***The Separating Waters of Holy Baptism***

**Creation Day 2 – Lent**

Our text for meditation, the creation account, day 2, Genesis 1:6-9

***Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.*** [Thus far the text.]

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Again our reason must bow down to the revelation of God through His servant Moses. It is far beyond our comprehension precisely how things looked at the end of the second day. What is more, we scratch our head in musing precisely about how God did what Moses here describes.

Of course, it does not help that we do not completely understand the nature of the words given by God to describe His Second Day of Creation. ***Firmament*** is not in our regular vocabulary. We might tend to think that it was something rather firm ... like a fixed foundation—despite that fact that we are talking about some sort of expanse between the waters which were under the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament. We might even ask what this above and below talk is all about.

Looking at other portions of Scripture to help us, Job speaks of the skies being spread out strong as a cast metal mirror (37:18). The Greek translation renders the word with one that means: steadfastness—such as in Colossians when St. Paul says: For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ (2:5).

But Hebrew word here carries the connotations of something expanded, spread out, or folded out, maybe like a tent. Or maybe like a balloon when it is blown up.

It is no better if we simply ignore the details of the what and how of this ***firmament****.* Then we get to the next conundrum, at least in my mind. How do we conceive precisely just how there were ***waters which were under the firmament* and *waters which were above the firmament?***

We live in the time **after** the Flood. We live **after** the great upheaval when ***all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and floodgates sky were opened*** (Gn 7:11). It was not just that it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, the earth was deluged from below **and** from above by many waters.

We question how such things could have happened. We wonder if the waters above were just extremely heavy rain-laden clouds such as the world has never known since the Flood? We do know from Genesis 2 that there was no rain before the time of the Flood, ***but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground*** (2:6).

But maybe the most perplexing question is raised by what we hear in the last verse of our text: ***And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.***

Were the waters above, above Heaven itself? Here is where looking at multiple translations is helpful, a couple translate, ***God called the expanse “sky.”*** The word in the Hebrew is more literally translated *heavens*, heaven-s is a plural. So also the Greek, it refers to the multiplex of the sky, the upper atmosphere, and “outer space” (where the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets will be located ... once we have arrived at the Fourth Day). It may also include paradise, that which is often referred to as Heaven proper ... the abode of God and all the company of heaven.

Again I say that our human reason must be taken captive to the text of the divinely inspired Word of Scripture. We must not speculate about these things too much. We must also not **doubt** them or cast them aside as fiction, myth, or mere allegory.

It is once again that Father speaks by the divine eternal Word, as the life-giving Spirit hovers above the creation, so that God’s ***Let there be*** must certainly come to pass.

Dear friends, Holy Scripture is and must remain for us the inspired, inerrant Word of the One God – Who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To doubt It or call It into question is the same as the Serpent: ***Has God indeed said*** (Gn 3:1). When doubt is cast upon a single portion of the Word of God, it is cast upon **all** the Word—including the Word of our forgiveness, salvation, and life in Christ Jesus alone.

Like the garment of Christ for which the soldiers cast lots beneath the cross, Holy Scripture is seamless, it is a whole from beginning to end. You cannot cast away a portion without ruining its seamless nature. You cannot call God a “liar” in one place without the risk of eventually slandering Him in all. For as God says: ***All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*** (2 Tim 3:16). *Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word.*

This separating of the waters becomes important when just a few generations after the Six Days of Creation our Lord judges the sinful earth and causes the waters above the firmament to rain down upon the earth and the waters below the firmament to burst forth. These waters brought an end of life to all those humans who refused to heed the preaching of righteousness through the mouth of Noah and did not enter the ark. Thus , the divided waters themselves become a divider among people—between those who believe God’s threats and promises and those who in sinful hard-heartedness refuse to hear the Word of God.

It is no different today. You and I each know the struggle that rages within us, *sinner* -vs- *saint*. We know that our sinful flesh must be *drowned* daily *and die with all sins and evil desires*. This must happen so that the *new man* may *daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever* (*SC IV.4*).

Just as the world was unable to correct and sanctify itself without God’s external work upon it, so must God work on you and me. It is why He has established the Holy Word and Sacraments, especially Holy Baptism—to correct and sanctify us.

Our sinful flesh—and especially our human reason—struggles against those things of God which do not coincide with our own thinking and experience. Our flesh needs discipline. It is why many fast, especially during ***Lent***. Our flesh needs to be beaten into submission, as it were—told who’s boss, and that is namely God, God’s Spirit who created a new spirit through the waters of Holy Baptism.

This new man in us must be continually re-created—when in contrition and repentance we return to live in faith ***from every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God*** – ***ALONE*** – whether we fully understand it or not…

Whether it pleases our reason or not.

It is a curious, divine, coincidence that God should have separated the waters at the Creation. Consider all the places in Scriptures where it describes God’s uses of the waters themselves to divide.

The waters of the Flood were used to divide believers from unbelievers.

God used the waters of the Red Sea to divide His people and the Egyptians.

While the waters of the Jordan separated the children of Israel from the promised land, there came a day that God granted them entrance as they carried the Ark of the Covenant God separated the water and He caused them to cross over on dry ground, just as He had once delivered them from the pursuing Egyptian army.

Then the waters of the Jordan set apart those who heard the Law preached through John the Baptizer – a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins in the promised Messiah.

Indeed, it was with the waters of the Jordan that God set apart His only-begotten Son from the rest of humanity, anointing Him with the Holy Spirit above His fellow-man that He might carry out His offices as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Finally, God has separated us from our sin and unbelief by the waters of Holy Baptism. This has made us life-long enemies of the devil, separating us and blessing us to be the children of the heavenly Father.

In tears the Son wept over unbelieving Jerusalem when He entered that day in Holy Week.

In tears, tears of both sorrow and joy, we behold by faith our Lord Jesus Christ shedding His holy and precious Blood upon the Cross for us and for our salvation.

By faith we see the spear pierce His innocent side, and from His side flows the water of Holy Baptism and the Blood of the Sacrament, by which God so graciously creates and re-creates in you clean hearts and steadfast spirits. In this flood of grace, you are restored to the joy of His eternal salvation.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen