

The Third Sunday of Easter

April 6, 2008 (9:30 a.m.)

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalms 116:1-3, 10-17

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Years ago – twenty, at least – there was a priest serving the parish of the Church of the Atonement in Augusta whose name was Lou Lindsey.

Lou told the story of being at an ecumenical gathering of clergy – being the only Episcopalian at the gathering at which the topic under discussion was Baptism. Lou said that the minister next to him, whose denomination shall remain nameless, turned to Lou with fire in his eyes and asked, “Do you believe in infant Baptism?” – a question obviously preparatory to a discussion or a lecture. “Believe in it? I’ve actually seen it done,” was Lou’s response. Thus ended the conversation.

Of course we believe in and celebrate infant Baptism. It’s surprising, at least to me, that there are those who don’t. It must be a matter of perspective, a matter of different ideas.

Which raises the question, just what is happening in Baptism?

Well, going back two thousand years, you will recall that Jesus Himself appeared on the banks of the Jordan River to be baptized by

John, not alone to be sure, but as part of a great crowd of people from Jerusalem and Judea, all sorts of people.

John was crying for them all to repent of their sins, to turn their lives around – and it is highly probable that everybody in the crowd needed to do just that – everybody except one, Jesus, the one without sin. Everyone, save Jesus, was reaching out to God for pardon and salvation; Jesus alone realized that God was reaching out to us as vigorously as we reach out to Him.

Baptism, then and now, is a moment of God's reaching into our world, our time and space, acknowledging that each one of us is indeed His child, His son or daughter. If we could see it, we would know that at each Baptism the heavens open, and a dove descends, and a voice says, "This is my child," and an infant is transformed forever.

In the water of Baptism we, no matter our age, are reborn into that relationship given us by God. We make a sign on the forehead, a cross made with holy oil, a mark that signifies, indelibly and eternally, our identity, seen always by the eyes of God.

We welcome the very newest Christian in the world into the Communion of Saints, all Christians past, present and future, inviting the newly Baptized to share in both the wonders and the labors of our faith.

In His Holy Name.