

Baptism: Special Topics

Right-Hand Thief

Christ did not institute the Sacrament of Baptism until after His Resurrection!

The Right-Hand Thief is a special case - and he is not the only one! But if we generalized and said "no one will enter Heaven without physical baptism" - what of all the prophets and righteous men who lived before the death of the Lord Christ? What of St John the Baptist?

The Thief did not have a chance to be baptized because of his imminent death. Had he survived the Cross, he would have been baptized just like every other Christian mentioned in the Scripture! An exception cannot be taken and made into a general rule!

What about martyrs? Many saints were martyred without baptism (i.e. they experienced the witness of the martyrs and decided in the moment to give their lives to Christ). For example, the martyr Matthew with the 21 Coptic Martyrs of Libya. Such a martyr is baptized in his blood shed.

Infant Baptism

We believe that all (with the exception of Christ, Himself) are born carrying the original sin. And we are concerned for their eternal life. So how can we deprive children from being baptized, and thus expose them to God's judgment?

1. The words "He who believes and is baptized" are meant for adults who are capable of understanding the significance of faith. Thus, we do not baptize capable adults except after they profess their faith. But for children, we apply: "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14)
2. The Scripture talks of baptisms of households:
 - Cornelius the Centurion (Acts 10)
 - Philippian Jailer (Acts 16)
 - Lydia (Acts 16)
 - Stephanas (1 Cor 1:16)
 - On the day of Pentecost, 3000 were baptized! It's unreasonable to believe that children were excluded - "for the promise is to you and your children" (Acts 2:39)
3. Circumcision, which is fulfilled by baptism, was done on the 8th day. (Colossians 2:11-12)
4. Children being saved on the belief (and action) of their parents is not new:
 - Circumcision, a type of baptism, fulfilled by baptism, gave one membership into God's chosen people, and participation in God's covenant with Abraham. Circumcision was done on the 8th day after birth, according to God's command

- The Passover, a type of the Cross and Eucharist, children were saved through the blood of the Passover Lamb on the faith and action of their parents.
 - The Crossing of the Red Sea included parents carrying their children - "All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2)
 - Even in the modern era, parents decide to vaccinate their child, because they are concerned for their health and want them to be safe.
5. Through baptism, a child is given an opportunity to grow up as a member of the Body of Christ, to enjoy Her divine sacraments, to experience the work of grace, and its effectiveness in his/her life.
 6. In Church History, infant baptisms were always done; in fact, there was a 5th Century heresy (Pelagianism) that taught that there was no Original Sin, and that infants are born blameless and thus need not be baptized. The Church condemned this belief at the 418 Council of Carthage, and 431 Ecumenical Council of Ephesus.

“Have you an infant child? Do not let sin get any opportunity, but let him be sanctified from his childhood; from his very tenderest age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the Seal on account of the weakness of nature? O what a small-souled mother, and of how little faith! Why, Anna even before Samuel was born promised him to God, and after his birth consecrated him at once, and brought him up in the priestly habit, not fearing anything in human nature, but trusting in God. You have no need of amulets or incantations, with which the Devil also comes in, stealing worship from God for himself in the minds of vainer men. Give your child the Trinity, that great and noble Guard.

Be it so, some will say, in the case of those who ask for Baptism; what have you to say about those who are still children and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them too? Certainly, if any danger presses. For it is better that they should be unconsciously sanctified than that they should depart unsealed and uninitiated.

A proof of this is found in the Circumcision on the eighth day, which was a sort of typical seal, and was conferred on children before they had the use of reason. And so is the anointing of the doorposts, which preserved the firstborn, though applied to things which had no consciousness. But in respect of others I give my advice to wait till the end of the third year, or a little more or less, when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the Sacrament; that, even though they do not perfectly understand it, yet at any rate they may know the outlines; and then to sanctify them in soul and body with the great sacrament of our consecration. For this is how the matter stands; at that time they begin to be responsible for their lives, when reason is matured, and they learn the mystery of life (for of sins of ignorance owing to their tender years they have no account to give), and it is far more profitable on all accounts to be fortified by the Font,

because of the sudden assaults of danger that befall us, stronger than our helpers.

But, one says, Christ was thirty years old when He was baptized, and that although He was God; and do you bid us hurry our Baptism? - You have solved the difficulty when you say He was God. For He was absolute cleansing; He had no need of cleansing; but it was for you that He was purified, just as it was for you that, though He had not flesh, yet He is clothed with flesh. Nor was there any danger to Him from putting off Baptism, for He had the ordering of His own Passion as of His own Birth. But in your case the danger is to no small interests, if you were to depart after a birth to corruption alone, and without being clothed with incorruption. And there is this further point for me to consider, that that particular time of baptism was a necessity for Him, but your case is not the same. He manifested Himself in the thirtieth year after His birth and not before: first, in order that He might not appear ostentatious, which is a condition belonging to vulgar minds; and next, because that age tests virtue thoroughly, and is the right time to teach. And since it was needful for Him to undergo the passion which saves the world, it was needful also that all things which belong to the passion should fit into the passion; the Manifestation, the Baptism, the Witness from Heaven, the Proclamation, the concourse of the multitude, the Miracles; and that they should be as it were one body, not torn asunder, nor broken apart by intervals." (St Gregory Nazianzen - Oration 40.17, 28-29)

One Baptism

One of the councils had a thing about who to rebaptize (based on whether or not the faith in the Trinity was intact)

Immersion or Sprinkling

The word "baptism" literally means "immersion"

"Buried" with Christ is only accomplished through complete immersion

The Church has always baptized with complete immersion

Both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water**, and he baptized him. Now when they **came out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away" (Acts 8:38-39)

Baptism is called many times "washing" (Titus 3:5, Acts 22:16, 1 Peter 3:18-21, Ephesians 5:26) - to wash a piece of cloth you need to completely immerse it in water!

For Pastoral Needs, the Church allows baptism by sprinkling (e.g. someone in a wheelchair, newborn in an incubator)

40 and 80 Days

If the one to be baptized is a newborn, the family waits 40 (boy) or 80 Days (girl) to baptize. The Church can baptize any newborn boy or girl at any day without waiting 40 or 80 days. This period is required period before the mother can participate in her child's baptism.

- Leviticus 12
 - Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of *her* purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. ‘But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of *her* purification sixty-six days. ‘When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then he shall offer it before the Lord, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This *is* the law for her who has borne a male or a female. ‘And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.’”
- St Mary fulfilled this commandment (Luke 2:22-24)
 - Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”
- The doubling of the period for a female child reminds us of the fact that the woman was the first to be deceived and fall
 - "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." (1 Timothy 2:14-15)
- Why does this Old Testament rule still apply?
 - <https://notes.morcous.com/books/leviticus/page/leviticus-15-the-law-concerning-bodily-discharges>