

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

I like to do crossword puzzles, especially the New York Times Sunday crossword. Those puzzles are challenging enough to be entertaining, without being so difficult that I would get bored with them. One clue that I have seen more than a few times of late would ask about the movie that won an Oscar in a given year. Many trivia games will ask similar questions. For example: who won the Oscar for leading actor in 1957? (Alec Guinness for *Bridge on the River Kwai*), What film was the winner of the Best Picture award in 1990? (*Dances with Wolves*). What movie won 5 Oscars in 1966? (*The Sound of Music*). Now, if I impressed you because of my vast knowledge of movie trivia, let me make it clear that I really don't remember this year's winners, let alone any of the other stats. Through the marvel of the internet, I went to look up the winners. I noticed, though, the information on winners didn't seem to be the centre of many websites. Most of the information focussed on the gala celebration—and a great deal of it was concerned with the fashions that have become such a central part of the Oscars.

In the weeks before and after the Oscars, there is always a great deal of discussion about the various gowns that the actresses are wearing. Who is wearing Versace? Who is wearing Yves Saint Laurent, or Bill Blass or any other number of names that don't mean anything to me. This 'brand recognition' doesn't come to light only at the Oscars. It is very much a common practice among people. Again, in my crossword puzzle the other day, one of the clues was "The shirt with the croc". It frightens me, to a certain extent, that I knew the answer was 'Izod'. People wear clothes with a designer or company name on them: Boss, Roots, Calvin Klein. We 'brand' ourselves with the outfits that we wear. Most of mine are branded, "Clearance".

But there is a name that we bear with pride; the name given to us in our Baptism. On this Trinity Sunday we rejoice in the great and glorious majesty of that Name. It is the name of the God of heaven and earth, the God who created this wonderful world and all that is in it. It is the name of God, who has redeemed fallen mankind from the condemnation that we rightly deserve because of our sinfulness. It is the name of God, who has sanctified us and brought us to faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, and who leads us in the wonderful life we enjoy as His people. As we focus on the wonder of the Triune God today, we rejoice that He is an awesome God. We also give thanks and praise for the fact that this Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent God who is so marvellous and so far beyond our understanding is the God who puts His name on us and says to us: ***"I will be your God, and you shall be my people."*** (Jeremiah 7:23, ESV)

If you were to ask people to quote a bible passage that speaks of the Trinity, I am sure that the majority of people would quote the verse that is our text today: ***Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*** We call this command from Christ *The Great Commission*. This is the work that Christ has given to His church to do. We are to go and make disciples. We do this by baptizing and by teaching. We go with the powerful name of God and in the power that God provides to accomplish His will for us and for the world. But may we never lose sight of the great significance and the wonderful blessings that are ours because we are blessed to bear the name of the Triune God! These words that command us to baptize also promise what God does for us in our baptism. It may actually be better to say that we are baptized *into* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If I wear a shirt that says, "Tommy Hilfiger" on it, that doesn't make me part of Hilfiger's family. I don't get to share in the profits that come from that clothing line. All I am doing is advertising for the company. But when we have the name of the Triune God upon us through our Baptism, we are truly blessed with all that God is; and with all that God has done, is doing and will do for us. Baptized into His name, we enter into an intimate and blessed relationship with the Triune God. We are baptized, and God is our Father. We are baptized, and God the Son, Jesus Christ, is our Saviour. We are baptized, and the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier and comforter. Those simple words spoken at our baptism are a summary of all that God grants to us as His covenant people. All that we confess about God in the Creed—this is what God has given us in our Baptism,

as we are brought into a special communion and relationship with Him, for He has put His name upon us.

Years ago, in the wide open spaces of the west, a little girl was baptized. The next day at school her friends asked her why. She said, "I was a little maverick out on the prairie. When I was baptized, Jesus put His name on me, and now everyone knows I belong to Jesus." The word maverick was originally a man's name. Samuel Maverick was a Texas cattleman who, for some reason, didn't brand his cattle. Because of that, an unbranded animal, especially a lost calf, became known as a maverick, and could become the legal property of anybody who would catch it and brand it.

We are all spiritual mavericks when we come into this world. We are lost, straying outside the boundaries of His ranch, far from the Father's house and home. But in His love God seeks and finds us. The Spirit creates and implants in us the precious gift of faith. By that faith we are united with Christ—united by our Baptism into His death and His resurrection. We are branded, as it were, with the holy name of the Triune God. That means we are no longer mavericks but children in the family and household of God.

It is the fact that God puts His name on us in our baptism that leads Luther to encourage us to make the sign of the cross at the beginning of each day in remembrance of our baptism. Sometimes we tell ourselves this isn't the way that Lutherans act. Yet nothing could be further from the truth! We have the opportunity to do this when the invocation is spoken or at various times in our liturgy. If you see the little cross icon on the screen, it is quite appropriate to make the sign of the cross at that time. We can make that sign of the cross as we kneel or leave the altar rail during Holy Communion. This practice is an excellent reminder of who we are: baptized children of God who have been redeemed by Christ the crucified. That sign of the cross testifies to the One who died and rose for us, so that we might be the people of God. It also reminds us that through our Baptism we are branded and marked by that Name that is thrice holy.

Of course, whether or not we do this does not change the fact that God has placed His name upon us. Making the sign of the cross is a matter of individual choice. C.S. Lewis once remarked that Christians shouldn't even notice whether other Christians do such things. If our attention is drawn to whether or not the person in the pew next to us is making the sign of the cross, or how he is folding his hands, and so on, then our focus is on the wrong thing. If you do want to make the sign of the cross, you may want to follow the oldest tradition, in which you bring together the thumb and first two fingers (three being the number of the Holy Trinity). As the Invocation is spoken, touch the forehead lightly, then move down to the middle of the chest. Then touch the right shoulder and finally the left shoulder. Or you can follow the western tradition and touch the left shoulder first, and then the right.

Regardless of whether or not we make the sign of the cross, we should remember that we have been baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We bear His name as His people. Are you familiar with the proverb "clothes make the man"? A person's attire can influence how they are perceived by others. It suggests that appearance can play a role in shaping first impressions and how others judge a person. Bearing God's name, given to us in our Baptism should do more for us than mere clothing ever could, although Paul does tell us: ***"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*** (Galatians 3:27, ESV) We are clothed in Christ—the Christ who died to pay the price for our sins; the Christ who rose to give us life. That makes us who we are! It is not just an outward image, but a life-changing reality. As you struggle with the cares of life, remember that the Father, who created the world and all that is in it, is still watching over you in all things. He has put His name on you. When the devil works against you, seeking to lead you into temptation, remember that you are clothed in Christ and bear His name. You are covered with the blessings of forgiveness and life through His death and His resurrection. When you are feeling weak or spiritually troubled, remember that you bear the name of God the Holy Spirit who is your helper and comforter. How blessed we are to bear His name—not just any name, but the name of the True God, the only God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.