

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

As we celebrate Trinity Sunday this weekend – remembering the central Mystery of our Faith, that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – we look at the Sacrament of **Baptism**. In Baptism, the words, “**I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**” are said. Remember that Sacraments are signs that make real what they signify, so the outward, audible reality of the words bring about an inward, spiritual reality in the soul – *that we are infused into the very life of God!*

Let’s take a step back. We realize that in our Faith, relationship is not merely important, it is essential! One of the beautiful things of our Faith is the truth that in Jesus, God has adopted us as His beloved sons and daughters. Prior to Baptism, we were His creatures, made in His image and likeness, and *beloved* by Him, but still merely creatures. In Baptism, God brings us into His family, makes us heirs of the Kingdom, pours His Holy Spirit into us that we may call Him, “**Abba, Father**” (see Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6). We speak very easily of God as Father, and that we are His children, but this is a profound mystery. Anyone who has adopted a child knows that there is a radical difference in our relationship between a child that we visit who is in an orphanage and the one that has entered our family in adoption; the child is now *our* child! God loves each person He made and desires each to be in relationship with Him – specifically the relationship where He is *Abba*, Daddy to us. Baptism makes us His children and calls us to a deep trust in the love that God has for us, that He is watching us each moment of each day. He doesn’t watch to see if we will mess up, but, rather, because He is so in love with us that He can’t keep His eyes off of us. Parents who have gone to the door of their children’s rooms to watch in wonder and awe as they sleep know this feeling. This is the love of God.

Another aspect of the mystery of what happens in Baptism is that our sins are washed away. *All of them*. There is no stain of sin, no punishment due to sin left at that moment (though we are still left with the effects of Original Sin: a darkened intellect and a weakened will). Since most of us were baptized as infants, we don’t feel this grace so much – we have always had it so we’re used to it. But adults that have come to a conversion and have been baptized realize more readily the joy of having all of their past sins forgiven!

Another facet of the mystery of Baptism, is that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us. You may remember the saying that we are “Temples of the Holy Spirit.” This is not a trite spiritual platitude but a deep truth of our Faith. God has deigned to dwell in us – both our bodies and our souls! He comes to us! The Holy Spirit, remember is the love between the Father and the Son – the love that is so real that He is a person. This same Holy Spirit that has united the eternal Father and the eternal Son for all eternity now enters us to unite us into the very life of God! God dwells in us! We dwell in God! What Grace!

In Baptism, we use various symbols – water, oil (both the *Oil of Catechumens* as a defense against evil, and the *Sacred Chrism* anointing us priests, prophets, and kings), touch, fire (the baptismal candle), and the white garment. All of these point to the same reality – *New Creation!* The darkness has been torn away, and the Light of Christ comes to dwell in us; we put on Christ, our purified garment; we are washed of our old ways; we have gone down into the death of Baptism to Rise again with Christ. **New Creation**. We are not simply *declared* innocent... we are **made innocent!** This is incredible that God would make us SO new that all of our sins are not simply over-looked, but completely erased! This is the grace of becoming a Child of God!

The *matter* of baptism is a human (sorry... we can’t baptize your dog) and water. The *form* is having the water touch the person three times while saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The ordinary minister of the Sacrament is a clergy member (bishop, priest, or deacon), but in exceptional circumstances, anyone can baptize another.

You may have noticed that the form requires the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can’t baptize people “in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier,” or “in the name of the Parent, the Child, and the Spirated.” The names “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” were revealed to us by Jesus Himself, and the form of baptism given to us from Jesus (Matthew 28:19). To baptize by “Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier” is to reduce God to His functions in the world (what He has done). But He always was/is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, even before He created, or redeemed the world, or made us holy. Relationship isn’t just important, it is essential. We are not baptized into jobs or functions, but into relationship with Persons – with God!