

THOUGHTS OF THE PASTOR

REV. DR. JERRY JACKSON

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each year in our church we celebrate with family and friends the birth of new children. A few months after the child is born, those parents or guardians bring these children to a service of Holy Baptism. Several times throughout the year we celebrate the service of Holy Baptism for children, youth and adults. We baptize people for the first time in their life into an amazing fellowship in the Church of Jesus Christ. They are baptized as infants and adults as a member of the Family of God. The youth are baptized and confirm for themselves that they are truly members of God's Holy Family. In each case, the new members are confessing that I belong to the wonderful family of God and to the Church of Jesus Christ. We call them "Baptized Members" and "Professing Members".

As these new converts enter the family, we, the "Professing Members", who have already made that commitment, makes a promise to the child, their parents and to the new adult convert. It is a promise that we make before God and tell him and the new convert that we are there for them. We say in every service of Baptism, Confirmation and Renewal,

"With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life."

We are telling these new children in the family of God, we have a message of Good News and we will be sharing it with you. We say that we are living a life that is an example of Christ. I ask you is that really a true statement on your life or is it a front that we are putting up?

We are now living in a world that is now calling the Church of Jesus Christ into the arena of accountability. We promise people that we will proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and the love of God, but are we embarrassed to do it? Do we fall short of the promise? Do we let these new converts down because we ourselves have not grown to trust in God's love? Do you have the faith to help them? We also promise them that we will surround them with a community of love and forgiveness so that they may grow in their trust to God. Are we that supportive community that is helping these new children of God to grow closer to God? Are we setting that example in our everyday life that these new converts will want to follow? Will they know that they are truly surrounded by a community of love and forgiveness? The church of Jesus Christ in this day and time is being challenged to be an authentic church that lives up to its promises. Are we at Bellemont letting the new Children of God down?

We promise the new children, that we will pray for them, that they may first of all be true disciples. Are we true disciples ourselves? How can we pray for others when we ourselves cannot pray? We say to the new converts we are truly here to help you live a life with God. Can they count on you?

As we are about to approach the season of Lent, we are entering a season of Preparation in the church. It is a time when the new converts will be looking at their lives and preparing their lives for Holy Baptism and entrance into the true family of God. It is a challenging time for them as they will be looking at their faith. Then hopefully on Easter Sunday they will be making that change in their life. But Lent is also a season when the "Professing Members" will through prayer and self-denial, work on their own lives to make them real and authentic to their calling so that they can help the new converts to grow. Over the next couple of weeks, I invite you to search your hearts and lives and see just what you need to change to make your baptism real. Make this Lenten Season the time when God revives you and holds you to your Baptism Covenant so that you can help new converts to experience the true love and forgiveness God gives them. A new child of God needs your promise.

Love in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Jerry A. Jackson