

Holy (Maundy) Thursday A (4/21/11 – *Holy Baptism and Holy Communion*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

As we meditate on and celebrate in restrained joy our Savior’s institution of the blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood this *Holy (Maundy) Thursday*, we do so in continuity with the theme set before us during our *Lenten* midweek services. Throughout *Lent* we considered the 4th Chief Part of our Christian faith – Holy Baptism. We have seen how we may understand our Baptism as *New Creation, Flood, Exodus, Rebirth, and Death & Resurrection*. Tonight we consider the topic *Holy Baptism and Holy Communion*.

On the surface, perhaps the only obvious connection between these two is the fact that the Lutheran Church considers both of these to be Sacraments. Indeed, despite sometimes great differences in the definition and number of Sacraments among the various Christian church bodies, the vast majority of Christendom considers both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper to be just that – Sacraments. And it is no wonder. Both have been instituted by our Savior. Both have the Word of God’s holy, infallible promise attached to visible, mundane elements. Both offer, give, and seal the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ our dear Lord on that awful yet *Good Friday*.

But there is a much deeper connection between *Holy Baptism and Holy Communion* – although this would be sufficient. Yes, there is a deeper, more blessed connection.

Consider the imagery set before us in the *Old Testament* lesson for this evening. When the LORD God made His covenant with the people of Israel, Moses *threw against the altar* half of the sacrificial blood before taking *the Book of the Covenant and reading it in the hearing of the people* [EXO 24.6-7]. Then when the people said, “*All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient*” ... *Moses took the* [remaining] *blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”* [EXO 24.7-8] And notice Who is the One Who makes the covenant. It is

God Who initiates the covenant. It is the LORD Who makes the covenant. ***Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you.***

Of particular interest is the sprinkling of blood for cleansing – as we heard it explained in the *Epistle*. ***Therefore He [Christ] is the Mediator of a new testament, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them [redeems you!] from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the Law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed – and this is the main point – under the Law almost everything is purified – or cleansed as the word is most often translated – with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*** [HEB 9.15-22]

The Lord purifies and cleanses His people by sprinkling them with the blood of the sacrifice together ***with water*** [9.19] – pointing forward to Christ’s Self-sacrifice for sins on the Cross ... by which He would purify and cleanse the whole world. And in EPHESIANS God connects the shedding of Jesus’ Blood with the cleansing of Holy Baptism. ***Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word*** [EPH 5.25-26]. We could paraphrase it this way: *Christ loved the Church and shed His Blood on the Cross for her, that He might make her – and all her members ... all believers – holy, having cleansed them by Holy Baptism in which God attaches His Word of promise to the visible element of water.*

This tying together of blood and water brings us to the deepest connection between the Sacraments of ***Holy Baptism and Holy Communion***. That

connection is seen in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. As we shall hear tomorrow in the Passion Reading from the Gospel of St. John – when it neared sundown on *Good Friday*, the beginning of the Sabbath, the soldiers were sent to break the legs of those who had been crucified. ***But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water*** [JN 19.33-34]. St. John, the eye-witness of this event, interprets this for us in his first *Epistle*. ***This is He Who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the One Who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*** [1JN 5.6-8]

The deepest connection between *Holy Baptism and Holy Communion* is, indeed, our Lord Himself. It is the water that flowed from our Savior's side that fills the waters of Holy Baptism with the forgiveness of sins. It is our Savior's Blood, shed from His pierced Body, that fills the bread and wine of Holy Communion with the forgiveness of sins. It is by Holy Baptism that our Lord first cleanses us from all unrighteousness, makes us His holy children, and brings us into His eternal Covenant and Kingdom. But, as Holy Scripture teaches, there is ***one Baptism*** – just as there ***is one body and one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith ... and one God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all*** [EPH 4.4-6]. Therefore, God repeatedly restores us in that baptismal cleansing through the Gospel given into our mouths week after week in the Holy Supper of the Body and Blood of our Savior.

Holy Baptism – the washing of the water and the Blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all the filth of our sin in the forgiveness won by Him on His Cross. ***Holy Communion*** – the New Testament in the Blood of the Son of God put into force by His death on the Cross. ***Holy Baptism and Holy Communion*** – the water, the blood, the forgiveness of sins, and life in Christ.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]