



OUR LADY OF
LOURDES
 CATHOLIC PARISH

THE LOURDES WORD

WINTER 2023



~Winter Theme~
*The Sacrament
 of Baptism*

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Fairy Godmother

by Michele Oertel

Within the past 25 plus years, I have been honored and humbled to be asked by my family and friends to be a godparent for three special children of God. My first fleeting thought was of course I accept that role; that will be a delight to play Fairy Godmother and spoil each of them with fun gifts for special occasions. Upon second thought, a grave sense of responsibility enveloped me to keep and share the faith with them.

It was more than a notion for me to plant seeds of faith in my godchildren and help them grow in the Lord, even in some small ways, especially from afar not living in the same town. So when the time came to hold each precious child draped in white awaiting the waters of baptism, I more seriously took my "co-parenting" promises to support their respective Christian journeys, just as the Church with its community of believers supports all of us.

As a child of God, I myself needed to be reminded of our baptismal vows to renounce Satan as a deceiver, divider, and destroyer and to remember Jesus Christ as the most holy Lord and Savior in order for me to be a worthy godparent. Our rebirth in Christ should not be "one

and done" as we need to be refreshed and renewed regularly.

My baptism was the first, important, sacramental step in my Catholic Christian faith. Clearly, all of us baptized as infants were immature Christians, so we have had to rely on others and the grace of God to support us along our journeys of faith. With gratitude for so much love and support in my life, I feel like I'm becoming a more seasoned Christian who can hopefully share more with each passing year than I could during the time of my godchildren's baptisms. Every life experience opens my mind and heart even more to God's hand in my life, pouring the waters of baptism to help my seeds grow so that I can in turn plant other seeds to help further His Kingdom.

Baptism is a big step -- even with little feet. And the call for a godparent seems like an even bigger step. This experience reminds me of an old adage that one of the best ways to learn is actually to teach. Serving as a godparent has helped me strengthen my own faith. It feels like I have received more than I have given. Throughout the years, it has been a blessing for me to be the "guide on the side" -- who has also delighted in the sprinkling of gifts.



Baptismal Renewal

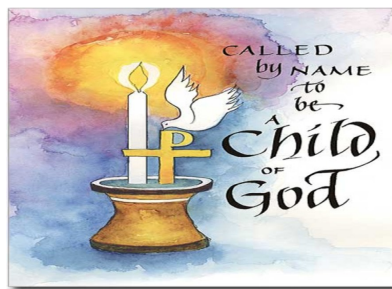
by Matthew Fallon

I happily attend baptisms -- no matter whose baptism. I soak up the optimism and excitement and the sense of a community connection. Since I was baptized when I was too young to remember it, I vicariously experience the love of my parents in seeking baptism for me, and their commitment to my education in the faith that they promised me. I can picture my godparents standing by the font, similarly promising to be a continuing presence in my life, aiding my parents with my spiritual growth and practicing of the faith. As an adult, baptisms remind me of my own entrance into the sacramental life of the Church.

Since I am their oldest child and first to be baptized, I know my parents attended a parental preparation meeting for my baptism, in which they learned about the theology of baptism. Specifically taught was what the rite confers and the meanings of the objects used in it, the rights the baptized member may expect of the Church, and also their responsibilities to the Body of Christ.

I recall how my parents chose my godparents according to Church guidelines: at least sixteen years old, a confirmed and practicing Catholic, who had no impediments under Church law, vouched for as such by their pastor. They chose a couple who were both Catholic, but they could have also designated one Catholic and a second person (of the opposite sex) from another Christian faith tradition as a 'Christian Witness'.

Because I enjoy renewing my awareness of my own baptism, I look forward to having people choose to include their baby's baptism in the liturgy of the Mass. In this way, the whole parish may also benefit and celebrate with the family!



Parish Mission Statement

We, the faith community of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, strive to live, share and be Christ in all we do.

In Baptism We Enter into the Body of Christ

by Mark Hudson

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On its website about Baptism Ascension, a leader in Catholic faith formation states the following: “Baptism serves as the first sacrament one receives when entering the Catholic Faith. It is a sacrament of initiation (which you can only receive one time) meaning once you receive it, you officially enter into the body of Christ, the Catholic Church. The recipient receives justifying and sanctifying grace when baptized, and the Holy Spirit begins to dwell within them.”

This sacrament, like all sacraments, is extremely important. The form and matter used are well outlined by the Church. You may recall late last winter the Rev. Andres Arango resigned as pastor of St. Gregory parish in the Phoenix diocese. He was found to have performed baptisms incorrectly throughout his priestly career. The diocese reported that during baptisms in both English and Spanish, the priest used the phrase “we baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” He should have said, “I baptize.”

Rev. Arango had been off by a single word. According to Canon Law, not using the correct wording required for the sacrament rendered the rite invalid for thousands of people. This affected the faithful not only in Phoenix but also in Detroit, Oklahoma City, and Mexico where he previously ministered.

A diocesan spokesperson stated that while an exact number of people affected could not be established, it was estimated the number to be in the thousands. On its website, the diocese explained: It is not the community that baptizes a person and incorporates that

person into the church of Christ, rather it is Christ and Christ alone, who presides at all sacraments. Therefore, it is Christ who baptizes.

This situation was in the national news. And this may be one of those times that, as the saying goes, “there is no such thing as bad publicity.” I note this because while the issue is canonically legalistic, it has brought to light for many what this sacrament of baptism is and what the symbols represent. (As Deacon Tom presents so well in his article in this publication.)

At baptism, we receive sanctifying grace and share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. A person becomes partners with Jesus. The sacrament forgives all sins that were committed before baptism, including original sin. For those above the age of reason, mortal and venial sins are forgiven. No matter the age, the person becomes a newly adopted son or daughter of God and a member of the Church.

With baptism, there are responsibilities. Vatican II recognized this and declared that Baptized Christians “have the duty of going out into the whole world.” Go out and proclaim the good news of the gospel.

One example of someone who fulfilled this responsibility would be Sargent Shriver, the first Director of the Peace Corps. A quote from him which reflects his life work is, “Quit looking into the mirror, turn towards the window.” Shriver like so many acted in the world on the authority of his baptism. He lived the gospel.



All God's children we
But most happy he
On whom his Father's Spirit
Comes to rest.
Baptism of desire
Come with mighty fire
To Your transforming power in man, attest.

Waters pure and sweet
Wash away these feet
Of clay, and sore self-serving
Heart.
Repentant now I come
I fear will be undone
Unless your wondrous Spirit You impart.

O Comforter and Son!
Mysterious Three-In-One
Why should You wish in me
To come and dwell?
Most humbly yet I come
Most thankfully succumb
My soul-sick darkness, Thine now to dispel.

I put my life in Thine
Die to Me and Mine
Am born again to love and live in Thee.
Most blessed promise this:
I am, by Holy grace
A new creation evermore to be.

All God's children we
But most joyous he
On whom his Father's Spirit comes to rest.
Ask and but believe
Open and receive
The ever-leading Light of His bequest.



Symbols and Effects of Baptism

by Deacon Tom

We are living in a time when many of our parents are choosing to defer baptism for their children. I have frequently been told by these parents that they believe that it is better for the child to make the decision on his/her own at a time when one is capable of making a mature decision to join the church. I find this approach disappointing to say the least. To delay or deny baptism for a child results in denying that infant a gift from God. In order to better understand the significance of that gift, an examination of its symbols and effects may be beneficial.

To baptize comes from the Greek word baptize “to plunge or immerse.” In modern times, most baptisms are accomplished with the assistance of a font, and water is poured over one’s head. However, in the early church, and still permitted today, most baptisms took place in a body of water large enough for the one to be baptized to be fully immersed below the water. While beneath the water and not breathing (holding one’s breath), it is said that the individual symbolically dies to his/her old life and ways. Then when raised above the water and gasping for fresh, life-giving air, the individual is said to have begun a new life in Christ, as one's sins have been washed away. Water symbolizes cleansing, deliverance, and new life. While water represents the principal symbol of baptism, the sacramental ritual is rich with many more.



Additional symbols include two anointings with oil, a white garment, and a lighted candle. The anointings are two fold. In the first, the recipient receives the Oil of the Catechumens on the chest, representing the salvation and strength and power that comes from Jesus. After being washed by the waters of baptism, Sacred Chrism oil is used to anoint the top of the head, and recognizes the new christian’s role in the priesthood of Christ and membership in His body. A white garment is then presented as an outward symbol of the person’s purity and dignity. The white garment further symbolizes that the person is a new creation clothed with Christ. Then a baptismal candle lit from the Easter Candle, representing Jesus the light of the world, is shared. For Jesus is the light that guides all the baptized, and the recipient is charged with keeping the light of Christ burning brightly.

Lest anyone think that baptism is purely symbolic, it is important to realize that in this sacrament, the recipient is literally changed. The person once baptized, is different from the same individual prior to being baptized. The sacrament of baptism is efficacious and has profound effects on the recipient. In baptism, the effects of original sin are cleansed from our souls, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, our souls are marked with the indelible seal of eternal life. Nothing can erase this mark, and the gates of heaven are opened to us. Additionally, the graces of baptism give us the power to resist the inclination to sin and bond us in an everlasting relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Through baptism, we are initiated into the Body of Christ and given a share in the priesthood of all believers, and we are called to bring God’s love to the world.

This past Christmas season, I imagine that many parents showered their children with longed for gifts -- gifts that their children wanted as well as some that the parents felt their children needed. But none of the gifts can compare to the Divine Gift of Baptism. Baptism is the gift that changes our fundamental identity -- a gift that welcomes us into the Christian family, a gift that gives grace and offers rebirth, and a gift that gives us access to the other sacraments. Baptism is a gift of divine love meant to be shared, not delayed.



Waters of Baptism

by Andrea Fleak

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We have all seen the images of Florida after a hurricane or the flooding in California, where homes and businesses were destroyed as a result of the water. We hear stories about the water rising so fast that it killed people who could not escape it. The pictures coming across our televisions or on social media make it hard to imagine the reality that these people are going through or the extent of the damage that they are experiencing. In my own life, I have seen the destruction water can cause when the extreme cold caused a pipe burst in my place of work that took down 90% of the ceiling in my office; ceiling tile fragments and water covered just about everything. The excessive damage created a sense of chaos as we tried to remain functional and rebuild the office. We hear of similar things happening in other places such as the Children's Museum which was closed for several days and ended up having to change how to enter the museum until the damage from the pipe was fixed. Water in these cases creates a sense of chaos as it changes our normal routines, and we are forced to adapt to the emergent situation as we deal with the destruction.

In the Old Testament, we saw this destruction and chaos of water as well. In the story of Noah, water filled the earth for 40 days and 40 nights, destroying everything not on the ark. In the story of Moses, water threatened the Israelites running to escape the pharaoh until the

Red Sea parted, letting the Israelites through on dry land, but killing the Egyptians when the sea crashed back in place. Many times in the New and Old Testament, we hear about the "Raging Sea" like in Psalm 65:7 or in the story of Jesus calming the sea. Even in the Bible, we can see the destructiveness of water.

Yet, when we think of baptism, what do we think of first? Water. Baptism is symbolized by water and is an important part of baptism. The water that can be seen as destructive can also be life giving. Through baptism, the stain of original sin that started with Adam and Eve in the garden is washed away, and we are given the opportunity to begin a new life walking with Christ. This baptism makes us children of God and a part of the Church, the Body of Christ. In baptism, we enter into a Covenant with God. We promise to reject Satan, be faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and profess faith in God. In return, we are given forgiveness of sins and life with Christ. Baptism is the beginning of our faith journey. We commemorate this new beginning each time we renew our baptismal vows again and are sprinkled with Holy Water. So the next time you enter the church and dip your finger into the Holy Water to make the sign of the cross, let us remember the power of the Holy Water protecting us from evil, washing away sin, and connecting us back to our baptism.



Baptism engrafts us into the mystical vine which is the body of Christ, and makes us live in His life and ripen like grapes on the trellis of His Cross. It brings us into the communion of the saints whose life flows from the Passion of Jesus. But every sacrament of union is also a sacrament of separation. In making us members of one another, baptism also more clearly distinguishes us, not only from those who do not live in Christ, but also and even especially from one another. For it gives us our personal, incommunicable vocation to reproduce in our lives the life and sufferings and charity of Christ in a way unknown to anyone else who has ever lived under the sun.

Thomas Merton
 “No Man Is an Island”



If you enjoy writing and would like to submit an article, poem, etc., then please see the last page of this publication.

Baptism

The water bathes the body but
The Holy Spirit works within,
When words divine uttered makes one
A member of Lord Jesus Christ!

The grace of God brings marked change;
Past sins and punishments are gone;
The sacrament called Baptism
Brings us to Christ and is the first!

‘Unless a man is born again,
Of water and of Holy Ghost,
He cannot enter God’s Kingdom! ’
Said Jesus Lord to Apostles.

The rite is simple; so, the words;
The cleansing is of soul, mind, heart;
The grace of God gets poured within,
As one is freed from every sin.

Dr. John Celes





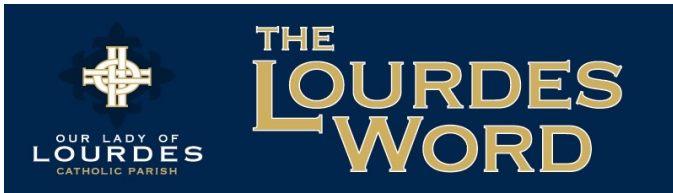
Courtney and Brian White with daughter, Dylan and older son, Gavin, baptized on October 23, 2022

In this Pentecost homily, Father Richard Rohr encourages us to recognize and call upon the Holy Spirit, a gift God has already given us! Pentecost June 5, 2022

It is a shame that the Holy Spirit tends to be an afterthought for many Christians. We don't really "have the Spirit." We tend, I'm afraid, to simply go through the motions. We formally believe, but honestly, there isn't much fire to it. There isn't much conviction. There isn't much service. We just sort of believe. That's why in the Gospels there are two baptisms that are clearly distinguished. There's the baptism with water that most of us are used to, and there's the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11), that's the one that really matters.

The water baptism that many of us received as children really demands little conviction or understanding. Until that water baptism becomes real, until we know Jesus, and we can rely on Jesus, call upon Jesus, share Jesus, love Jesus, we're just going along for the ride. We can recognize people who have had a second baptism in the Holy Spirit. They tend to be loving. They tend to be exciting. They want to serve others, and not just be served themselves. They forgive life itself for not being everything they once hoped for. They forgive their neighbors. They forgive themselves for not being as perfect as they would like to be. Even though we so often pray, "Come, Holy Spirit," the gift of the Spirit is already given. The Holy Spirit has already come.





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Our quarterly publication of *The Lourdes Word* is an attempt for us, the followers of Christ, to reflect publicly on our faith journey. Each edition has a specific theme. Contained in this issue are reflections on “**The Sacrament of Baptism.**”



We invite the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes to submit writings which they feel will help address the theme of the next publication. All submissions will be reviewed by the publication committee. Please note that due to space requirements, editing may be necessary. Therefore, please limit your submission to 525 words or fewer. The theme for the next edition will be “*Prayer.*” The edited copy will be returned to the author for review before final publication. Please feel free to submit writings through the parish secretary.

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