

- ✘ As is our custom during the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, we Episcopalians will renew our Baptismal vows.
 - ✓ We Episcopalians renew those vows four times a year
 - Easter Vigil
 - Day of Pentecost
 - All Saints Day
 - Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord
 - ✓ The Roman Catholic Church has a renewal of baptismal vows at Easter – but not 4 X per year.
 - I’m not sure of the practices of other denominations, Methodist churches may renew covenant at significant times during one’s life, sometimes on the same days we do
 - ✓ One Question is: “why do we renew our Baptismal vows so often during the year?”
 - Another question: why be baptized in the first place?
- ✘ Here’s one reason to be baptized: as evidenced in the curious story of what happened to my mother in law in the hospital.
 - ✓ Pat Rosenberg – rheumatic fever as child – difficulty in carrying babies to term
 - Series of babies that didn’t make it between Lynette and her younger brother Roger.
 - ✓ Two curious incidents while my M-i-L in hospital over the course of a few days giving birth to brother, Allen, who only lived a few hours
 - The first: Incident of identification band: “what faith tradition should we indicate?”
 - Buddhist than anything; “H for Heathen”
 - Over course of her stay she was visited by a nice gentleman...I see by your outfit that you are Jewish...Rabbi, chaplain; we saw the H and assumed you were Hebrew.”
 - ✓ The Second incident entitled, “What the Nun Did at Night”
 - When Baby Allen was born, he lived only few hours.
 - One of the nuns came in to tell M-in-L that her baby had died, “But not to worry...I baptized him before he died.”
 - Pat was not a happy person: “Why did you do that?” What made you think her needed to be baptized?”
 - ◆ Why, indeed?
- ✘ Because of Limbo.
 - ✓ St Augustine: we are all born with original sin, sinners with a sinful heart and will

- Children who died without being baptized could not go to heaven (only those who were baptized could do that)
 - But neither were they deserving of the punishments of Hell....so we have Limbo
 - A concept, along with Purgatory, that was dismissed in Article XXII found in the BCP
- ✗ Another good reason to be baptized I saw while I was stationed in England. Our church was neighbor to Church of St. John the Baptist in Snape
 - ✓ Where people went to church three times in their lives: christened, married and buried.
 - Baptism is a public celebration of a private event that happened, in a perfect world, only once (christening and burial anyway)
 - But it only served as a mark along the timeline of life that one did because it was expected and it served your own well-being...and really had nothing to do with being a part of the living body of Christ in the world.
- ✗ So, other than just showing up and marking oneself as “present and accounted for” at one’s baptism, how do we become the living body of Christ in the world; how do we serve the well-being of the community in our baptism.
 - ✓ Perhaps we can see a clue in today’s Collect:
 - Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.
 - If/then: baptized/keeping the covenant
- ✗ Baptism requires a response
 - Baptism was not just an event, for Jesus, when he said to himself, “OK, now I’m baptized, I’ve been cleansed of my sins; I’ve been blessed by a voice from heaven. That pretty well wraps that up.”
 - Right after this Jesus went out into the desert to discern how he was to live out his baptism.
 - How he lived that out was described by Peter in the Second Reading, where Peter declares that the “message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.
- ✗ Jesus continued to live out his Baptism, and we are called to do the same in the Baptismal Covenant.
 - Look at the verbs used: “continue,” “persevere,” “seek,” “strive”

- We are not talking about an event that happened in the past,
 - ◆ This is something that is always ongoing;
 - ◆ We are always living into the reality of our baptism,
 - ✦ We need to remind ourselves that we are part of a community of faith that are “continuing, and persevering and seeking and striving” to know and do the will of God
 - ◆ That is the reason we put a great deal of emphasis on baptismal renewal throughout our lives.
- ✕ Our baptismal covenant is very clear about what is “the will of God” for us:
 - ✓ (pg 8) "Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ? Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?"
- ✕ So what does this really mean?
 - ✓ Does that mean that we are supposed to work through churches to create a more just society?
 - ✓ Are we talking about political advocacy there?
 - ✓ There are those who who say "Religion and politics don't mix."
 - Yet we are pledged in our baptismal covenant to advocacy as a fundamental Christian calling.
- ✕ We are called by our church to create a more just society. And that’s something we’ve done throughout our history:
 - ✓ You can look to the struggle against slavery,
 - and the fight against child labor,
 - and the civil rights movement.
 - ✓ In each, the church had a critical role in not only being an advocate, but also in developing expertise and skills in the work of justice.
 - You’ll see that again and again being practiced in our book of *Holy Women, Holy Men*.
 - Thomas Merton, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Freer Andrews, Emily Morgan, hundred others who
 - Lived out their baptisms, not in seizing governmental power, but used their power as citizens and their moral voice to ensure that the state’s power was used to protect the weakest.
- ✕ We have an opportunity to learn how to do that more effectively in an Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia on January 30th
 - ✓ Sponsored by the Faith Action Network, a partnership of 70 faith communities

across Washington who aim to build a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

- ✓ Talk to local legislators; learn more about the final skills of engaging lawmakers:
 - Something I learned to do on behalf of AMRAAM missiles in the late 70's, and something a could learn to do more of on behalf of preventing gun violence and wage theft and working on behalf of other poverty issues... a few of which we might even have here in Anacortes.
- ✓ So I invited you to join me in a 5:30 AM departure on January 30th to the Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia
- ✗ I believe that we are indeed true to our baptisms, we cannot be satisfied with the way things are.
 - ✓ Our baptisms demand that we struggle with what's right and what's wrong, what's important and what's not.
- ✗ So to answer the Question that opened this homily : "why are baptized in the first place."
 - ✓ The Answer is; because it gives us a Covenant with God and our Neighbors,
 - It gives us a reason to live and reason to die.
 - Our Baptismal covenant,
 - Obliges us to tell the truth in a world that lies,
 - To give in a world that takes,
 - To make peace in a world that fights,
 - To pray in a world that waits to be entertained, and
 - To take chances in a world that worships safety.
 - ✓ Baptism is our ordination to all our ministries
 - It is our vow to live with more concern for the hurting than for our own comfort,
 - It is our promise to take issue with ideas with which everyone else agrees.
 - Baptism is our commitment to share our time with the poor and listen to the lonely.
 - ✓ By our baptism we are "marked as Christ's own forever."
 - And that ought to mean something.
 - It means we have a different way to think, feel, and act this day, than if we were not baptized.
 - It means that we should be doing something today that we wouldn't be doing if we had not been baptized.
 - It means that we should forever be asking the question, "Why was I baptized?"