

Baptism Bible Study I (Baptismal Regeneration)

Let's begin this Bible study with a word of prayer.

Come, Holy Spirit Prayer (The Veni, Sancte Spiritus)

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful;
And enkindle in them the fire of Your love.
Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.

LET US PRAY . . .

O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant by the gift of the same Spirit we may always be truly wise
and ever rejoice in His consolation, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

In this examination that we are about to undertake, we will study the subject of
Christian Baptism.

Getting Our Starting Point Concerning Christian Baptism

Baptism is God's promise or oath (the Latin word for "oath" is "sacramentum") or
Sacrament, instituted by Christ.

Baptism is when we utilize a "water-washing" for the recipient, while simultaneously
invoking God in a special way with special prayers, resulting in initiation into God in a
special and profound way. In Baptism the Holy Spirit comes down "from above" (from
Heaven) and incorporates us into the life of God and unites us to and in Him in a special
way, a way that is beyond our understanding.

A Priest commonly performs this Baptism, but if no Priest is available, anyone may
Baptize another person under the proper conditions. Baptism into the family of God, is
a gift from God, and in the ordinary sense (we'll explain that later), Baptism is necessary
for a Heavenly destiny.

We will go into some in-depth catechesis later in the study concerning Baptism

Some Basic Housekeeping (Keep in mind . . .)

As we study the Sacrament of Baptism keep in mind our resources will include the Catechism of the Catholic Church (abbreviated in this study as CCC), the Bible (Revised Standard Version [RSV], unless otherwise mentioned), and the Roman Catechism (RC) which is also called “The Catechism of the Council of Trent.”

Since the RC has no paragraph numbering system, I may also include the TAN Edition page # since the TAN publication is the only edition currently in English print that I am aware of.

Jesus is Lord of all including being the Lord of history. We will therefore draw upon the wisdom of the Early Church Fathers¹ and other Patristic² sources for more insight into the gift of Baptism.

Any underlining, **bold highlighting**, or ALL CAPITALS, of any of these documents will be mine unless otherwise stated.

Some knowledge of “Original Sin” will be assumed for this study, but we will touch on it briefly as well.

We will touch on various “Biblical objections” against the Church’s practice of Baptism throughout the study, and see that these objections don’t stand up to careful Scriptural scrutiny.

We will also present pertinent historical data. After all, if the Lord Jesus is the Lord of History (and He is), than history ought to reflect that. And we will see history DOES reflect that.

1 Early Church Fathers—Who are the “Early Church Fathers”? The Early Church Fathers are classically considered those men who during their lives combined these four marks:

- (1) orthodoxy in doctrine
- (2) holiness in life
- (3) Church approval (not necessarily perfection in doctrinal writings though)
- (4) antiquity

Today, this title of “Church Fathers” has been bestowed on other writers who fulfilled only some of these marks (e.g., Tertullian, Eusebius of Caesarea, Origen). These people are included because of the value of their historical writings in the early Church. The usual mark of antiquity ends with St. John Damascene (A.D. 750) in the East and with St. Gregory the Great (A.D. 604) in the West.

2 The “Pater” root in “Patristic” is just the Latin root for “Father”. “Patristic” usually just means pertaining to the “Fathers” or “Early Church Fathers” or “ECFs” as some abbreviate. So when people say they are about to reference or cite “Patristic sources” they just mean they are about to quote one (or more) of the Early Church Fathers or historical data from the ECF time period.

Some Basic Catechesis Concerning Christian Baptism

- Baptism is a true Sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ.
- Your one Baptism brings you into Christ. It also brings you into the mystical body of Christ—the Church—the Family of God. It also brings you into the New Covenant.
- Baptism is required for salvation! People after Christ's resurrection (RC section on Baptism p. 171 TAN Ed.) are required to be Baptized!
- God can give an individual Baptism in a mystical way (i.e. a Baptism of "Desire" and Baptism in martyrdom also called "Baptism of Blood"). See the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) sections 1257-1261, 1280 for details of "Baptism of desire" and "Baptism of blood."
- Baptism has been referred to as "the entrance ramp" to the Christian life. The Catechism (CCC 1213) calls "Baptism". . . "the **gateway** to life in the Spirit" . . .
- Baptism brings the Holy Spirit down upon you to dwell within you in a special way and thus make your body a "Holy Temple in which the Holy Spirit now dwells"!
- When a person is baptizing another person "true and natural water must be used" in addition to the proper prayer invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The invocation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit **MUST** be utilized in the baptismal prayers.
- Although anyone can baptize someone else, the Church prefers a Priestly baptism, as special prayers of exorcism are recited just before the Baptism to prepare the recipient for their upcoming imminent baptism.
- You cannot Baptize yourself.
- The washing in Baptism may occur by (any of these methods are acceptable):
 1. Total immersion or dipping (Also called by the Church, "immersio").
 2. Pouring on ("infusio").
 3. Sprinkling ("aspersio") (See RC section on Baptism p.169 TAN Ed.).
- In the case of **infants**, baptism does away with original sin.

- In the case of **adults**, baptism does away with original sin, prior sins, and the punishment or account or expiation you had coming for your sins (it's a totally fresh start, but you can only have it once).
- Baptism confers a permanent or **indelible change** in the recipient's **soul**. We therefore do not “re-baptize”.
- “Re-baptizing” someone is considered a sacrilege, (extreme irreverence toward God). It is an act that in and of itself denies the Sacramental aspects of Baptism or if the Sacramentality of Baptism is affirmed it would then be like saying the Holy Spirit couldn't get it right the first time. There is **ONE Baptism!** That’s why we say in the Creed: “We believe in ONE Baptism for the forgiveness of sins . . .”

EPHESIANS 4:4-6 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, 5 one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, 6 one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.

- For an individual unsure of their prior baptismal status, a “*conditional baptism*” may be performed. When we pray during the conditional baptism, we recognize that this act is only being carried out to the fullness if this individual has not been baptized before!
- Jesus is the Priest behind the Priest doing the baptizing. These graces ultimately come from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and ascension. This is the work of Christ! The CCC talks about how in Christ’s Baptism Jesus sanctified the water. CCC 1225 even talks about the water that flowed from Jesus’ side at His crucifixion being symbolic of Baptism.

Baptism Is Not . . .

- Baptism will not result in salvation if an adult is later knowingly in an unrepentant state of serious sin.
- Baptism does not detract from Christ’s work! Baptism IS the work of Christ!
- Baptism is not reducible to “a sinners prayer” or belief alone.

- Baptism doesn't guarantee we will live out a life of holiness by God's grace and go to Heaven. We are still free to reject those graces which have very sad consequences for that person who rebuffs these gifts.
- Baptism is not an optional item if you are a Bible believing Christian.

Invariably These Questions Come Up During Baptism Discussions Of Any Depth

"Why do Catholics and yes most Protestants the world over Baptize infants?" We will discuss that in detail in our Baptism II study and see why Christians, for 2000 years, have Baptized their infants and only now over the last 400-500 years have some Protestant Christian people been talked into denying their own children these gifts! We will also look at the reasons they give as to "why" they invented this tradition.

"Why is a 'sprinkling' or 'pouring' Baptism, just as licit or appropriate as an 'immersion' Baptism?" We will discuss that in detail in our Baptism III study and see why Christians for 2000 years have always affirmed this and why only recently, some people have been denying these ways to Baptize (and the explanations they give as to "why" they devised this tradition).

"Why do Mormons collect extensive detailed genealogies and use lists of the deceased to 'Baptize' dead people by proxy?" We will look at this tradition in our Baptism III study and the reasons they would give and why they do this. We will see this tradition invented and carried out only over the last 100-150 years and why it is wrong.

"What about novel ways to Baptize—Is this O.K.?" "Why Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit when the Bible sometimes just talks about being Baptized into Jesus' name in some spots but in other spots being Baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?" Can we Baptize with 'wine' instead of 'water'?" We will discuss these and other issues in our Baptism III study.

Some Basic Catechesis On Original Sin

Just before the segment of the CCC section on Original Sin the heading in the CCC reads "Original sin - an essential truth of the faith" so you know it is important. As the CCC says (below in CCC 389) "The Church, which has the mind of Christ, knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ."

So we are not going to get a complete definition of original sin because it is a mystery. With a mystery we can't know all things about that given mystery, but we can know some things, things that are revealed by God. CCC 404 which is an extremely important paragraph in the CCC reaffirms this "mystery" aspect of original sin.

CCC 404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".²⁹³ By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. **Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand.** But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state*.²⁹⁴ It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.

The doctrine of Original Sin has ramifications reaching far beyond the subject of Baptism.

We will only be able to touch upon this concept of Original Sin here in this study on Baptism.

Just What Is Original Sin?

You know the story of Adam and Eve and "the fall". Let's review some basic catechesis concerning Original Sin to get some deeper insights.

Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature (CCC 404). In other words the state of original holiness and justice were part of Adam's (and Eve's) very nature!

CCC 389 The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the "reverse side" of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ,²⁶³ knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ.

CCC 397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin

consisted of.²⁷⁸ All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

CCC 398a In that sin man *preferred* himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. . . .

CCC 399 Scripture portrays the tragic consequences of this first disobedience. Adam and Eve immediately lose the grace of original holiness.²⁸⁰ They become afraid of the God of whom they have conceived a distorted image - that of a God jealous of his prerogatives.²⁸¹

CCC 400a The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed . . .

Question: **If** Adam and Eve **never sinned**, would their offspring have had the nature of original holiness and justice or the nature of original sin?

Answer: Their offspring would have had original holiness and justice.

CCC 404b “But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature”. . . .

Let’s look at the classic Bible verse that has to do with original sin—Romans 5:17 and following

ROMANS 5:17-19 17 If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. 18 **Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.** 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.

So What Are The Consequences Of Original Sin?

When Adam and Eve sinned, that was an actual sin committed for themselves. This is very self-evident.

But do their offspring **commit** this sin? No.

When Adam and Eve have offspring, their children don't partake of forbidden fruit in the Garden. Yet something is not altogether right with their offspring—with humanity. Why?

When a being has offspring the best it can give its offspring is **its own nature**. This is obvious to human experience.

Fish, when having offspring give rise to little fish (their own nature).

Birds, when having offspring give rise to little birds (their own nature).

Dogs, when having offspring give rise to little dogs (their own nature).

Question: So what does all of this have to do with original sin?

Answer: With the fall, the very nature of mankind changed! Mankind now had a "fallen nature".

So even though Adam and Eve's offspring don't eat forbidden fruit in and of themselves, Adam transmits NOT his nature of original holiness and justice—no—because that aspect of his nature was now gone!

Adam (and Eve but for now on I'll usually just say "Adam") transmits a nature that is MISSING this "original holiness and justice". This "privation" or sometimes called "deprivation" or "LACK" of "original holiness and justice" along with man's now fallen nature is called "original sin".

So this was Adam's nature—fallen—and the best he could do was transmit his nature to his offspring.

Let's look at CCC 404 again with a little different emphasis this time.

CCC 404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man".²⁹³ By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but **this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state**.²⁹⁴ **It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind**, that is, by the **transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice**. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: **it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act**.

(In CCC 404 bold and underline mine, italics original)

Remember original sin changed Adam's very nature. He now had a "fallen nature". This is why St. Paul refers to Adam as "a man of dust". Fallen man's nature is not totally corrupt but is injured (see CCC 406).

So now Adam transmits a human nature to his offspring that LACKS original holiness and justice. It is a "privation" or a "deprivation" of this original holiness and justice that Adam passes on to us. And we are not appropriately equipped for Heaven in this fallen state. Mankind if left like this, could NOT get to Heaven.

Let's review some catechesis from the Catechism of Pope (now Saint) Pius X on original sin . . .

41 Q. Is this sin proper to Adam alone?

A. This sin is not Adam's sin alone, **but it is also our sin, though in a different sense**. It is Adam's sin because he committed it by an act of his will, and hence in him it was a personal sin. It is our sin also because Adam, having committed it in his capacity as the head and source of the human race, it was transmitted by natural generation to all his descendants: and hence in us it is original sin.

42 Q. How is it possible for original sin to be transmitted to all men?

A. Original sin is transmitted to all men because God, having conferred sanctifying grace and other supernatural gifts on the human race in Adam, on the condition that Adam should not disobey Him; and Adam having disobeyed, as head and father of the human race, rendered human nature rebellious against God. And hence, human nature is transmitted to all the descendants of Adam in a state of rebellion against God, and deprived of divine grace and other gifts.

43 Q. Do all men contract original sin?

A. Yes, all men contract original sin, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin, who was preserved from it by a singular privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior.

44 Q. Could not men be saved after Adam's sin?

A. After Adam's sin men could not be saved, if God had not shown mercy towards them.

45 Q. What was the mercy shown by God to the human race?

A. The mercy shown by God to the human race was that of immediately promising Adam a divine Redeemer or Messiah, and of sending this Messiah in His own good time to free men from the slavery of sin and of the devil.

The Roman Catechism echoes the language of Q. 45.

ROMAN CATECHISM (FROM ARTICLE II) The human race, having fallen from its elevated dignity, **no power of men or Angels could raise it from its fallen condition and replace it in its primitive state.** To remedy the evil and repair the loss it became **necessary** that **the Son of God, whose power is infinite**, clothed in the weakness of our flesh, should remove the infinite weight of sin and reconcile us to God in His blood.

Let's look at the Scriptural aspect of Q 45 above—the promise of the divine Redeemer and His gifts. This is in Genesis just after Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. We will see blessings and curses result from this upheaval.

Now let's look at the Covenant blessings and curses. First the relevant verses . . .

GENESIS 3:14-19 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. **15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**" 16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." 17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. **19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread** till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; **you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**" 20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Now let's look at the actual blessings and curses . . .

Blessings

- Enmity (literally "enmities") or total opposition between the serpent and "the woman" (Genesis 3:15). So we have effective opposition to the serpent – the woman (a prophetic utterance concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary).
- Enmity or total opposition between the serpent and "the seed" of the woman (also Genesis 3:15). So we have even more effective opposition to the serpent –

“the seed of the woman” (a prophetic utterance concerning the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary—Jesus).

- You shall still have the blessing of being able to bring forth children (but now at a price—a temporal punishment—Genesis 3:16).
- You shall still eat—a blessing—eat bread till you return to the ground (The good news is you get to eat. The bad news is this comes with a laboring—Genesis 3:17-19). There is probably a natural element (i.e. tending wheat fields, etc.) to this AND a supernatural element. This laboring for bread in a supernatural sense is possibly a prophetic statement telling us we will need to “labor” for the food that endures to eternal life (John 6:27, etc. which we will see below contains the context of “bread” with “laboring”).
- The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20). Notice her offspring is described as “living” so some sort of reconciliation is implied here. It also suggests possibly that she eventually made it to Heaven. Sirach 49:16 implies Adam eventually was saved as well (but these two points are beyond the scope of this study so we will not expound on them).

And we will put John 6:27 here for your personal reference.

JOHN 6:27, 51, 54 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but **for the food which endures to eternal life**, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." . . . 51 **I am the living bread** which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." . . . 54 he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Curses

- To the serpent: God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.
- To the woman he said, "I will **greatly multiply your pain in childbearing**; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."
- And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' **cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you**; and you shall eat the

plants of the field. **In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground**, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

- And we will see banishment from the Garden as well.
- Adam now has a body that turns to "dust" ("you are dust, and to dust you shall return" - Gen. 3:19 and Ash Wednesday Catholic Liturgy). This body decomposes or rots due to sin. We inherit this type of body.

An Inclination Toward Evil—Concupiscence

This fallen nature that mankind inherits from Adam fights against reason. This nature that fights against reason is called "concupiscence" (pronounced "con-qu-piss-ence"). "Concupisco" is the Latin root word for "desire eagerly"³

3 p. 45 Cassell's Latin English Dictionary, Copyright. 1963.

Catholics teach that concupiscence itself is not sinful. Temptations are not sinful either. But some Protestants see the concupiscence that we have from the fall as itself being sinful—this is an error. Concupiscence can lead and often does lead to sin, but concupiscence itself is not sinful.

Dan Woodring, a former Missouri Synod Lutheran Protestant Minister wrote about how he saw his Lutheran theology defective as it taught that concupiscence itself was sinful. Later he discovered in Scripture that concupiscence **can lead to sin** but was **not sin in and of itself**. This discovery was one of many that helped move him toward and into the Catholic Church. Let's read an excerpt from his writing⁴ . . .

Another issue, related to Justification, that gave me pause was that of baptism and concupiscence. Concupiscence refers to the sinful desire that resides in our nature as a result of hereditary sin. Both Catholics and Lutherans agree that concupiscence remains in our nature after baptism. But for Lutherans, this concupiscence, a corruption of our nature, is in and of itself sin. For Catholics, concupiscence is a defect in our nature that remains after baptism, but it is not sin, although it may lead to sin. James 1:14-15, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own **desire** (vulgate: "**concupiscentia**") Then **desire (concupiscentia) when** it has conceived **gives birth to sin**, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."

4 <http://www.chnetwork.org/Conversionstories/danwoodring.html>

So when Adam and Eve have offspring, they give to their offspring their own fallen nature.

We are not **born** offspring of God. Therefore we need to in a sense be RE-BORN (we'll get to that concept shortly), so we can become offspring of God.

And so Adam who is a man of dust (as Genesis 3 suggests), has offspring (mankind) who likewise bear the image of "the man of dust", these offspring of Adam's have his nature of deprivation of holiness with a fallen flesh that now has this inclination to evil (concupiscence).

CCC 405 Although it is proper to each individual,²⁹⁵ original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. **It is a deprivation of original holiness and justice**, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin - an **inclination to evil that is called concupiscence**". Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back towards God, **but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle**.

We looked at the first sentence in CCC 400 earlier. Now would be a good time to read the whole paragraph.

CCC 400 The harmony in which they had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination.²⁸² Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man.²⁸³ Because of man, creation is now subject "to its bondage to decay".²⁸⁴ Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will "return to the ground",²⁸⁵ for out of it he was taken. *Death makes its entrance into human history.*²⁸⁶

What Is A Human Person Made Up Of?

We know God is pure Spirit (of course the second person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus, permanently took flesh upon Himself at His incarnation).

Christians believe when people are conceived, they are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Original sin injures our nature but doesn't totally destroy it.

We know though we are made of flesh and blood—we can see that. But we as people are NOT just fleshly beings.

We have a soul, a spiritual soul. This soul is somehow intertwined with our flesh, but the soul cannot be reduced to mere material matter.

And although we get our flesh and blood from our parents, we get our soul directly from God!

CCC 33 The *human person*: with his openness to truth and beauty, his sense of moral goodness, his freedom and the voice of his conscience, with his longings for the infinite and for happiness, man questions himself about God's existence. In all this he discerns signs of **his spiritual soul**. The soul, the "seed of eternity we bear in ourselves, irreducible to the merely material",⁹ **can have its origin only in God**.

The human "spiritual soul" is often just referred to as a "soul" (or sometimes "rational soul").

We are not a body PLUS soul! We are a flesh-spiritual soul **composite** by nature.

CCC 365 The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the "form" of the body:²³⁴ i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, **are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature**.

When we are brought into the world, we received our flesh from our parents and our spiritual soul directly from God.

What Happens To A Human Person When They Die?

When we die, the spiritual soul separates from the body as a result of sin (the wages of sin is death—Romans 6:23).

The body returns to dust. The soul is immortal—it lives forever.

I don't want to get into eschatology here but we will just say a few things ("eschatology" is just the study of "the last things").

When we die, the soul and body are separated as a result of sin. As souls we still know what is going on around us—perhaps much better than when we were encumbered by fallen flesh. The soul that separates from the body is immediately judged by God (Particular Judgment) and the soul goes to one of two destinies, Heaven or Hell. Heaven can be direct or indirect (via Purgatory—see Purgatory Bible study for details). These destinies (Heaven or Hell) are permanent.

At the end of time (the final Resurrection), **everyone receives their body back—but an immortal body.** It isn't going to go away or turn to dust this time. Everyone sees everyone else (and themselves) judged (General Judgment) with all the effects of their sin (for example, Adam's effects are still with us) and good works too and their effects. And then they go with this body, to eternal beatitude or some to eternal punishment with their body (Matthew 25:31-46).

CCC 366 The Church teaches that **every spiritual soul is created immediately by God - it is not "produced" by the parents** - and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and **it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.**²³⁵

***We Have A Fallen Nature.
If We Necessarily Contract Original Sin
How Can We Possibly Be Made "Fit For Heaven"?***

Mankind was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26).

What that means to be made in the image and likeness of God is too profound for us to understand this mystery to its depths.

When Adam and Eve sinned the very nature of mankind was changed.

Our nature at this point lacked “original holiness and justice” as well as having a fallen or injured nature.

As stated earlier, original sin injures our nature but doesn’t totally destroy it. We know this because we still possess reason. A damaged reason, but we still have the gift of reason (CCC 36). All people are still made in the image and likeness of God even in our injured state. Even though this image is now damaged it is not destroyed. We are still made in the image and likeness of God (see CCC 325, 299, 343, 2501). Never-the-less restoration is needed after the image of our creator.

CCC 2809b . . . In making man in his image and likeness, God "crowned him with glory and honor," but by sinning, man fell "short of the glory of God."⁶⁹ From that time on, God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his **Creator**.⁷⁰

COLOSSIANS 3:9-10 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that **you have put off the old nature** with its practices 10 **and have put on the new nature**, which is being renewed in knowledge **after the image of its creator**.

Question: So do we want to merely get back to original holiness and justice in this restoration?

Answer: If that’s all God did was get us back to original holiness and justice we should praise Him on that account for all eternity.

But God doesn’t merely get us back to original holiness and justice, God goes much further fulfilling precious and very great promises by putting His own Divine life within us. Not in a new age sense—one where God and us lose our identity—No!

But in some mysterious way, God incorporates us into Himself in a special way. We get incorporated INTO Jesus! St. Peter refers to this as us being “partakers of the Divine nature”!

1st PETER 1:3-4 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, **and become partakers of the divine nature**.

This goes way beyond what Adam and Eve had in the Garden of Eden.

That’s why at the Easter Vigil Mass (during the “Exsultet”), the Liturgy echoes St. Thomas Aquinas in proclaiming Adam’s fall is in a certain sense “happy” for us (because

we are raised way beyond original holiness and justice eventually, whereas in the Garden we had happiness, but merely a kind of natural earthly bliss).

CCC 412 But *why did God not prevent the first man from sinning?* St. Leo the Great responds, "Christ's inexpressible grace gave us blessings better than those the demon's envy had taken away."³⁰⁷ And St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "There is nothing to prevent human nature's being raised up to something greater, even after sin; God permits evil in order to draw forth some greater good. Thus St. Paul says, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'; and the Exsultet sings, 'O happy fault,. . . which gained for us so great a Redeemer!'"³⁰⁸

This spirit isn't bad, (God doesn't create anything bad), but this fallen person lacks the sanctifying grace we need to be sons and daughters of God.

Again this LACK of sanctifying grace again is not a "bad creation" but rather our spirit now has a "void" or "hole" or "lack" or "privation" or "deprivation" (all these terms have been used to describe a soul which is made with a "DEPRIVATION of original holiness") along with a tainted or fallen flesh that we received from our first parents.

We are just not equipped to be down deep in the sea without a deep sea diving suit (submarine, etc.). Likewise, we are just not equipped for a Heavenly destiny in this fallen state when we are born sons and daughters of Adam and Eve (no matter how cute of a baby we might have been).

Since our soul lacks sanctifying grace we need to have our souls changed to a permanent state of holiness. But remember our souls and bodies are so intertwined (composited) that things that effect the soul have some effect on the body too.

This change that results from the beginnings of sanctifying grace is often called "REGENERATION of the soul".

This permanent change or an "indelible" change of the soul occurs when the soul is regenerated.

This regeneration of our soul **begins the process of** . . .

. . . preparing this person for Heaven.

Is The Process Of Getting To Heaven Over With After Regeneration Of The Soul?

St. Paul echoing Genesis 3 refers to Adam as a “man of dust” (Adam’s body turns to dust) and teaches how **WE** have borne that same image of Adam, but in salvation we **shall** bear the image of Jesus (our body turns to dust but will be raised to an imperishable state).

1st CORINTHIANS 15:47-50 47 The first man was from the earth, **a man of dust**; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. 49 **Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.** 50 I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the **imperishable**.

So there is more that will need to be done by Jesus to us after our souls are regenerated because we still possess this fallen flesh and our bodies therefore are still perishable.

That’s WHY St. Paul can say in Philippians 1 that there is “completion” that needs to occur. This happens on the final judgment day—the day of Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 6 And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

And we KNOW by common sense that this process of getting us ready for Heaven isn’t over with once regeneration of our **souls** occurs, because our **bodies** are not yet glorified for one example, but the regeneration is a starting point, a necessary starting point.

We Have To Be Delivered From The Dominion Of Darkness

We were conceived in a sinful state, in a dominion of darkness.

PSALM 51:5 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

And we need to get OUT of this sinful state and brought into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son which is not a mere “place” but a “who” or “whom”. Of course the “whom” is Jesus. We need to be put IN Jesus.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14 He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

So we have redemption IN Jesus. This is the regeneration of our soul—to be placed in-Jesus.

This transfer from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of the beloved takes place when we are “born anew”.

JOHN 3:3 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Being “born again” puts us really and actually IN Christ!

You Must Be Born Again!

This regeneration of our soul does nothing less than put the actual life of God within us (and we in Him)!

We are **born** lacking sanctifying grace. We therefore need to be “**born again**” into this grace.

As we just saw, the term being “born again” comes from the lips of our Lord Jesus in John 3:3 when Jesus says to an inquiring Nicodemus . . .

JOHN 3:3 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

We become a New Creation when we are “Born Again” or “Born Anew”.

1st PETER 1:1a, 2-4 1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ . . . 2 chosen and destined by God the Father and **sanctified by the Spirit** for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!
By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you . . .

By Jesus' great mercy **we can be born anew** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ to an inheritance kept in Heaven for us.

We are "Born Anew" when we are placed "in Christ" and He in us.

We must get "in Christ" and then we will become a new creation.

2nd CORINTHIANS 5:17 17 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

(Hmm. A "**New creation**" huh? Sounds like being "Born again" or "Born anew.")

Yes I realize IF I am in Christ I am a new creation. I also realize that if we are in Christ we are a new creation.

But HOW do we get "Born Again" or "Born Anew?" **HOW** do we get **in-Christ** so we can become a new creation?

That's the question. That's the issue.

OK. So We Must Be "Born Anew". . . .

. . . . But HOW Do We Get "Born Anew"?

We are born anew by being born of water and the Spirit.

Let's look at John 3:1-6 (we will look at this verse in much more detail shortly).

JOHN 3:1-6 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**" 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So we get born anew by faith in Christ (you are not going to follow the commandment to be baptized if you are not moved by faith) accompanied by Baptism.

In the case of babies, their parents have God-given authority to use their faith on behalf of their children. We will deal with infant Baptism in the Baptism II Bible study—we won't deal with infant Baptism here in any depth.

CCC 782b . . .

. . . . - One becomes a *member* of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit,"²⁰³ that is, **by faith in Christ, and Baptism.**

- This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people."

- "The *status* of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple."

- "Its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us."²⁰⁴ This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁵

CCC 1212 The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the *foundations* of every Christian life. "The sharing in the divine nature given to men through the grace of Christ bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. **The faithful are born anew by Baptism**, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity."³

Baptism has been called "the entrance ramp to the Christian life". The CCC calls it the "**gateway** to life in the Spirit."

CCC 1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the **gateway to life in the Spirit** (*vitae spiritualis ianua*),⁴ and **the door** which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons

of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."⁵

So Baptism is HOW we are "born anew" or "born again"!

Incidentally, sometimes "born anew" in John 3:3, is translated as "born again". Either one is fine.

It is translated as "born again" in the King James Protestant Bible translation and the Catholic Douay Rheims translation this way. I'll put both here just to re-familiarize you as you may have heard them this way in the past.

JOHN 3:3-5 (KJV) 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

JOHN 3:3-5 (DRV) 3 Jesus answered, and said to him: **Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** 4 Nicodemus saith to him: How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born again? 5 **Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

A New Objection To "Baptism" Being "Born Anew"

Have you ever had men knock on your door with a Bible in their hands and when you answered the door be asked by them

. . . . "Have you been born again?"

What do they mean by this?

Well virtually all Christians agree, that to have our soul **regenerated** we need to be "born anew" or "born again."

But recently (the last 400-500 years) in history there is dispute on what being “**born anew**” or “**born again**” constitutes.

Historically being **born again** has always been interpreted by Christians as **baptized**, or as Jesus stated in John 3: 5 “being born of water AND the Spirit” . . .

JOHN 3:5 “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

But only recently in Christian History certain individuals claim “being born again” merely means reciting what they call a “sinners prayer” where the people they are “evangelizing” admit to God they are sinners and “accept Jesus into their hearts as personal Lord and Savior”.

THEN after doing this “sinners prayer” they may get Baptized to SHOW the community they are now saved as they have done their sinners prayer!

But they DON’T BELIEVE THERE IS ANY SAVING GRACE WITH BAPTISM! That’s WHY they are called “Anabaptists” with regards to their theology (ana = “without” —Baptism WITHOUT any saving grace).

So when the nice men dressed in suits come to your door and ask if you’ve been “born again” what they really mean is: “have you ever prayed a “sinner’s prayer”?

If they lead you through a “sinner’s prayer” they will say “you are now born again” and will often give you a little business card size piece of paper with that date written on it because now you are going to Heaven. They will then solicit you to attend their ecclesial communion or “church”.

And they often believe you are going to Heaven now that you said this “sinner’s prayer” NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO (more on this concept and variations of it in the “Eternal Security?”/Once Saved Always Saved Bible study and won’t be addressed here).

If you ever watch some of the Bible TV preachers, sometimes they have other people interrupting them in the middle of their talk and giving them a piece of paper. The preacher will stop, look amazed and read the little piece of paper and say something like: “We just found out 327 more people in Guatemala have been saved!” And then the audience cheers.

What they mean when they say this is that they have gone around in Guatemala and got 327 more people to recite this “sinner’s prayer” and now they are “born again”. I’m serious. And the 327 people are usually Catholics and they are often about to become ex-Catholics.

Another common scenario is the youth campfire preaching. Then calling the youths to come forth to accept Jesus “into your heart as personal Lord and Savior”. Or at an “Evangelist’s Crusade” you will be “called forth” to do the sinners prayer with “prayer leaders”.

All who were old enough recall “Billy Graham crusades” in the 1970’s remember this scenario well being played out on TV if they viewed this.

This “sinner’s prayer” incidentally, is considered more likely to be efficacious if you have an emotional experience along with saying your “sinner’s prayer”.

Well What’s WRONG With Accepting Christ Into Your Heart As Personal Lord And Savior?

First off it’s important to state from the outset that there is nothing wrong with admitting to God we are sinners—we need to do this.

And there is nothing wrong with asking Jesus into our hearts as personal Lord and Savior! Catholics often call this a “spiritual communion”.

The fact that this concept of “accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” is a partial truth and that is one reason why it is so confusing and dangerous to some.

Asking Jesus into your heart taken by itself it is right and we should also repent of our sins daily and ask Jesus to be in us (and we in Him) daily.

O.K. So What’s The Problem?

Asking “Christ into your heart” is NOT what being “born again” is!

We must get this concept of being “born again” correct otherwise practical and theological problems result. Why?

For one thing the *other person* giving you defective theology deserves to know the FULLNESS of truth.

Another thing is *you* deserve to have the fullness of truth—Jesus wants you to have the fullness of the truth as truth sets us free (John 8:32).

Yet another problem is your “coming forth” at a public event may confuse some people as well. They, (especially if they know you) may think “well HE/SHE thinks this is really being ‘born again’ so I guess I should too.” It’s a form of teaching and propagating error in this context by example—wrong example.

An added practical negative consequence is that sometimes these people assuming they never were Baptized in the first place, won’t bother being Baptized at all! Such is the case with the Salvation Army religion (that’s right the Salvation Army is a Protestant denomination/religion), the Quaker religion, and others. “After all, if I’m now saved, what difference does Baptism make in the eternal realm?”

This attitude risks imparting an anti-Sacramental, anti-Physical attitude and keep people from other outward physical signs that actually impart saving grace (other Sacraments such as belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in The Eucharist may be rejected with this mindset).

And even if they ARE Baptized themselves, if they think being “born again” is reducible down to just “accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” and that’s ALL that’s NECESSARY, then they will almost certainly NEGLECT to baptize their babies!

After all; “Since babies cannot accept Jesus into their hearts as “personal Lord and Savior” why bother with Baptism?”

And this compounds the problem even more and leads to other errors such as some ministers teaching that babies don’t need to be “born again” and some even denying original sin!

And yet other ministers teaching babies DO have original sin but it doesn’t matter.

And even others teach the babies that die just plain have to go to Hell.

We will look at the Infant Baptism issues in our Baptism II Bible study.

Lutheran’s usually believe the same things about Baptism as Catholics. I once had a Protestant mom (who was a traditional Lutheran) lamenting to me about her daughter going to a Baptist Bible College, getting married to an Baptist and now REFUSING to have her own baby (the daughter’s baby—the mom’s grandson) Baptized!

This traditional Lutheran mom said she went to her Lutheran pastor and he allegedly couldn’t defend infant Baptism to this woman’s daughter so she asked me for some Catholic materials to give her Lutheran daughter!

An additional practical consequence is that sometimes these people will get themselves “RE-Baptized”. We’ll discuss the sacrilegious aspects of that in our Baptism III study.

There is a “domino effect” from errors associated with this false teaching and these examples above are just some of the practical bad and sometimes dangerous spiritual consequences that occur due to this defective theology or not knowing what being “born again” means.

Being “born again” being equated with merely “asking Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” is a new invention which came even after the Protestant Reformation.

Being “born anew” being equated with “asking Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” is a tradition of men that makes void the commandments of God.

When Did This Invention Begin?

This notion of being “born again” being equated with “asking Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” is NOT historical Christianity!

This concept of “accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” as being “born again” is often wrongly thought of as a “Calvinistic” concept (“**Calvinistic**” named after “John **Calvin**” who was an ex-Catholic Protestant “reformer” that came slightly **after** but overlapped ex-Catholic Priest, Martin Luther in the 1500’s).

According to Reformation Historian, Dr. David Anders, this tradition of men is actually a newer **invention** than even Calvin’s Protestant Reformation era teachings.

Dr. David Anders⁵ (author of the book: *How John Calvin Made Me A Catholic*), a historian who specializes in Protestantism, tells us that the concept of “accepting Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior” is a theological invention that came AFTER John Calvin and other Protestant reformers.

This concept showed up in the 1700’s. He states: “Calvin did not know anything about this idea of praying to receive Christ and being born again (in the context of) and Hey brother have you been born again? He knew nothing of that at all. You don’t find it anywhere in Calvin.”

Anders states this concept came later. As Calvin’s Presbyterian religion spread beyond Switzerland, some of the places it spread to, for example England, Presbyterianism was illegal. The state religion was Anglicanism by this time in England (Henry the VIII and successors effectively outlawing Catholicism). Since these people couldn’t have public services where they had Baptisms within the Presbyterian Church (or any other non-Anglican Church), more and more home-made traditions kept cropping up as “authentic Christianity”. This was one of them.

5 Dr. Anders is a Protestant Reformation Historian with a Masters of Christian Thought degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (in 1995) and obtained his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Iowa (in 2002).

He and his family were welcomed into the Catholic Church in 2003.

The radio show where Dr. Anders was interviewed was from the Catholic Answers radio show, April 1st 2011. It is present in the archives there and you can download the interview with him for free. He also blogs at the website "Called To Communion" (www.calledtocommunion.com).

Of course there is no verse in Scripture that states something such as . . .

. . . "being born again is reciting and meaning a sinners prayer (with or without the emotional experience, as some would insist)."

Yet these people, who assert this tradition, often criticize Christians who affirm the classical historical Christian teaching that being born again is being born of water and Spirit or being Baptized.

These individuals who criticize Christians that believe in baptismal regeneration of the soul are called (you guessed it) "unbiblical."

Reminder! We Do NEED To Have Our Souls Regenerated

As mentioned earlier we NEED to have our souls regenerated.

The reason we NEED to be regenerated is because we are not **by nature** sons and daughters of God in our fallen state. So this regeneration takes place and we get adopted into Jesus. "Grafted into the vine" so to speak.

Again Jesus reminds us we **must** be "born anew" in John 3:3.

JOHN 3:3 3 Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless** one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

How Do We Get Born Again?

How do we become a new creation? How are we "born anew"?
How do we become that new creation and thus get **in-Christ**?

Do we get “born anew” by crawling back into our mother's womb and then coming out again? NO!

JOHN 3:1-4 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him. 3 **Jesus answered him,** Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born anew,** he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 **Nicodemus** said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? **Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?**

First notice that we can't even SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD; much less enter it, unless we are “born anew” or as the KJV says; “born again.” These are the words of Jesus!

We must be “born again”. But crawling back into our mother's womb isn't going to do it.

Nicodemus is thinking on a natural level here, and not a supernatural level. Nicodemus is thinking natural earthly birth.

“Well if re-entering the womb isn't going to get us ‘born again’, please Jesus, tell us WHAT WILL get us ‘born again’?”

Jesus goes on to state unless one is . . . What? Well let’s read on and find out!

JOHN 3:4-5a 4 Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one . . .

Does Jesus say . . . “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one accepts me into his heart as personal Lord and Savior reciting a sinner’s prayer, and that's all, one cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”

Is that what Jesus said? NO!

So what DID Jesus command? Let's read the rest of the verses and find out.

JOHN 3:4-5 4 Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? 5 Jesus answered, **Truly, truly, I say to you,** **unless one is born of water and the Spirit,** **he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

Unless we are born of water and spirit we CANNOT see or enter the kingdom of Heaven!

What is being born of water and the Spirit? Any idea what our Lord Jesus might be referring to here? Baptism!

And Jesus says “Truly Truly” or in the original Greek “Amen Amen” before he stated it. “Amen” is a promise. It’s Jesus’ Promise!

Amen is an oath formula, you can see this for example in Numbers 5 and elsewhere.

The Latin word for “oath” coincidentally enough is . . . “sacramentum” . . . where we get the word Sacrament!

The Whole Context Of John 3 Is Baptism Related

The Anabaptist will bring up John 1:12 and we should too.

JOHN 1:12 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;

They will say “see this is ‘receiving Jesus into your hearts as personal Lord and Savior!’”

But is it? HOW do we “receive Jesus”? That’s the question.

We affirm “believing in His name” is necessary and we saw CCC 782 and CCC 1212 explicitly affirming this.

But because you must “believe” does this mean “accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior” is the grace of being born again and exclude Baptism as the means of this grace? No!

We as Catholics affirm you must “receive Him” . . . but HOW do we “receive Him? That’s the issue here.

So to find out “how” let’s read on. Certainly “believing in His name” is necessary. Anything more?

Let’s go right back to St. John the Evangelist’s Gospel. Immediately in John 1, the Gospel of John hearkens us back to Genesis 1.

JOHN 1:1 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John the Evangelist (who wrote the Gospel of John) hearkens us to Genesis 1 in the context of the Holy Spirit hovering or “moving” over the “water” in the context of “light”.

GENESIS 1:1-3 1 IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and **the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters**. 3 And God said, "**Let there be light**"; and there was **light**.

Then the Gospel of John introduces us to John the Baptist in the context of “light”⁶ and we find out this is “light that enlightens every man” a few verses later (as Jesus sacrifice gives grace to the whole world, but grace in a very special way to the Baptized).

JOHN 1:6-9 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came for testimony, to **bear witness to the light**, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to **bear witness to the light**. 9 The true **light** that **enlightens every man was coming into the world**.

6 For more on Baptizing being the Sacrament of Illumination or “light” see Baptism Bible Study III.

The Pharisees correctly knew Baptizing would be consistent with the appearance of the Messiah. That’s why they ask John the Baptist in John 1:25 “Why are you Baptizing (if you are not the Christ)?”

The Pharisee’s knowledge of this phenomenon is from an Old Testament prophecy that we will look at in our Baptism III study. The Pharisees were obviously correct in asserting the importance of Baptizing in conjunction with the appearance of the Messiah.

JOHN 1:19-20, 24-28 19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." . . . 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 They asked him, "**Then why are you baptizing**, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" 26 John answered them, "I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, 27 even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." 28 This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

We will see in a later segment (Baptism Bible Study III), that St. John the Baptist was giving a “**Baptism of repentance**” for the “forgiveness of sins” which was a necessary

sign but merely a prefigurement or foreshadowing of Christian Baptism which was shortly to come.

This makes sense as John the Baptist himself is Jesus' immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way.

But John the Baptist's Baptisms were NOT Christian Baptism. John the Baptist's baptisms could not remit or forgive sin but WAS a prefigurement of what was to come with Christian Baptism which DOES remit and forgive sin. Jesus and His Apostles would begin Christian Baptism. Jesus gave us all of the seven Sacraments.

St. John Chrysostom (from approx. 400 A.D. excerpted from St. Thomas' Catena Aurea) For while as yet the sacrifice had not been offered, nor remission of sin sent, nor the Spirit had descended on the water, how could sin be forgiven? . . .

CCC 523a *St. John the Baptist* is the Lord's immediate **precursor** or forerunner, sent to **prepare** his way.¹⁹⁶ "Prophet of the Most High", John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last.¹⁹⁷ . . .

CCC 720 Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of "the divine likeness," **prefiguring** what he would achieve with and in Christ. **John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth.**

ACTS 19:1-5, 8 1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "**Into what then were you baptized?**" They said, "**Into John's baptism.**" 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the **baptism of repentance**, telling the people to **believe** in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** . . . 8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about **the kingdom of God;**

Here is that "Kingdom of God" imagery again associated with Baptism just as we saw in John 3:3-5 (there is also an alluding to the Sacrament of Confirmation too in Acts 19 but is beyond the scope of this study to cover it here—see Confirmation Bible study for more details).

JOHN 3:3, 5 3 Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" . . . Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**"

John the Baptist baptized with water, not so the recipients receive the Holy Spirit. This is what happens in Christian Baptism, not John's Baptism.

Well why would John the Baptist bother baptizing then if the world was awaiting Christian Baptism?

John the Baptist carried out Baptisms so Jesus might be revealed to Israel as the Messiah.

JOHN 1:31b . . . but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."

Pope St. Gregory The Great (from approx. 500 A.D. excerpted from St. Thomas' Catena Aurea) John baptizes not with the Spirit but with water, because he had no power to forgive sins; he washes the body with water, but not at the same time the soul with pardon of sin. . . . Why then does **he baptize who could not remit sin, but that he may preserve in all things the office of forerunner?** As his birth had preceded Christ's birth, so his baptism should precede the Lord's baptism.

Well why then did John the Baptist bother baptizing anyone but Jesus? Why didn't he merely Baptize Jesus ONLY? Because it would be confusing for the people. Then the people would be saying John the Baptist's baptism is greater than Jesus' Baptism and that John the Baptist is the Messiah (some thought this anyway—that's why John the Baptist vehemently said in John 1:20: "**He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.'**").

St. Augustine (from approx. 400 A.D. excerpted from St. Thomas' Catena Aurea) Or, he baptizes, because it was fitting Christ to be baptized. But if indeed John was sent only to baptize Christ, why was not He alone baptized by John? Because had the Lord alone been baptized by John, there would not have lacked who should insist that John's baptism was greater than Christ's, inasmuch as Christ alone had the merit to be baptized by it.

More on this concept of the different natures of John the Baptist's baptism compared to Christian Baptism in Baptism Bible study III.

Back to The Fourth Gospel—The Gospel of John.

So when John the Baptist reluctantly ("I need to be baptized by you") Baptized Jesus, what immediately happened that John the Baptist saw and heard?

John saw the Holy Spirit "**descend**" upon Jesus (that means it came "from above"). Remember that. The Holy Spirit **descends** upon Jesus (FROM ABOVE). Why is the descending aspect so significant? We'll get to that in a moment.

So St. John the Baptist (and perhaps even all the people there but we don't know that for sure) saw the Holy Spirit **descend (from above)** and he heard God the Father speak!

And John the Baptist gives testimony calling Jesus "the Lamb of God who **takes away the sins of the world**" and that Jesus will now "Baptize(s) with the Holy Spirit". Remember the aspect of "taking away the sins of the world" too because Baptism we will find out, takes away sins.

JOHN 1:29-35 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 **And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him.** 33 I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, **this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that **this is the Son of God.**" 35 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples; 36 and he looked at Jesus as he walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

The "sin of the world" is "original sin" (see CCC 408).

Saints Matthew and Mark's Gospel alludes to this event as well. Matthew's Gospel states Jesus will Baptize with the Holy Spirit (this is a reference to Christian Baptism) and with "fire" (this "fire" is almost certainly a reference to the book of Acts and Pentecost—Confirmation—see Confirmation Bible study to see more on this).

St. Jerome (from approx. 400 A.D. excerpted from St. Thomas' Catena Aurea)
Either the Holy Ghost Himself is a fire, as we learn from the Acts, when there sat as it were fire on the tongues of the believers; and thus the word of the Lord

was fulfilled who said, I am come to send fire on the earth, I will that it burn (Luke 12:49). Or, we are baptized now with the Spirit, **hereafter with fire**; as the Apostle speaks, Fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.

St. John Chrysostom (from approx. 400 A.D. excerpted from St. Thomas' Catena Aurea) He does not say, shall give you the Holy Ghost, but shall baptize you IN the Holy Ghost, showing in metaphor the abundance of the grace. This further shows, that even under the faith there is need of the will alone for justification, not of labors and toilings; and even as easy a thing as it is to be baptized, even so easy a thing it is to be changed and made better. **By fire he signifies the strength of grace which cannot be overcome**, and that it may be understood that he makes His own people at once like to the great and old prophets, most of the prophetic visions were by fire.

. . . "he (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" . . .

MATTHEW 3:11, 13-17 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; **he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.** . . . 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so **now**; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 **And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; 17 and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."**

MARK 1:9-11 9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, **immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove**; 11 and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased."

CCC 535 Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan.²²⁸ John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins".²²⁹ A crowd of sinners²³⁰ - tax collectors and soldiers, Pharisees and Sadducees, and prostitutes - come to be baptized by him. "Then Jesus appears." The Baptist hesitates, but Jesus insists and receives baptism. Then the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, comes upon Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is my beloved

Son."²³¹ This is the manifestation ("Epiphany") of Jesus as Messiah of Israel and Son of God.

CCC 536b Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened"²³⁷ - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

In John 2 we have the Wedding Feast At Cana. You know the story.

And what happens there? WATER is transformed into new wine.

This new wine here undoubtedly is the best quality in taste, texture, bouquet, color, etc. but more importantly this new wine also symbolizes the New Covenant and Heaven where we partake of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb (described in the Book of Revelation) inaugurated by the New Covenant in Jesus' blood!

CCC 1335b The sign of water turned into wine at Cana already announces the Hour of Jesus' glorification. It makes manifest the fulfillment of the wedding feast in the Father's kingdom, where the faithful will drink the new wine that has become the Blood of Christ.¹⁵⁹

Later in John 2 there is more imagery of the New Covenant with the first Temple cleansing, but the Baptismal connection here is more implicit than and not as explicit as it is earlier in John's Gospel (think of your bodies as a "Temple" of the Holy Spirit and how Baptism cleanses this "Temple" while simultaneously putting the Holy Spirit within you and you within the Holy Spirit).

So Far In John 1 And 2, We've Seen

So in John 1, we've seen water imagery not just from John's Gospel itself but even hearkening back to very beginning of creation with John's Gospel paraphrasing Genesis 1—with the Holy Spirit hovering over the water, but the Holy Spirit never descends at his point in Genesis, but rather just hovers over the water.

Also in John 1 we see water in the context of an announcement or prefiguring type of Baptism—John the Baptist's Baptism of Repentance.

Likewise in John 1 we see a prophecy of a new Baptism—one where WE receive the Holy Spirit.

Additionally in John 1 we now see the Holy Spirit not merely hovering over the water but descending from above upon Jesus' associated with Jesus' Baptism by John. This occurred "immediately" probably even while Jesus is still in the water (but had come up out of the water from His immersion) of the Jordan River assuming Jesus had an immersion type of Baptism.

MARK 1:10 10 And when he came up out of the water, **immediately** he saw **the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove;**

Then in John 2 we see water imagery again. This time the water, in the context of "wedding" imagery becomes wine (it is transformed!).

The context⁷ of John's Gospel that we have reviewed so far concerns: Water imagery, light, the Holy Spirit, Genesis being fulfilled here at the Jordan River concerning water and light, Jesus as the one who will Baptize with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit descending FROM ABOVE, the new wine or the New Covenant in Jesus' blood, getting our original sin removed ("the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"), and possibly signifying here also that our actual sins are removed too with Baptism (perhaps the Temple Cleansing and possibly the "rites of purification" in John 2:6 indicating actual sin removal too).

7 There are many other aspects of John's Gospel chapters 1 and 2 which we are not touching upon due to time. One interesting aspect would be to delve into the Church because when we are Baptized, we are Baptized into Jesus, but we are also Baptized into the Church. For example, in John 1 Jesus meets Simon and says "you ARE Simon, you WILL BE called Cephas (Hebrew or Aramaic word for "Kepha" or "Rock") the prophecy of which eventually will eventually be fulfilled in Matthew 16 (see Bible study on the Pope I) for more details.

John 1 And 2 All Lead Into John 3 . . .

So the background context of John 3 is water, Baptism, and the Holy Spirit, etc.

Now let's begin in John 3 and Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus concerning Baptism.

JOHN 3:1-3a 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named **Nicodemus**, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, . . .

So What Is The Context Of John 3 Concerning Jesus' Discussion With Nicodemus?

We will study Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). We will focus mostly on verses 3 through 5.

JOHN 3:1-5 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**"

Remember the context of "belief" and a certain grace to draw mankind to Himself is necessary for Baptism. We saw that earlier.

Nicodemus just can't believe this teaching that Jesus is giving him here at this time.

History tells us Nicodemus later did believe, move to what is now called England, and helped spread the Gospel there.

Jesus uses His death on the Cross and eventual Ascension to put in Nicodemus' mind His own supernatural quality.

It is like saying when you hear of or see this Ascension, THEN you'll be convinced! Why? Because this is too hard to believe without an act like this for Nicodemus that's why. And of course Jesus provides the grace for this as well because humanity, left to mere natural powers, cannot grasp these mysteries apart from grace. Only Christ can open up such access.

JOHN 3:10-15 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can this be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and **you do not believe**, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 **No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.** 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

CCC 661b . . . Only the one who "came from the Father" can return to the Father: Christ Jesus.⁵³⁸ **"No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man."**⁵³⁹ **Left to its own natural powers humanity does not have access to the "Father's house", to God's life and happiness.**⁵⁴⁰ **Only Christ can open to man such access** that we, his members, might have confidence that we too shall go where he, our Head and our Source, has preceded us.⁵⁴¹

Incidentally, Jesus appealed to the Ascension aspect with the Eucharist too as a future help for some of those who did not believe there too along with the grace that accompanies His work.

JOHN 6:62, 65 62 Then **what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?** . . . 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

We see the same teaching within the Liturgy.

Troparion for the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ "You ascended into glory, O Christ our God, and You delighted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. **Through this blessing, they were assured that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World.**"

Also let's look at what happens immediately **after** Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus.

Why look at immediately "after" Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus?

So we can put the whole discussion with Nicodemus in context.

JOHN 3:22 22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized.

So we see the context of Baptism here.

And we could go on and on. We could go into John 4 where Jesus tells the Samaritan Woman that if she would have asked, Jesus would have given her water that wells up to eternal life! Any idea what THAT water could be? The waters of Baptism!

And in John 5 Jesus heals the man waiting by the "Sheep Pool" where the Angels would come down and stir the water and people would be healed. He couldn't get to the healing waters by himself so Jesus healed him.

And in John 9:7 Jesus heals the blind man with mud, spittle, and orders him to “go wash in the pool of Siloam”—the same pool where the Israelite Levite Priests would wash their sacrificial lambs. And on and on.

So **BEFORE** Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus in John 1 and John 2, we see the context of Baptism, water, the Holy Spirit, the transforming of water, etc. etc.

And right **AFTER** Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus we explicitly see the context of Baptism (John 3:22). Only now, Jesus and His disciples are going out and doing the Baptizing.

So John’s Gospel in John 3:5 contextually explicitly AND implicitly is surrounded by Baptismal imagery. The context is BAPTISM. Now let’s re-read John 3:5 knowing full well the context.

JOHN 3:5 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Why State Something So Obvious?

So right now you may be thinking “Well of course Baptism is the context! WHY state something so obvious as the context of Baptism surrounding Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus?”

Why? Because in discussions concerning John 3:5 you will hear some people say something to the effect of: “Well Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus has **nothing** to do with Baptism. He’s merely talking about accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior”!

So the context of John 3:5 needs to be unpacked first, and then we can study the associated verses.

JOHN 3:1-8 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' 8 The wind

blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit."

What do you think the early Christian Church (the Catholic Church) thought of these verses? Let's look at St. Justin the Martyr writing somewhere in the early 100's A.D.

St. Justin the Martyr "For Christ also said, '**Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**' Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all But if ye refuse (this washing) and rebel, the sword shall devour you: **for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.** And for **this [rite] we have learned from the apostles** this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and **may obtain in the water the remission of sins** formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be **born again**, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; **he who leads to the laver⁸ the person that is to be washed** calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And **this washing is called illumination**, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, **he who is illuminated is washed.**"

- Justin Martyr, First Apology, 61 (A.D. 110-165), in ANF, I:183

8 A "laver" is a large water-containing basin or fount that Old Covenant Jews performed ritual washings with. It was also used by many early Christians for Baptism.

When St. Justin is calling Jesus' work ("he who leads") in Baptism "illumination" he's hearkening back to John 1:9 that we saw earlier.

JOHN 1:9 9 The true **light** that **enlightens every man** was coming into the **world**.

And what did St. Irenaeus in about 190 A.D. think being born of water and Spirit was? Fortunately he tells us.

Saint Irenaeus " 'And dipped himself,' says [the Scripture], 'seven times in Jordan.' It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy,

was purified upon his being baptized, but [it served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, **we are made clean, by means of the sacred water** and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: **‘Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’**”

- Irenaeus, Fragment, 34 (A.D. 190), in ANF, I:574

St. Irenaeus also used Naaman the Syrian’s washing in the River Jordan seven times as prefiguring or foreshadowing Baptism (see Baptism IV study for Old Testament prefigurements or ‘Types’ of Baptism).

St. Hippolytus of Rome tells us the same thing about being born of water and the Spirit in about 240 A.D.! These are ancient teachings passed on directly from the Apostles!

St. Hippolytus of Rome “But give me now your best attention, I pray you, for I wish to go back to **the fountain of life**, and to view the fountain that gushes **with healing**.

The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man **in order to wash him with water and the Spirit**; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the breath (spirit) of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God⁹.

And if he is made God **by water and the Holy Spirit** after **the regeneration of the laver** he is found to be also **joint-heir with Christ** after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect: Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to **the immortality of the baptism.**”

- Hippolytus of Rome, Discourse on the Holy Theophany, 8 (A.D. 217), in ANF,V:237

⁹ St. Hippolytus means joint or coheirs with Christ here, not replacing Christ as God. Just as the CCC 1265 and St. Peter say in 2nd Peter 1:4; “Partakers of the divine nature”. The Church has always taught this.

Baptism makes us a “new creature” and allows us to become “partakers of the Divine nature”.

CCC 1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte “a new creature,” an adopted son of God, who has become a “**partaker of the divine nature**,” member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

2nd PETER 1:3-4 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and **become partakers of the divine nature.**

But does the Church see John 3:3-5 as referring to Baptism? Yes!

CCC 1257 The Lord himself affirms that **Baptism is necessary for salvation.**⁵⁹ He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.

The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude;

this is why she takes **care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are “reborn of water and the Spirit.”**

God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

Footnote #59 in CCC 1257 above cites John 3:5 specifically!

And listen to the language of CCC 1266a.

CCC 1266a The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues . . .

And which ancient Church Father taught that being “born of water and Spirit” was merely “accepting Christ into your heart as personal Lord and Savior”?

None! Nobody at all. There is NO verse that states anything like that. The Anabaptist perhaps wishes the verse to say . . .

??JOHN 3:3, 5?? 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." . . . 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one accepts Me into his heart as personal Lord and Savior, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**"

This verse or anything close to it is NOWHERE to be found in Sacred Scripture. It is a tradition of men that makes void the commandments of God!

And if this **were** authentic Christian teaching, you'd expect the "authentic Christians" to be condemning St. Hippolytus of Rome. You'd expect them to be writing castigating treatises against St. Irenaeus and distancing themselves from St. Justin the Martyr in their writings. But there are NO WRITINGS of this sort. Why? Because the denial of Baptismal regeneration was a novel invention approximately 1500 years after these men.

A Few Objections to John 3:3-5

Objection: "I think the "water" in John 3:5 means the amniotic waters when you are born."

JOHN 3:3-5 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**"

When I first heard this objection I thought the person was cracking a joke. I didn't know anyone actually thought this.

Answer: The problem with this is several-fold.

First, Jesus doesn't call it "amniotic fluid". That has to be invented and added into the text of Scripture.

Second, no early Christian ever held this novel view.

Third, the "amniotic fluid" is where you are born the "**first**" time".

But the birth of "water and the Spirit" in John 3:5 which Jesus alludes to, is being "**born again**".

The "amniotic fluid" invention approximates Nicodemus' thinking on a natural level of being birthed through a birth canal in John 3:4 not Jesus' teachings.

JOHN 3:4 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Fourth, since the Amniotic fluid (so called "water") is present when you're born the FIRST time, then WHY bother using water to baptize anyone?

Why not just say . . . Well you've had the waters of the amniotic fluid when you were born so no need for baptism for you (or anyone else for that matter).

The amniotic fluid invention is so poorly fitting here, that it's kind of an embarrassment to some of the people who bring this up to try to affirm and defend it. And it doesn't come close to what we've seen the ancient Church teach (which is the same as the Catholic Church because they are one in the same).

The new "amniotic fluid" tradition just doesn't work.

Objection: Well I think the "water" merely is a metaphor for "the Spirit".

Answer: Again Jesus doesn't call it that. The early Church never made such a novel testimony of these verses saying "Spirit ALONE" pertains to John 3:3, 5.

There is some metaphorical usage to water being associated with the Holy Spirit perhaps but not in this context. In a sense this "theologically stuttering" theory just doesn't match up with history or the larger context of Scripture as a whole.

It would have Jesus in effect saying in John 3:5: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of the Spirit and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

This doesn't make sense.

That's why in the 300's A.D. the ancient Church Fathers can say things like . . .

St. John Chrysostom "For if **no one can enter into the kingdom of Heaven except he be regenerate through water and the Spirit**, and he who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink His blood is excluded from eternal life, and if **all** these things are accomplished only by means of those holy hands (of the Priest), I mean the hands of the priest, how will any one, without these, be able to escape the fire of hell, or to win those crowns which are reserved for the victorious? These verily are they who are entrusted with the pangs of spiritual travail and **the birth which comes through baptism: by their means we put on Christ**, and are buried with the Son of God, and become members of that blessed Head."

- St. John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 3:5-6 (A.D. 387), in NPNF1, IX:47

Listen to St. Basil the Great in the 300's A.D. as well.

St. Basil the Great **Baptism** is ransom, **forgiveness of debts**, death of sin,

regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal,
a chariot to heaven, a protector royal, a gift of adoption.
- St. Basil the Great, on Baptism, A.D. 330-379

There Is Even More Concerning John 3:3-5!

Back to John Chapter 3. Jesus and Nicodemus are probably discussing this in the language of the Jews of Palestine of that day—Aramaic. Yet when St. John originally wrote his Gospel, evidence suggests he wrote it in Greek.

Keep this in mind and re-read John 3:3, 7 and highlight the word “anew” in your mind as you re-read the passage.

JOHN 3:3, 7 3 Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born **anew**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born **anew**.'

The original Greek word for “anew” or “again” here in John 3:3, 7 is a Greek word called “**anohen**” (“ανωθεν”).

If we were to look at the same passage with the original Greek transliteration we would see this

JOHN 3:3, 7 3 Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born **anohen**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born **anohen**

When we look up the word “anohen” in a Greek lexicon we see it has several meanings. Three of them make sense. “**Anew**” and “**again**” we already looked at. But “anohen” can also mean “**from above**”! Actually this is its primary meaning.

Anohen—Word number 509 in Strong’s Greek Dictionary—from above; by analogy from the first; by implication anew: —from above, again, from the beginning (very first), the top.

From above! That’s interesting. Especially since we saw in John 1 when St. John the Baptist baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended down upon Jesus **from above**!

Recall earlier in the study we mentioned that—and urged that we keep this “from above” concept in the back of our mind for future reference.

So now let's look at what the verses would look like if "from above" were placed in there.

Here is what JOHN 3:3, 7 with the phrase "from above" substituted for "anew" would look like: 3 Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born ***from above***, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born ***from above***

So "another" can mean "anew" or "again". That's why Nicodemus would ask Jesus a question like "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born"?

But St. John is giving us even more insight into the discussion with the original Greek language using a word that has a double meaning.

So should we think of "another" as
"anew" or as
"from above"?

BOTH.

But is this "Catholic" to think of "another" as "anew" AND "from above"?

Yes! This is consistent with the "mind of the Church".

That's WHY the Church uses "again" at times when discussing this passage but the Church uses the phrase "FROM ABOVE" with regards to discussing this passage as well!

Let's look at a couple of examples of where the Church uses "from above" in regards to John 3 and Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus.

CCC 526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. **Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God".**²⁰⁶ Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvelous exchange":

O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.²⁰⁸

CCC 591a Jesus asked the religious authorities of Jerusalem to believe in him because of the Father's works which he accomplished. But such an act of faith

must go through a mysterious death to self, for **a new “birth from above”** under the influence of divine grace.³⁷⁴

Footnote 206 in CCC 526 above references John 3:7. Also footnote 374 in CCC 591 likewise references John 3:7!

So we see use of the phrase “FROM ABOVE” in our mind concerning Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus is certainly consistent with the “mind of the Church.”

Likewise, the Greek speaking Saint Athanasius the famous Catholic Bishop that fought against the Arian heresy so eloquently back in the 300’s A.D. used this language of being born “anthen” as being born “from above” AND “born again” in context with the “water and Spirit”.

St. Athanasius “...as we are all from earth and die in Adam, so being **regenerated from above of water and Spirit**, in the Christ we are all quickened.”

- Athanasius, Discourses Against the Arians, 3:26 (33), AD 360.

St. Athanasius “For he who repents ceases indeed from sinning, but he still has on him the scars of his wounds; whereas **he who is baptized, puts off the old man, being born again by the grace of the Spirit.**”

- Athanasius, Ep. iv. ad Serap., c. AD 296-373.

St. John in his Gospel was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use the word “anthen” to have a double meaning for us.

It is important to not change the **translation**. Only the Church has the authority to approve that.

But I think we should see *both* “**from above**” and “**anew**” as correct and appropriate usage of “anthen” for **meditation** purposes (as the CCC and St. Athanasius supports).

Although the context is “anew,” (or “again”) I believe the Holy Spirit Inspired St. John to use the word “anthen” *because* of its dual meaning.

When we are born of “water and Spirit” we are “*born anew*” **and** we are “*born from above*” (from Heaven) by the power of the Holy Spirit. It doesn’t need to be “either/or,” or “one or the other”.

Jesus and His Disciples Practiced What Jesus Just Preached—Baptism

Also IMMEDIATELY after Jesus tells Nicodemus about the necessity of being born of **water and spirit**, what do Jesus and his Apostles go out and do?

In John 3, verse 22, St. John tells us immediately after this discussion, Jesus and His Apostles went out and **baptized** people!

JOHN 3:22 22 After this **Jesus and his disciples** went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and **baptized**.

Jesus and His Apostles practiced what Jesus just preached and this is likely WHY John's Gospel presents this right here.

Jesus Is The Priest Behind The Priest

JOHN 4:1-3 1 Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), 3 he left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

Did Jesus Baptize? Yes.

Did Jesus refrain from Baptizing? Yes.

Did the Apostles Baptize? Yes.

How can Jesus Baptize individuals and NOT Baptize individuals at the same time?
Isn't this a self-contradiction?

No. This is NOT a self-contradiction!

Why not?

Because they are used in different senses.

So in a sense (the physical sense), Jesus is NOT Baptizing. His Apostles are.

But in another sense (the spiritual sense), Jesus is the one doing the Baptizing!

Remember . . .

1. In a sense, Jesus IS Baptizing. ("Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John"—John 4:1)

2. In a sense (the physical sense), Jesus is NOT Baptizing. ("(. . . although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples . . .)—John 4:2)

Roman Catechism:

Lastly, St. Ambrose says: Because he alone of all of them professed (Christ) he was placed above all.

Should anyone object that the Church is content with one Head and one Spouse, Jesus Christ, and requires no other, the answer is obvious. For as we deem Christ not only the author of all the Sacraments, but also their invisible minister -- He it is who baptises, He it is who absolves, although men are appointed by Him the external ministers of the Sacraments

Jesus in a way, could NOT Baptize the people physically.

Why not? Can you imagine the bickering that would have occurred among the recipients? Some would say: "Well, I was Baptized by Jesus Himself! You were merely Baptized by Andrew." Or Nathaniel. Or Judas Iscariot.

These objections would be **based upon mere feelings** and not evidence.

The early Christians even inappropriately had some of this attitude anyway.

1st CORINTHIANS 1:11-13 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. 12 What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

More Objections – Based Upon Feelings

Objection: "We receive The Holy Spirit through prayer alone! We don't need any rituals or 'works'!"

One person has even told me: "WE pray for the Holy Spirit. You Catholics just sprinkle a little water on each other!"

I pointed out that WE PRAY TOO!

Ours is a community prayer and the prayer of the Church.

But we ALSO obey Jesus and utilize water as our Lord commanded.

Scripture doesn't say prayer ALONE, no water necessary!

Don't ever let anyone tell you a Catholic doesn't pray for the Holy Spirit!

The baptismal rite is a community prayer! Incidentally, although it is beyond the scope of this study, baptism and its preparation is also a rite of exorcism.

Objection: “We have faith in Jesus. We don’t need any rituals.”

Answer: We have faith in Jesus too—but we obey Him as part of our faith. A saving faith is necessarily an obedient faith as St. Paul has alluded to (see Bible study on sola fide for many more details on this issue).

When Jesus (in John 9:1-11) put mud and spittle in the blind man’s eyes and told him to “go wash in the pool of Siloam” should he have just gone home blind and said “I’ll get my sight back anyway because I have faith in Jesus” or should he have obeyed Jesus and went and washed in the pool of Siloam like Jesus told him? We all know the answer to this.

It’s NOT “faith” when we disobey Jesus! Sometimes its ignorance but other times its lack of faith when we disobey.

Do we actually believe Jesus when He tell us we need to be born of WATER and the Spirit? I hope so.

Would St. Paul Reject Baptism As Being Regenerative?

Objection: If you Catholics would just read Paul’s letter to the Romans, you’d see we are justified by faith **alone** and NO rituals therefore are called for or necessary.

This is what one Baptist told me.

Answer: St. Paul in Romans or anywhere else never says: “we are justified by faith **alone**.”

St. Paul in Romans is talking about being justified by faith, apart from “the law”. The context here is the Old Covenant Law given to the Israelites through Abraham and Moses and even then the context is focusing on the “circumcision” aspect of the law.

The ONLY place in Scripture where “justification” and “faith alone” is mentioned is in James 2:24.

In James 2:24, The Holy Spirit through St. James condemns “justification by faith alone” as a false teaching (for further details on this issue we have a whole study on justification).

But let’s take a closer look at what St. Paul’s letter to the Romans has to say about Baptism.

Baptism In St. Paul’s Letter To The Romans

Remember in Romans 5 (as we saw earlier) St. Paul taught us about original sin. Now what is St. Paul going to teach in Romans 6?

Let's look at Romans 6:1-6 and find out. Romans 6 is where St. Paul addresses the issue of Baptism . . .

ROMANS 6:1-3a 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can **we who died to sin** still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been (Blanked) into Christ Jesus were (Blanked) into his death?

St. Paul is addressing people who he thinks have **died to sin**. We have died to sin.

But HOW did we die to sin?

Fortunately we don’t have to speculate as St. Paul is about to tell us.

St. Paul just got done telling these Roman Christians about Original sin, and that they are surrounded by sin, and they themselves used to participate in such sins.

But don't worry because where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. God always provides. The tougher things are, the more grace God gives us (just ask a martyr when you get to Heaven).

But HOW did we die to sin?

Hint: Fill in the blanks to find out what St. Paul and inspired Sacred Scripture

teaches on HOW we died to sin, and got placed into Christ Jesus.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been (Blanked) into Christ Jesus were (Blanked) into his death?”

Does St. Paul say . . .

?ROMANS 6:1-3a? 1 What shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

3 Do you not know that all of us who have prayed a sinners prayer and accepted Christ into our hearts as personal Lord and savior were prayed into his death?

Is that what St. Paul is going to tell us in Romans 6:1-3 here?? NO! This is what some people WISHED St. Paul would have said here.

And St. Paul certainly had the opportunity to say that here didn't he?

But WHAT does St. Paul really teach us then?

For the answer let's see what Sacred Scripture says:

ROMANS 6:1-2 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

St. Paul seems to think these people died to sin! How did they die to sin St. Paul?

ROMANS 6:3a 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been BAPTIZED into Christ Jesus were BAPTIZED into his death?

Let's read more now to get more depth.

ROMANS 6:3-4 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death?**

4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

The phrase “**newness of life**” coincidentally enough, sounds just like being “**born again**.”

ROMANS 6:3-6 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death?**

4 We were buried therefore **with him by baptism** into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in **newness of life**. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be **united with him in a resurrection like his**. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

How did God save us? By the washing of regeneration of the soul and renewal in the Holy Spirit in Baptism. Let's go back to the 300's A.D. and read some more.

St. Basil the Great **Baptism** is ransom, **forgiveness of debts**, death of sin, **regeneration of the soul**, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, **a chariot to heaven**, a protector royal, a gift of adoption.
- St. Basil the Great, on Baptism, A.D. 330-379

We are called to obey. But deeds of righteousness could never EARN the grace of the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.

God did not send His Son to die for our sins because we as humanity were so good.

Baptism, where the Holy Spirit applies Jesus' work to us in a special way is pure gift.

TITUS 3:4-6 4 but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by **the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit**, 6 which he **poured** out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Q: But WHY did God give us this gift of "the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ"?

A: Verse 7 is about to tell us!

TITUS 3:7 7 so that we might be **justified by his grace** and become heirs in hope of **eternal life**.

And HOW were our sins washed away? Baptism! **Baptism washes away sins!**

ACTS 22:16 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and **be baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on his name.'

Baptism gives us forgiveness of sins and gives us the gift of The Holy Spirit!

ACTS 2:38 38 And Peter said to them, Repent, and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you shall receive . . (what?) . . .

What will these people receive IF they repent AND are BAPTIZED??!
Fortunately Sacred Scripture is about to tell us.

ACTS 2:38 38 And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**.

Again this is a GIFT! We can't earn these graces. They come to us through the work of Jesus Christ.

These verses all support why we believe Baptism is necessary. That's why the Catechisms and the early Church teach things such as

CCC 1277 **Baptism** is birth into new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it **is necessary for salvation**, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.

Roman Catechism "By nature we are born from Adam children of wrath, but **by Baptism** we are **regenerated** in Christ, children of mercy . . ."
(Part 11 The Sacraments, Section on Definition of Baptism, p. 163 TAN Edition)

Tertullian "When, however, the prescript is laid down that '**without baptism, salvation is attainable by none**' (chiefly on the ground of that declaration of the Lord, who says, '**Unless one be born of water, he hath not life**'" . . .
- Tertullian, On Baptism, 12:1(A.D. 203), in ANF, III:674-675

Is Jesus Bound By The Water?

Objection: "Well we don't think Jesus is bound by mere water. You Catholics think Jesus is bound by water."

Answer:

- We don't say JESUS is bound by water, but WE ARE bound to obedience to Him!

- We don't use MERELY water, but ALSO prayer invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!
- We affirm the necessity of prayer but we also OBEY Jesus' commandment to use water with that prayer!

Jesus is not bound by the water and certainly not by a "sinner's prayer". It is beyond the scope of this study to get into Baptism of desire and Baptism of blood (martyrdom). We will go into some aspects of this in our Baptism III study.

Theologians when referring to the fact that WE are bound by using water for Baptism is called "the ordinary means" of Baptism.

Baptism by "desire" or "blood" is called "the extraordinary means" of Baptism and just means Jesus is not bound by our command to do so.

The Church puts it this way

CCC 1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation.⁶⁰ He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them.⁶¹ Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.⁶² The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." ***God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.***

(Italics in CCC 1257 original)

Jesus is not bound to OUR Sacramental instruction. Jesus is not bound to the physical elements of the universe either.

For example Jesus can cure leprosy by a touch or a word. I once saw a patient with Leprosy down at the Mayo Clinic. Today if someone was in the Drs. Office with Leprosy, we'd use (and we did) the ordinary means of treating Leprosy with a special antibiotic. We wouldn't say "Well go home. Jesus can cure this with extraordinary means so good-bye." Jesus CAN cure Leprosy with extraordinary means but we are given ordinary means and Jesus expects us to use the ordinary gifts He gives us. That doesn't mean the guy with Leprosy can't go home and PRAY AND take his antibiotics. He should pray AND use his antibiotics. But we don't ignore the ordinary means of the cure!

Jesus wants us to use the "ordinary means" that He gives us in the earthly physical realm like proper medical treatment.

And Jesus wants us to use the ordinary means He gives us in the Spiritual/Sacramental realm too which are more than sufficient but require us to exercise FAITH.

Baptism Puts Us In Jesus Directly, But In Other Ways Too

Baptism puts us IN Jesus (St. Paul explicitly states this too as we saw in Romans 6:3). But as we said earlier in the study, Baptism also puts you into Jesus Mystical Body—The Church. The Church is explicitly called the bride of Christ by St. Paul in Ephesians 5. The Church, His bride, was born of the side of Christ.

Just as with the birth of Eve, the Bride of Adam came from Adam's Side, so also With the birth of the Church, the Bride of Christ, came forth from Christ's side in His blood and water. That's why St. John Chrysostom could say back in the 300's A.D. . . .

St. John Chrysostom “There flowed from his side water and blood”. Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized baptism and the holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from baptism, “the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit”, and from the holy Eucharist. Since the symbols of baptism and the Eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that Christ fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim: “Bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh!” As God then took a rib from Adam's side to fashion a woman, so Christ has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way Christ gave us the blood and the water after his own death.

Do you understand, then, how Christ has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food we are both brought into being and nourished. As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life.

- St. John Chrysostom - **The Catecheses (Cat. 3, 13-19; SC 50)**

The CCC 766 quotes St. Ambrose (from approximately 400 A.D.) teaching us this same concept . . .

CCC 766b As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross.¹⁷³

See also CCC 1067 on your own.

Saint Paul speaks of All Christians as being in **Christ**, so that in **Jesus**, they Form **One Mystical Body—the Church** (See Bible study on the Communion of Saints. Also see Romans 12:4-5, 1st Corinthians 6:15, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:11-16, Ephesians 5:29-32, Colossians 1:18, 24, Colossians 2:18-20, Colossians 3:15. Also see CCC 779, 782, 789, 792, 795, 1474-1477, and elsewhere).

Baptism Incorporates Us Into Christ And His Mystical Body— The Church

Christ has a personal body, His own.

But He also has an extended collective body which cannot be reduced down to earthly terminology. Never-the-less, we need to use words to communicate with each other and thus this collective body is often called by Catholics “The Mystical Body of Christ¹⁰.”

10 “The Mystical Body of Christ” is the “body” of beings (people and Angels) who are in Jesus and He in them. There is a physical AND a spiritual aspect to this body. It is beyond the scope of this study to go into detail, but the Holy Spirit, is sometimes called the “Soul of the Mystical Body of Christ”.

Christians are part of this Mystical Body of Christ. That’s why from Heaven Jesus can say to Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4):

?“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting my people, **my followers?**” NO!

Jesus said:

ACTS 9:4b “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting ME?”

This incorporation of beings (Angels and People) who are in Christ even transcends time.

The Church often refers to these members as “The Communion of Saints.”

Our membership in the Mystical Body of Christ here on earth is provisional, but “if we endure till the end” (see Mt 10:22 and elsewhere) will be made permanent. See Bible study on Eternal Security?/Once Saved Always Saved?” for further details.

But How Do We Get Into The Body Of Christ—The Church?

So HOW were we New Covenant people BROUGHT INTO the Body of Christ (The Church)?

Christians are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ—but how?

Does St. Paul say . . .

?? 1st CORINTHIANS 12:13?? 13 For by one Spirit **we were all prayed into one body with a sinners prayer only**
- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

NO! That's NOT what St. Paul said!

So HOW did we get into this ONE BODY (The Body of Christ or "the Church")?

Fortunately St. Paul explicitly tells us.

1st CORINTHIANS 12:12-13 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For by one Spirit **we were all baptized into one body**
-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

HOW did we get into this ONE BODY (The Body of Christ)?

WE WERE BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY.

1st CORINTHIANS 12:13 13 For by one Spirit **we were all baptized into one body**. . .

We were Baptized into the Body of Christ, The Church!

THE CHURCH is THE BODY OF CHRIST!

St. Paul, in his letters, refers explicitly to the Church as the Body of Christ 5 times (Romans 12:4-5, 1st Corinthians 6:15, 1st Corinthians 12:20-27, Colossians 1:18, and Ephesians 5:29-32).

Baptism brings us into the Church.

We were all BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY! That's how we got into the Church. That is how we got in-Jesus! And we NEED to be in-Jesus to be saved.

That's WHY 1st Peter 3:21 can say . . . **Baptism . . . now saves you!**

Excerpt from 1st PETER 3:21 21 **Baptism**, . . . , **now saves you**, . . .

Let's look at the verse in deeper context to get added insight out of this teaching . . .

1st PETER 3:18-22 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. 21 **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

A Baptismal Theme At The Beginning Of Jesus Earthly Public Ministry

We saw earlier in the study that Jesus public life BEGINS with his Baptism by John in the River Jordan—A Baptism of repentance which was to prefigure and in a certain sense announce what Jesus would give us—Christian Baptism.

CCC 535a Jesus' public life begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan.²²⁸ John preaches "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". . . .

We saw Jesus' first miracle also had to do with transforming waters concerning the miracle at Cana and Jesus' grace He imparts there.

A Baptismal Theme At The End Of Jesus Earthly Public Ministry

Jesus earthly public ministry ENDS with teachings about several features. One of these aspects includes Christian Baptism and the commandment to the Apostles to carry it out. We see this stated by our Lord Jesus at the end of Mark and Matthew Gospels explicitly (Mark 16 and in Matthew 28).

Baptism is one of the last things our Lord Jesus reaffirms before going off into Heaven.

The End Of St. Mark's Gospel

The risen Lord Jesus in Mark 16 is soon to Ascend into Heaven. But before He does, St. Mark records these words of our Lord Jesus in Mark 16:16.

MARK 16:16 16 He who believes and is **BAPTIZED** will be **saved**;
but he who does not believe will be condemned.

We see again Jesus' teachings concerning His commandment to be Baptized here in Mark 16:16.

Objection: This is not Jesus teaching to be Baptized. This is Jesus teaching us to believe in Him. This verse just says: "he who does not believe will be condemned."

It doesn't say . . . "he who does not believe AND isn't baptized, will be condemned."

So this verse doesn't show any necessity for baptism!

Answer:

First of all the verse IS about belief, but it is ALSO about Baptism. Jesus says so!

MARK 16:16 16 He who believes **AND** is **baptized** will be **saved**;
but he who does not believe will be condemned.

But in Mark 16:16b, Jesus doesn't have to say "whoever doesn't believe, AND isn't baptized will be condemned".

Why?? Think about it.

First, if a person **doesn't believe** the gospel, that person isn't going to bother to get baptized. That would be nonsense.

Who comes to the Apostles and says:

"I don't believe any of this. I DO believe in King Zeus and other pagan gods but I want Baptism into the New Covenant of you Christians anyway."

This is especially true given the Apostles command to these adult converts to “believe” and “repent” and THEN they can be baptized.

Also, Jesus doesn't have to say whoever doesn't believe, AND isn't baptized will be condemned. Why? Let's analyze it by putting the “and” in there and see what happens.

Hypothetical verse 16 He who believes and is BAPTIZED will be saved;
but he who does not believe, AND isn't baptized, will be condemned.

Look at the confusion that THIS would have led to. Now look at what a perplexed Scripture reader might say . . .

“See it says ‘he who doesn't believe, AND isn't baptized, will be condemned.’

So even though I don't believe, I'll keep my bases covered and **be baptized** just in case you Christians are right.

I won't have to worry about condemnation then because it can't be said about me that I don't believe **AND** I haven't been baptized!

I just don't believe! But I HAVE been baptized.”

Maybe I'll just go baptize other people too. It won't matter if they believe or not, because hypothetical verse says: “he who doesn't believe, **AND** isn't baptized, will be condemned.”

These people just don't believe, but now they will at least be baptized and thus they will all be saved!

You can start to see what nonsense could develop out of a verse like that.

And if you take out the “AND” and replace it with “OR,” the problem gets even worse.

New Hypothetical verse 16 “Whoever doesn't believe, OR isn't baptized will be condemned.”

I won't go through the hypothetical steps as with “OR” placed in this verse as the problems are pretty obvious. It's pretty clear how that verse could get twisted.

This is WHY the ACTUAL Bible verse reads . . .

MARK 16:16 16 He who believes AND is BAPTIZED will be saved;
but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Jesus HAD to say it this way.

The End Of St. Matthew's Gospel

Jesus in Matthew 28 as one of the last commands He give to the Apostles is to go and make disciples of ALL nations!

MATTHEW 28:18-19a 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, . . .**

But HOW should they go out and do this?

HOW do the Apostles make disciples of ALL nations?

Jesus explicitly tells them HOW to make disciples. Let's read on and find out.

MATTHEW 28:18-20 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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,** 20 **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

HOW do the Apostles make disciples of ALL nations? Two things Jesus explicitly tells them here.

1. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
2. Teach them to obey ALL that I have COMMANDED you.

Biblical Summary of Some of the Effects of Baptism

- People who believe and are **Baptized** will be saved (Mark 16:16).
- People are made disciples of Jesus by being **Baptized** AND taught to OBEY ALL that Jesus commands (Matthew 28:18-20).

- People who repent and are **Baptized** receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- We are called to be **Baptized** “for the forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:38 also).
- We need to be **born of water and the Spirit** (John 3:5).
- We need to keep in mind, people who are **not born of water and Spirit cannot** even SEE the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3-5).
- **Baptism** now saves us (1st Peter 3:18-21).
- We were **Baptized** into one body (1st Corinthians 12:13).
- Do you not know that all of us who have been **Baptized** into Christ Jesus were **Baptized** into his death?” (Romans 6:3).
- We were “saved . . . by the **washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit**” (Titus 3:5).
- **Baptism** “wash(es) away your sins.” (Acts 22:16).

This doesn’t even begin to touch the early historical data, ALL of which supports the Catholic Christian positions regarding Baptism. The Catholic Biblical understanding affirms just what the Scriptural verses say they mean.

Why Would Any Christian Question These Truths?

A denial of Baptismal graces has much in common with early Church heresies—a “dualistic” view of creation that basically says “spirit good, matter bad”.

Creation *has* been corrupted by mankind’s sin committed by our own volition.

But God doesn’t have a “bad side” *and* “good side” and God cannot create anything BAD. Unbeknownst to even themselves, some Sacrament deniers have the same problematic outlook that some of the ancient Greeks, Persians and Manicheans had. They have adopted this **dualistic** view of creation to varying degrees.

This **dualism** leads to a profound distortion on how they view God. If the physical world is “bad” what about the universe God created? What about God Himself (why create the physical universe)? And of course by extension of varying degrees what about the Incarnation where God becomes man? This distortion has led some such as the

Unitarians to deny Jesus as God. And what does this say about physical matter being used as a vehicle for grace today concerning Sacraments (such as Baptism).

Let's not use ancient dualism as an excuse for an anemic faith or even unbelief.

Are we willing to take Jesus at His word?

Are we willing to believe these Spiritual gifts through physical Sacramental truths that we have been taught for 2000 years that are to be in conjunction with our faith?

Are we willing to believe and accept being born of "water and the spirit" as a vehicle of God's saving grace? May God grant us this grace to believe Him.

God bless you.

In the next segment (Baptism II) we will review the subject of infant Baptism, why it's Biblical and how it has always been taught in the fullness of Christianity.