

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

What Jesus does, He does for us. When Jesus is baptized, he does it “*to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matt 3:15), not for Himself — He was already righteous — but for us sinners.

When Jesus is tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He does it for us, continuing as a man to do the righteousness that ordinary mortals like us cannot do, yet showing Himself by this temptation to be like us in every respect except for sin — that we might know that this High Priest, who will offer up the perfect Lamb as a sacrifice for sin, knows our every weakness and sympathizes with us (Heb. 4:15). When Jesus takes on our “*flesh and blood,*” He does it not only that He might be “*made like [us] His brothers, in every respect,*” suffering with us as He was tempted, but also that He might suffer for us, making Himself a “*merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God ..., [making] propitiation for the sins of the people*” (Heb 2:14, 17-18).

What Jesus does, He does for us — both the Old Testament and the New record it: “*he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities*” (Is. 53:5). He “*was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*” (Rom. 4:25). And as we heard on Wednesday, it was “*for our sake [that God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor. 5:21).

What Jesus does, He does for us — not only offering up the sacrifice for the whole world, but also directing the blessings of that sacrifice to us individually. (1 John 2:2). Thus Jesus is not only baptized Himself, but He also institutes baptism for us. He does it that we might be born from above (John 3:3) by water and the Spirit (John 3:5)— born of God (John 1:13). He does it that He might incorporate us into Himself, making us a mystical part of His own body (1 Cor. 12:13). He institutes baptism that by it we might be united with Him in His atoning work — His death for us — and buried with Him, that we might also be raised again, like Christ, to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-4).

But, oh, how this newness of life makes life in this corrupt world difficult, for being made Jesus’ disciples does not stop “*all the flaming darts of the evil one*” from being hurled our way. For by baptism, we have been burdened with “a mighty and lifelong enemy” in Satan (Luther, LW53, p. 102). With lies, sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, Satan seeks to turn us away from this new walk. He tries to get you to return to “*your old self,*” to “*your former manner of life [which] is corrupt through deceitful desires*” (Eph. 4:22). He wants you to engage in falsehood; he wants you to get angry and stay angry, so that he can have his way

with you. The devil likes stealing and sloth and selfishness. Satan likes slander and sexual immorality and corrupting talk, and he wants you to walk in these ways.

But walking in the newness of life granted in Holy Baptism is to “*walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*” (Eph. 5:2). Walking in the newness of life is to “*walk as children of light [not darkness] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).*” It’s to “*try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord*” (Eph. 5:8-10) and then do that. Walking in the newness of life, therefore, is to walk with wisdom, that is, “*filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph. 5:18-20). But that walk sets not only Satan against you, but also the world.

As we heard yesterday from some of our state legislators standing up for life at our state house, even here in conservative Indiana, they continue to endure the flaming arrows of those who want no restrictions on killing babies in the womb. Moreover, open warfare on Christians is manifest since the Supreme Court’s Obergefell decision legalizing same-sex marriage. I’m sure you know of the case of the Colorado baker targeted because he did not want to use his artistic talents in a same-sex wedding, or the Wyoming judge (a Lutheran by the way) who lost her position only because she answered a hypothetical question about whether she would perform weddings for same-sex couples. She hadn’t refused anyone. And in North Carolina a civil magistrate lost her job and retirement because the state said that the reasonable accommodations that her supervisor made for her were insufficient. She had to choose between her faith and her job.

These trials are simply the result of these Christians seeking to walk in newness of life. How much easier it would be, in the face of such trials, simply to cast aside one’s beliefs and the truth of the gospel! Why hold fast to your integrity? Well do the disciples pray to Jesus in the face of such temptation: “*Increase our faith!*” (Luke 17:5) Well do we do the same as our enemies, the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature, tempt us to take the easy road that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13). St. James reminds us in our Epistle lesson: “*each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*” Increase our faith, Lord; light our path by the lamp of Your word that we may continue to walk in newness of life.

What Jesus does, He does for us. He was sent not to condemn the world but to save it. Therefore, the God who saves surely “*tempts no one,*” indeed, as St. James

teaches. Nevertheless, we can expect our faith to be tested through trial and tribulation. Abraham was not spared the testing of his faith that called upon him to offer up his own son, indeed the son of promise. Nor are we spared from heartbreak and danger just because we are Christians, just because we are the baptized. Rather, we should look for them all the more. We should expect to be persecuted for the sake of Jesus' name. We should expect the world to hate us. We should expect tribulation.

Thus, the images were poignant this past week of parents in Florida whose faces were marked not only with tears but also with ashes on their foreheads. These were Christians being grieved by this trial, the genuineness of their faith being tested. And we pray that their faith *“more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 5:7). As again, St. James wrote: *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”*

As the hymn confesses: “[we] walk in danger all the way ... Satan, who has marked his prey, Is plotting to deceive [us].” “[We] pass through trials all the way, With sin and ills contending.” “Death pursues [us] all the way ... He comes by night, he comes by day, He takes his prey most surely.” And yet, made children of God by baptism and faith, buried with Christ, but raised with Him to walk in newness of life, “[we] walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails [us]; Within His wounds [we] find a stay When Satan’s pow’r assails [us]; And by His footsteps led, [Our] paths [we] safely tread. No evil leads [our] souls astray; [We] walk with Jesus all the way.” LSB716

*“To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen”* (1 Pet. 5:11).

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.