

Thanksgiving over Water: A Celebration of Holy Wisdom

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© February 2002

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the biblical theme of wisdom and especially in the feminine character of holy wisdom. In a separate document, “Baptism and Holy Wisdom,” possible implications of including holy wisdom in our thinking about baptism are explored briefly. I now try to express some of these ideas liturgically through a prayer of Thanksgiving over Water, which is offered for study and discussion.. It is intended to be a model and a resource, to be adapted as seems appropriate.

The Thanksgiving over Water (or Prayer over the Water) is a significant part of the liturgy of baptism of a number of churches. The Thanksgiving over Water offered here is noteworthy on three counts. First, it gives special prominent to the story of the baptism of Jesus Christ, viewing this as an event and experience of holy wisdom.

Second, the biblical stories told (creation of water, passage through the Red Sea, baptism of Christ, death and resurrection of Christ), are remembered and celebrated using the language of holy wisdom. (Biblical sources and allusions are given below.)

Third, the four-fold invocation of the Holy Spirit names baptism as an experience of holy wisdom as well as of the Triune God. Thus baptism is seen as entering into solidarity with Jesus Christ, who is also God’s wisdom; entering into “the spirit of wisdom”; entering into “friendship with God,” who is source of all wisdom; and entering into the church, which is “the household of wisdom.”

Consequences of baptism include following Christ in being gentle and humble of heart and accepting his yolk and burden; proclaiming the gospel, which is a message and experience of

wisdom; continuing Christ's ministry of peace, justice and reconciliation, all of which are characteristics of wisdom; experiencing freedom and new life; and experiencing liberation and equality among persons.

To enhance participation in this Thanksgiving over Water, the response "Blessed be God forever" or "Thanks be to God" is repeated several times during the first part of the prayer. At the end of the first of the four invocations of the Holy Spirit a leader may issue the invitation, "And let us cry, Come, Holy Spirit", after which all respond, "Come, Holy Spirit." A short version of this verse and response may be used following the next three invocations.

Thanksgiving Over Water

*Water may be poured into a suitable vessel.
It may be touched at times during the prayer.*

Blessed are you, O God,
empowering love and well-spring of life:

At the dawn of creation
you created holy wisdom, breath of your power;
she reached mightily from one end of the earth to another
and held sway over the waves and the springs.

R. Blessed be God *or* Thanks be to God.

Through the waters of the Red Sea
holy wisdom brought Israel out of slavery;
she led them through deep waters
and guided them along a marvelous way;
she became a shelter to them by day
and a starry flame through the night.

R. Blessed be God *or* Thanks be to God.

Jesus, your Christ, was baptized by John
in the fountain of wisdom
and given the waters of wisdom to drink.

You sent your Holy Spirit from on high,
the spirit of wisdom from the throne of your glory;
she came upon your Christ,
raining down knowledge and discernment.

You named Jesus as your Beloved,
with whom you were well pleased
-- your wisdom and your delight.

R. Blessed be God *or* Thanks be to God.

When your Christ died on the cross,
wisdom did not desert him,
but descended with him into the underworld
and did not leave him.
When you raised him up,
she brought him authority and everlasting honor

R. Blessed be God *or* Thanks be to God.

Now send your Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply into solidarity with Christ your wisdom,
whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light,
who is gentle and humble in heart.

V. And let us cry, Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

Now sanctify this water by the power of your Holy Spirit
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply into the spirit of wisdom,
proclaim the wisdom of Christ's gospel,
and continue his ministry of peace, justice and reconciliation.

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

Now pour out your Holy Spirit upon these waters,
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply into your friendship;
you are the wisdom of the cosmos
giving freedom and new life.

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

Now bless these waters,
that those who will be baptized in them
may share in Christ's resurrection
and take their places in the church, the household of wisdom,
where there is no longer slave or free, male or female.

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

To Christ, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory,
now and for ever.

R. Amen.

Annotated Text with Sources and Allusions Thanksgiving over Water

**Blessed are you, O God,
empowering love and well-spring of life:**

**At the dawn of creation
you created holy wisdom,**

Prov 8:25 - Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth

Wis 9:9 - She . . . was present when you made the world

Sir 1:4 - Wisdom was created before all other things

breath of your power,

Wis 7:25 - She is a breath of the power of God

she reached mightily from one end of the earth to another

Wis 8:1 - She reaches mightily from one end
of the earth to the other

and held sway over the waves and the springs.

Sir 24:6 - Over waves of the sea, over all the earth,
and over every people and nation, I held sway

Prov 8:24 - When there were no springs abounding with water

**Through the waters of the Red Sea
holy wisdom brought Israel out of slavery;
she led them through deep waters**

Wis 10:19 - She brought them over the Red Sea,
and led them through deep waters

and guided them along a marvelous way;

Wis 10:17 - she guided them along a marvelous way

**she became a shelter to them by day
and a starry flame through the night.**

Wis 10:17 - and became a shelter to them by day,
and a starry flame through the night

Jesus, your Christ, was baptized by John

Mark 1:9 (+ parallels) - In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan

in the fountain of wisdom

Prov 18:14 - the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream

and given the waters of wisdom to drink.

Sir 15:3 - [she will] give him the water of wisdom to drink

You sent your Holy Spirit from on high,

Wis 9:17 - sent your holy spirit from on high

the spirit of wisdom from the throne of your glory;

Wis 9:10 - and from the throne of your glory send her

she came upon your Christ,

Mark 1:10 - And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

Wis 7:7 - I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me

raining down knowledge and discernment.

Sir 1:19 - she rained down knowledge and discerning comprehension

**You named Jesus as your Beloved,
with whom you were well pleased**

Mark 1:11 - And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased."

-- your wisdom

Mt 11:19 - Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds
Mt 13:54 - Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power?

and your delight.

Prov 8:30 - I was daily his delight

**When your Christ died on the cross,
wisdom did not desert him,
but descended with him into the underworld
and did not leave him.**

Wis 10:13-14 - [the original refers to Joseph]
When a righteous man was sold,
wisdom did not desert him,
but delivered him from sin.
She descended with him into the dungeon
(14) and when he was in prison she did not leave him

**When you raised him up,
she brought him authority and everlasting honor**

Wis 10:14 - until she brought him the scepter of a kingdom
and authority over his masters.
Those who accused him she showed to be false,
and she gave him everlasting honor.

**Now send your Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply into solidarity with Christ your wisdom,**

Mt 11:19 - Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds
Mt 13:54 - Where did this man get this wisdom
and these deeds of power?

whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light,

Sir 6:24 - Put your feet into her fetters
and your neck into her collar
Sir 6:25 - Bend your shoulders and carry her
and do not fret under her bonds
Sir 6:28 - For at last you will find the rest she gives,
and she will be changed into joy for you.
Sir 6:29 - Then her fetters will become for you a strong defense,
and her collar a glorious robe.
Sir 6:30 - Her yoke is a golden ornament
and her bonds a purple cord.
Mt 11:30 - For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.

who is gentle and humble in heart.

Mt 11:29 - for I am gentle and humble in heart

V. And let us cry, Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

**Now sanctify this water by the power of your Holy Spirit
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply into the spirit of wisdom,
proclaim the wisdom of Christ's gospel,
and continue his ministry of peace, justice and reconciliation.**

Prov 8:20 - I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice

Sir 1:18 - The fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom,
making peace and perfect health to flourish

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

**Now pour out your Holy Spirit upon these waters,
that those who will be baptized
may enter deeply your friendship;**

Wis 7:14 - those who get it obtain friendship with God

you are the wisdom of the cosmos

giving freedom

Wis 6:15 - One who is vigilant on her account
will soon be free from care

Wis 10:15 - A holy people and blameless race
wisdom delivered from a nation of oppressors

and new life.

Prov 3:16 - Long life is in her right hand

Prov 3:18 - She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her

Prov 4:13 - Guard her, for she is your life

Prov 9:11 - For by me your days will be multiplied,
and years will be added to your life

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

**Now bless these waters of baptism,
that those who will be baptized
may share in Christ's resurrection**

and take their places in the church, the household of wisdom,

Wis 9:1 - Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.

Wis 9:2 - She has slaughtered her animals,
she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.

Wis 9:3 - She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
from the highest places in the town,

Wis 9:4 - You that are simple, turn in here!

To those without sense she says,

Wis 9:5 - Come, eat of my bread,
and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Wis 9:6 - Lay aside immaturity, and life,
and walk in the way of insight.

where there is no longer slave or free, male or female.

Gal 3:28 - There is no longer Jew or Greek,
there is no longer slave or free,
there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

V. Come, Holy Spirit. R. Come, Holy Spirit.

**To Christ, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory,
now and for ever.**

R. Amen.