

1 PETER 3:19-22 BAPTIZED INTO THE RESURRECTION

¹⁹ ...he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

In the Episcopal Church: *The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.* One of the 2 biblical sacraments is Baptism. While the outward and visible sign of baptism is water, the inward and spiritual grace is *union with Christ in his death and resurrection, birth into God's family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit* (*Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 857-8).

It is not the getting wet, our even belonging to the institutional church that was prefigured by the flood, rather it was the dying to sin (and self), symbolized by immersion in water and the rising from death and the grave (with Christ), to a Kingdom life lived in union with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can this be a pledge if it is all up to God? It is a pledge because we must participate as willing subjects of baptism. It is a pledge because baptism is our public proclamation that God is our Father and that we are members of his family and royal citizens of his Kingdom. In the liturgy for Baptism, the minister declares that the person having been baptized is *sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever* (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308). A seal is a peculiar mark that is both a guarantee of ownership and a public indication of membership. May we always wear it with honor and thanksgiving.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon me the forgiveness of sin, and have raised me to the new life of grace. Sustain me, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give me an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen. (mod. fr. *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308)