

LIVING OUR BAPTISM...*Five gifts of discipleship*

When a baptized Christian affirms the faith (often called confirmation) the presiding minister addresses those making public affirmation of baptism and asks the question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

**to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?**

RESPONSE: We do, and ask God to help and guide us. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 236)

And so begins a daily claiming and re-discovering of the God-given gifts of discipleship. These gifts overlap and are intertwined as one gift flows into another and into faithful living.

FIVE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP ... *during Epiphany*

Epiphany is an ideal season of the church year to emphasize LIVING OUR BAPTISM and discover the five gifts of discipleship. Affirming the gifts of discipleship in Baptism during the season of Epiphany could become a significant New Year's tradition. Commitments are made in New Year's resolutions, often relating to health and well-being. But what about our spiritual health and well-being? What commitments do we make to claim the gifts of discipleship?

The Story of the Epiphany: The church celebrates the day of Epiphany on January 6, twelve days after Christmas. The church recalls the story (found only in Matthew 2:1-10) of the wise men who came from the East searching for a king born under a star. They met with King Herod in Jerusalem and ascertained that a king was to be born in Bethlehem. Herod directed them to continue their search for this new king.

"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road." (Matthew 2:10-12 NRSV)

The wise men risked much and traveled far to pay homage to the king born under a star in Bethlehem. They came offering their gifts, only to be overcome with joy, not grasping that it was Jesus who provides the greater gift to the world. Aha! God was revealed to the wise men!

EPIPHANY: The Season of Aha! – The texts of the Revised Common Lectionary used by churches throughout the world during the Sundays after the Epiphany include wonderful stories of those who (like the wise men) have "Aha!" moments. We experience similar Aha moments when we say, "So that is what God is up to!" as we discover and claim the gifts of discipleship in our baptism.

How is Christ made known today?
Share one of your "Aha!" moments.

7 AHA! Stories of the Bible *(for an Epiphany series)*

Shepherds - Luke 2: 8-20

Simeon and Anna – Luke 2: 25-38

Parents – Luke 2:41-52

Unclean spirits – Luke 4:31-37

Disciples - Luke 5:1-11

Peter: Luke 9:18-20

Women: Luke 24:1-12



EPIPHANY: “Yes I Do!” Resolution

In January, many people adopt New Year’s resolutions. Imagine if a congregation adopted the “Yes I Do!” resolution in the text box on the right. Imagine if individuals approached this resolution with the commitment of the wise men in their search and journey to Jesus.

**“YES I DO!”
New Year’s
Resolution and Prayer**

God help and guide me to
LIVE among God’s faithful people;
HEAR the word of God and
share in the Lord’s supper;
PROCLAIM the good news of God
in Christ through word and deed;
SERVE all people following the
example of Jesus;
and to
STRIVE for justice and peace
in all the earth. Amen

1) Pre-Launch Party: Twelfth Night or the Day of Epiphany

Organize a party with food, fun, games, and gift-giving on either the Twelfth Night of Christmas (January 5) or the Day of Epiphany (January 6). Twelfth Night parties date back to medieval times. Roles were reversed as servants dressed up like royalty and royalty served them. Gifts might be brought and distributed to a nursing home, to a shelter for abused women, to the homeless, to children of incarcerated adults, and to others who are in need.

2) Launch: Baptism of Jesus (The first Sunday after January 6.)

Each year on the Sunday after January 6 (Epiphany), the church celebrates the baptism of Jesus and hears a clear affirmation of God’s love for him, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17 NRSV) All four gospels describe this significant event in the life of Jesus. In baptism, the Holy Spirit came to Jesus, and his mission on this earth was launched.

In our baptism, we too are claimed as God’s beloved children. In our baptism, we too receive the Holy Spirit, transforming our lives and launching our mission. That mission is made known in the gifts of discipleship which we are given and to which we commit our lives as we affirm our baptism.

“In baptism our gracious heavenly Father frees us from sin and death by joining us to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are born children of a fallen humanity; by water and the Holy Spirit we are reborn children of God and made members of the church, the body of Christ. Living with Christ and in the communion of saints, we grow in faith love, and obedience to the will of God.”

(Holy Baptism liturgy, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 227)

At baptism, the presiding minister places water upon the person in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, marks the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized and offers these words, “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 231)

To be sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever is significant and life-changing. As we affirm our baptism, we are asked the following question: Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

to live among God’s faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth? (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 236)

Each of us responds: “I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.” This response sounds like a New Year’s resolution for daily living. This response is not an obligation, but rather a five-fold gift from God. Each gift contains the potential of blessing.