

THE SPRINKLING Why Do We Do It?

When the priest sprinkles the congregation with holy water, did you ever watch how people react as the water hits them? Some are surprised by the water; others seem puzzled; a few duck when they see the priest coming; some almost seem to be looking forward to the water's arrival. Kids are usually giggling. Did you ever notice Father's face as he does the sprinkling?

The sprinkling ceremony is done as a reminder of our baptism...and baptism is a joyful thing, as well as a challenging one. It seems appropriate that we all get wet together since baptism calls us into life together. It isn't just a 'me and Jesus' thing; it's about growing together, being challenged together, and sometimes giggling together!

Baptism calls us to holiness together. Like the people reacting to the sprinkling of baptismal water, sometimes we seem surprised by the challenges of our baptismal call to be disciples; sometimes our life in Christ is filled with joy. Some of us seem to want to hide from the demands of faith in Christ. We duck away from Christ's call just as we duck from the sprinkled baptismal water. Others seek the support of the people around them in order to stand firm as they face the allure of less-than-Christian responses to the circumstances of their lives. No matter what, baptism draws us into relationship with Christ, which in turn thrusts us into relationship with others.

As baptized believers, each of us is called to draw others to holiness. I don't know about you, but I cannot say I wake up every morning convinced that I will lead someone else to God in the course of my day; yet that is exactly what we are called to do. Being part of the Body of Christ means we must act on Christ's behalf in our world. Individual to individual, spouses to each other, parents to children, elders and children, and everyone in between. We are meant to be people who, through the way we live and the words we speak, bring others a step closer to a life of holiness.

And we do this together! The life of a Christian is a life of communal striving-toward-holiness. Baptism makes us members of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth, and makes us sharers of her mission. If we really embrace the idea that we are the Body of Christ, then doesn't it seem to follow that people will come to know Christ through us?

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