



We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another...

The theme of this year's English District Convention, to be held next week in Ann Arbor, MI, is *Living Our Baptized Life in Christ*. Dr. Martin Luther's Post-Communion Collect allows us to reflect on this very theme after we receive God's gifts in His Divine Services to us.

The prayer opens, "... that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift." *Our Baptized Life* begins with our receiving God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. God always acts on us first. Of course, He daily gifts us what we need to support and sustain our lives. He gives these gifts to everyone, even the unchurched non-believer who does not recognize the Giver. The prayer though takes this a step farther. Consider the Convention theme verse:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. (Galatians 2:20a)

Here, too, we confess God's acting on us. We were dead in sin, unable to do anything to save ourselves. In Baptism, our old Adam was crucified with Christ, and we were set free from sin, death, and the devil, and granted a new life in Him (c.f. Romans 6:1-14). Yet we remain sinner-saints, and by the way he phrased the Greek in this verse, St. Paul teaches that we are continually co-crucified with Him.¹ Thus, every time we receive God's gifts in His Word and Sacrament, we are quite literally refreshed or brought back to life in Him! The verse continues:

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20b)

As we receive God's gifts, He is restoring His image within us (Colossians 3:10). Put simply, the image of God is "a wisdom and righteousness ... that would grasp God and reflect Him."² Thus, in the Post-Communion Collect, we implore God to continue to do just that, by strengthening us in faith toward Him and fervent love to each other. *Living Our Baptized Life in Christ* means continually receiving His gift of saving faith in Christ-crucified, died, risen, and ascended *for us*. It also means selflessly sharing that deep and sacrificial love that He has first shown to us with our fellow believers, and yes, our unchurched neighbors as well, all by His grace alone. In doing so we pray that all will be saved, come to the knowledge of the truth, and live in eternity in His presence. As we live *Our Baptized Life in Christ*, we truly acknowledge in word and deed that all human life, from fertilization to forever, matters to God, and therefore to us as well.

Notes:

1. A. Andrew Das, *Concordia Commentary: Galatians* (St. Louis: CPH, 2014), p. 268
2. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article II, paragraph 18