

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

“You’re all wet!” That’s what we often hear when someone thinks our idea or opinion is less than acceptable or sensible. “You think you can balance the budget? You’re all wet!” Other times, it’s an exclamation of horror from a parent to a child coming in from the rain. I have even been known to say that to one of the corgis when they come inside on a snowy day and decide to jump up on me when I’m trying to take a nap. Generally speaking, it’s not a good thing to be “all wet.”

Then again, there are times when it is good to be all wet, or, at least it’s not a problem. At the beach, it’s a good thing to be all wet. If you are on the swim team, being wet is good. At the beginning of all things, when the earth was a formless void and darkness abounded, God came across the “all wet” earth and declared “Let there be light!” And, having separated light and darkness, God saw that it was good. And again, God separated the dry land from the waters, called the land mass earth and the gathered waters seas and declared it to be good. Now, the earth being “all wet” wasn’t so bad, either.

Noah and his family and the animals got all wet—but at least they survived the days and nights of rain and the flooding of all creation. For Noah and company, being all wet was good, even if it wasn’t good for the rest of creation. Thankfully, that is a case of wetness we don’t have to worry about, thanks to God’s promise of the rainbow.

Throughout the Old Testament, we find references to being “all wet” as a method of healing or ritual cleansing. Baptism was not new to the Jewish people of the first century AD at all. You might recall from Advent that the question asked of John the Baptist was not “What are you doing?” but “Why are you baptizing?” For John, as we are reminded in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, baptism was for repentance. Repentance was a common reason one would be baptized, because it was a visible sign of the cleansing which comes in asking forgiveness and receiving pardon for one’s sins. This was the baptism that John offered to the people—to anyone who would listen and be moved. But a baptism with water alone was not

permanent, nor was it salvific. That kind of baptism was “above John’s pay grade,” as some might say.

The baptism of salvation is the baptism that comes to us when the ordinary—water—comes together with the extraordinary—the Holy Spirit—and come with God’s promise—our salvation and His adoption of us. That is the baptism which John promises is to come from the one whom he has been sent to prepare the world to receive.

And no sooner do we hear John’s words, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals,”<sup>1</sup> there Jesus appears at the edge of the water, seeking to be baptized by John.

Unlike the other Gospel accounts of the baptism of Jesus, here we don’t hear a word from John about not wanting to do the baptism. Mark’s account is simple and straightforward. Jesus shows up at the Jordan, John baptizes him, and then Jesus sees the Holy Spirit descending upon him from above, as if it were a dove. That’s all pretty simple stuff.

The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry. But if Jesus was born without sin, why did he need to be baptized in the first place? What was he to gain by such an action?

Donald Juel, in his book, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted*, looks at the importance of the baptism of Jesus as reported in Mark’s account. For Juel, the most significant part of this account is the phrase “the heavens torn apart,” or in the Greek, the single work *schizomai*. Here, at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, Jesus sees the heavens ripped apart, and his Sonship is declared from heaven by a voice unseen and the Holy Spirit descends into him. At the end of his ministry, he is crucified, and the curtain in the temple is ripped apart, the centurion declares Jesus as Son of God, and Jesus gives up his Spirit back to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:7 (NRSV)

At his baptism, Jesus is “all wet” from the waters of the Jordan, in which he was baptized not because he needed to be redeemed, but as a sign of his solidarity with the human beings whose form he had taken in the Incarnation. At his crucifixion, Jesus is “all wet” with the sweat and blood that has poured out of him and onto the ground as the final sacrifice for those very human beings—including you and me—for whom he was sent into the world.

Thanks be to God that we do not have to suffer as Jesus did! All we have to do is believe and be baptized...it’s that simple. Whether we were sprinkled with a few drops of water from an eyedropper while clinging to life in a neo-natal intensive care unit or submersed in the waters of the River Jordan itself, we, too, are “all wet” in our baptism. And being all wet, the Old Adam or Old Eve in us is destroyed and we are reborn as children of God and coheirs with Christ for all that God has for us to inherit.

Indeed, we, too, can hear the voice declare “You are my Son, and you are my daughter! With you, too, I am well pleased!”

And the One who says that, my dear friends, is *not* all wet!