

Connecting Water and Baptism

- ❖ The Old Testament has a rich tradition of stories that focus on water and enrich our understanding of baptism. Creation (Genesis 1), the Great Flood (Gen: 7, and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14). After escaping from Egypt, the Israelites cross the River Jordan to reach the Promised Land.
- ❖ In the New Testament, we read this same Jordan River is where Jesus is baptized, and we read that Jesus calls himself “living water” when he speaks to the Samaritan woman.
- ❖ All these Bible passages and many others tell the story of baptism: **a story of moving from death to life under the protective care of our God.**
- ❖ In Jesus’ time when water was not as plentiful as it is for us, it was synonymous with life. Water was the stuff of life. Even today, without water, we die.
- ❖ **What an amazing symbol is water for Baptism, a sacrament that carries us from death to new life. We are immersed into water as a sign of our dying with Christ, then rising out of the water into new life with Christ.**
- ❖ Water is a means for cleansing and making all things new just as Baptism cleanses our soul and makes us new in the sight of God.

Connecting Oil and Baptism

- ❖ In the Old Testament, kings, prophets, and priests were anointed with oil as a sign of their special calling, e.g., David was anointed with oil when he became King of the Israelites. The word *Christ itself* means “anointed one.”
- ❖ The anointing after Baptism is a way of saying something about what being baptized means. The anointing with sacred chrism oil means that the new Christian has a special place in the Body of Christ, i.e., they are incorporated into the life of the Church.
- ❖ In our lives, oil is used to strengthen (source of nutrition), protect (as a lubricant), and heal (as a medical salve).
- ❖ In Baptism, oil is a sign of being “anointed” by the Holy Spirit, our spiritual source of strength, protection and healing.

Connecting the White Garment and Baptism

- ❖ The newly baptized receives a white garment, which symbolizes that the person baptized has “put on Christ.”
- ❖ The garment is white, reflecting the purity of being cleansed of sin.
- ❖ All the baptized are clothed in similar white garments, for all of them are equal in the eyes of God, and equally valued as new members of our faith community.

Connecting Light and Baptism

- ❖ The imagery of light and darkness has long been used to symbolize Christ, “the light of the world.”
- ❖ A candle is lit from the Paschal (Easter) candle and given to each newly baptized person.
- ❖ The candle signifies that Christ has enlightened the baptized person, and those baptized become the “light of the world.”
- ❖ It is the light of Christ that guides our lives as Christians, and we are called to bring that light of Christ to our world by being Christ-like in our daily lives.
- ❖ In the Rite of Baptism for Children, parents and godparents are entrusted to keep the light burning brightly for their children so that they will always walk as children of the light.

Connecting the Promises to Baptism

- ❖ If you were baptized as a child, your parents and godparents made some promises on your behalf. If you were older, you made the promises yourself.
- ❖ There are promises of renunciation, i.e. to turn away from sin, ‘Do you reject Satan, and all his work, and all his empty promises?’
- ❖ There are promises of faith and belief in God, i.e., ‘Do you believe in God the Father....Jesus Christ, his only Son....the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?’
- ❖ These promises are made several times during the year at 1) Easter vigil, 2) confirmation, 3) baptism.

More on the Promises.....

Why make promises? At a time when many men and women seem less willing to make and keep commitments, the followers of Jesus need to resist the temptation to be skeptical about the possibility of making lifelong promises and remaining faithful to them.

Promises, after all, give expression to our desires: what we want to do, what we want to become, what we want to give, how much we want to love. To lose confidence in the possibility of making and keeping promises is to jeopardize the human heart itself, which is the seat of all our desiring. Besides, desires which are truly life-giving ultimately trace their origin to the Spirit of God. To dismiss the possibility that human beings can make and keep promises, and their human obligation to do so, is to lose faith in the Spirit which prompts us to do and to dare great things with our lives.

The promises, of course, are quite familiar: Do you renounce Satan? and all his works? and all his empty promises? So too the profession of faith: Do you believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth? Year after year we listen to these questions...and...provided we have taken the time to think about them, they can reinforce the whole structure of our faith...But precisely because the questions are so familiar, they can also sound like unimaginative religious formulas which stir neither our minds nor our hearts. If we reflect on those questions ahead of time, however, then those ancient phrases can ring again with the faith of the Church as they have done through the ages. Rather than sound like tired uninteresting questions, the words of the baptismal promises and profession of faith will focus our attention once more on the ground and direction of our lives.

Renewing our baptismal commitment can be a truly graced moment. Promises should not be taken lightly, especially promises made to God. We made, and ...renew, those promises because we desire to let our lives be grounded in and guided by the gospel. Promises look toward the future. They do not cancel out the possibility of failure, of going back on our word, of temporarily losing sight of the direction of our lives. Yet failure should never stop the follower of Jesus from trying to be faithful, or from starting over, any more than the fear of failure should cripple the heart's desire to give itself, totally and unreservedly to another.

“Speaking to each of us personally, the Church could rightfully ask: “You who have allowed yourself to be called Christian, are you being faithful to what you pledged when you accepted baptism?” (W. Reiser, *Renewing the Baptismal Promises: Their Meaning for Christian Life*. N.Y.: Pueblo Pub. Co., 1988, p. 6-8)

Signing of the Senses with the Cross

- ❖ When we use the sign of the cross in daily life and in liturgy, we are making a statement about who we are and who we belong to. In liturgy we use the gesture of signing with the symbol of the cross when we welcome new members into the Christian community. The signing is accompanied by a new relationship.
- ❖ In infant baptism, the infant is signed with the symbol of the cross by the priest, parents and godparents.
- ❖ In adult baptism,.....

- ❖ Once initiated we use the sign of the cross over and over again to remind ourselves who we are. Claimed. Loved. No matter what. Our liturgies are filled with signs of the cross.
- ❖ **The cross tells us that we loved by God unconditionally. We belong to Christ and our belonging is not based on our accomplishments. We are important no matter what. God pursues us and loves us no matter what. Jesus gave his life on account of us. The cross symbolizes the nature of the life God's love inspires: a life lived on account of others.**