

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Effects of Baptism Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday,
November 12, 2014 8:15 AM **Ti 3:1-7;** Lk 17:11-19 St. Josaphat, bishop, martyr
(Wisdom, obedience to the God within, good citizens, desire for God, filled with good will,
understand how blessed we are)

Today we are reading from the **Letter of St. Paul to Titus**, although we are not sure St. Paul himself actually wrote the letter. It seems to have been written at a rather late date. St. Paul died in 67. This letter seems to give evidence of a later period in the history of the Church, but doubtless St. Paul had followers, people who could write in his name and took on his responsibilities.

The point in today's letter is the transformation that is caused by Baptism. How do we describe the effects of Baptism? By effects I mean what we can actually see. We can't simply say that, well, with Baptism there are invisible graces that fill the soul, although outwardly you don't know any change; you don't see anything. No, that is not acceptable. **Sacraments have to affect the whole person:** the way they live, the way they feel, the way they think, otherwise they are pointless. **We can't imagine an invisible world of grace that has no effect on how we live.** It doesn't make any sense. **Grace is supposed to change the way we live, change the way we feel and think.**

So what he is describing here: **"We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deluded,"** you could say this is natural. Naturally, people growing up in the world as it is will be foolish, because they will look around them, they will take in the so-called wisdom of the age, wisdom of the world, which isn't wise, and therefore they will be foolish. Disobedient: mainly this whole idea of do whatever you please. That's being disobedient. Deluded: well if you think you know what's what, but in fact you don't, you are deluded. It is the natural state of people living in the world and gaining their sense of reality from their senses, from their contact with the world through their senses.

"Slaves to various desires": not in control; we see this all around us all the time, maybe in our families, people who cannot control themselves but whose needs and/or desires control them, **"and pleasures."**

"Living in malice and envy": well, now malice means actually ill will. What the author means is that when we live a so-called natural life, when our knowledge of what is, is simply gathered from the world—there's no other source—we simply believe in what we see, we take what we see as all there is, well, then naturally there is a tendency toward a kind of ill will, because what we see in the world is not benevolent. We don't see a world where everyone loves each other, where everyone is full of concern for others. We see a world of indifference, coldheartedness, so therefore we become coldhearted and ill willed toward others, whom we see as our competitors for a limited amount of stuff, and "envy" because we start comparing ourselves to other people. It's very easy to compare yourself to other people. And envy involves a basic sadness at the prosperity of other people, especially when one is not prospering oneself, but not necessarily. One could be sad about the prosperity of others even when one prospers. It comes from this comparison and from this inner competition that the world sets up and one could take to be real and reality itself.

“Hateful ourselves”—hateful—in a way all of this living in the world is hateful because we are not created for it. We are created for something else. We are created to be filled with the Holy Spirit and, therefore, the Spirit of God, and to have a sort of inner contentment. But if we lack that, then naturally we have some sort of reaction to that, some distaste, some disgust. **“Hateful,”** he says, **“ourselves and hating one another”**: again, naturally because other people are just a mess. They are just more trouble, more competition. Jean Paul Sartre, the famous atheist said, “Hell is other people”—hating one another.

“But when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth,”—this is Baptism—**“and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”** What is the role of this Baptism? **What are the effects of this Baptism?** Well, in every way to counter all these things. **It gives us a wisdom that the world cannot teach us. It helps us be obedient,** not to somebody out there, but **to the God within.** And if we are obedient to the God within, we will be people of peace; we will be good citizens; we will be respectful, not because we fear the powers that be, but because we know God within us and **we want to be cooperative, helpful, good citizens. We will be not deluded, but enlightened.** So we say Baptism enlightens us or illumines us, because we have now a wisdom not from the world and not from our senses, but from the word of God. And of course Baptism has to be preceded by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No longer will we be slaves to various desires because **we will see the true desire of our hearts and souls is God;** and things and stuff and pleasures out there will be only secondary, if they matter at all, but they won’t control us. We will control them. **And there won’t be any more malice because we won’t be full of ill will.** We will be filled with good-will. Good will comes from God. It’s grace. Sanctifying grace is good-will. And **we will stop comparing ourselves to others,** except to **understand how blessed we are,** how fortunate we are to have been brought into the body of Christ, how **blessed we are to have been chosen to be a minister of Christ in the world.**