



## Sacraments 4/35: The Sacrament of Baptism

In this discussion of Baptism, we can introduce a repeating theme in all of the Sacraments: “Grace Builds on Nature.” It does not replace it. Each sacramental action has a natural meaning. The grace of the Sacrament keeps this meaning and builds on it to make it supernatural.

Natural Meaning of Baptism: The natural use of water and washing cleanses us from dirt. By washing, we are made clean.

Supernatural Meaning of Baptism: The grace of Baptism takes this natural meaning of washing and raises it to the supernatural meaning of washing us free from sin. In the Sacrament of Baptism, we are washed from Original Sin.

Why do we baptize? Baptism marks our incorporation into the Body of Christ. It is our entrance and membership in the Church. We are not actual members, nor really “Christians,” until we have been baptized.

### Scriptural sources of Baptism:

- \* John the Baptist began his ministry with “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:4)
- \* In Gospel of Matthew, part of Jesus’ final instructions to His disciples was to: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (28:18-20).

A point of theology on Jesus’ own Baptism (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22): If Baptism incorporates us into the Body of Christ, what did Jesus’ Baptism do for Him? Did Jesus need Baptism? Most theologians believe that Jesus’ Baptism did not make Him holy, it made water holy for the rest of us.

As Baptism is the first Sacrament to be received, it is our incorporation into the wholeness of the Body of Christ, into the wholeness of Jesus. This means we are incorporated not only into His life, but also His death. An alternate natural meaning of water has to do with drowning. The supernatural meaning through Baptism is that we now die with Christ, so that we can be raised with Him:

“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. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin. For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” (Rom 6:3-8)

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Tri-Partite of Baptism