

*“Baptism Fourthly” In  
The Life Of The Pastor*

Submitted by  
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## "BAPTISM FOURTHLY" IN THE LIFE OF THE PASTOR

When I was asked last year to deliver this paper, my instructions were that this was to be a practical paper. I was asked to try to send you home from this conference enthused for ministry. I was told that I was chosen because I am a veteran whose "wisdom and experience" would be valuable for younger pastors.

I am here as a baptized child of God, unworthy even of salvation for myself, but chosen by God to minister to His flock for nearly fifty years. Today I have been chosen by Him to minister to a large group of pastors, all chosen by Him to be caretakers of His flock. What a responsibility! As a baptized child of God, I look to Him for help in carrying out my assignment.

Let's review "Baptism Fourth" and what Luther's large catechism has to say about it. I do not know if I have the latest version, but here is "Baptism Fourth" from David Kuske's Catechism.

### THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

*Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?*

It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever.

*Where is this written?*

St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Paul elaborates on the preceding statement in Romans 6:5,6:

"If we have been united with Him in his death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (*All Bible quotes - NIV*)

In his "Large Catechism" Luther has the following to say (*in part*):

These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of Baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else

than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that which belongs to the new man come forth.

(Bente *Concordia Triglotta*, p 749. Par 65)

....where men have become Christians [the old Adam] daily decreases until he finally perishes. That is truly to be buried in Baptism, and daily to come forth again. Therefore the external sign is appointed not only for a powerful effect, but also for a signification. Where, therefore, faith flourishes with its fruits, there it has no empty signification, but the work (of mortifying the flesh) accompanies it; but where faith is wanting, it remains a mere unfruitful sign.

And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance as it is really nothing else than Baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man [that his lusts be restrained] and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong. (Bente, *CT* p. 751, Par 72ff.)

Thus it appears what a great, excellent thing Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then daily strengthens the new man; and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory.

(Bente *CT*, p. 751, Par 83).

The basic thoughts we will draw on are these:

1. The Old Adam is going to be a problem for me all my life and needs to be drowned daily.
2. Baptism with its blessings gives me the incentive for repentance, as I contemplate the relationship God has established with me.
3. God's Spirit dwelling in me nurtures the New Man in me, and by the power of His Word enables me to gain the victory and live as a redeemed child of God.

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When I was assigned this paper last year, this conference was scheduled for Redwood Falls. This reminded me of my youth. Nearly 70 years ago I became a baptized member of the Minnesota District, when my father became pastor near Redwood Falls at Town Emmet and Town Flora. I can vividly recall believing at that time that Jesus would forgive me when I

prayed for forgiveness. I distinctly recall praying that God would let me pray for forgiveness just before I died. It was a flawed faith, tinged with work righteousness. But God did not turn his back on His baptized child. He perfected my faith during the ensuing years. I can recall many times during my growing-up years when the Old Adam really was strong. But God was with His baptized child. Thanks be to God, the Old Adam was repeatedly drowned, and the New Man of faith strengthened.

*My love for you  
not be shaken* I would encourage you today to think back to your youth. I am sure that all of you can remember one or more times when the odds would have seemed to be very much against the New Man prevailing against your Old Adam.. But you are here today as a believing child of God! Why? God promised at your baptism, "*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,*" says the Lord, *who has compassion on you*" (Isaiah 54:10) And He has kept that promise! What comfort and encouragement to believe that He will continue to keep His promises.

How did you feel about becoming a pastor during your school years? Probably because I grew up in the house of a pastor, the last thing I wanted to do was become a pastor. The grass looked a lot greener on the other side of the fence. My father used pretty strong persuasion to keep me studying for the ministry. I now thank him for it, but psychologists would not have approved of it. The first year at the seminary proved a turning point. And I have often wondered whether I would have remained in the faith if I had not been in the ministry. I must freely confess that my years of preparation were not model years. Mine was not the example of a fine Christian life, nor was I a model of faithful application of the gifts God had given me. The Old Adam came on pretty strong. But the New Man created in me at my baptism did prevail by the grace of my heavenly Father. He chose to use even me! What an encouragement to each of us that God could use even us for ministry.

*Feed my lambs  
Feed my sheep* In spite of my many flaws, nearly fifty years ago He commissioned me: "*Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep*" (John 21,15,17). What an awesome responsibility! It was not long before my Old Adam raised doubts that I was qualified for the task. I could relate very well to youthful Solomon: "... *'But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.'* ... *God said, ... 'I will give you a wise and discerning heart.'*" (1 Kings 3:7,12) My New Man came through by reminding me that God makes no mistakes, and he had called me into the ministry. My New Man was ready to serve God as a pastor.

I am standing before more than 200 similar flawed children of God, whom He has called to be His representatives. I know that all of us have skeletons in our closets. I know that all of us have often had doubts about our fitness for the ministry. But be of good cheer! He has called each of us into our particular field, because He knows that we as His baptized children can serve the family of God in our present field of labor better than anybody else at this time..

**Love your wife** Our heavenly Father in His love for us has given most of us a family. **Discipline your son** The devil sees this as an opportunity to impede our work as pastors. Our Old Adam leads us in one of two directions. He persuades us that we must either neglect our church work for our family obligations, or we must neglect our family obligations for our church work. But our New Man turns to the Word of God which says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13) Believe it! Pray for that strength! Your New Man can find the way to fulfil both obligations.

Sometimes motives are less noble. It is rumored that some pastors have secreted themselves in their study to avoid family relationships. Pastors have also made wives and children feel very confined in order to present the proper "image" to the congregation. It is true that the pastor's family can, - and sometimes does, humanly speaking - harm a pastor's ministry. But as a baptized child of God I will recognize my wife and children as God-given blessings. My New Man will deal with my wife and family in patient love and encouragement, and not legalistically. After all, an embittered wife or a resentful "PK" will not enhance my ministry. "Husbands ... treat [your wives] with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3:7) Let's not forget to count our blessings.

**Contentment** The Old Adam has tried to convince 99% plus of Americans that they are not receiving the salary they need or deserve. Pastors and their families are not immune. The New Man in us will remember that God adopted us as His children in baptism. He watches over us more carefully than any parent could. He wants us to have the best. Our New Man will dare to believe that what we are receiving is the very best for our stage of life. Once we believe that, we will gladly manage what we have, trusting God to make it reach as did the widow who fed Elisha. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:8) David says, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." (Psalm) Would David not say the same today? We as baptized children of God are "righteous" and await the same blessings as yesteryear.

**Restore Him Gently** The Bible describes the church as one body, functioning together under the guidance of Christ, the Head. Often, to our dismay it does not function that way. Our congregations are often like the Corinthian congregation. Down south we would speak about the "alligator" that was giving us trouble. Factions may develop in the congregation. Sparse finances lead to much dissension about what the program of the congregation should be. Our own "expert" plan for the congregation is shot down. What opportunities for the Old Adam! And he makes hay with them.

Is it the Old Adam in me that labels a member a troublemaker or an "alligator"? Should I not rather consider and deal with that person as a troubled soul? Or could it be that God has placed that person into the congregation to keep it from going off on a wrong tangent. I have had occasion to later appreciate the objections of a person, whom I had first considered a real problem. The New Man will give me the strength to deal with such a

member as a valuable asset to the kingdom. Gamaliel's advice still applies: "If their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 6:38f)

A more insidious attack by the Old Adam is the member or family of the congregation that seeks to establish an overly close relationship with us. The New Man in us longs for fellowship with all God's children. It is a wonderful blessing. But the devil through our Old Adam so often seeks not this kind of fellowship, but an exclusionary grouping with those who flatter our ego. Even Jesus had his very special friends, - Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, - but others were in no way excluded. Our New Man of faith will strive for the same ideal.

*Cast all your anxiety on him* In dealing with the sort of problems mentioned above, and those which follow, I have spent many a sleepless night. (Thinking about this paper cost a few hours of sleep too!) The Old Adam in me says, "You have a problem here. You aren't going to be able to come up with an answer." "It's all going to come crashing down. Then what will you do for a living?" "You are going to lose face. Everyone is going to look down on you." Believe me, this is scary!

Early in my ministry the New Man eventually would come through with this answer, "You are God's child, and this is His church. What are you worrying about! God's still in control. He knows how He is going to deal with this. All you need to do is proclaim His Word." In those days it took far too long to come to this point. Thank God, in the later years of my ministry, I still fall into this trap, but it doesn't take too long before I follow Jesus' invitation: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7). How comforting for my New Man this passage is: Knowing that I am a beloved baptized child of God, I can say with Paul: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful ... I do not even judge myself." (1 Corinthians 4:2f) The results are not in my hands, nor am I responsible for them. My loving God will bless my faithful effort. How wonderful to be able to sleep again!

*The hired hand* How nice to rest easy. But the Old Adam says, "Aha, I'll catch you now." We have been at ministry for a longer time. We know the ropes. Everything is going well. We can shake a sermon out of our sleeve. We are no longer ill at ease in front of an audience. We have our catechism classes down pat. Things are going well in the congregation. We lose our sense of mission. It's just going through the routine. And it shows, although we are not aware of it. The Old Adam is taking over. We need to be shaken out of our lethargy and drown the Old Adam. We need to preach the Law in all its sharpness to ourselves again, and then drink deeply of the Gospel of salvation to appreciate its value again. Only the New Man in us can lead us to say with the Psalmist: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God (Psalm 41:1) Being thus refreshed ourselves, we will be able again to bring the Water of Life to thirsting souls.

*The body is a unit  
made up of many parts*

In our ministry, we will most likely engage in a ministry shared with other called workers. This may be in a Christian Day School or a multiple pastorate. Or we may be called into a college or high school. As we share our ministry, the devil rubs his hands with glee. The Old Man is a proud being, who does not willingly want to share in any way with another person. He asks, "Who's the head honcho around here? It better be me!" Some members will relate better to me, some to the other minister(s). Because God does not waste talent, God wants to use both our talents, skills, and ideas and those of our co-minister(s). At times their skills and ideas will seem better in the judgment of the congregation. The Old Adam in me rebels, but pride needs to be swallowed.

I have been baptized into the body of Christ. The New Man in me appreciates this blessed relationship with Christ, the Head, and all the other members. "*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. ... Now you are the body of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 12:12,27) As a baptized part of the body of Christ, I appreciate the abilities and insights that God has given to members of the body. What a blessing for me and for all the members of my church!

*Not against us  
... is for us*

In Missouri we have a lot of elbow room. I have 80 or more miles in every direction. In most of our district and Synod, we have to rub shoulders with congregations that can be very close to ours, - a matter of only a few miles. Needless to say, the Old Adam seizes on this opportunity too. The term "sheep-stealing" has come into our vocabulary with good reason. It is hard to deal with. The New Man of faith in me will examine himself to make sure I am not guilty, and will seek the mind of Christ and Paul toward my neighboring pastor, following Jesus' example. ("*Do not stop him, Jesus said, ... whoever is not against us is for us.*" Mark 9:39) Paul spoke the same way of other ministers.

*Not look down on  
you who are young -  
- Rise in the pres-  
ence of the aged*

God loves the young and the old. They are both part of His Church. The old Adam readily absorbs the world's attitudes of the young and old toward each other. - "The old are so set in their ways. They knock down all the brilliant ideas we have come up with. They just aren't with it anymore." - "The young aren't dry behind the ears. Their ideas are so half-baked. They are never satisfied. If they would just plug away like we did, they would get things accomplished." - As always, the Old Adam has it all wrong. Young and old alike are baptized children of God. We are all his workmanship; and he uses us all. The New Man of faith recognizes the blessings of youthful energy and fresh approaches, and takes to heart what Paul tells Timothy, "*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young.*" (1 Timothy 6:2) Our young pastors are a most valuable asset. And we also take to heart what God says: "*Rise in the presence of the elderly, show respect for the elderly.*" (Leviticus 19:32) Experience is a blessing not to be shunned. In recent years I have heard solutions being proposed for certain problems/ Ironically we in an earlier generation jettisoned very similar solutions, because of the problems that surfaced in those programs..



*Watch out for those who cause divisions* The world has never taken gladly to "Thus says the Lord," - nor those who dare to proclaim such an uncompromising Word. The Old Adam in us is certain that we will lose out by doing so. Just give a little bit here and a little bit there. You'll be popular. Your church will grow. You'll get a chance to preach the Gospel to people who would otherwise never hear you. It's a siren song, and many have fallen for it. But the New Man of faith treasures every Word of his loving Father as absolute truth. He recognizes that every deviation from that truth waters down the Gospel. And he takes to heart the admonition: "*I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. (Romans 16,17f)*" I want to keep that Gospel unblemished.

I beg your indulgence as I reminisce about doctrinal division. After 13 years of very heated discussions, I sat on the auditorium floor at Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee on an August evening in 1961. After hours and hours of debate, it was time to stand up and be counted. My Old Adam told me that standing up would bring disastrous results for my beloved Synod and disturb relationships within my own family. But the New Man told me to stand and I did. My conscience was at rest. Subsequent events proved that my decision was the right one. Purity of doctrine was preserved for another generation.

*Walking together* God has given us, His baptized children, an organization in which we can walk together, doing together what we can not do in smaller groups. The devil recognizes this as a potent force in God's kingdom, so he will stir up the Old Adam in us to induce us to walk separately. There is a phenomenon known as Monday morning quarterbacking, and it can be found in our Synod too. Hindsight is often 20/20, or at least so we like to think. But our New Man of faith heeds our heavenly Father, who tells us, "*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. ... Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden*" *Hebrews 13:17*) They are sinful human beings as we are. They are not omniscient or infallible, and humanly speaking we might think we could do it better. But my New Man recognizes that God chose them, and He didn't make a mistake.

If God calls you to serve in an administrative position in our District or Synod, recognize that the Old Adam has a fertile field for nefarious mischief there too. He will do his best to make us forget that our only sufficiency is of God. It is easy to forget that we have been chosen to be servants. The danger is very real that our authority will go to our head. The disciples suffered from delusions of importance even yet in the upper room on Maundy Thursday. The New Man in us will take to heart the example of our Savior that evening, and listen to His words: "*The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. ... But you are not to be like that. Instead the greatest among you should be ... like the one who serves*" *(Luke 22:25f)* None of us would be anything if God had not washed away our sins in baptism and made us His dear children.

*Summary*     The Old Adam in me says, "What's in it for me?"  
The New Man, born again in baptism, says, "For me to live is Jesus."

The Old Adam says, "I must fend for myself in a dangerous and hostile world."  
The New Man assures me, "I am not alone but rest in God's protecting arms."

The Old Adam says, "It's too much to ask of me. I can't do it"  
The New Man is confident that "I can do all things through Him that loves me."

The Old Adam says, "Nobody loves me. I am not appreciated."  
The New Man says, "I am Jesus' little lamb. Ever glad at heart I am."

The Old Adam says, "The situation is hopeless. I'm a failure." (Judas)  
The New Man says, "I am a lost and condemned creature, but Jesus still loves me." (Peter)

The New Man in me sings in the words of the Hymn 294, verse 3, in "Christian Worship":

My faithful God, you fail me never; Your promise surely will endure.  
O cast me not away forever If words and deeds become impure.  
Have mercy when I come defiled; Forgive, lift up, restore your child.

**SOLI DEO GLORIA**