

Day 137 - Sunday, August 2

Two things to pray for:

I received word yesterday that Fr. Roger Lavoie suffered a stroke. Please pray for his recovery.

I will be on holidays all week and will not be sending out an email until late Saturday. Please pray for me while I am gone.

Baptism as future-oriented

It has already been said that Baptism is initiation into the mission and ministry of Christ (1 Peter 2). Like Christ, baptismal candidates are anointed for this purpose. They are anointed with the oil of catechumens and the chrism of Christ's salvation. As such they are strengthened for the lifetime journey of commitment to discipleship with Christ. To be a disciple is to be a learner, a journeyer with others who learn together along the way. Discipleship is built on the concept of Church as a community of followers who support one another in sharing the Spirit and mission of Christ as found in the New Testament. It suggests that life is not a static condition, but a continual movement toward making real the actions of Jesus in [today](#)'s world. That's what we agree to when we say "Yes" to Baptism. We publicly acknowledge that we have been chosen, marked and set on our way. Most of the real business of Baptism comes after the ceremony.

Baptism and babies

All of this is pretty heady stuff, especially when considered in light of baptizing babies. The largest percentage of Baptisms in our Church are still infant Baptisms, even though the process of faith and conversion is essentially an adult experience and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is now the norm in the Catholic Church. So what does all of this mean for those infants?

Obviously, infants cannot respond immediately to the call/response aspect of the sacrament. Nor can an infant understand the change of allegiance, the putting off of the old and putting on of the new, the dying and rising, the new life, or the sharing in the life of Christ. However, the parents of those infants can understand and live those values and pass them on to their children. They can also experience the support of the community in living those ideals, and that is extremely important. Infant Baptism only makes sense if parents are true Christian disciples. If they are not, then it makes little sense to initiate their children into a Church which calls for a commitment to living the mission of Christ.

The Rite of Baptism for Children emphasizes the importance of faithfulness on the part of parents when it says to parents: In asking to have your children baptized, "you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith." That word practice is crucial; it calls for Christian modeling on the part of parents. Considering the future orientation of Baptism and the fact that we are marked for a lifelong journey of discipleship, it is important that parents be strong role models and lead the way. It is equally important that the children's sponsors (godparents) do the same. They are significant supporters of parents and the ones who can first begin to reveal to their godchildren the value of the Christian community.

Children learn to be Christian by osmosis, by experiencing Christianity at home. The "domestic church" prepares children for the local and world Church. It is in the home, in the domestic church, that children first learn basic trust which is the foundation of faith. Without the experience of faith, hope and commitment in the home, children will not be able to know and understand the larger Church.

Vatican II's Declaration on Christian Education points this out quite emphatically: "Since parents have given children life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied when it is lacking. . . . It is particularly in the Christian family. . . . that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship him and to love their neighbor."

In the light of eternity, we're here for a very short time, really. We're here for one thing, ultimately: to learn how to love, because God is love. - James Finley

Sincerely,
Fr. Jim Kaptein