

With us through the water (Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22)

Our baptismal covenant is a beginning, not an ending.

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January 7, 2022

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I was 16 years old the first time I remember really appreciating the magnificence of the Pacific Ocean.

I remember just listening from afar to the powerful noises of the sea. I closed my eyes, and even though I had recently stopped going to church and felt distant from God, I remember thinking: *How can I not believe in God's existence when I'm witnessing such a sign of God's beauty and creativity?*

Isaiah reminds us this week that we can be confident that God will be with us as we go through the waters. This is also a reminder that the waters can be a source of life but can also be dangerous.

In the same way that water can inspire peace and calmness, as the psalmist mentions, it is through mighty waters that we can experience God's voice and glory. Now, every time I go to the ocean, it has become my practice to close my eyes in front of the sea and try to hear God's voice through the mighty waters. Sometimes it is serene and soothing, sometimes it is loud and vigorous, but it is always a mystical experience—an opportunity to experience the mighty touch of the Holy Spirit.

Luke also reminds us that through the baptismal waters, Jesus was claimed by the Holy Spirit as the beloved son. Remembering our baptism should be a regular practice for the church of Christ today. Living out our baptismal vows every day

should be an expectation for every Christian. Often, our baptismal covenant becomes an accomplishment—an ending point. Luke reminds us that when Jesus was claimed by the Holy Spirit as the beloved son, it was the beginning of Jesus' path toward the cross.

Living out our baptismal covenant on a daily basis should lead us to the same path. Living our baptismal vows today might lead us to uncomfortable places, to let go of relationships, to establish new friendships with people we would never expect, to unlearn and redeem oppressive theological and political convictions, and to resist and seek transformation of the current systems that perpetuate oppression and dehumanization.

Jesus' baptism is the reminder that our baptism is just the beginning, our joining of God's plan for all humanity to experience liberation. More than ever, the body of Christ on earth needs to rise, resist, and reclaim this world as God's world. As we intentionally seek to live out our baptismal covenant daily this new year, may we also remember that the Spirit that claimed Jesus as the beloved son is the same Spirit that claims us today as the beloved children of God.