

## BAPTISM

April 27, 2020

It's the Bible Study Evangelista Show, Bible study spinach that tastes like cake. Here, we love and lift all we've been given. That's my prayer, in every show, that I'm able to love and lift you a little bit so that you can turn and love and lift all those that you've been given.

We are in our series on the sacraments. Last week we talked about how sacraments are covenants. That's actually how we're going to begin looking at the first sacrament of Baptism. We're going to look at Baptism in the context of a covenant, and Old Testament covenants and how they were made between people, and between God and people.

There are several things we talked about last week that are involved in every covenant throughout the Old Testament. There is an exchange of commitment, there's an exchange of identity, an exchange of resources, an exchange of enemies, an exchange of life, an exchange of a mark, and an exchange of a meal. In Baptism we see each of those exchanges illustrated specifically. When we talk about a commitment - when we look at Baptism, we have to remember a couple things. One, for those of you who aren't Catholic, most of the time, non-Catholics believe that Baptism is merely a symbol. They call it an ordinance. It's not a sacrament, meaning, to them, it doesn't actually do anything, it's just symbolic.

My question to that is always: Then why did Jesus tell us to do it? If it didn't have a purpose, and it didn't do anything, then why would He command us to do it? It just seemed really arbitrary to me, even as a non-Catholic, that would be the case. But the other point is, we know that it is salvific, that it is efficacious. Those are a couple of big Church words. Salvific just means "it saves." The Bible itself says that, plainly. Peter says, "Baptism, which now saves us." He says that, word for word. Not only that, but we've seen in the readings this past week where Jesus was speaking with Nicodemus, that you cannot see the Kingdom of God unless you have been born of water and spirit. That is exactly what Baptism is. That is what that entire passage in John 3 is talking about. Jesus is talking about Baptism. He's not talking about praying a prayer and being born again the way non-Catholics speak of that. It means to be born of water and spirit. That is what Baptism does.

We're going to get into the "weeds" of what that means throughout the show. Baptism is called "The Sacrament of Faith." Here is one of the places we diverge from non-Catholics where Catholics offer infant Baptism. That is partly because the early Church offered infant Baptism, which I'll prove to you later in the show, probably the last segment. Because parents have authority over their children until they are adults and/or out from under their household, parents have authority over their children. So, they are able, through covenant, to offer their children to God. That's exactly what Mary's mother and father did with her. That's exactly what Mary did with Jesus when she took Him to the temple and had Him circumcised. Circumcision itself is an example of why it is okay, and very important even, to baptize an infant. Partly because it does remove Original Sin, and I'm getting way ahead of myself here, but the other reason is because it is the sacrament that incorporates you into the family of God. That is what circumcision did in the Old Testament. Paul himself draws parallels between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament Baptism.

Now I want to talk, just a little bit, about types and anti-types in the Bible because we have "types" in the Old Testament of Baptism. A type in the Bible is a prefiguring of - or a foreknowledge, or a foretaste of - something that would come later in Christ. For a type to be a true type, it has to be less than the antitype that comes afterward.

In the Old Testament, there were several types of Baptism. One of them was The Great Flood. That was a symbol of Baptism, St. Paul says. The Crossing of the Red Sea was also a type of Baptism. The Water Rock in the desert that Moses was supposed to have touched with his staff, but instead he wacked it. That water rock was symbolic of - it was refreshment actually for the people. That was the only way they had water in their journey through the desert to the Promised Land. But it was also a type of Baptism that would come later. Then there is the laver in the Old Testament tabernacle which was where the priest washed their hands and feet to purify themselves before they went into the sanctuary.

Now all of those are types of the Baptism that would come in Christ. For an anti-type to be a true antitype, it has to be - in every single way - better than the type that came before. So it has to be better than the flood, which cleansed the entire earth. It has to be better than the Red Sea crossing which sent them into the literal land of Canaan, the land of Palestine. It had to be refreshing daily, in a daily kind of way, as the water rock in the desert was. It has to be purifying as the laver was in the Old Testament. And, because the Old Testament observances of these types of Baptism, did not and could not save people, Baptism has to be, in all ways, greater than the types in order for it to be a true antitype. Because it does save, Baptism saves us. It incorporates us into the family of God. It is the Sacrament of Faith, the Church says. Because of that, it is greater than the types that went before.

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Now, I am getting way ahead of myself, but I want to talk about Baptism in light and in the context of a covenant. Because a covenant, then, involves an exchange of commitment. If you are a parent of an infant, then you take your child to be baptized. The very first thing the priest says is, "What name do you give this child?" So the child, or the baptized person - if you're an adult and you're being baptized, it's usually done at the Easter vigil because that is the traditional time when the new Christians that were adults came into the Church. And so a child will receive a baptismal name. That will be, obviously, the given name of that child forever more.

It involves an exorcism. Baptism involves an exorcism. That is what those promises that we offer in communion with those who are coming into the Church at Easter vigil, when the priest says, "Do you renounce Satan?" And we say, "I do." That is a solemn commitment, a solemn promise.

For an infant, the parent makes that commitment on behalf of the child. The parent has the authority to do so because the parent is the guardian and the parent with the authority over that child. That remains so until the child is an adult and/or until the child is out of the home. The commitment then - there is an exchange of commitment. We commit to renounce Satan and to live for God forever. We commit to be part of His family. And then God commits to take us as His own - as an adopted son or daughter - incorporate us into His family. He gives us several other things - a new identity, His own resources, our enemies become His enemies. He gives us a new life. He gives us a new mark. He gives us a meal. All of those things are involved in covenant making in the Old Testament. That commitment begins with the baptismal promises. That is an exorcism.

In fact, your baptismal water in the font, which is - it's sort of a, not a copy, but it's similar to the laver in the Old Testament temple or tabernacle - that water is exorcised by the prayers of the priest. It's actually the prayers of Christ over the water and it combines holy salt. Then there's an exorcism performed over that water. That's why, every single time you dip your finger into the baptismal font and you make the sign of the cross, you are reaffirming and renewing your covenant of baptism with God and vice versa. He renews His promises to you. That commitment, then, is renewed every time.

Now, I know we do it without thinking, but I hope that from now on, you will think about it. That I am renewing my Baptism as I dip my finger into this baptismal font and make the sign of the cross. I am reaffirming that commitment that I made to God and that He made to me. And in so doing, Baptism, then, gives us a new identity. A child receives a name. A new identity is given to us by God Himself through the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul says that "we are a new creation." Jesus Himself called it "a new birth." That is - think about being born. It is a total, complete transformation. A birth is being born into a new life, a new world. So Baptism does that. It's a new birth. It's the beginning of the spiritual life. It removes Original Sin. Most of us think of Original Sin as sort of like this dark spot or a blot on the soul, but Original Sin is not really a something at all, it's the absence of something that should be there. It's a darkness where there should be light. More on that when we get back.

So Baptism removes Original Sin. Now, what is that? If you are non-Catholic - or even if you're Catholic, really. A lot of Catholics don't understand this either. The reason that sin is transmitted to us through our parents is because Adam, at the time of his sin, was the entire human race. In him, all of humanity was potential. It was potentially present in him. He was seen as the head of all human beings. So where he goes, we all go. When he fell, then, he fell into sin and everyone after him did as well. That is why Jesus is called "The New Adam" because He has restored the life, the eternal life, that Adam had in the garden and forfeited through sin.

So, sin, as I mentioned, is not a mark on the soul, really, it's the absence of the eternal life and light that should be there. Baptism restores the capacity to receive grace and to have that life. It restores grace. In fact, it takes away sin. It takes away mortal sin and venial sin and all of the punishment that's due for sin, which we'll talk about in great detail when we get to Confession. There is a such thing as mortal and venial sin, the Bible says, in several places - well, two really big places and we'll talk about that in Confession.

It does remove sin, but more than that, it gives you a certain character, "A Character of the Mark" is what it's called. It's an indelible mark, the Church calls it. It is the mark that we were talking about. There's an exchange of a mark in a covenant. So it gives you this particular charism that co - well, a charism too - the grace of God and His eternal life. But it's a capacity to receive grace. That's what we receive at Baptism. We lose sanctifying grace when we sin by cutting off the grace, the flow of grace, from God. But we don't lose that baptismal mark, we don't lose that baptismal character because the soul has been completely reborn and transformed by Baptism with that mark, or that character.

Because we have that baptismal mark, it's relatively easy, then, to regain graces that we lose through sin, mortal sin or venial sin. None of the other sacraments can offer us any grace whatsoever unless we have first received Baptism. Baptism is the

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beginning of the spiritual life. None of the other sacraments can mean anything to us until the capacity for receiving the graces of those sacraments has been established in the soul by Baptism.

There are a couple of things that Baptism does. St. Paul says that it configures us - well, St. Thomas Aquinas says this too - it configures us to Christ, and it makes us participants in His priesthood. Not in the ministerial priesthood, but the lay priesthood. We each, then, have sacrifices to offer God. It gives us this distinguishing effect, which differentiates us from people who are not members of the Church, or members of Christ's body. It gives us an obligative sign, which means it gives us an obligation, then, to live out our Christ-likeness unto eternal life in the Church. That means we live a life according to the pattern that Jesus has given us. We give obedience to Jesus' representatives. That means our bishops and the pope and priests, legitimate authorities we should say.

We cannot escape the absolute necessity of Baptism. Jesus said, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Or he cannot perceive the Kingdom of God. He's not saying that He will *prevent* you from coming in. Now, this come - this is the blessings and the cursings of a covenant. In a covenant, we talked about those *things* that every covenant had in the Old Testament: an exchange of commitment, exchange of identity, exchange of resources, exchange of enemies, exchange of life, exchange of mark, an exchange of meal.

When Jesus says, then, that you must be born again of water and Spirit - He's speaking of Baptism there. He says, "You cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Now what does He mean? He doesn't mean that He's standing at the door of Heaven holding up His hands saying, "No, you're not allowed to enter." Instead, when you're not baptized, you can't even - you can't even discern heavenly things. You don't have the mark on your soul that gives you the capacity to distinguish what is of the kingdom and what is not. This is why it's so necessary to be baptized because that baptism gives you the capacity to see and discern spiritual things. It places you in the family of God and it gives you the Holy Spirit. It gives the Spirit to you as part of the down payment of eternal life. It is absolutely necessary, Jesus said, that you be born again of water and the Spirit. And Baptism, then, is a new birth.

So after that exchange of commitment, then, we exchange identities. We exchange the fallen identity, the one that is mired in Original Sin, for the identity of Christ Himself, His authority, and, we could even say His robe, because St. Paul talks about "being clothed" with Christ. In the Catechism, I love the way it puts it, it says, "The baptized have put on Christ." It quotes St. Paul in Galatians 3:27. It says, "Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies." So we see that we put on Christ. St. Paul says that we enter, through Baptism, into communion with Christ's death and His burial, and His resurrection, which we'll look at in a few moments. The way the new Church - the New Testament Church, the early Church - baptized, really conveyed this beautifully. I'll get into that in a moment.

It says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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." Now, that brings up what the word "Baptism" itself actually means. It's from the Greek "baptizo." It means, literally, "to immerse."

So here's another place where we diverge from non-Catholics. I grew up as a Baptist. The teaching was, if you didn't immerse someone when they were baptized then they weren't actually really baptized. Which, I don't know why that made a difference because baptism was just a symbol, and it didn't really mean anything anyway. In some non-Catholic churches - and specifically I'm thinking of The Church of Christ - if you don't get completely immersed, even your fingernail and the last bit of hair on your head, if you're not completely immersed in the water, then you haven't actually been baptized. The Church of Christ actually does believe that Baptism is like a sacrament, it actually does something. So if you don't get completely dunked, then you have to be dunked again.

The reason that people see Baptism in that way is because of what St. Paul said, "We're buried with Christ into Christ's death." We are in the grave, then. That's the symbolism of being dunked into the water, the grave. You're being dunked into the water, into the grave, and then you rise again by coming out of the water into a new life, or a new birth.

In the early Church, it's fascinating to me how they baptized. In those days, when a river, or another body of - they called it "living water," meaning it was fresh, it was fresh water, it wasn't stagnant. If there wasn't a river or another living body of water for Baptism, then people were baptized at the home of the wealthy. Why? Because they had baths in their homes. They would've been a little bit similar to ours, but you would have walked down into it, up to about hip deep. If they - if you couldn't be baptized in someone's home, then they would baptize you by what's called "effusion." That means just pouring small amounts of water over the head of the person being baptized, a lot like what we do when we baptize an infant. We don't take an infant and dunk it down into the baptismal font. Thank goodness we don't because my youngest son was baptized as an infant and he screamed his head off. I can't imagine if we completely dunked him.

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When they effused, they did it in the same way that we do it today, “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” And for each of those - the Father, sprinkle; Son, sprinkle; Holy Spirit, sprinkle. The candidates for Baptism, then, would enter into those baths that were recessed into the ground and they descended a few steps into the water about hip deep. And then the bishop would pour water over the person’s head three times, while he knelt in the fetal position. Why? Because he’s signifying that this is a new birth.

So the point is, then, even though the word “baptize” literally means “immerse,” or “plunge” in Greek, none of the ancient Christians ever considered a person was less baptized if he wasn’t, for some reason, dunked completely into the water. In fact, it wasn’t until about 500 AD that Baptism was associated with submersion at all because the practice of burial was above ground until that time. Everyone was buried above the ground. Until they began burying people underground, that’s when the common understanding of “being buried with Christ” came to mean “submerged.” Then Baptism, by immersion, kind of became the norm.

We also have the idea of Baptism in the Catholic Mass. There’s a part of the prayer in the Mass called “The Levabo.” The priest, then, sprinkles water on his hands and he says, “I will wash.” That’s what that comes from is from Psalm 26. The priest pours that water over his fingers in the dish and then he uses the towel to dry his fingers, and as he pray - as he washes, he prays The Levabo Prayer. It says, “Lord, wash away my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” More when we get back.

Baptism is the configuration for the character of the mark of the supernatural life. If you think about two printers - if you have a printer and it dies and you go get a new printer and you bring it home, what do you have to do? You have to install the new software and configure it to your computer. You can’t use the old software with the new computer. That’s what Baptism is. It is a new configuration into a new life. So, “If anyone is in Christ,” Paul says, “he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) I love that. And that’s an important point because a lot of times, as I said, we see Baptism from a negative perspective because we see it as taking away of Original Sin. But Baptism gives us something, it incorporates us into the family of God and it configures the soul, then, to receive sanctifying grace so that we can really and truly share in God’s own life. And God’s life is eternal life, which is a quality, remember, from last week, not a quantity of time.

Baptism, then, confers on us the right and the ability to receive the other sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession, in the case of mortal sin. If we don’t have that mark of Baptism on our soul, then we’re unable to receive the sacramental grace of absolution. And then, of course, our mortal sins would be completely unforgiven. That’s true of the other sacraments, too. They can’t communicate grace to us until the capacity for receiving grace has been given to us in the - has been established in our souls by that configuration of Baptism first. It is through Baptism that we “put on Christ” in the words of Saint Paul and we’re “configured to Him” in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Since there is no escaping that absolute necessity of Baptism, and no other sacrament is valid unless you have it, then the Church insists that babies be baptized as soon as possible after birth. One formally - if you’re an adult then you choose to continue in faith and maturity an apostolate ministry at Confirmation. We don’t have what non-Catholics call “The Baptism of the Believer.” I mean, they are believing because, if they’re infants, because we are their parents and we establish them under the - our own authority into the family of God. And we can do that. But at Confirmation, then, they make that decision, that conscious decision, to follow Christ themselves. So there’s not an absence of faith on the part of an infant Baptism. The faith is the parents until the child is old enough to make the decision themselves through Confirmation.

Now, back to the covenant idea. We have exchanged commitments, we have given ourselves to God through Baptism, or given our children to God through Baptism, and He has given Himself to us. And then we receive a new identity. There’s a new birth. “We are a new creation,” the Bible says. And then there is an exchange of resources. This means that nothing that we have and are can be held back from God because God has given us everything that He has and everything that He is. He has given us His Spirit, He has given us His Son, He gives us His Body and Blood. All of the resources that are His are also ours by inheritance, by the fact that we are His children in Christ and through Christ. That is what Jesus won for us on the cross. He has given us the new birth. He has incorporated us into the family of God and everything He has, then, is ours. But then vice versa must be true as well. All of our resources, our time, our talents, our possessions, everything that we are and have, is placed into the hands of God to use as He will. That means that we don’t possess things. God gives us things and resources to use on His behalf.

We are simply stewards of the resources that He has given us to be Christians and to be on mission and to be His example and little Christians in the world. So there’s an exchange of commitment, there’s an exchange of identity, there’s an exchange of resources, and then there is an exchange of enemies.

Our natural enemies are going to be the people that we consider enemies. But we don’t actually have the right to consider another human being as our enemy. Who is the enemy of God? Satan himself. Satan is our true enemy. So we give our enemies to God and God takes those enemies on Himself and vice versa. When we are baptized, that is why we proclaim those baptismal

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promises. Do you renounce Satan? "I do." Satan, then, becomes our enemy because he is God's enemy and vice versa. So there is an exchange of enemies.

Then there is an exchange of life. There has to be, in a covenant - in the Old Testament there always had to be the shedding of blood in order for there to be a covenant. It's called "cutting a covenant" for that reason. You would take an animal, sometimes more than one animal - and in the example of Abraham, who was Abram at this time, and God - there was a covenant cut between the two of them and there were animals involved. You cut the animal from nose to tail and you divided it into two parts. And both parties would walk between the pieces of the animals. The reason they did that is because it was to convey to one another that, "If I don't keep my side of the bargain here, this covenant, may I become like this animal, split in two, and dead." Okay? So that was the solemn vow that you took and the animal there, cut in two, was the symbol of that commitment that you make to one another. So there was the shedding of blood. And you "cut a covenant" and there was shedding of blood.

The shedding of blood for the remission of sins, the Bible talks about, that was Christ. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. His blood, the shedding of His blood, gives us that eternal life in Baptism. Because of that, then, we offer ourselves back to God. I'll get into what that actually means when we talk about the meal. How do we give God our blood? Well, I'll give you that in just a moment. But I want to talk about the mark.

When you "cut a covenant" with another person in the Old Testament, a lot of times they would cut their wrists. They would cut a symbol in the wrist, a little bit like a brand, and let it bleed, and each person would do so. Then they would drip a little bit of blood into some sort of container and catch it. Then they would mingle the two bloods together, mix in some ashes, and then dab the ashes and the blood into the wound. What would happen is it would make a tattoo. The ashes would color the place of the scar and it would make a tattoo. When you raised your right hand, you would see - like in a vow - you would see the mark and people would know, then, with whom you had a covenant. Both parties would do that. That's why it's called sort of an indelible mark because in the Old Testament, that was literal. There was an indelible mark.

If you think about Jesus being stretched out on the cross, the indelible mark, then, would have been there on His wrists where He was pierced. So there is that indelible mark. But we receive it through Baptism. It's a lot like a spiritual brand. It's invisible to us, but God Himself sees it and it's what consecrates us to Himself. We, then, have an exchange of marks. The Song of Solomon brings this out beautifully in chapter 8, which is the chapter of consummation. "Set me as a seal upon your heart as a seal upon your arm," or upon your wrist. And so that's kind of where we get, in court, when we raise our right hand and put our left hand on the Bible and we say, "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth," that's because when you raise that right hand, that mark would have been visible - this is, of course, I'm conflating two things: our legal system and the Old Testament, but I'm just trying to give you an example. When you raised your hand in commitment to another person, then they would see with whom you had a covenant. So there was an exchange of a mark in the Old Testament.

And then there was an exchange of a meal. So the idea of "cutting the covenant" was similar in the meal as it was in the, sort of, sacrifice of the animals because there was usually bread and wine eaten during this meal. It was private. You would say, sort of, in symbolism, "If I don't keep my side of the covenant here, I will be like this bread," which was broken. Right? And then, "like this blood." They would mingle, as I said, that blood in the container, with the ashes and then make the tattoo on their wrists. So there was a co-mingling of blood. And then there was also a meal that was shared. It was - it was actually a very intimate act to share a meal with another person. In fact, it was the worst kind of betrayal, and the worst kind of treachery to share a meal with someone and then betray them. That's why Judas was so despised. Because of this meal that Jesus had just had with the apostles, or the disciples. They shared this very intimate covenant meal together. There was a - there would be a co-mingling of blood in the cross, but then also in that chalice of wine.

For Judas to go right out and betray Him.... That's the worst act of treachery that you could ever do against another person. That's why he was so despised by the apostles, and of course the Christians later and throughout the Scriptures. But for us, then, that meal that we share is the Eucharist, the bread and the blood, the wine, that has also been mingled with blood. So we exchange our wine for Jesus' blood. You see that exchange? So there is an exchange in Baptism of commitment, of identity; we are a new creation; we give God our resources and He gives us His; His enemy becomes our enemy and vice versa; He gives us His life and we give Him our lives; we receive His mark - and of course He was on the cross; and then we share a meal. We'll be back in a moment.

I want to take this opportunity to shout out my newest friends of the show: Vicky D., Karen B., Sharon B., Katriana L., Amy O., Lisa H., Carline G., Elizabeth B., Phyllis T., and Donna K. I sent out another round of thank you gifts yesterday. You should be getting those if you have become a subscriber in the last couple of weeks. I just want to thank you so much.

All of the exchanges that were performed in cutting a covenant in the Old Testament are present in the new covenant in Christ. The very first part of that covenant making, or that oath making, remember that's where the word "sacrament" comes from. In

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the Latin it means “to swear” or “to covenant.” The covenant that Jesus enacted through is passion and death and resurrection is the covenant of the seven sacraments which themselves are a swearing of an oath or a promise. The very first of those is Baptism. As is true of the Old Testament covenants, there were both blessings and curses associated with covenants in the Old Testament.

So what are the blessings of Baptism? We know most of them because we’ve already talked about them. We know that we’re incorporated into God’s family. We know that we have a new identity in Christ with His authority and His - the power that He has, He says, He gives to us. We have God’s resources to bear and we don’t hold back our resources from Him. We have a new enemy, but we also have a new - a friend to fight on our behalf through the Holy Spirit. We have that new life, that life in Christ. We have a new mark, that indelible mark through Baptism that marks us spiritually as gods. Then we have this sharing of the meal. So those are all blessings. They are covenants in and of themselves. They are part of the covenant and Baptism is one of the covenants of the covenant as a sacrament.

Those are blessings. All of the blessings of Christ are also ours through Him. The curses, what are the curses? Those are the blessings that are forfeited. That means we forfeit His protection and His blessings. Should we continue to do so throughout our lives, we may forfeit them eternally. It’s interesting that, in the Old Testament, when they performed the sacrifices of the temple, the sacrifices were - of the animals - were made in the temple on the altar. Then the priest would pour water over the altar to cleanse that area. The blood and the water would flow out of the side of the temple down into the Kidron Valley from those sacrifices. There was blood and water mingled in those sacrifices and they flowed down into the valley, into the water that ran there.

It’s the same picture, then, of Christ on the cross when He was pierced in His side and that blood and that water poured forth. That’s part of what we talk about, that grace that is poured out on us through Baptism.

We believe, then, as Christians, but as Catholics, that Baptism with water, either by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, cleanses us from Original Sin and personal sin and all the punishment. It initiates us, then, into the family of the Church, or the life of the Church. So it’s more than symbolic. It’s more than just an expression of belief. It is a sacrament. It is a sign and also a conveyor of sanctifying grace.

Baptism *does* something. It forgives of sins. It was prophesied in Ezekiel, in chapter 36 where he says, “Then, God says, I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be cleaned from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will cleanse you.” And then Peter said in Acts chapter 2 in that big sermon, he said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” That is that life for life. Jesus gave us His life and He gives us the Holy Spirit and that gives us a new life. We, then, cannot hold anything back from our own lives in giving ourselves to God. It’s a self-donation. A covenant, then, is not a contract as we talked about last week. It is a self-donation, a total, complete self-donation. Acts 22 says, “Why do you tarry? Arise, then, and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

So, like all the sacraments, Baptism is not a work of man. It is the work of Christ and it’s an act of *His* grace, not our own. Titus says in chapter 3, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” So it’s through Baptism that we’re born again, or born from above of water and the Spirit as Jesus told Nicodemus in John chapter 3.

If you read that whole chapter, you can see that Jesus, when He’s talking about being born again He’s talking about Baptism. He’s not talking about praying a prayer of salvation and that is the new birth. He’s talking about Baptism.

What does that mean? Does that mean, then, that people who aren’t baptized won’t go to Heaven? Well, there are a couple of qualifications that the Church makes in those circumstances. First of all, for the souls of infants who die without Baptism - the Church has never taught that they don’t see God. It could be that God has some way of compensating for their lack of Baptism. If He has, then we don’t know about it because God hasn’t revealed it to us, but in any event, it is our obligation to follow the safer course. We don’t ever let a soul fail to enter eternity without Baptism if we can help it.

Because it is so important, children, then, should be baptized as soon as possible. If there is some sort of emergency or an urgent need, then the Lord has just kind of thrown the whole sacrament wide open. In those cases, when an unbaptized person is in danger of death or something, he can - he’s eligible and wants to receive the sacrament and just hasn’t been available to him - then anybody can baptize that person, even a non-Catholic. Even an Atheist can validly administer Baptism as long as he has the intention of doing whatever it is that the Catholic Church does, we could say, by that ceremony, and he performs it correctly.

## 02\_Baptism

So it's really very simple. If you ever find yourself in this situation, you pour plain water on top of the forehead of the person to be baptized and then you say, audibly while the water is being poured, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Those are words that we should all know as well as you know your own name because you might be in a situation where somebody's dependent on you knowing those words.

Anybody, then, in that kind of situation is able to perform the Sacrament of Baptism. That's parts of why it's so important that newborns be baptized as soon as possible because we want that Original Sin removed so that they can receive grace as early as possible. That orients them to the things of God as early as possible.

If Baptism is so absolutely necessary in order to get to Heaven, and it is, then what about all those people who die without ever having the chance to be baptized? What about them - if they don't even know about it? Or, you know, are they just not going to go to Heaven? And it's not their fault? Well, first of all, no one who is of the age of reason can lose Heaven except through his own fault. It's an article of Christian faith, and it's defined by the Church that God gives every soul He creates, sufficient grace to be saved. St. Paul talks about that in Romans chapters one and two. Nobody can ever say to God, "I didn't make it to Heaven and I couldn't help it." That's not the case.

For those who don't have an opportunity to be baptized, then, there is called the Baptism of Desire. When a person who loves God knows about Baptism and wants to be baptized, we call that an explicit Baptism of Desire. But when a person is ignorant of Baptism, but he loves God and has a desire to do everything God wants, then we call that an implicit Baptism of Desire. So the desire for Baptism, then, is sort of contained implicitly in the desire to love God and do whatever He wants them to do, to do His will. If a person *knew* about Baptism and *knew* that God wanted him to receive it, that person *would* be baptized because what God wants, then he wants. So that's an implicit desire for Baptism.

But then, there is a higher form of Baptism of Desire in martyrdom. Martyrdom is the suffering for a supernatural motive of death or a mortal wound inflicted out of hatred for Christ, His religion, or a Christian virtue. So that's called the Baptism of Blood. In those cases, St. Augustine says, "When any die for the confession of Christ without having received the washing of regeneration, it avails as much for the remission of sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of Baptism." So, Baptism of martyrdom trumps Baptism of water if there was not the availability before. So that person who is martyred for Christ goes to Heaven.

That's actually what you would sort of see the thief on the cross who asked Jesus to forgive him, and Jesus said that, "You will be with Me today in paradise." So in a way, at the last minute, he was baptized in that blood through that desire for Baptism and then death on the cross with Christ.

To summarize, then, Baptism is one of seven sacraments of the Church, sacrament meaning covenant or oath, in the new covenant of Christ, which was itself the sixth covenant. The sacraments are covenants within the covenant of Christ. Jesus, then, in Bap - in being baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist - He wasn't being cleansed, He Himself cleansed the baptismal waters for us so that when we're baptized we can receive that new life and become a new creation in Christ.

Friend, if you have not been baptized, get thee to the Church. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.