

# LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

VINCENT: Hey, Sharon! Got a minute? Kim and I are doing a survey for Mrs. Alfonso's class. Can we ask you a couple questions?

SHARON: I guess. What kinds of things do you want to know?

KIM: Here's question one. "What do you want to be when you get out of school?"

SHARON: A doctor.

VINCENT: A doctor? How did you decide you wanted to be a doctor?

SHARON: My mom's a doctor. She says it's hard work but she likes it. I want to be like her and help people.

KIM: That takes a long time, doesn't it?

SHARON: Sure it does. But it'll be worth it. Like I said, mom loves it. I will, too. Dad says mom and I are just like two peas in a pod. That's why I think I'll like it.

• Many people grow up to follow in a parent's footsteps. Some go into the same jobs, some take up the same interests or causes. But it is not only parents who influence future generations. Many people find role models in teachers, neighbors, people at church, or people in the news. Even when we aren't thinking about it, other people influence us in hundreds of ways.

The same is true for us in our lives of faith. Have you ever thought about how and why you are a member of the church? Who are the big influences in your life?

When people help us follow them into the Christian life of faith, they are acting as a light for us—a light from God that shows us things we haven't seen and a light from God that helps us see the right path. As people lead us to God, they are fulfilling their baptismal mission—a life's work.

## 3 STATEMENTS

- Following their baptismal mission, others have brought us into the Christian faith.
- Through Holy Baptism, God includes us among those who serve the world in God's name.
- You are called not only to receive Holy Baptism, but to live it.

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*Source*

SENT

One of the places we most clearly learn about our baptismal mission is at the very end of Matthew's gospel. Let's set the scene. Jesus had already been arrested, crucified, and had died. Three days later God raised Jesus from the dead. According to Matthew, the disciples went to a mountain in the area of Israel known as Galilee. The risen Jesus then appeared to them there.

Now read Matthew 28:16-20 and answer the following questions to help discover the important points.



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1. Jesus said: "All authority in \_\_\_\_\_ and on \_\_\_\_\_ has been given to me."
2. What are Jesus' followers commanded to make? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How are Jesus' followers commanded to make them? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long will Jesus be with his followers to help them in their mission? \_\_\_\_\_

From the time of the first Christians, Jesus' followers have understood that when they are baptized, they not only receive a wonderful gift from God, but receive an important mission, too.

The word *mission* comes from an old Latin word *missio*, which means to be sent out with authority to perform a special duty. Soldiers get sent on missions. Diplomats get sent on missions. Astronauts get sent on missions. But the most important mission of all is the baptismal mission that Christians are sent on by Jesus.

### WHAT DOES MARTIN LUTHER SAY?

Turn in your book to the Small Catechism and find Part 3 of Holy Baptism (page 171).

Take a moment to read Luther's answer to the question, "How can water do such great things?" This answer is a very important reminder to us that Holy Baptism does not just happen by water, but by water *with* the Word of God.

Luther does not use the word *mission* here, but the idea is certainly present where he speaks of "the new birth through the Holy Spirit."

### WHO SENT JESUS TO ME?

It may seem like a new idea for you, but as surely as anything, Jesus sent people on a mission to bring you into the faith and into this incredible rela-

tionship with God. *Following their baptismal mission, others have brought us into the Christian faith.*

Who has been sent on a mission to you? In the margin, write the names of all the persons you can think of who have followed Jesus' command and whose baptismal mission has brought you into the faith and helped keep you there.

## HOW ARE WE SENT?

Christians are sent to others in a number of ways. Sometimes our mission is to speak directly to others. Sometimes it is to directly serve others. Sometimes it is to just be there. Many times our mission is one of supporting others in their mission.

Your mission can take place anytime, anywhere, and with anyone. Hardly a day can go by without some opportunity to work on your baptismal mission. Maybe you can help a friend at school. Maybe you can give some money to a charity. Maybe you can stand up for an important cause. These are all ways that your mission can be done. Remember what you learned about how the church is like a body with each part having something special to do? These ministries are a part of how you do your baptismal mission.

One place you can be sure to find lots of people participating in mission is in your congregation. How many different jobs or ministries can you think of that people must do to help carry out the mission Jesus sent them on? Write as many of these jobs as you can think of in the margin.

Now put a check mark beside the ones you have done already. Draw a circle around the ones you would like to try someday.

Remember, *through Holy Baptism, God includes us among those who serve the world in God's name.*

## LIVING YOUR BAPTISM

*You are called not only to receive Holy Baptism, but to live it.*

Maybe that sounds a bit strange. How does one go about living Baptism? There are many ways to answer that, but they all have some common ideas.

Living your Baptism means:

- remembering each day that you are baptized.

- remembering each day that because you are baptized, you are in an incredible relationship with God—one that is yours for free.

- remembering each day how grateful you are to God for this incredible gift.

- discovering each day new ways to thank God by helping others know about the incredible relationship God offers them.

- discovering each day how to serve the world and God's beloved people so that others may see God's light shine through you.

Can you think of ways that you are already living your Baptism?

Can you think of ways that others are living their Baptisms?

Can you think of new ways of living your Baptism that you might want to try some day?

## Shaping life

## WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF . . .

Here are some situations that Christian young people might find themselves in. Remembering what you've discovered about baptismal mission, what alternatives do each of these people have? Try to think of two or three ideas for each situation.

- Kristin was at school when she heard some of her friends making fun of Mieko's Japanese background. "That Japanese girl," she heard one say, "gets good grades because she can't do anything but study. Who'd be seen on a date with her?" What might Kristin do to live her Baptism?

- Rob's best friend is Mike. One day, while walking home from school together, Mike offered Rob a strange-

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looking pill. "Try this, Rob," Mike whispered, "it'll make you feel great!" What might Rob do to live his Baptism?

• Ryan saw that the new kid seemed pretty shy. Ryan was shy himself, so he could understand. The youth group was going to have a sleep-over at the church and Ryan was looking forward to it because he felt the kids in the group liked him. What might Ryan do to live his Baptism?

## ONE PERSON'S MISSION

One of the great Christian missionaries in Japan was Toyohiko Kagawa. He was born in 1888. In his teens he became a Christian and spent the remainder of his life trying to help people in many different ways. He was especially involved in helping relieve poverty in his nation. But, it wasn't easy.

In a book called *Love: The Law of Life* he wrote:

"My real experience of religion came when I entered the Kobe slums. Everything in the slums was ugly: the people, the houses, the clothes, the streets—everything was ugly and full of disease. If I had not carried God beside me, I should not have been able to stay.

But because I believed in God, and in the Holy Spirit, I had a different view of life, and I assure you that I enjoyed living in the slums. With active love and the love-motive, every moment was full of joy. Because I felt that the Holy Spirit of the Heavenly Father was living inside me, I was not afraid of anything—not of the many repeated threats from pistols, swords, ruffians, not even from the infectious diseases which infested the slums."

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## FURTHER

# opportunities

### *Bible Reading and Reflection*

Read the following Bible passages and think for a moment about each. Think especially about what the passage has to do with your baptismal mission.

- Ephesians 6:10-17
- James 1:22-25
- Acts 8:26-39

### *Memory*

Turn to Part 3 of Martin Luther's explanation to Holy Baptism (see page 171 of your book). Remember, if you do a little each day, it is easy! Be sure to check yourself on the memory work you did on Part 1 and Part 2.

### *Activity 1*

Make baptismal candles your church can use in upcoming Baptisms. There are many ways you can do this. The most simple way is to take a white candle and two pieces of thin ribbon. Melt some wax from another candle to use as "glue." Then, using small drops of the melted candle, stick the ribbon to the candle in the form of a cross. Be sure to put it low enough so that the candle won't melt down to the ribbon too quickly.

### *Activity 2*

Write thank-you notes to the persons who helped bring you into

the Christian faith. Thank them for carrying out their baptismal mission to you and for ways they have helped you grow in faith. You may end up with many different notes.

### *Activity 3*

With your pastor's permission, create a display for your church entryway or narthex to remind people of Jesus' teaching about being the light of the world. Use a candle as part of the display. Then make a small sign with Matthew 5:14-16 neatly printed on it. Have a copy of *Lutheran Book of Worship* opened to the service for Holy Baptism on page 121, a baptismal cloth or towel if your pastor uses one, and a bowl of water. Arrange the display so that when people come to church they will see it and be reminded that through their Baptism, they too are lights of the world.

### *Activity 4*

With your pastor's permission, decorate the baptismal font for the next Baptism. Or, you may agree to do it for the next several months whenever a Baptism is celebrated. Many different kinds of decorating would be meaningful. You could decorate with flowers to symbolize life. You could make a cross or a dove or candle to put on the front of the font. Perhaps your congregation has a special symbol you could use. Be creative!

# FOCUS

## ON HOW LUTHERANS CAME TO NORTH AMERICA

Lutherans came to North America in all kinds of ways and for all kinds of reasons. It may be surprising to think about it, but North America was once a wide-open missionary field.

The first Lutherans came in 1619 as a part of a Danish expedition that was searching for the Northwest Passage. In 1623, three years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, Dutch Lutherans built the first Lutheran settlement at Fort Orange, New York. Dutch Lutherans also established themselves in the Virgin Islands in 1666.

German Lutherans began coming to the New World in large numbers in the late 1600s and early 1700s. German pastor, Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg, was sent to America to help the Lutheran churches and he became the most famous Lutheran organizer and leader in the New World.

Swedish Lutherans set up a settlement in 1638 where Wilmington, Delaware is now. The second pastor of the Swedish church, John Campanius, translated the Small Catechism into the language of a local Native North American nation and this was the first Protestant work ever translated for the original inhabitants of the continent.

In 1734 a massive immigration of Austrian Lutherans established a settlement called Ebenezer near Savannah, Georgia.

From these beginnings, Lutherans began to spread themselves all across North America.

