

Belovedness Found in Baptism

I was recently asked why the top was off the baptismal font and water filled the bowl. First, I'm always thankful when asked a question as such because it tells me attention is being paid! Customs and practices shift over time in a worshipping community, as is the nature of life.

When I arrived at Saint Andrew's, I found the baptismal font with its cover on top of the font. I've come to understand this was the practice here. As a priest I generally try to integrate with the practices and customs of the place I am serving; however, upon occasion, when it seems to me there could be a deeper understanding and/or experience from altering a practice or custom, I have made adjustments. After conversing about the baptismal font cover with several members of Saint Andrew's, we removed it from the baptismal font, filled it with Holy Water, and located it to a more prominent place in the Nave.

With the visible reminder of our belonging to the Body of Christ and the opportunity to renew those Baptismal Vows as we dipped our fingertips into the Holy Water and traced the sign of the cross on our foreheads remembering our baptismal day when we were "sealed as Christ's own forever. This was all before the COVID pandemic arrived.

Not fully understanding how Covid was transmitted the first year, the recommendation was to empty baptismal fonts. The bowl was emptied while the cover remained off. As the pandemic has worn on, we've learned COVID is transmitted through the air and offering Holy Water in the baptismal font was safe again.

Being reminded of our baptism upon seeing the baptismal font and dipping our fingers in Holy Water to retrace our baptismal cross are both lovely rituals; however, if they have no meaning to the individual, they remain lovely and yet empty gestures. What's most important is understanding what our baptism reveals to us about God how we are viewed by God ... and that is "this is my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). In Jesus taking on our humanity, we too become God's beloved.

I don't know about you, but I can never be reminded that I am one of God's beloved too often. What a source of strength it is to move through life out of these waters of belovedness (as opposed to wretchedness).

May you find both comfort and courage in your belovedness,

Rev'd Stephanie