

In It Together!

[Nehemiah 8^{1-3,5-6,8-10}; Psalm 19;] 1 Corinthians 12¹²⁻³¹; Luke 4¹⁴⁻²¹

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. [1 Corinthians 12²⁷]

One of the things that is seldom understood is that the sacrament of baptism is accepted by most the Christian Churches as valid - so long as water is administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. While it is usually a priest that administers baptism, in an emergency any baptised Christian can baptise and it is accepted as valid. (The Baptist Churches and the Pentecostal Churches don't accept the baptism of infants, however.) Baptism is followed by Confirmation - always the gift of a Bishop - and the reception of bread and wine at the Eucharist.

The Orthodox Churches go much further than the Western Churches in the single Sacrament of Initiation. A baby will be stripped off and dipped fully into a font three times, they will then be confirmed and in the same service receive the bread soaked in the wine. They are much more serious about the conviction that every baptised person is from that moment fully a member of the Church of Christ.

- ✠ Paul makes that point very forcefully. Every member of the Church is a necessary member of the Church. He uses the illustration of a body where everything has to work together. If any part is absent or isn't working in partnership with the rest the whole body is dysfunctional.

Paul's view is that the whole body loves, cares, suffers, honours and rejoices together. A body should look after itself, but there is more...

- ✠ Jesus pushes it just a little further and points out that the body should embrace others. He picks up Isaiah's manifesto and tells us the good news we share: good news to the poor; release to captives; sight to the blind; the oppressed going free; proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour.

All of these things make a difference to others and especially those unable to help themselves.

Baptism is a launch pad for a life that should become more and more like Jesus. It is the task of parents and godparents and the Christian community to live lovingly as the body of Christ, honouring each other and from the strength gained in the time we spend together we gain the confidence, strength and direction to live as Christians in the world.