



*April 8, 2017*  
**“From font to funeral—the journey of Baptism”**

Read Romans 6:1-11

A Christian funeral is a sort of “pay-out” on our baptismal covenants. Perhaps you recall hearing the words of Romans 6 at the beginning of a funeral service:

*“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”*

As we grieve the death of a friend or loved one, we are reminded of two things. In Holy Baptism, we die the one death that matters. We die to the powers of sin, death and evil. In the waters of the font we are buried just as Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb on Good Friday. We are drowned in those waters in order to be raised up to new life in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit and as the gift of God’s grace.

At most of our funeral services, we cover the casket with a white funeral pall. The white pall symbolizes the white robes of our baptism into Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a reminder that our grief, though real, can be tempered by Easter joy. The funeral pall is a sign of words that Paul speaks in Romans 6: *“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”*

These days people often say something like this. “I don’t really want a funeral, Pastor. I don’t want people to be sad and crying when I die. I’d rather have a celebration of life.” While I understand this sentiment, I don’t support it. On the one hand, no amount of “celebration of life” (as in, a focus on the now-ended life of the deceased person) will erase the reality of death. Denial of death delays grief. It does not dilute it.

On the other hand, I am all in favor of celebrating life. Indeed the mortal life of a loved one is something for which we give thanks. It helps us heal as we remember. But the life I want to celebrate the most is the life yet to come, the life that will not end, the life we will share together forever in the New Creation. Paul reminds us, *“For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”*

It is the reality of the Resurrection that makes a Christian funeral a celebration of Life—New Life, Unending Life, Easter Life. In Holy Baptism we begin to live that life in the here and now by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes the daily value of baptism clear in Romans 6:11—*“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* I invite you to see yourself and your life that way every day!

Let’s pray. God of grace and glory, in Holy Baptism you free us from the powers that want us dead. Raise us up daily to the New Life that cannot end. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Do something:** If you don’t know it, find out the date of your baptism. On that date each month, have a small time of baptismal remembrance. If you were baptized on the fifth of a month, then on the fifth of each month, light a candle or do something else to remember the great gift of Life you have received.

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