

1 Last Sunday – Matthew 25

When you were baptized, Jesus anointed you with his Holy Spirit. Just as Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit when he was baptized in the Jordan River, you have received the same anointing. You have been christened in Christ. In other words, you have been made a Christian. And your goal throughout your life is to remain a Christian. We're not talking about being a Christian in name only. No, we are talking about keeping what you received in your baptism. Your goal is to keep the anointing of his Holy Spirit. Live in him. This way, when Jesus finally appears in his glory, you won't miss out. You will not be ashamed. Instead, you will remain grounded in him, safe in the anointing of your baptism, which will shine like the sun in his presence. Listen to what St. John says about it in his first epistle:

The Holy One has anointed you, and now all of you know . . . He anointed you, and that anointing stays in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you everything – and it is true and no lie – as He has taught you, so live in Him. And now, children, live in Him so that when He appears we may be bold and not shrink from Him in shame when He comes. (1 John 2:20, 27-28)

Your baptism into Christ is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is God's seal placed on you, the firm pledge of his favor through his Son who died for your sins. As Christ was anointed for his death and burial where all your sins were carried and covered forever, your baptism into Christ has anointed you with his own life and resurrection.

Therefore, as St. John says, you don't need anyone else to teach you. You don't need some special insight from philosophers. There is nothing this world can market, offer, or sell you that can bestow on you what you have already been given by your Savior. Through the anointing of your baptism, you have the Word and promise of your Savior. You have his pure teaching, the gospel truth of his life, death, and resurrection. You have faith in his blood, hope for eternal life, and love for your neighbor. This is what you have when you have Christ. This is what you know when you are anointed by his own eternal Spirit. So don't let go of this anointing. Don't forget about your baptism.

Our Lord's parable about the ten virgins is a warning not to forget about your baptism. The foolish virgins didn't bring enough oil with them. The oil represents the anointing we receive in our baptism. It is the Holy Spirit with his holy Word. And wherever the Holy Spirit is, there is the Father and the Son. There is the gift of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Those who remember their baptism are therefore those who remember that they have the favor and pardon of their merciful Father through the merits of Jesus Christ. They trust in the promise that their sins are forgiven for the sake of God's Son who made full satisfaction for their sins. With a sure hope, they look forward to his appearing, commending all of their despair, worries, and pain to his merciful judgment. And because they have this faith and hope, they also have love. After all, the same Holy Spirit who causes you to trust and hope in the Lord also causes you to love your neighbor. He causes you to bear your cross with patience and walk in the works of love he has appointed for you, all while expecting him to work all good things out for you.

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When you trust that the blood and righteousness of Christ cover up your shame and guilt before the Father, then you are remembering your baptism where you were clothed with Christ. As St. Paul says, “As many of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27). When you wait for God to bless your labors, even when your own best efforts seem to fall so short, then you are remembering your baptism where God caused you to be reborn to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:3). You can therefore love your neighbor, because you know that God has poured his own love into your heart by the Holy Spirit whom he has given you (Rom 5:5).

Remembering your baptism is vital in this life, especially because of all the temptations that surround us. The world is filled with all sorts of pride and deceit. The devil is always twisting God’s truth and mixing it with errors. Meanwhile, your own sinful flesh is always lusting after comforts other than the one true comfort found only in Jesus Christ. It’s enough to make you exhausted, so discouraged and distracted that you end up bored by God’s Word and unable to listen to what the Holy Spirit teaches you. This is why many Christians become Christians in name only, keeping the appearance of their anointing but ultimately denying and losing hope in the power their baptism actually bestows.

Just consider how this happens. You go to church, because you have the habit of going to church. You get your kids baptized, because you feel the obligation. Perhaps it’s a tradition passed down in your family from generations. Of course, these are good habits. It’s no doubt a wonderful thing that your parents and grandparents have handed it down to you. But when it becomes merely a habit or tradition and nothing else, then the oil runs out. When the walls of your house never echo with conversations of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, when the sermons and lessons at church are never discussed around the dinner table, then before you know it you are forgetting all about your baptism and anointing from God. Soon you find yourself unwilling to forgive those who have sinned against you, forgetting that God in Christ has forgiven you. And instead of getting your wisdom from God and his unchanging Word, you seek rather to be wise in the eyes of men. You learn from this dying world instead of learning from the crucified and risen Christ.

And what does the world teach you? It teaches you to love and trust yourself. It teaches you to hope in worldly success. If you overcharge your neighbor while managing to appear generous and caring, then the world will call that smart business. If you achieve power and influence at the expense of someone else’s reputation, then the world calls it good campaigning. If you kill your unborn child because you don’t want to be pregnant, then the world calls it healthcare. If you shack up with your girlfriend, then the world calls it compatibility. The world will teach you all of these things even while allowing you to keep calling yourself a Christian. But don’t be a fool. The world is dying. Even when their oil and wine abound, even when they are shining like the sun, the world’s brightness and glory will only grow dim and ultimately go out.

Instead, the wisdom we receive from our baptism is the only lasting wisdom. It is the wisdom of the cross, which is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power of God to those who are being saved. It is the anointing of Christ who suffered, died, and

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slept in the tomb for us. And this wisdom is ours when we remain in his Word. His oil continues to fill our lamps when we cling to the promise given to us in our baptism.

The Scriptures tell us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10; Ps 111:10). Knowing that you depend on his mercy and compassion at all times – this is what it means to be wise. To fear God means that you recognize your need before him. It is to confess with David, “If You, O Lord, marked iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness that You may be feared” (Ps. 130).

There are plenty of temptations in this world and within our own bodies, which make us drowsy. The works God has given us to walk in often seem like burdens. We fall short. We get discouraged. We fail to love those whom God has commanded us to love. A Christian is wise when he acknowledges this. But our wisdom comes from the anointing we have received from the Holy Spirit who has washed us with the blood of our Savior.

Therefore, remember your baptism. Remember what the Holy Spirit has given you and still gives you in his Word. So even if it seems that your faith, hope, and love are barely shining, he will not put your light out. He will continue to fill your lamp with the confidence of Christ. Because Christ did not grow tired of saving you. He always entrusted himself to the Word his Father gave him to proclaim. He didn't despair of the work he was given to do, but even while he suffered on the cross for your salvation, he commended his life to God as his righteous judge. He rejoiced in the hope of saving you from condemnation. He loved you with an undying love even as he gave himself into death. And when he slept in the tomb, he blessed your grave with a peaceful sleep. He therefore promises that your tears, your struggles, and all the work he has prepared for you in this life are not pointless. He has anointed you and caused your cup to run over with confidence in your salvation.

Most of us don't remember the day we were baptized. But when we cling to our Lord's promise, then we cling to the anointing we received and still receive from him. His death remains our death. His life remains our life. His sleep is our sleep. And we will rejoice at his appearing. Let us pray:

Once in the blest baptismal waters
I put on Christ and made Him mine;
Now numbered with God's sons and daughters,
I share His peace and love divine.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day. Amen.