



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: The Profession of Faith
One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins – Part II



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Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists represent a rather broad background in catechesis gained in support of various parishes as well as a variety of age and spiritual interest groups. So, welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

During Part I of our discussion of “One **Baptism** for the Forgiveness of Sins,” I wrote down several key words and phrases as we walked through scripture. These included: water, Spirit, removal of impurities, removal of sin which separates us from God, repentance, and forgiveness of sins.

Through segments of scripture, such as Leviticus 16:4, Ezekiel 36:23-27, Psalm 51:3-9; we see a progression as to the use of water to purify, God's cleansing of the sins which separate us from

Him, and the placement of a new Spirit; God's Spirit. In Psalm 51, we observe King David's contrite lament to God and David's request to be cleansed with hyssop (a small shrub whose twigs were used to sprinkle water during Jewish rites of purification) so that David could be cleansed of his sin and washed of his guilt so David could be made pure by God. We also discussed scripture in relation to John the **Baptist** and how he was sent to **baptize** with water, but that he was also sent to herald the way for One greater than John, One who would **baptize** with the Holy Spirit.

So, at the conclusion of our discussion, I asked our panel and our listeners to prepare for today's discussion by reflecting on the scripture we reviewed and the relationships we might observe concerning the cleansing properties of water, why we cleanse in relation to that which is sacred, the meaning of a contrite heart, the meaning of repentance, the blessings and power of the Spirit, what it means to believe in the Word made flesh, and the meaning to us as to the forgiveness of sins.

Last time, we only had the opportunity to open scripture, but today, we will also take a look into the Catechism of the Catholic Church to examine how it guides us in our understanding of **baptism** and its meaning to our **faith**.

(CCC: 1213) Holy **Baptism** is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), 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 and in the word.**"

(Question 1: Here, we see **baptism** referenced as "...the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. As we reflect upon what we experience with **baptism**, in what ways does the sacrament fit this description?)

(CCC: 1214) This sacrament is called **Baptism**, after the central rite by which it is carried out: to **baptize** (Greek baptizein) means to "plunge" or "immerse"; the "plunge" into the water symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as "a new creature."

25 I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them.

(Ezekiel 36:23-27)

17 So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

(Question 2: Considering this paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the scripture from both the Old and the New Testaments, in what ways does **baptism** make us a new creature and what meaning does this have for us?)

(CCC 1216) “This bath is called enlightenment, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding” Having received in Baptism the Word, “the true light that enlightens every man,” the person baptized has been “enlightened,” he becomes a “son of light,” indeed, he becomes “light” himself:

[St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote:] **Baptism** is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift. . . . We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because sin is buried in the water; anointing for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God’s Lordship.

4 John [the] **Baptist** appeared in the desert proclaiming a **baptism** of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4)

7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his **baptism**, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. (Matthew 3:7-8)

(Question 3: In this paragraph of the Catechism, we see **baptism** described as enlightenment, but as John the **Baptist** greets the Pharisees and Sadducees, we see much darker words, such as “Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” In what ways do we believe **baptism** transforms us from the darkness of sin to enlightenment?)

6 A man named John was sent from God. 7 He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might **believe** through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. (John 1:6-9)

(CCC: 1219) The Church has seen in Noah’s ark a prefiguring of salvation by **Baptism**, for by it “a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water”:

(Question 4: In this paragraph of the Catechism, we observe a reference to Noah's ark as prefiguring of salvation by **Baptism**. What meaning does this analogy carry to us?)

19 In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, 20 who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. 21 This prefigured **baptism**, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but 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.
(1 Peter 3:19-22)

(CCC: 1231) Where **infant Baptism** has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after **Baptism**, but also for the necessary flowering of **baptismal** grace in personal growth. The catechism has its proper place here.

(Question 5: In this paragraph of the Catechism, infant **baptism** is mentioned. Catholics are often criticized for infant **baptism**. Indeed, when we see in 1 Peter 3:21, that **baptism** is “*an appeal to God for a clear conscience,*” how is it that an infant, still unable to speak and without the multitude of sins that are likely carried by a mature adult, can make such an appeal to God?)

(CCC: 1250) Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant **Baptism**. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer **Baptism** shortly after birth.

(CCC: 1251) Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.

(CCC: 1252) The practice of infant **Baptism** is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole “households” received **baptism**, infants may also have been **baptized**.

*14 One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. 15 After she and her household had been **baptized**, she offered us an invitation, “If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home,” and she prevailed on us. (Acts 16:14-15)*

*30 Then he [the jailer of the prison in which Paul and Silas were held] brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 And they said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved.**” 32 So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. 33 He took them in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds; then he and all his family were **baptized** at once. 34 He brought them up into his house and provided a meal and with his household rejoiced at having come to **faith in God.** (Acts 16:30-34)*

*8 Crispus, the synagogue official, came to **believe** in the Lord along with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians who heard **believed** and were **baptized**. (Acts 18:8)*

16 (I [Paul] **baptized the household of Stephanas** also; beyond that I do not know whether I **baptized** anyone else.) (1 Corinthians 1:16)

(CCC: 1257) **The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation.** 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.**

5 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)

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 behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”** (Matthew 28:19-20)

16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)

(Question 6: In this paragraph of the Catechism, we are told, God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments. What does this mean, that God, Himself, is not bound by His sacraments?)

39 Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” 40 The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? 41 And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” 42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” 43 He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:39-43)

(CCC: 1259) For catechumens who die before their **Baptism**, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament.

(CCC: 1260) “Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that **the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery.”** Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, **but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.**

(CCC: 1261) As regards children who have died without **Baptism**, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them," allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without **Baptism**. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy **Baptism**.

13 And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." 16 Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them. (Mark 10:13-16)

(Question 7: In paragraph 1260 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it says, "It may be supposed that such persons would have desired **Baptism** explicitly if they had known its necessity." What does it say to God if we are aware of the grace of **baptism**, but do not avail ourselves of it? What does it say if parents neglect the opportunity for their children?")

*36 Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" 38 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 will receive the gift of the holy Spirit." 39 For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." 40 He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were **baptized**, and about three thousand persons were added that day. (Acts 2:36-41)*

(Question 8: As Peter opened the eyes of those who supported the crucifixion of Jesus, scripture says they were cut to the heart, meaning that once they realized the injustice, they were sorrowful and regretted their part in it, so they asked the question, "What are we to do?" What do we learn from Paul's response; "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?")

(CCC: 1254) For all the **baptized**, children or adults, faith must grow after **Baptism**. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of **baptismal** promises. Preparation for **Baptism** leads only to the threshold of new life. **Baptism** is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

(CCC: 1255) For the grace of **Baptism** to unfold, the parents' help is important. (See CCC: 1231) So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly **baptized**—child or adult—on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function (*officium*). The whole ecclesial

community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at **Baptism**.

(CCC: 1263) By **Baptism** all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

(CCC: 1264) Yet certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the **baptized**, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls concupiscence, or metaphorically, “the tinder for sin” (*fomes peccati*); since concupiscence “is left for us to wrestle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent but manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ.” Indeed, “an athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

(Question 9: As we review these paragraphs of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and our previous discussion, we see that **baptism** brings us to a threshold. What is that threshold and what remains before us after this new birth of Spirit?)

(CCC: 1266) 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; — giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit; — allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues. Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in **Baptism**.

Quotes:

The rediscovery of the value of one's **baptism** is the basis of the missionary commitment of every Christian, because we see in the Gospel that he who lets himself be fascinated by Christ cannot do without witnessing the joy of following in his footsteps... we understand even more that, in virtue of **baptism**, we have an inherent missionary vocation. – *Pope Benedict XVI*

Their example gives witness to the fact that **baptism** commits Christians to participate boldly in the spread of the Kingdom of God, cooperating if necessary with the sacrifice of one's own life... This martyrdom of ordinary life is a particularly important witness in the secularized societies of our time. It is the peaceful battle of love that all Christians, like Paul, have to fight tirelessly; the race to spread the Gospel that commits us until death. May Mary, Queen of Martyrs and Star of Evangelization, help us and assist us in our daily witness.
– *Pope Benedict XVI*

Wicked sons do not have the Holy Ghost in the same way as do beloved sons, and yet they do have **Baptism**. So, too, heretics do not have the Church as Catholics have, even though they have **Baptism**. – *Saint Augustine*

Baptism does not profit a man outside unity with the Church ... For many heretics also possess this Sacrament but not the fruits of salvation ... The benefits which flow from **Baptism** are necessarily fruits which belong to the true Church alone. Children **Baptized** in other communions cease to be members of the Church when, after reaching the age of reason, they make formal profession of heresy, as, for example, by receiving communion in a non-Catholic Church. – *Saint Augustine*

Final Thoughts:

During the course of our discussion, we saw in scripture the role of water and Spirit. We observed the purificatory properties of water. We discussed the relationships of removal of impurities and the removal of sin which separates us from God. We discussed the meaning of repentance, the forgiveness of sins and a new birth in the Spirit. We reflected on the statement of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that baptism is “the gateway to life in the Spirit..., and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.”

In this discussion, we see **baptism** is a new beginning, a new birth from above through which we may receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a sacrament over which we may rejoice, but in our rejoicing, we must be prepared to tend to the moments which shall come; moments of learning and moments of temptation.

As we open the door to Christian life through **baptism**, we must not be complacent. We must continue in our learning as to what God asks of us. If we are parents, we are not only responsible for our journey, but also the journey of the life we brought into the world and entrusted to us by God, or the life for which we have assumed responsibility if we are adoptive parents. Sponsors and Godparents of those who are **baptized** have a responsibility as well, for such titles are not merely honorary, but an opportunity to help fulfill the second of the greatest commandments in honor of the first, for as we care for God's creation, we demonstrate our love for Him as well.

For those of us who are **baptized**, it is our role, then, to look to what is from above so we may care for one another and encourage one another to do with is right and just and with the blessings of love. **Baptism** is a grace. Let us receive it and in so doing, let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide us so the will of God may be fulfilled through us.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: The Profession of Faith: Resurrection of the Dead and Life of the World to Come.