

REFLECTIONS

Thoughts on nature and the Christian faith - 4/17/17

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." - Rom. 6:5

Shelf fungi live by attaching themselves to wood that is dying. This union provides the fungi with the nutrition they need to grow and survive. In the sixth chapter of Romans, the apostle Paul speaks of Christian baptism in a similar way. In baptism we are united publicly with the death of Jesus, and are assured of a future resurrection like his. But, unlike the shelf fungi, we are united and nourished with one who was once dead but now is alive. Christian baptism is a drama of the gospel. It shows all who witness it where our hope is fixed - in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is wholly Christ-centered. In baptism, we are saying that we have died to sin, not its presence, but to its dominance. We are proclaiming our union with Christ. Our old self has died, we are a new creation with a new heart and new priorities. It is the end of an old life and the beginning of a new one. And it unites us with all believers for we all now share one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Sadly, this sacrament has become a point of division rather than unity. Christians disagree over the mode of baptism, the proper candidates for baptism, and even the purpose of baptism. We have made what was intended to unite us an excuse for division. Members of a family are united because they are a family, not because they agree on everything. But let us agree on the necessity of baptism, on its being a proclamation of our death to our old selves, and on the union we have with Christ. Let us build on what we have in common. Our union with Christ will eventually resolve our differences. Shelf fungi grow because of what they are affixed to. So should we. - John