

The Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time
September 2, 2018

“Jesus answered, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.’” (John 3:5)

In our Catholic faith, symbols which interact with our senses are very important to us. We can look upon a crucifix and remember what Jesus endured for our salvation. We can contemplate a teaching of our faith as we gaze upon a stained glass window. As we reflect upon the sacrament of Baptism, we could feel the coolness of the water as it flowed over us washing us of our sins. The visible reality of flowing water reminds us of the invisible reality of our being washed of sin.

The sacrament of Baptism is usually the first sacrament we receive. The English word “Baptism” comes from the Greek word “*baptizo*” which means to wash or immerse. We can read in Sacred Scripture where Jesus not only received baptism, but also instructed His disciples to go out into the world and baptize all nations. *“Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’”* (Matthew 28:18-20)

In discussions with various Christians of other denominations, we have often heard the statement concerning “accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.” By doing so, our salvation is now guaranteed. This concept of guaranteed salvation through a statement of faith, leads me to ask on simple question: “Why do I need to be baptized?”

Returning to Saint John’s Gospel (John 3:5), Jesus speaks of being “born again.” We understand this new birth, through water and spirit, as an invitation to join the family of God. Baptism is a spiritual birth which connects us to a new family - God’s family. Through Baptism we become God’s adopted children. Jesus becomes our brother. His Father becomes Our Father. His mother becomes our mother. The “regeneration” of Baptism also means we become a new person. This is why we are never “re-baptized”. Baptism, like Holy Orders, leaves an indelible mark upon our soul. Once I am a child of God, I never cease being a child of God. I may choose to live a life unworthy of the gift of being His child, but I will not ever stop being His child. It is this relationship formed through water and spirit (amongst other reasons) which should motivate us to receive Baptism and want our children baptized. Let us glory today in our baptism, for we can now say with Jesus our brother - Our Father.