

THE PROMISE OF BAPTISM

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Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

Do you know what that means when a little baby is baptized into the Church?

Firstly, it means that he has become a member of the Church. His mother and father have promised that they will bring him up with the teachings of the Lord's Word, so that he will know and believe in the Lord. So now he is a member of the Church. Secondly, special angels are now given to him, to look after him, and to keep him in the wish to believe in and trust the Lord. And the angels of heaven count him as a member of the Church too. Of course, all babies have angels looking after them, but when they are baptized, they get two special angels to do so.

But what I especially want to talk to you about this morning is what the mother and father of this baby have said that they will do. In the baptism service they have actually made a most special and important promise. They have promised that until their baby is grown up and can make up his mind for himself, they will see to it that he keeps the Lord's commandments.

That's really a big job, isn't it? You see, they know that a little baby, or, as he grows, a young boy, can't keep all the Lord's commandments for himself. They know that the hells are very clever, and that if they don't help him, he will be led into disobeying the Lord's teachings. The evil spirits try to make little children tell lies and be unkind, and even take things that they shouldn't. They make children want to do other things too—swear, think dirty thoughts, and so on. And little children don't know enough to fight the hells. They want to be good, but sometimes they don't know *how* to be good.

They need help. They need someone who loves them, and thinks about them every day, someone who wants nothing more than for them to be happy, to keep guard over them, and stop the hells from leading them into evil. And that is what mothers and fathers do. They promise the Lord that until their children are grown up, they will see to it that the children keep the Lord's commandments.

You can see how terrible it would be if mothers and fathers didn't do this, can't you? Maybe you've heard of some bad parents who teach their children to steal, so that they can have the things the children steal. And they teach them to tell lies to get away with things, and they boast about how clever their children are at doing bad things. Parents like that are wicked, for they are teaching their children the way of hell, instead of heaven.

But your mothers and fathers are trying to keep the promise they made at your baptism. They have four ways they can help you to keep the Lord's commandments. Firstly, they can give you their love, so you know that they always care for you and that you can trust them with all your problems. You can tell them if you are

unhappy, you can turn to them at all times.

Secondly, they try to teach you what the Lord has said, because the truths of the Word are the best swords to fight evil with. You may learn about the Word from lots of people, from ministers and teachers, too, but you will find as you grow up that some of the things you remember best are the ones that you have learned from your mother and father at home, because these are the people who love you best of all, and their teaching is usually the strongest, for that reason. **And, we are told that the truths your fathers teach you are especially strong.**

Thirdly, parents try to teach you how to love the things that the Word teaches. They try to show you how happy people are who are honest and kind, who live quiet, clean lives, and how miserable people will be who live bad lives. They try to show you by their example how happy you can be by obeying the Lord. And fourthly, of course, when you do what is wrong, and disobey the Lord, they must correct you. They must do this, because they have promised to stop you from disobeying the Lord, and the Lord would be very sad if they let their children get away with doing evil.

These things mothers and fathers do, so that they can keep their most special promise to the Lord, to see to it that their children obey Him, while they are growing up. They are helped, of course, by the Lord Himself, who leads and guides them. They are also helped by the angels, who are with the children, and make the children feel happiness when they do good things and guilty when they do bad things. But they can also be helped by one other person too. Do you know who that is? It is the child himself. You can help your mothers and fathers keep their most special promise to the Lord.

How can you do that? By trusting them and turning to them, so that they can help you. If a child hides away and does wrong things, and tells untruths to his parents so that they don't know what he is doing, they can't help him to do better, can they? It's harder for them. If he doesn't listen well to what they say, but listens to his friends instead, he's not helping them keep their promise, is he? If he sulks when they punish him for bad things, he's not realizing that he was wrong, and learning to do good things instead.

So you can help your parents to keep this most special promise by trusting them and turning to them when you need them. If things are going badly, if you're sick, or need help in other ways, you turn to them, don't you? It's the same with evils. Trust them and look to them for help, and you will be giving them a better chance of keeping their promise. After all, all mothers and fathers wish for their children that they will eventually be led to heaven. That is something they want more than anything, for they know that if their children get to heaven, all will be happy with them forever. That is what they are working for, and that's what you want too, isn't it?

Amen.