

Your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ (Alma 5:27).

Clean Again

BY ANNE BENTLEY WADDOUPS

(Based on a true story)

The water felt warm and smooth as I stepped into the font. Dad walked down the steps across from me, grinning. I looked around at all the people bunched up in front of the baptismal font: people who loved me and had come just for me! Dad said the baptismal prayer and lowered me into the water. I'll never forget how I felt coming up out of the water—happy and clean. As I climbed out of the font, Mom was ready with a big towel and wrapped it around me in a warm hug.

I dried off and got dressed in the new white eyelet dress we had picked out for this day. Then I went back into the room where my family and friends were waiting. My dad, both grandpas, and my uncle put their hands on my head and confirmed me a member of the Church.

Afterward, everyone came up and hugged me or shook my hand. My home teacher said, "Right now you're clean! You don't have any sins!"

I hadn't thought about that before. I realized that right then I was practically



perfect. I decided to stay that way as long as I could.

Everyone went outside and sat on the big rolling lawn, talking, eating refreshments, and enjoying the view of the Potomac River.

After a while my cousins and friends and I got up to run around a little. “Be careful,” Mom called. “Remember you have on your new dress.”

We played hide-and-seek and chased each other around the trees. I loved how my dress billowed out when I spun around.

Then the worst thing happened. I slipped and fell into a mud puddle left by the morning’s rain. I heard a lot of gasps and a few giggles as I got up. My white dress was muddy! And worse, I had already done something wrong by ignoring Mom’s instructions. I ran inside to the bathroom, my tears starting before I got there. The dress *had* to come clean. I’d scrub until it did. I pulled my dress up into the sink, running the water over the mud. The dirt faded but the stain stayed there on the front of my new white dress.

I went out to the other side of the church and sat on the curb near the parking lot, watching the air above the blacktop waving from the heat. I heard the door open and close behind me. Mom sat down and put her arm around me.

“So you fell in the mud.”

I nodded.

“I’m sure we can wash it, and it’ll come out,” she said.

I shook my head. “I already tried that in the bathroom, and it didn’t work. I’m sorry. I don’t think it will ever come out. Will I ever be able to wear it again?” As I spoke, my tears started again.



I thought Mom was going to scold me for ruining a new dress, but she said, “I think you’ll remember this day even more now.”

That was true. Who could forget ruining her own baptism!

“You know, in your life, you’re going to make some mistakes,” Mom said. “We all do. And no matter how hard you try on your own, you won’t be able to completely erase them from your life. Do you know who can?”

“Jesus Christ?”

Mom nodded. “Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ want to forgive us. If we repent and ask humbly, Jesus can make us clean again—as clean as you were when you stepped out of the baptismal font. Christ’s Atonement is Heavenly Father’s greatest gift to us. And do you know what we can do every week to help us become clean?”

I nodded slowly. “Take the sacrament.”

“That’s right. When we partake of the sacrament we renew the covenants we made when we were baptized.”



“None of us . . . is perfectly obedient, and thus we rely on our baptismal covenant to bring a remission of sins

after baptism just as . . . before baptism. We rely on repentance to . . . bring the Holy Spirit and, with it, atoning grace.”

**Elder D. Todd Christofferson
of the Presidency of the Seventy,
“Justification and Sanctification,”
Ensign, June 2001, 24.**

Mom leaned her hand on my knee and stood up. “I think a little bleach will make the dress white again. This isn’t our first mud stain, and I’m sure it won’t be our last.”

I sighed. It wouldn’t be my last mistake either. But I did understand a little bit more about what it meant to be baptized and confirmed. It wasn’t just taking

away all my old mistakes. It would allow me to stay clean—not by being perfect all the time, but by repenting and trying harder. ●

