Spirit we are named and claimed as His. This week, my friends, we

are reminding ourselves to live in community honoring the one who died for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Through our baptism we are called and empowered to be him in this world and that begins in the church.

Let us pray:

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, so we may be of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.\*\* Amen.

\* Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, **Women's Uncommon Prayers,**” page 313

\*\* “For Unity of the Church” from the **Book of Common Prayer,** p 818