

Baptism and Confirmation



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Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Structure Overview

“This journey includes not only periods for making inquiry and for maturing, but also the steps marking the catechumens progress as they pass, so to speak, through another doorway or ascend to the next level.”

Periods

First Period

Point of initial conversion and desire to become a Christian. Period of inquiry and evangelization. Ends with the **Rite of Acceptance** into the Order of Catechumens.

Second Period

Period of progression of faith and of more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation. Ends with the **Rite of Election** also called the Enrollment of Names. This usually occurs during the first week of Lent.

Third Period

Period of purification and enlightenment. Spiritual preparation is completed and candidates are ready to receive the sacraments. This usually coincides with the Lenten preparation for Easter and ends with the **Sacraments of Christian Initiation** (Baptism and Confirmation).

Fourth Period

Devoted to the post baptismal catechesis. A time for deepening spiritual growth and for entering more fully into the life and unity of the Christian community.

Why Baptize Babies?

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and
Rev. John A. Quill**

Fundamentalists do not baptize children below the age of reason because they believe only adults can have a “born again” experience, which results from repentance and a desire to be saved. For them, Baptism is not a sacrament. It produces no supernatural effect. It is simply a ceremony which publicly manifests that someone has gone through the “I accept Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior” faith experience. They believe persons who die after this experience, but before Baptism, still go to heaven.

The Catholic Church believes that Baptism is a sacrament instituted by Christ necessary for salvation. It produces real supernatural effects. It removes original sin, and in the case of adults, all previous sins as well for which he has sorrow. It confers holiness through the gift of sanctifying grace, which also makes the baptized person an adopted child of God and member of Christ’s Body, the Church. Baptism also confers the virtues of faith, hope and charity. The baptized person has the power to believe, but must be taught what to believe by parents and others.

Since our purpose is to discuss infant Baptism, we will not dwell on Baptism’s effects.

In John 3:5, Jesus said: “Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” The word “man” refers to a human being, either male or female, adult, adolescent, child or baby. Nowhere does Jesus say: “Unless an adult is born through water and the Spirit” We conclude, therefore, that all persons, regardless of sex, age, or nationality, have a right to the kingdom conferred by Baptism.

Let the Little Children Come to Me

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says: “Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” If Jesus wants children to belong to his kingdom, and if Baptism is necessary for membership, then would not Jesus have wanted children to be baptized?

Immediately before his Ascension Jesus said to his Apostles: “Make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:18-19). The expression “all nations” is significant in relation to

“baptize them.” Nowhere does Jesus say: “Make disciples only of adults,” as if He intended age to be an impediment.

To those who say babies should not be baptized because they cannot make a conscious act of faith, Catholics respond that these little ones become God’s adopted children and are welcomed into the house of their Father, in the faith of their parents or the Church.

In Acts 16:15, we read about Lydia’s conversion, and how “She and her household had been baptized.” St. Paul and Silas converted their jailer who “was baptized then and there with all his household” (Acts 16:33). In 1 Corinthians 1:16, Paul remarks: “Then there was the family of Stephanas ... that I baptized too.”

The implication behind the expressions “her household,” “with all his household,” and “the family of Stephanas” is that everyone in the family, including any children, big or small, were baptized together. Take the case of Paul and Silas’ jailer. “He ... with all his family” certainly sounds like more than just he and his wife. It presumes that if he had children, including infants, these, too, were baptized.

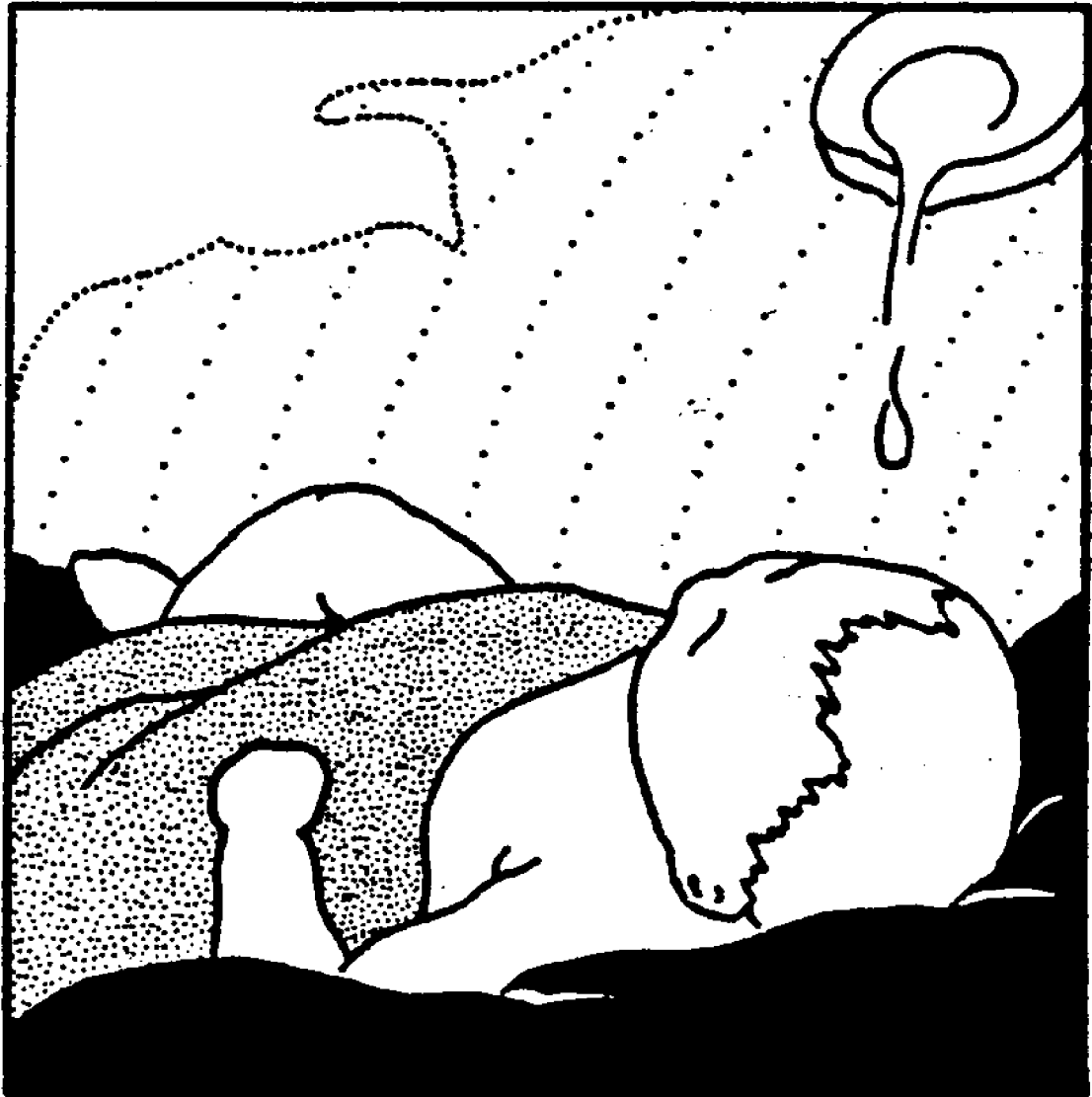
In Colossians 2:11-12, Paul says: “This is circumcision according to Christ. You have been buried with him, when you were baptized.” Now, under Mosaic Law boys were circumcised before their eighth day. So if Baptism replaced circumcision, then what Paul implied is that Baptism is to be administered to infants too.

Nowhere in Scripture is it forbidden to baptize infants or small children. Although Scripture explicitly mentions only the Baptisms of certain adults, nowhere is it even implied that if they had babies, these were refused Baptism. The argument leans rather in favor of the opposite practice, as we have indicated above.

Early Christian writers attest to infant Baptism in the earliest days of the Church, for example, in *The Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* (d. A.D. 110), in the writings of St. Justin (d. A.D. 156), St. Irenaeus (d. A.D. 235), Tertullian (d. A.D. 220) and St. Hippolytus of Rome (d. A.D. 235).

Origen (d. A.D. 253) taught that “The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving Baptism also to infants.” St. Cyprian (d. A.D. 258) warned: “From baptism and from grace ... must not be kept the infant.” A synod at Carthage in A.D. 251 forbade postponing an infant’s Baptism till after his eighth day.

Thus we see that by baptizing infants, the Catholic Church continues a good and holy practice, in use since apostolic times, that reflects the will of her founder, Our Lord Jesus Christ.



“Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”



The baptized person has the power to believe, but must be taught what to believe by his parents and others.

In accord with Canon 827 of the New Code of Canon Law, this publication has been submitted to a censor of the Diocese and nothing being found contrary to faith and morals, we hereby grant permission in accord with Canon 824 that it be published.

Rev. Msgr. John B. Szymanski
Vicar General
Diocese of Metuchen
April 14, 1992

N.B. The ecclesiastical permission implies nothing more than the material contained in the publication has been examined by diocesan censors and nothing contrary to faith and morals has been found therein.

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What is the Role of Godparents?

Please explain the role of godparents in Catholic baptism. How strictly should the potential godparents adhere to traditional Catholic teaching? If a couple does not know sufficiently “qualified” godparents, is it acceptable for them to act as the godparents themselves?

- A reader in Fredericksburg

The role of the godparent for baptism is rooted in the role of the sponsor in the catechumenate, which originated in the early Church. Recall that until the year 313, the Church was under the persecution of the Roman Empire and had to be cautious in conducting its affairs so as to prevent pagan infiltration and persecution. Also, until the Middle Ages, the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation – were administered at once. The role of the sponsor then was to attest to the integrity of the person, oftentimes an adult, seeking admission into the Church as well as to assist him during the catechumenate in preparing for these sacraments and in living a Christian life. For infants, these sponsors would also make the Profession of Faith in the child’s name and accept the responsibility of instructing the child in the faith, especially if the parents failed in this duty. About the year 800 when infant baptism was truly the norm, these sponsors were called “patrinus,” or “godfather.” Traditionally, we identify the sponsor of a child for baptism as the godparent godmother or godfather, but the technical term remains “sponsor.”

According to the Code of Canon Law, “insofar as possible, one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it” (No. 72). This statement clearly reflects the historical roots of the role of sponsor.

To be a sponsor, a person must be chosen by the person to be baptized, or by the parents or guardians of a child, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament. The sponsor must not only have the intention of being a sponsor but also meet proper qualifications. The sponsor must have completed his 16th year unless the bishop has established another age for sponsorship, or the pastor or minister judges that a cause warrants an exception to the rule. He must be a Catholic who has received the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Confirmation, and “leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.” Moreover, the sponsor cannot be impeded by some canonical penalty. Ideally, this sponsor at Baptism should be the sponsor for Confirmation. Note that the mother and father of the child cannot serve as sponsors. Also note that these are the same requirements for Confirmation sponsors. (Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, No. 874.1).

Strictly speaking, a person only needs one sponsor for Baptism – male or female, but may have two sponsors, one male and one female. Here the Code of Canon Law wants to eliminate the practice of having numerous sponsors, as has occurred in some cultures (No. 873). Also, in the case of an emergency, such as imminent death, no sponsor is needed.

Here we should pause to clarify who qualifies as a Catholic godparent. A Catholic who does not practice the faith by regularly attending Mass or who is in an invalid marriage disqualifies himself from being a godparent. Moreover, if a person is Catholic but antagonistic to the faith, i.e., has the attitude “I am a Catholic but ...” and would not be a good example and witness to the faith also disqualifies himself. If a person is not striving to fulfill his own obligations of Baptism and Confirmation, he will not fulfill the responsibilities of helping another to do so.

As a pastor, I am truly perturbed each time someone comes by the rectory office and wants me to sign a sponsor’s certificate and attest that he is a practicing Catholic when I do not recognize him, he has not registered in the parish, and he does not attend Mass faithfully. In justice, I cannot meet such a request.

Parents need to find good practicing Catholics for godparents. Sadly, this task can be very difficult in today’s world. The best place is to look for relatives, even grandparents, who have a blood relationship with the godchild and have kept the faith over the years. Good friends are also appropriate, but sometimes friendships wane; leaving the godchild without an active godparent. Godparents should be faithful individuals who are ready to accept the responsibility of looking after a godchild.

What if someone would like to have a faithful Protestant friend as a sponsor? Technically, only Catholics can be godparents or sponsors. A Christian of another denomination, whether Orthodox or Protestant, however, may be a “Christian witness” to the baptism along with the Catholic godparent. The reason for this distinction and restriction is that the godparent not only is taking responsibility for the religious education and spiritual formation of the baptized person, but also is representing the Church, the community of faith, into which the person is being baptized. A Christian who is not Catholic, although perhaps a very holy Christian, cannot fully attest to the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Likewise, a Catholic can only be a Christian witness for someone who is baptized into another Christian denomination. (Cf. *Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism*, No. 57)

In all, godparents serve a special role in the life of the baptized person. Therefore, each parent should choose a godparent not just because of a blood relationship or friendship; rather, a godparent should be a trustworthy witness of the faith who will help the godchild attain salvation.

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The Role of Godparents

To be chosen as a Godparent is a special honor. You, above all others, have been entrusted with the responsibility to participate in this child's Christian life and education.

This privilege offers you the opportunity to develop a mutually enriching spiritual relationship – one that will last throughout this life and beyond.

There are many ways you can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your Godchild. Among them are:

- Celebrate the anniversary of this holy day of Baptism each year with a visit, a call or a card.
- As your Godchild grows, listen to and share in the struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life, and keep yourself informed on Christian doctrine and values, to be able to answer questions as they arise.
- Encourage a consistent life of faith through special cards, letters or gifts which celebrate holy events ... Christmas, Easter ... and personal growth events ... graduation, first job, engagement. (Gift suggestions: a Bible, spiritual book, rosary, religious jewelry, gift certificate for religious goods/books, retreat opportunity.)
- Participate in, or send assurance of prayer, as your Godchild receives the other sacraments, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which complete initiation into the Church community.
- Be supportive of your Godchild's parents in their role as the primary religious educators of their child.
- And most importantly, become a model of Christian living for your Godchild, through daily prayer, virtue and active participation in parish life and liturgy.

By living a Christian life in partnership with your Godchild, both of you will experience the great joy of sharing a life of faith.

Congratulations and may God bless you!

Sponsors and Godparents

What is the purpose of a sponsor? The sponsor accompanies the candidate seeking the sacrament of Confirmation by providing spiritual help during and after the process.

How is a sponsor different from a godparent? Godparents are members of the Christian community who will assist the candidate both before and after their baptism. In the case of children, they help the parents so that children learn and live up to the faith.

It sounds like they are basically the same, correct? Yes. Both are persons chosen by the candidate on the basis of example, good qualities and friendship, delegated by the Christian community and approved by the priest. Both show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness and to guide the candidates' progress in either the baptismal life (godparents) or confirmation (sponsors). Both continue to be important after reception of the sacraments.

Can my sponsor be my godparent? Yes. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "To emphasize the unity of the sacraments, it is appropriate that this (the sponsor) be one of the baptismal godparents."

Who can be a sponsor or godparent? The requirements are the same. They must be approved by the priest and:

1. Be designated by the candidate (or by the parents in the case of an infant baptism).
2. Have the capability and intention of carrying out the responsibility of a sponsor or godparents. A person of at least 16 is presumed to have the requisite maturity.
3. Have received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist.
4. Be active members of the Catholic Church and be living a life consistent with its faith. For example, if married, they must have been married in the Catholic Church.

Can my sponsor be my spouse? Certainly, as long as all of the above requirements are met. Some people, however, choose a person other than their spouse so that they can have additional support and guidance.

What if I do not have a sponsor and don't know anyone to ask? No problem! We'll help find someone to work with you ... someone you are comfortable with and who will be delighted to walk through this journey with you.

Our Sacramental Bath

In the gospel of John, Christ tells the Pharisee Nicodemus that, “unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. The requirement to be “born anew” mystified Nicodemus and he asked Christ for a clarification. Christ’s response was, “truly, truly I say to you, unless one is *born of water and the Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”. In this private catechism, Christ patiently instructs Nicodemus of the necessity of a rebirth, a rebirth by way of a sacramental bath consisting of water and the Holy Spirit. It is through this baptismal bath where the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts an efficacious dose of regenerative grace. Lest we think this water that Christ speaks of is something other than sacramental baptism, the Apostle John tells us that “*after this*” Christ went out with his disciples to baptize, in effect linking his words with his deeds.¹ This article will survey the Old and New Testament scriptures to further explore the background and necessity of this baptism “of water and the Spirit”.

To begin with, in the first chapter of our Bibles we find an immediate reference to “water and the Spirit”. In the opening utterances of God’s Word, we are told that “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters”. And thus begins the creation story. As the Spirit moved over the waters, the heavens and the earth came into being. Likewise for the New Testament believer, the Spirit moves over the baptismal waters as our recreation in Christ begins. As God chose to commence the earthly creation with the Spirit moving over the waters, so too does He commence our recreation with the Spirit moving through the waters of baptism.

In the book of II Kings we find a story about a man named Naaman. Naaman is described as a man of valor, a great man, a man of wealth and as one who was highly honored. Additionally, he was the commander of the army of Syria. His king highly esteemed him as God had granted victory to Syria through Naaman. In many respects, Naaman was a man who “had it all”. But all of this was tainted in Naaman’s sight as he had one significant liability, one that regardless of all his earthly wealth and power held him prisoner, and one that surely at times caused him to deeply despair. The great Naaman was a leper.

Now it so happened that during one of Naaman’s raids into Israel he had captured a young girl, and this girl was compelled into the service of his wife. This girl must have been a saint. Rather than become embittered with her lot in

¹The Gospel of John is a sacramental book. The first 5 chapters are filled with stories centered on water. In the stories our attention is drawn to the healing and spiritual renewal of water as used by Christ and John the Baptist. The purpose is to teach us of baptism. In chapter 6 John transitions to the next sacrament, the Eucharist. But notice how John always places his stories in context. In John 6 he points out that the story to follow takes place during the time of the Passover (and therefore in the context of Passover). In John 3 we are told that the Nicodemus discourse takes place at the time Christ and his disciples were baptizing.

life, a life where she had been torn from her home and her parents and her culture, she seems to have humbly accepted what God had allotted for her. She bore her cross well.² This nameless servant girl took pity on her new master and longed to see him healed. Growing up in Israel she knew of somebody who could help; namely the prophet Elisha. In the Biblical account, the girl convinces her mistress of the wisdom of going to the prophet. Naaman's wife likewise convinces Naaman.

Naaman begins his journey to Samaria, where Elisha resided, expecting certain things to happen, most of which don't, at least in the manner he expected. After a series of somewhat humorous twists and turns Naaman arrives at the front door of the prophet Elisha in the province of Samaria. Being a man of stature, Naaman had not arrived in Samaria alone. He arrived with a entourage of servants and chariots, generously laden with gifts. Being mindful of the prophets of his native Syria, Naaman wanted to make sure he had ample funds to motivate Elisha to conjure up a sufficient remedy.

Upon Naaman's announcing himself at the front door Elisha sends a servant with a message. "Go wash yourself in the Jordan river seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean". Naaman, a man used to living in a world attentive to protocol and rank, was not happy at all with how this encounter was unfolding. First of all he was expecting to hear from the prophet directly, not through some lowly servant, a man of lower rank. And secondly, the Jordan river was an inferior river in his eyes compared to the rivers of Syria.

The whole thing was just not making sense to Naaman. He left in a rage. But God was good to Naaman as He had put wise people in his life to help him overcome his faults. Not only had God given him a saintly servant girl, He gave him sensible servants who saw Naaman's folly and gently and persuasively talked him into giving the instructions a try. The first winds of conversion began to blow when Naaman admitted that he might have been wrong, when he admitted he was desperate, when he admitted he had no other place to turn. He submitted himself, albeit reluctantly, to the word of Elisha and he dipped himself into the Jordan seven times. It's here where we need to sit up straight, lean forward in our chairs and listen carefully to the wording of the events. The scriptures say that, "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a *little child*, and *he was clean*." This episode is significant for our understanding of baptism. The significance is this. Naaman's leprous flesh was reborn; made anew with the flesh of a newborn child. But he received more than a fresh coat of paint! More

²This girl has Mary like qualities. Like Mary she seems to have taken the attitude, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word". And as Mary points us to Christ to be healed, so the young maiden pointed Naaman to Elisha to be healed.

importantly he was *made clean; he had a changed heart*. The cleanness referred to here is not “the removal of dirt from the body”³ but rather a sacramental cleanness.

It was not some magical power contained in the waters of the Jordan river that performed this miracle. This was the Holy Spirit working through the water as it was applied to a humble heart, a heart responding to God’s calling. Naaman had descended into the water as a man of earth. He arose from the water as a man of heaven. It was more than his flesh that had changed; his heart had changed also. In our story Naaman returns to Syria as a servant of the Lord. The water and the Spirit had their effect upon both Naaman’s soul and Naaman’s body. Likewise, Christ has not come to save only men’s souls but our bodies as well. Let us not forget that there is this thing call “the resurrection of the body”. In creating new life within us, Christ redeems us body and soul just as he did for Naaman in the waters of the Jordan. In a sense, we are Naaman.

Returning to Nicodemus, Christ said, “you must be *born anew by water and the Spirit*”. To compare our stories, Naaman was restored with the flesh of a little child. So too was Nicodemus told that he must, in a sense, become a little child. To accomplish this, both Nicodemus and Naaman would need water and the Spirit to sacramentally become new creations.

To continue with our theme, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the coming new covenant in the 36th chapter of his book. In describing the New Testament era, Ezekiel describes how the Lord will revive His people. “*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*” In this passage, God is clearly using the language of regeneration, the regeneration of hearts through the sprinkling of water and the working of the Holy Spirit. What is this describing if it is not sacramental baptism? Tell me, what other water could make us spiritually clean? And what is spiritual cleanness other than a justified heart? Is it possible to be clean before God and not be justified? Clearly not! Why does God keep pointing us to the outward sign of water and the inward workings of the Spirit? It is because in the mystery of His ways He has chosen baptism as a means of creation, of regeneration, in our hearts.

The theme of God’s new life through water and the Spirit is seen again in the Exodus story. St. Paul tells us in the first Corinthian letter that, “our fathers were

³Baptism ... now saves you, *not as the removal of dirt from the body* but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” I Peter 3:21.

all under the cloud (a reference to the holy cloud where the Spirit of God dwelt) and all passed under the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink". The exodus from Egypt culminated in the Hebrews passing through the parted waters of the Red Sea under the cloud of the Spirit. Just as Christ told Nicodemus that one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless one is born of the water and Spirit, so the Hebrews could not enter the Promised Land without passing through water and the Spirit.

Moving into the New Testament, we find a litany of passages depicting the regenerative powers of baptism. In them the scriptures describe baptism as the instrument for washing away sins at conversion. During the Apostle Paul's conversion, Ananias is recorded as telling Paul, "and now why do you wait? Rise and *be baptized, and wash away yours sins* calling on his name".

St. Peter, when calling on the people gathered at Pentecost said, "repent and be *baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*". Again we see how water and Spirit are linked in a language describing how new souls are ushered into the kingdom of God.

St. Peter tells us in his first epistle that Noah and the eight souls in the ark were saved through water. He then writes "baptism, which corresponds to this [being saved through water in Noah's ark], *now saves you*, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for *a clear conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

The author of Hebrews also points to a clear conscience, mentioned above by St. Peter. The writer tells us to draw near to God in faith "with our *hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience* and our *bodies washed with pure water*". Again we see the inward and outward workings of sacramental baptism. Baptism involves both our hearts and our bodies.

St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to live righteously when he says, "*you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God*". Later he says in the same letter, "for *by one Spirit we were all baptized* into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit".

We see this same message in Saint Paul's letter to the Romans. In chapter 4 he states that Christ "was put to death for our trespasses". Later he says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life." Since we participate in his death through baptism we

receive the benefit of that death; the forgiveness of our trespasses and a new (i.e. reborn) life.

In writing to Titus, St. Paul states that God has saved us, “not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, *by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit*, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior”.

Some may protest against baptism being required for salvation saying that faith in the heart is alone sufficient for salvation.⁴ They will point to the thief on the cross and the Gentiles in Acts 10. In the case of the thief on the cross, it is true he wasn't baptized when he made his profession of faith and it is equally true that he entered Heaven (even though he was not baptized). But it is also true that in his case there was no Church as of yet (it would be born during Pentecost), so there were no sacraments to administer. But even if there had been a Church, in embracing Christ the thief had the “baptism of desire” (in other words, it is presumed that given the opportunity, he would have chosen to be baptized). The Church has always taught that such a desire is sufficient. Additionally, the Church has always taught that the “baptism of blood” (the blood of martyrdom) is another means of acquiring baptismal graces. In *normal circumstances*, baptism is required as spelled out in this article. However, in *special circumstances* where baptism is impossible, God works directly on the heart independent of the sacraments.

In Acts 10 the Holy Spirit descended on the new Gentile converts prior to their baptism. Yet this seems to be the exception to the norm (it doesn't occur anywhere else in the Bible) as God needed to make clear to the Jewish Christians, in no uncertain terms, that the Gentiles were equals in his redemptive plans.^{5 6}

God wants to wash us clean from the stench and stain of our sin. With the heart of a loving Father He has provided the means of making us clean through baptism. This baptism is not merely an outward sign; it is not merely an outward ceremony. Nor is this baptism an act of magic. This baptism, through the working of “the Spirit moving over the waters” is an outward form with an inward reality. And by the Holy Spirit this baptism makes us a new creation in Christ, cleanses us from all of our prior sins and displaces our heart of stone with a heart of flesh, enabling us to become children of God. Gifted with this beloved sacrament, let us cherish the baptismal font and receive and nurture the free gift of Jesus Christ born in our hearts. Amen.

⁴Luther authored the slogan sola fide (faith alone). But he also believed in baptismal regeneration and saw no contradiction in the need for faith and the need for baptism. Like Luther, the Lutherans of today include the necessity of baptism in their understanding of faith alone.

⁵This passage also demonstrates the “baptism of desire”, a doctrine taught by the Church. As Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance writes, “That is why St. Thomas does not hesitate to teach that a child – even one who has not been baptized – who after he has reached the full age of reason efficaciously loves the good more than self, is justified by the baptism of desire, because this love, which is already efficacious love of God, is not possible to man in his present state without regenerative grace”. Our Saviour And His Love For Us, p 6.

⁶Some might also argue that there are two baptisms, one of water and another of the Holy Spirit. But St. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians that there is only “one Lord, one faith and one baptism”. This is an awkward passage for Protestants as they cannot agree on who should be baptized (adults or infants), how they should be baptized (immersion or sprinkled) and what the baptism means (an outward testimony – Baptists and others, a covenantal bond with God – Presbyterians, or regeneration – Lutherans and others). Often, children growing up in homes where they are baptized as babies face difficult choices when growing up and looking for their own church home. Many times they are turned away from membership unless they are willing to be rebaptized. Others may be turned away from membership even though they’ve be baptized as adults because they were not immersed. This creates a very chaotic situation as Protestants disagree on who has actually received a valid baptism. But having every man armed with his Bible and having the authority to decided for himself only lends itself to this kind of anarchy. You almost need a spreadsheet to track the possible combinations. This chaos is not the work of the Holy Spirit, for God is not the author of confusion.

EULOGY FOR A BABY WHO DIES AFTER BAPTISM

I need to take a couple of minutes to say “thank you” to all of you here today. The support we have received from our neighbors, fellow parishioners, friends and co-workers has been so appreciated by our family.

We asked for and have received prayers for our family from all of you and from so many others we have come to know and love. I can say with an abiding confidence that the grace we have received as a result of your prayers has swiftly moved us from crushing grief to an attitude that, while still tinged with sorrow, is nevertheless permeated by joy.

This Faith of ours, this glorious Catholic Faith, has for centuries boldly proclaimed that an infant who is baptized and then dies, as our child has, is carried directly to the waiting arms of God to enjoy the Beatific Vision and live in Paradise forever. We as Catholic parents are called by our vocation of marriage to strive above all else to work toward helping our children arrive in Heaven someday. The Church assures us that our baby is now in Heaven. How can we not be filled with joy?

At the same time, the Church gently encourages us to embrace sorrow. The other morning as my wife sat in her rocking chair and held our child’s lifeless little body, we pulled close a small replica of the Pieta which depicts the Blessed Mother holding the lifeless body of her Son. God is good. He allows us to share in a small way with Mary and all of her suffering. The Church teaches us not to waste suffering but to use it as an opportunity to show our dependence on God.

One might think that it would be difficult to eulogize a baby, but let me share some of what I’ve been told over the past two days. I’ve heard people reflecting on how fragile life is and taking stock of their own life. I’ve heard parents express their desire to run home and hold close their own children. I’ve heard reassessments of how incredibly precious each and every life is that God gives us. I’ve heard recognitions of how truly short life is and how suddenly it can end, which in turn resulted in personal inquiries about God, faith and eternal life.

In short, our baby’s short life and sudden death has prompted some wonderful things. This, then, is our family prayer – we gladly give our baby back to God and endure the sorrowful pain if it prompts just one person to grow closer to Him.

And finally, to my beautiful bride whose arms ache for your baby, you have sustained us through all of this unselfishly and with dignity and humility in imitation of our Blessed Mother. I know well that your heart is breaking and I love you.

“The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away ... Blessed Be the Name of the Lord!”