

Pentecost 3, Pr 4 Yr A  
June 1, 2008

RCL  
Genesis 6:9-22;7:24;  
8:14-19  
Psalm 46  
Romans 1:16-17; 3:22b-31  
Matthew 7:21-29

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All Saints Episcopal Church

Two weeks ago last Friday night we had a party. We were celebrating 55 years since the groundbreaking for this church and we enjoyed a wonderful catered meal – 100 or so of us – in our parish hall.

The night before that event there had been a blessed event. Abigail Lorraine Francisco was born that night and it was her grandmother and her godfather who were serving us our lovely dinner the next day. So we know just how brand new Abby is, a scant 2 ½ weeks old. And today we bring her to the baptismal font and welcome her as the newest Christian in the world-wide community of Christ's followers.

Today we baptize with joy by water and the Holy Spirit. We've been talking about the Holy Spirit lately. We celebrated God the three in one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, on Trinity Sunday, and we celebrated the descent of the Spirit the week before that, on Pentecost, a few days before Abby's birth, as tongues of fire came to rest on the disciples and the room was filled with the sound of a rushing wind, and they all spoke in languages they did not know and yet everyone understood.

That same Spirit is present today, that we might all understand the promises we make and the promises God makes in the sacrament of baptism.

We have spoken lately of the Spirit. Today we speak about the water.

The readings from Holy Scripture for this morning are full of water. We began with Noah, warned by God of the destructive power of water that was to come on the earth. And he built an ark, saving two of every creature as well as his own family. Who doesn't know the story of Noah, how God protected him and those in the ark from the mighty force of the flood?

We have seen water destroy life in our own time, too. Recently in Myanmar, a horrible tragedy, where some victims of the cyclone a month ago have not yet been reached with aid. And less recently but memorably, in New Orleans and other parts of the coastline in Louisiana and Mississippi, where in many places the devastating effects of the storm still remain.

It's clear we need to respect what water can do, and we need to help those who suffer as a result, and do what we can to be prepared for the next storm.

We can build our house on a solid foundation, on a rock, like the wise man in the gospel. And when we take the time and the extra effort, the long hours and hard work that it takes to build in this way, on rock, we will be prepared for the storms that may come.

Of course Jesus is talking not about building a house but about the building of our character, about placing our trust in the firm foundation of God's love and about doing the work it will take to conform our will to the Father's will.

Jesus desires that we hear his word and follow him. Only in building on what he teaches and practicing his love in the world will we be like that wise man who built his house on rock. And the first step in that building is our baptism.

Water can threaten us, yes, but it also cleanses and purifies. Water has the power to rejuvenate life in us as we drink of it – fresh, cold water. In baptism we celebrate these renewing qualities of water as the one baptized is cleansed by it and brought into new life.

Well, a nearly-three-week-old child can hardly be said to have sinned very much. Give her time! But in the promises that will be made for her in a short time lies the opportunity for her parents and godparents to begin building her young life on the rock of love and kindness and hope and of listening for God's voice throughout her life.

Forgive me if you have already heard me tell this story. I have told it here before. It's a true story and it's about a little boy, 4 years old, who at the time of the story was in a Good Shepherd Sunday School class at his Episcopal church in Chicago.

This little boy's mother had a baby and when he heard the news the boy was very excited to see his baby sister. "Daddy," he said again and again, "I want to talk to the baby." "You will," said his father, "just as soon as she and Mommy come home from the hospital."

On the day the baby came home, the little boy was more excited than ever. "I want to talk to the baby," he said as soon as they were in the house. "OK, then, go ahead," said his father. "No," said the little boy, "I want to talk to the baby alone!" So his parents agreed and left the baby in her crib with the 4-year-old standing beside her.

Extremely curious about what the little boy would say, they ran to the kitchen and turned on the baby monitor in time to hear the little boy say to his sister, "Now, I want you to tell me all about God because I've forgotten a lot."

We belong to God. Some of us have forgotten a lot about it, but the fact is, we are God's. In the baptism of a child we all come closer to God again and remember the firm foundation on which we may build a life, and that foundation, that rock, is God's love.

This is our hope for Abby and her family today, that they come closer to God as they come to the baptismal font, and its our hope for all of us who have been baptized and thus adopted by God as his children. Thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria