

## You Are Mine

Isaiah 43:1–3

Introduction:

Dear Friends in Christ

Today we rejoice with two beautiful girls who will experience the new birth of baptism. I'm sure the parents are rejoicing at this simple yet powerful act of baptism.

You know, there are many moments in the life of a parent when you feel particularly proud of your children. Right from day one to the moment of your last breath, I think. And along the way you sense that pride over and over, when their names are called at school, for example, for achievements award. Or, when they walk across the stage at graduation to receive their diplomas and see them accomplish great things in life. Or when they stand at the Lord's altar on the days of their weddings and repeat their vows of promise to their future spouses. On these and many other occasions, a parent is often beaming with pride. That sense of pride is there because you know that by God's grace you have been allowed to play a role in creating, forming, and making your son or daughter into who he or she is. You are proud to say "This is my son" or "This is my daughter."

The same happens with those who have been baptized and are now called children of God.

And since we are witnessing two baptisms today, I would like to meditate on the gift of baptism. It does us good to refresh our memories, or even learn what the Lord tells us in his word what baptism does. And for this I would like to meditate on the words of God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, Isaiah 43:1–3 where we hear God saying:

"But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. <sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."

That's what happens at your baptism, God claims you as His. As his children. Children that He has created, formed and redeemed. And as his children God is so proud to say of each of you, "You Are Mine." That's what he says of each of the baptized and of the ones being baptized today, "you are mine."

**I. God says, "You are mine," For I have created, formed and redeemed you.**

With all authority God reminds His people that He, God Himself is the one who Created and formed them, actually, he created the whole human race. He is the ultimate Creator. He created our first parents, Adam and Eve, as his own treasured possession.

And when the Human race rejected God, there at the Garden of Eden, He provided a way to bring us back to Him, to make us again into His people. He did through His Son Jesus Christ, as He came and died on the cross of Calvary, so that through His sacrifice and His life, those who once were alienated from God, would

become His children. Now, thanks be to God, that we are able to receive His saving grace, freely given to us, through the waters of Baptism. Through baptism our God saved us, giving us a new identity and a new name. Our identity is God's identity and our name is Children of God.

And it is there, in the water of our Baptism that God created a people special to him, his Church, making and forming her members into a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), from that moment on, the Word, God's word, is forming us into that New Creation, all through and by the power of the Holy Spirit, who constantly reminds and assures us of the forgiveness of our sins, original, and actual sins. And with that assurance comes also the assurance that even when we pass through "fires" and "rivers" in this world, "fires" and "rivers" that test our faith and try our patience, those, will never burn us or drown us. Why? Because we are God's "treasured possession" (Deut 7:6). Because, in his love, He gave up the life of his Son in exchange for our life (v 3-4). He sacrificed his Son in order to gather people from the ends of the earth to be formed as one holy Christian and apostolic Church (vv 5-6).

## **II. As His Children we are Watermarked in Christ Jesus.**

Now as God's Children, God watermarks us in Christ Jesus. The prophet says, that God is the one who shapes us. We are who we are because of the grace of God. He has made us to be his own through water and the Spirit. We belong to him. We are his. Our identity is with him, it is with Christ. The identity we have is that of his Son Jesus. For when we are baptized we do get to partake in the blessings and life of Jesus, there we begin to bear his name. And it begins with simple water and God's word, there God watermarks us with Jesus name.

It marks us with Jesus name, because it first marked Jesus. Just as the beginning of Creation was marked with God's presence and grace, so our spiritual life begins with God's presence as well. After all, our lives are God-begotten.

Baptism is God's plan, even Jesus was baptized too. You probably remember the story about of Jesus' baptism and how he was baptized by John, there at the Jordan River. There one day Jesus came to Him for baptism. "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him." We read in one of the Gospels account. (Mt 3:13). Now, John recognizes Jesus, because God had told John how to recognize the Christ. So He's been expecting him.

Now, just as John was expecting Jesus to be baptized, God was expecting us to receive his baptism, and today God is expecting Lilian's and Kate's baptism. And if so, then baptism watermarks us for Christ's coming, coming at our baptisms, coming here today in his Word and the Sacrament, and coming on the last day to take us with him. So look for Christ to come to you daily in concert with his Word. His coming is a mark of his grace, His salvation to you, to you whom God calls and says "you are mine!"

But there is more, the story goes that John was reluctant to baptize Jesus at first, but Jesus said: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." (Mt 3:15). What words of wonder!

It was Christ's work, but on this day he included John in the doing of it. John's work or ministry was marked by the presence of Christ. It's always the work of Christ. Even the work we do, the ministry of our lives, is marked by Christ, so what we do is offered to God as our spiritual act of worship day after day. Whatever you do every day, you do as God's name bearing child. For in baptism you are born of water and the

Spirit. And as a new born being, born of water and the Spirit, the Father sends you saying "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).

In Baptism we are watermarked by the doing of Jesus. Right there at his baptism, Jesus Christ identifies with all humankind. Christ identifies with humankind by coming as one of us, under the mantle of God's wrath for sin. On him the fullness of God's furious judgment against sin was fully and really done. Jesus did it, at his baptism, by allowing John to baptize him.

Now as John baptized him, Christ really did nothing. John did the baptizing. But in doing nothing, he accomplishes everything—for us. He fulfills all righteousness, Jesus says.

Jesus begins his work in the same way he will receive his death—obedient to the Father's will, identifying with us. We could not and cannot be obedient as God demands. We would be marked with the stain of mortality and the stench of death without Christ. Like his death and resurrection, so Christ's baptism is for us.

But there is more, in a few moments the sign of the cross will be placed on the forehead and heart of the baptismal candidates, and the pastor will say: "to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified"

In other words baptism watermarks with the Cross of Christ. As Paul tells us in Romans 6 and Colossians 2, that in our Baptism God buried us with Christ into death and raised us to new life in the Spirit through the power of his resurrection.

And for this we do nothing, the babies being baptized today, *could* do nothing. God has done it for us in Christ. Grace claims us and gives us what is not ours—we are drawn to God as loved children, not enemies, as watermarked followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we no longer are marked by sin's stain.

Then we hear the gospel account that "...when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mt 3:16-17). Really in our baptisms we are watermarked by the Father's Pleasure and the Spirit's Anointing.

In Christ the Father takes pleasure. He was well please as Jesus went to the cross for us. Oh, perfect love, that Christ would love the Father so much that he would love us with that love, and take our place.

And it is through the same Christ that Father smiled at our Baptism, and it is the same Father who is smiling now as these two babies are baptized today. It is because of Christ that the Father delights in you his children, you, whom God says "you are mine."

Marked then by Christ, who was marked by our sin, and who heals us by his sacrifice and death, Father says of each us including Kate and Lillian "My son, my daughter whom I love." The Father takes pleasure in our place in his family. The Spirit works in the living water through the Word, and we are changed from death to life, from despair to hope, from the chaos of sin to the peace of God's rest.

In Baptism God claims us as his own children, and watermarks us with a new identity in Christ. And through him God says: "I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (43:1)

**Conclusion:**

In the beautiful song: “When the Roll Is Called up Yonder” (by James M. Black) we sing these words:

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,  
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;  
When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

We will be there because we are God's. Because through baptism the Lord has said: “You are mine” and wrote my name in the book of life. So when Judgment Day occurs and the Lord calls forth the names that are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev 21:27), God will beam with pride as each name is read, as the roll is called up yonder, because these are his people—he created them, formed them, and made them. We are his because of what he has done, because of what he has accomplished and completed in our life. We are his, now and forever.