

Recently I came across an article which was quite alarming. The article covered the numerous statements (most of which are erroneous) made by a former president of Ireland. The topic of the article regarded infant baptism. The one covered in the story basically said that infant baptism is morally repugnant, or coercive. The statement said that baptism places a child in a contract that he/she was not able to choose. Leaving aside her misunderstandings of the Magisterium, doctrinal development, personal opinion, infallibility, truth, and conscience does she have a point? No!

Why? A few reasons. First, this logic regarding infant baptism is as ridiculous as saying that parents who love their infants coerce their child into a lifelong relationship of love. To deny baptism is a deprivation that is similar to depriving an infant of their parents love. It would be utterly absurd to tell a parent not to love their child because that would coerce the child into a relationship that the child didn't choose. Just as a child needs and is created for parental love and interaction – regardless of its inability to choose it – for a proper and healthy development, even more so, every human being needs and is created for a Supernatural, filial relationship with God. This relationship is not possible in the natural order, hence the need for baptism.

Just as the relationship of love between parent and child is not a contract, neither is baptism. Baptism establishes the human person in a covenantal relationship with the Holy Trinity, wherein they are able to experience and participate in Divine love, not to mention the entire Communion of Saints. It's a birth into a family of a Supernatural (divine) origin. There is a big difference between contract and covenant. It is simple to distinguish: contracts are essentially an exchange of goods for services rendered; covenants are an exchange of persons in a response of love, wherein the beloved is possessed by the lover and vice versa. Anyone who would like to argue that God impinges upon human freedom or is in any way in opposition to it is not talking about the True God, the God of Christianity. In reality, the closer one is to God, the freer he or she is and thus the more he or she flourishes. If one argues this point, then they do not know what human freedom is for: it is ordered for human flourishing, which is to say perfection – something that obtains only in intimate covenantal relationship with The Holy Trinity. This relationship and perfection of man implies right worship of God; man discovers his identity in true worship of God.

Moreover, to say that baptism is a contract is like saying that God gets goods – i.e., baptized people – out of the services He renders – i.e., the possibility of Heaven. Let it be clear: if God desired some good outside of Himself then He wouldn't be God. Think about it. If God desired or was constrained for something outside of Himself, well then, he wouldn't be the greatest good, because there would be something further beyond him that He desires. He wouldn't be pure perfection, because there would be another perfection outside of Himself that He sought. Now certainly, God desires our salvation, but not because it's good for Him like He gets anything out of it that He doesn't already have. He wills it because it is solely good for us. He desires it insofar as we participate in *His* Goodness and perfection and it is *His* Goodness and perfection that He desires. This is a good thing. This means that God's love doesn't change. But back to the point, if there were any necessity in God with regard to our creation and salvation then He would not be God. The True God freely offers intimate relationship within His very life to us, without any constraint. God is self-sufficient, He has no need of our praise, or us. Period. He freely bestows existence and offers salvation because He is Goodness itself, He is Love itself: love is diffusive of itself. God is Love. Just as an aside: families are not contracts and humans are not self-sufficient, we need God.

Of course, baptized children have the ability to choose disbelief and avoid or reject their relationship with God just as they can with their parents. But that does not therefore excuse them as creatures from worshipping God. Worship is still due to God whether you're baptized or not is a reality and a demand of justice that cannot be avoided. Actually, baptism enables one to participate in the perfect praise and worship Jesus offers. Whose worship of God would be deserving of God and fulfill justice: Jesus' (who is God) or man's (who is a creature).

Sadly, the woman in the article and others like her seem to demonstrate an attitude that is ignorant of the reality of grace, sacramental realism, God, human freedom, human flourishing, and the New Covenant that Jesus established. But perhaps this can be a wakeup call for us to look at these topics and come to, by the grace of God, a re-appreciation of these incredible gifts that God has poured into our hearts. Let us earnestly pray for the grace to appreciate what God gave to us at baptism. You are participants in the divine nature, let that point alone sink in. Also, pray that the gifts which have been poured into your hearts may flourish and grow. Pray for people such as the one mentioned in the article that they come to know God's love for them.

Your servant in Christ,
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