

## Proper 7A 2008

This season after Pentecost, is the longest liturgical season of the year.

And the liturgical color of the season after Pentecost is Green.

Green is for the growing season of our souls.

We come together on this summer morning to grow spiritually.

8:00 Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaks of us as having been baptized into Christ Jesus.

Baptized into his death, and into his resurrection.

In doing so, Paul asserts that we are now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

What a sentence.

To be alive to God.

Our baptismal covenant poses 8 questions from which our lives in Christ spring.

10:00 And today we celebrate the baptism of Olivia Christian Buitrago.

A beautiful little girl who is so clearly a gift from God.

The service of Baptism is a departure from our regular service.

It is a study of our Baptismal Covenant, the promises we make to God and were made to God on our behalf when we were baptized.

With our baptismal covenant, we revisit the 8 questions from which all of our lives in God in Christ spring.

*1. Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father?  
It's an important question to ask from time to time. Doubt, questioning, is a part of any earnest faith journey.

In asking the question, we are willing to begin again on the spiritual journey to and with and in God.

*2. Celebrant* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

That Christ was an historical figure, is without a doubt.

There are extra- biblical sources that speak of the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The question is not so much his historicity, but do you believe that Jesus Christ is the manifestation of God?

By his preaching and teaching is your heart and soul moved to follow him in his ministry, in his way of life?

*3. Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

Do you believe that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ is with you to lead you, to comfort you?

Do you believe that the Spirit of God reveals God's will in the world?

Do you believe the whispering within your soul to be the Holy Spirit?

*4. Celebrant* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

In short, will you continue to be a part of the body of Christ?

Will you continue to come to Church and pray and be there not for yourself, but for others?

There's a young woman in the hospital whom needs our prayers.

*5. Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

A reminder that following Christ Monday through Saturday is not easy sometimes.

We all get derailed, distracted, dismayed, defeated.

Some think that they've messed up so much that they are not welcome back.

But it is for our miserable failures and shortcomings that Christ died.

Perseverance is to have a willingness to start again the journey in Christ.

That's why we come to worship together on the first day of the week; to start the week out right.

*6. Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

*7. Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

*8. Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Here's where the rubber hits the road.

These three final questions, is where we promise to practice a living faith each day.

Easier said than done.

But nothing worthwhile in this life is easy to do, is it?

You've all seen in the paper that the Church itself is having a hard time serving Christ in all persons and loving neighbor, and striving for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

Some in the Anglican Communion, as are other branches of Christianity, are asking that crafty question that the lawyer once posed to Jesus when asked to love his neighbor as himself, He asked, "Who is my neighbor?"

Some in our Communion are making the same attempt to put boundaries or limit the extent in which God is calling them to love.  
You've all heard about it.  
It's wrongly called the "gay issue."  
I don't see it that way.  
I believe it would be more aptly named the "failure to love" issue.  
Same problem, different group.  
It used to be women or minorities.

Somehow being gay means that one does not deserve the same respect or dignity given to others.  
This is some very bad theology going on there.  
First, Jesus, when asked who the lawyer's neighbor was, told the story of the Good Samaritan.  
Samaritans were reviled, half-breed heretics.  
To be shunned.  
If Jesus were here today, I'm sure he would have answered the attorney, by telling him the story of the Good Gay person.  
Everyone who was shunned in Jesus' day, the little children, the woman with the hemorrhaging, the woman caught in adultery, the blind man at the side of the road, the lepers, these were whom Jesus included in his ministry.

As many of you know, the Lambeth Conference, where all the Bishops in the Anglican Communion meet once every 10 years, is about to take place.

The Conference is held at the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Palace in London.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev. Rowan Williams, issues invitations to the conference, which this year the planners decided that it would be a time to foster mutual understanding and relationships with each other because of the friction between left and right.

But what did the Archbishop do?

He fell in the same pit of those who are arguing over the issue, he did not invite The Right Rev. Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire to the conference.

Remember, Bp. Robinson was duly elected by the people of New Hampshire, and affirmed by a large majority of the Episcopal Church.

The Archbishop also forbade Bishop Robinson from preaching or celebrating in the country of England. So, Gene's sermons will be read by many in the churches in England at the time of Lambeth.

The Archbishop also did not invite The Right Rev. Martin Minns, who was elected a Bishop of Nigeria here in the United States.

His election was in direct violation of the understanding of sovereignty over physical boundaries.

Minns was a parish priest here in the US, but has broken with the Episcopal Church over the gay issue. Because Martin Minns was not invited, the counties of Nigeria, Rwanda, and Uganda are refusing to go to Lambeth, and have set up a conference in Jerusalem, even though the Bishop of Jerusalem asked them not to have the conference there.

The Archbishop, Ronald says, is more focused upon the Church's unity rather than the issue of justice. The division that Christ is talking about in today's Gospel does happen when one stands for love and for justice.

I don't believe that doing love and justice can be secondary to unity.

Unity without love or justice is a special form of spiritual bankruptcy.

The Archbishop has forgotten that both Gene and Martin are his neighbors.

Gene Robinson and Martin Minns are my neighbors. Our neighbors.

In this season for spiritual growth, let us ever keep before us the eight baptismal questions.

For outside of these questions is, my brothers and sisters, a living death.

May we have the courage to answer those questions each day with love, with courage, with grace, and with the strength given us by God in Christ, and live lives with reflect the love of Christ.

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Amen.