

REFLECTING ON OUR BAPTISM

As we just celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, I am inviting each one of us to reflect on our own baptism and what baptism means for our Christian Life. Most people do not remember the date of their baptism. Many do not know the place of their baptism (city and name of church). Others cannot recall the names of their godparents. We all know our own birthday (and birthplace) and most people celebrate them every year. Does that mean that "baptism" is less important than natural "birth"? Do we understand the teaching of the Catholic Church that "BAPTISM IS BIRTH INTO THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST"? (CCC # 1277).

St. Paul eloquently explains the importance of baptism: "*Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life*". Do we believe that we are baptized in Jesus Christ, that we die (all our sins, including original sin) with him in the waters of baptism and that we emerge as a NEW PERSON out of the waters of baptism?

Let us go back to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), which expands on the central fact that IN BAPTISM WE ARE BORN INTO A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST..., WE ARE BORN AGAIN! "Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the GATEWAY to LIFE IN THE SPIRIT, and the DOOR which gives access to the OTHER SACRAMENTS. Through baptism we are freed from sin and REBORN AS SONS OF GOD; we are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission (CCC # 1213). Baptism is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism (CCC# 1277)". Maybe we do not focus our attention on baptism as most of us were baptized as infants. However, most of us have received the Sacrament of Confirmation at a much later age and we are told, "Confirmation gives us more of the graces, more of the Holy Spirit already received at baptism".

I like IMAGES. Images open our imagination. Thanks to the generosity of the Levasseur family (in memory of their deceased parents, long-time parishioners at OLHOC), we do have since last year a "BEAUTIFUL IMAGE of the HOLY SPIRIT" "in our own church.

When you leave the church, before entering into the Narthex LOOK UP! You will see a stained glass window similar to one at St Peter's Church in Rome representing the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. It has been placed above our baptistry, as a reminder of Jesus' own baptism in the Jordan: "*After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the HEAVENS WERE OPENED FOR HIM and he saw THE SPIRIT OF GOD DESCENDING LIKE A DOVE...and a voice came from the heavens, saying THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, with whom I am well pleased.*" (Matthew 3:16-17).

This week, when you look up to the stained glass window of the HOLY SPIRIT, remember that your own baptism is similar to that of Jesus. At baptism, all of us too became BELOVED SONS AND DAUGHTERS of GOD, and the Holy Spirit also descended upon us, and since then He has never left us, He is always within us, at the inner core of our being. We may not feel HIS presence, but we should keep asking for His help. He is a constant reminder that GOD LOVES EACH OF US!

It is always a great joy for me to baptize children (throughout the year) and adults (at Paschal Vigil). We are blessed at OLHOC to have over 70 to 80 baptisms a year. Every baptism appears different. However, the same Holy Spirit is at work. Every baby/child or adult at baptism is transformed into a new life by the same Holy Spirit, becomes a full member of the same Church (Body of Christ) and can be truly called "beloved son or daughter of the same Father in Heaven".

At most baptisms, I am asking parents to keep celebrating the baptism of their children by lighting their baptism candle every year on the anniversary date ...If you have not done so, it is not too late to begin this tradition with your children. They may not have kept their baptism candles. Buy one for them and have it blessed on Sunday February 2nd (the Presentation of the Lord in the temple) when we will have the traditional blessing of candles (Candlemas).

Come Holy Spirit! Fill our hearts with Your Love! Guide all our steps and decisions!

One in Christ,
Father Alain