

Don't Get Distracted

At this point in my Christian life, I've seen a lot of baptisms. I've seen adults and children of all ages come to the baptismal font to receive the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), and each time I get a little emotional. It's an amazing thing to witness, this burying of the old Adam and putting on of Christ. We're witnessing the beginning of a new Christian life. It is a miracle.

When my youngest son was baptized recently, I was not thinking about the miracle happening to him. I was instead thinking, "Oh, please stop screaming! This is so embarrassing. No one can hear the pastor!" Even at one month old, my son had strong opinions that he wanted to share with the whole world. My focus had been diverted from the miracle taking place, to social anxiety and self-consciousness. Fortunately, the miracle still took place.

It's very easy to get distracted in this fallen world. We have jobs, doctor appointments, family obligations, social events, and technology that constantly reminds us that there's so much to do. Whatever we happen to be doing, our minds are always on *what else* has to be done. Even during worship (and here I confess my sin) while Pastor is preaching, I am sometimes thinking about what I need to do at home or during the coming week. During the Lord's Supper, I'm thinking, "Boy, the wafers have gotten stale," or "Huh, this must be a new bottle of Manischewitz...." Not exactly meditating on Christ's body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. Fortunately, despite the fact that I'm not truly present – Christ is!

God be praised that when we are faithless, Christ remains faithful (2Tim.2:13)! The everyday distractions that we all face do not put our salvation in jeopardy. Our Baptism is working even when we're not thinking about it; Christ is truly present in the Eucharist whether we are focused on His presence or not. Our Savior is stronger than our short attention spans!

These Sacraments – these gracious gifts of God – do not work apart from faith. Our faith must be fed. Faith, itself, is a gift that we receive and are tasked to maintain, so that we may share it and use it to serve our neighbors. Come to church. Keep coming to church. The Lord has given you gifts! He wants to keep giving you gifts! Don't be afraid of what the people there might think or say; we all miss a Sunday

morning from time to time. Don't let the world's distractions divert you from the new life you have in Christ. The season of Lent is the perfect time to repent.

Distractions happen. You're forgiven. But a word of caution: distractions can turn into idols. It's one thing to have your attention diverted for a while. It's another thing to prioritize those distractions over hearing the Lord's Word preached and taught, and receiving His Sacraments. Sometimes it happens without us even noticing. The Devil is tricky that way. You don't have to be the model Christian when you walk into church on Sunday morning. You have to be a sinner. And so you are! Repent! Believe! Receive Mercy. See you Sunday.

Prayer: *Almighty God, we thank You for all the gifts through which You show us mercy. We are sinners; Lord, give us more mercy! Grant us the strength in our faith to show and share this mercy with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*