

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT: BAPTISM & CONFIRMATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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WHO JUST RECEIVED THE SACRAMENTS THIS
LAST MONTH?

WHO IS NOT A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN?

WHO IS ALREADY A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN, BUT
NOT CATHOLIC?

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE
SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND
CONFIRMATION? (Take a few moments and
write them down on the index cards. We will
revisit them at the end of the session.)

IF YOU DID A SURVEY OF WHAT BAPTISM
MEANS TO PEOPLE, WHAT ANSWERS DO YOU
THINK YOU WOULD HEAR?

WHAT DOES BEING A DISCIPLES OF JESUS
MEAN TO YOU?

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

- **BAPTISM** IS OUR ENTRANCE, THROUGH DEATH, INTO A NEW NARRATIVE AND NEW LIFE IN JESUS' CHURCH.
- **CONFIRMATION** SEALS US WITH THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- THE **EUCCHARIST** COMPLETES OUR INITIATION, BRINGING US TO THE TABLE OF THE LORD, WHERE WE EAT THE BREAD OF LIFE AND DRINK FROM THE CUP OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

BAPTISM

HOLY BAPTISM IS THE BASIS OF THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN LIFE, THE GATEWAY TO LIFE IN THE SPIRIT AND THE DOOR THAT GIVES ACCESS TO THE OTHER SACRAMENTS. THROUGH BAPTISM WE ARE FREED FROM SIN AND REBORN AS SONS OF GOD; WE BECOME MEMBERS OF CHRIST, ARE INCORPORATED INTO THE CHURCH, AND MADE SHARERS IN HER MISSION: "BAPTISM IS THE SACRAMENT OF REGENERATION THROUGH WATER IN THE WORLD."

(CCC, NO. 1213)

BAPTISM

- **A DAY OF LIBERATION** – BAPTISM CELEBRATES OUR LIBERATION FROM THE SLAVERY OF THE POWER AND DYSFUNCTION OF SIN. THE DAY WE ENTERED INTO THE WATERS OF BAPTISM IS THE DAY OF OUR LIBERATION AND A DAY TO BE RECALLED, CHERISHED, AND RESPONDED TO WITH GRATITUDE. MY DAY IS MAY 12, 1969.
- **EMBRACING POWERLESSNESS** – ADMITTING ONE’S POWERLESSNESS IS NOT AN ADMISSION OF WEAKNESS BUT A RECOGNITION OF THE OPPRESSIVE FORCE THAT HAS RENDERED OUR ABILITY TO RESIST FUTILE. IN BAPTISM WE ADMIT OUR POWERLESSNESS OVER SIN AND CALL ON A HIGHER POWER—THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD THAT WE RECEIVE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST—TO SAVE US FROM OURSELVES.

BAPTISM

- **GAINING ACCESS** – BAPTISM PROVIDES US ACCESS TO INTIMACY WITH GOD AND IT REQUIRES NO SECRET CODE. WE DON’T HAVE TO SEARCH FOR A WAY TO GAIN ACCESS. THAT ACCESS HAS BEEN REVEALED TO US IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, WHO STATES VERY CLEARLY IN JOHN 14:6 THAT HE “IS THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.”
- **EMBRACING THE GRACE OF GOD** – BAPTISM IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT HAVING OUR LIVES REFORMED AND TRANSFORMED BY GOD. THIS TASK IS CENTRAL TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. AT ALL BAPTISMS, THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL REVISIT THEIR OWN BAPTISM AND RENEW IT, TO MAKE IT FRESH AND VIBRANT.

ORIGINAL SIN

- OUR DISCUSSION IN BAPTISM, IN FACT SALVATION IN GENERAL, MUST BEGIN WITH THE ADMISSION THAT WE ARE, AT OUR CORE, INHERENTLY DYSFUNCTIONAL.
- THIS IS NOT SAYING THAT WE ARE INHERENTLY EVIL. WE ARE MADE INHERENTLY GOOD, BUT SADLY DAMAGED.
- WE ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD; TO REFLECT HIS GOODNESS, TRUTH AND BEAUTY.
- BUT...WE CHOSE ANOTHER PATH AND IN SO DOING, DAMAGED OURSELVES.
- THIS DYSFUNCTION IS CALLED **ORIGINAL SIN**

BAPTISM IS NOT ABOUT YOU

- BAPTISM, LIKE ALL SACRAMENTS, IS ABOUT WHAT GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIFE—NAMELY, CALLING YOU TO ENTER MORE DEEPLY INTO GOD'S WORLD AND CONFORM MORE CLOSELY TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST.
- RELATIONSHIPS FORM US AND SHAPE US INTO A NEW PERSON. IN BAPTISM WE ARE SHAPED INTO CHRIST HIMSELF.
- BAPTISM REORIENTS US, SHIFTING OUR ATTENTION AWAY FROM OURSELVES AND TOWARD THE NEEDS OF OTHERS. THIS IS A LIFE THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY LAYING DOWN ONE'S LIFE AND SETTING ASIDE ONE'S OWN NEEDS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.
- IN BAPTISM WE DO NOT BECOME A BETTER VERSION OF OURSELVES, WE BECOME A VERSION OF CHRIST HIMSELF.

LIVING BAPTISM

- WHAT IS THE DIVINE IMAGE IN BAPTISM: PRIEST, PROPHET AND KING
- IN BAPTISM WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE IN THESE THREE ROLES OF CHRIST
- “GOD, THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST...NOW ANOINTS YOU WITH THE CHRISM OF SALVATION. AS CHRIST WAS ANOINTED PRIEST, PROPHET, AND KING, SO MAY YOU LIVE ALWAYS AS A MEMBER OF THE BODY, SHARING EVERLASTING LIFE.”
- PRIEST – HELP OTHERS GAIN ACCESS TO GOD
- PROPHET – SPEAK AND ACT ON BEHALF OF THE OPPRESSED AND FIGHT FOR JUSTICE
- KING – SERVE AND PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

CONFIRMATION

PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION SHOULD AIM AT LEADING THE CHRISTIAN TOWARD A MORE INTIMATE UNION WITH CHRIST AND A LIVELIER FAMILIARITY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT—HIS ACTIONS, HIS GIFTS, AND HIS BIDDINGS—IN ORDER TO BE MORE CAPABLE OF ASSUMING THE APOSTOLIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

(CCC, NO. 1309)

A BIT OF CONTEXT

- IN THE GOSPELS, PEOPLE OFTEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAS COME OVER JESUS. FOR EXAMPLE MARK 2:7A, “WHY DOES THIS MAN SPEAK THAT WAY?”
- WHETHER THEY HAD LANGUAGE FOR IT OR NOT, THEY SAW JESUS AS THE INTERSECTION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.
- THE JEWISH PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO RECEIVE SOMETHING SPIRITUAL, NOT ONLY FROM GOD BUT ALSO FROM ANOTHER PERSON. THIS “SOMETHING SPIRITUAL” WAS IMAGINED AS BEING “POURED OUT” AS ONE POURS PRECIOUS OIL.
- SINCE JESUS WAS KNOWN AS THE ANOINTED ONE, HIS FOLLOWERS CONCLUDED THAT BY LEARNING ABOUT HIM, THEY COULD SHARE IN THIS SPIRIT.

A BIT OF CONTEXT

- THESE FOLLOWERS SOON CAME TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SAME SPIRIT THAT FILLED JESUS COULD BE “TRANSFERRED” FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER THROUGH THE ACT OF ANOINTING WITH OIL AND LAYING ON OF HANDS.
- ON PENTECOST, THE SAME PEOPLE WHO ASKED WHAT HAD COME OVER JESUS, NOW WAS ASKING THE SAME QUESTION ABOUT THE APOSTLES.
- AT THE HEART OF BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT IS THE NOTION OF EXPERIENCING A TRANSFORMATION.
- IT IS PRECISELY THIS TRANSFORMATION THAT IS AT THE HEART OF ALL THE SACRAMENTS.
- IN CONFIRMATION WE CELEBRATE THE TRANSFORMATION THAT TAKES PLACE WHEN HEAVEN AND EARTH INTERSECT IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR

- DO YOU WANT TO BE ONLY A MEMBER OF A CHURCH OR DO YOU WANT TO BE A DISCIPLE?
- ONE CAN BE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH WITHOUT LIVING A LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP.
- CONFIRMATION INVITES US TO REVISIT OUR BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT TO DISCIPLESHIP AND TO INVITE GOD TO STRENGTHEN IT THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ROOTS AND WINGS

- BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION ARE TWO DISTINCT SACRAMENTS, AND YET THEY ARE INTIMATELY LINKED AND WORK TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM US.
- BAPTISM INVITES US TO PARTICIPATE IN JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION (PASCHAL MYSTERY). CONFIRMATION INVITES US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMPLETION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY (RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.)
- BAPTISM GIVES US ROOTS WHILE CONFIRMATION GIVES US WINGS.
- BAPTISM GROUNDS US IN THE REALITY OF JESUS CHRIST, CONFIRMATION CALLS US TO SOAR ON THE WINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

- AT THE HEART OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION IS THE REALITY OF BEING SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON, SOMEONE WITH WHOM WE ARE CALLED TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP.
- SCRIPTURE USES SYMBOLS SUCH AS THE WIND, FIRE AND A DOVE TO DESCRIBE THE HOLY SPIRIT, BUT JESUS REFERS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AS OUR ADVOCATE.
- ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM REFERRED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT AS “THE FRIEND CLOSEST TO OUR HEARTS.”
- COME HOLY SPIRIT, AND SHAKE ME UP!

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

“CHRIST HIMSELF WANTS TO EXPERIENCE THIS [**A LIFE OF HOLINESS**] WITH YOU, IN ALL THE EFFORTS AND SACRIFICES THAT IT ENTAILS, BUT ALSO IN ALL THE JOY AND ENRICHMENT IT BRINGS. YOU CANNOT GROW IN **HOLINESS** WITHOUT COMMITTING YOURSELF, BODY AND SOUL, TO GIVING YOUR BEST TO THIS ENDEAVOR.”

POPE FRANCIS, *GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE* 25

