

Diocese of San Joaquin

26 January 2012



As we continue in our study of the Duties of the Laity, as proscribed in the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America, we come to the third of those duties, which is to be faithful to our baptismal vows. Specifically our duty is **"To observe their baptismal vows, to lead an upright and sober life, and not give scandal to the Church;"**

This weekend I was with the good people of St. Paul's, Bakersfield, and in observing the Confirmands as they renewed their vows I was struck with how very powerful those vows are.

Our baptisms are based in a profound belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - we state this belief in the Baptismal Covenant in which we publicly affirm our orthodox Christian faith.

The observation of our baptismal vows begins and ends with our orthodox faith handed down throughout the ages from Christian to Christian, Father to Son, Mother to Daughter since the time that Jesus passed it on directly to the Apostles. That faith is lived out in our baptismal vows:

Question: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the Prayers?

Answer: I will, with God's help.

The teaching we follow is not new, it is not what we invent or the world invents but as found in the Bible revealing God's love for us in his son Jesus Christ. That teaching is not in a vacuum but in the Church where we gather with fellow believers to share in the sacraments instituted by Jesus and lived out through the centuries.

Question: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Answer: I will, with God's help.

Our baptismal vows recognize that we are fallen creatures in need of God's saving Grace and that, indeed we do sin. We are to examine our lives and repent when necessary. I strongly recommend the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The book of James encourages us to **"confess your sins to one another and pray for each other."** (James 5:16) In the church we share in God's Grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and are restored in our relationships with God and our brother.

Question: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Answer: I will with God's help.

As baptized Christians it is our honor and duty to share the Good News of Christ and that begins with our willingness to share with others about our personal relationship with Jesus. Of course, that relationship is also lived out corporately in the church but ultimately, we can and must share with others the light of Christ in a cold and dark world.

Question: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.

Answer: I will, with God's help.

"Let us make man in our image after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26) All human beings are created in the image of God and are due respect and dignity. It is important to note that this respect and dignity begins from the moment of conception and lasts until the moment of natural death. In addition, scripture tells us in the prologue of the gospel of John, **"And to all who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God."** (John 1:12) All people are due respect and dignity but not all people are "Children of God." Our brother and sister Christians are due our love and honor.

Question: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? Answer: I will, with God's help.

To strive for justice and peace is the duty of every Christian because Jesus demonstrated the same in his life. It is important to understand that Justice & tolerance are not synonymous and peace is not simply the absence of violence. Justice flows from God who cries out through his prophet Micah **"O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"** (Micah 6:8)

Each and every one of these vows is supremely important but it is also imperative to note that the response to each question is, "I will, with God's help." Left to our own devices we will not be able to fulfill any aspect of our baptismal vows. However, if we invite God the Holy Spirit into our lives and allow Him to move and shape us then, in fact, we cannot help but live out these vows.

And so I would end this Bishop's Note with a special invitation to all baptized Christians to take a moment to ask God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to move in and through you in the completion of his divine will in your life. You see, the second half of the third duty of the laity is to live a godly and sober life not causing scandal in the church. If, in fact, we are living out our baptismal vows, then we need not worry about living godly and sober lives or causing scandal to His Church!

Bishop Eric

Diocesan Calendar

- January 29th** - Bishop @ Trinity Lone Pine
February 5th - Bishop @ St. Paul's Visalia
February 12th - Bishop @ Jesus Our Saviour, Modesto
February 18th - Diocesan Council
February 26th - Bishop @ Jesus the Good Shepherd, Henderson
March 11th - Bishop @ San Pedro y Pablo, Arvin
March 13th - Rural Deans
March 17th - Diocesan Council
March 18th - Bishop @ St. Clement's, Woodlake
March 25th - Bishop @ St. James, Sonora
March 29th - Mass of Chrism, 11am
April 1st - Palm Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral
April 8th - Easter Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral
August 9-10 - Provincial Hispanic Ministry Conference. at the Cathedral, "Caminemos Juntos"

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