

2nd Sunday of Ord. Time (A)
January 14, 15, 2016
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes

(St. Athanasius) We have had several baptisms here in the parish recently. I think we will have a few more in the near future. We also celebrated the baptism of one of our school children this past week at the Thursday children's Mass.

(St. Francis) In moving some things around for Advent and Christmas environment, the baptismal font was moved from the front of church to the back of church. When I saw it first in the Reconciliation room, I thought it should have a more prominent place than 'simply out of the way' for the Christmas Season. So it ended up where you have seen it the past few weeks, right in the middle of the aisle at the entrance to church. Maybe you wondered if it wasn't in the way; or, seeking to bless yourself upon entering church, maybe you found yourself deciding 'do I dip in there, or reach around to dip in one of the usual smaller containers of holy water'.

All this was in mind as I studied the Scriptures for this Sunday. We are back into Ordinary Time, and we are beginning a whole new cycle of Scriptures, focusing on the Gospel of St. Mark. Reading the baptismal account in Mark, the vocational call of Isaias to be more than a mere 'servant of the Lord', as well as St. Paul's words about being sanctified in the Lord, it seemed as if some reflection on Baptism would be important and even helpful for today's homily.

During the baptisms here recently, we have joined individual families in the celebration of this Sacrament; hopefully we have shared in the excitement and joy of these families as they brought their children to the font of new life. But have we thought about our own baptism, and what it is for us?

At St. Francis, Barclay the baptismal font is currently at the very entrance to the church. It is directly in the middle of the aisle. You can't actually get into the church easily without noticing it, and even without walking around it. That is as it should be. Theologically, we can't get into any church without baptism. Without Baptism we are not part of the Church. Going even further into theology and the mystery of God, we can have no part of Jesus, and Jesus has no claim on us, without Baptism. It is the entree to the Kingdom of God, and to God Himself. This is why Jesus himself submitted to Baptism. It was not that he needed the forgiveness of sin for himself, but it was to identify with our human nature, and our need for Baptism. In Baptism we become infused with the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Confirmation deepens that gift of the Spirit in us, but it all begins in Baptism. Without Baptism, our immersion into Christ does not exist.

Listen to the blessing over the water. and some of the other prayers.

“Father, look now with love upon your Church, and unseal for her the fountain of baptism. By the power of the Spirit give to the water of this font the grace of your Son.”

“You created man in your own likeness: cleanse him from sin in a new birth to innocence by water and the Spirit.”

“We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life.”

We ask the parents of a child You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith..... Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

When the white garment is placed You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity.

On Mass days, the school children wear white shirts a great sign of their white baptismal garment.

I do not mean that through Baptism we become Christ Himself, but we are indeed brought into Christ in a way that we never were. And as a result of our Baptism we are meant to live our lives in Christ. We are immersed into Christ, both his death and his resurrection, as the waters are poured over our heads. It would really be best if we could be actually 'immersed into a large font in some churches (worship spaces) that is possible. And then we are anointed (CHRISTENED) with the Oil of Chrism ... sealed like Jesus *“as Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.”*

Baptism is life changing in every way. In Baptism we are called to live in Christ – we are called to witness to Christ. We are formed to be part of Christ's mission/work. At the end of Mass we hear “We have celebrated these mysteries; we go to live them now loving and serving the Lord.”

And when we live faithfully, we proceed on to the Table of Eucharist to be fed.

And when we mess up, we turn the other way to be Reconciled. We dip again in the font.

Before we do either, we bless ourselves, which reminds us that we are indeed part of Jesus, anointed as Christian.

Think about it this week: St. Paul says, *“....to the Church of God that is in Jesus, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..... Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* And we say, “Thanks be to God!”