



At The Baptismal Font

August 29, 2018

Rachel Yates

This past Sunday, I took out-of-town visitors to a church renowned for its architecture and beauty. We sat quietly in the back until services ended and then moved to the front pews for the scheduled tour. While the tour guide shared a bit of history about the church, we gawked at the high columns and dome, the carvings, and the artwork. Around us, church staff prepared for the next mass in an hour. One ritual jarred me: a priest came out carrying an orange bucket from Home Depot filled with water, and he poured it into the baptismal font. There was something disturbing about knowing that the baptismal waters had been in an orange, plastic Homer bucket. To their credit, someone had written in large, black Sharpie letters on the side of the bucket: “Baptismal Water Only.” So, at least it wasn’t being used for gardening or to mop floors in the kitchen.



The baptismal font was very large; use of a bucket was admittedly expedient. Seeing the water poured from an ordinary bucket also made me realize that the water probably came out of an inside tap or hose, straight from the public water system. Regular water, though undoubtedly blessed somewhere in the process.

I’m not sure what I expected. Maybe I assumed the font was filled using an ornate silver and crystal pitcher – several times – with water from a spring that gurgled up behind the church. Something grander, surely, than an orange, plastic bucket.

In Presbyterian churches, we place the font in full view of the congregation, open and filled with water on Sunday. The presence of the font in worship serves as a constant reminder of the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus, through our dying and rising with Christ in baptism, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Spirit, our incorporation into Christ’s body, and the promise of life eternal and abundant in the kingdom of God. At the font, we confront again our mistakes and our withdrawal from God, and we reclaim our need for forgiveness.



Upon reflection, I’ve decided there is something comforting about a baptismal font filled from an everyday, worker’s bucket. As I am reminded of my baptism each Sunday, I meet at the font of a Savior who knows me well and who knows I can’t live up to standards symbolized by the silver and crystal pitcher. In that moment, I am relieved that the sacrament of baptism does not depend on natural spring water, ornate serving ware, or a state of blamelessness. It is available to all who are ready to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, to renounce sin, and to participate in the worship and mission of the church. For a Homer bucket kinda gal, that is good news indeed! Thanks be to God!