



The Armor of Faith

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



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:

Last time we discussed the portion of the Profession of Faith where we express our belief in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. We spoke about Matthew 16:18-19, where Jesus stated, *And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.* We discussed how these verses of scripture are a stumbling block for denominations whose founders are not Jesus Christ, because this scripture reveals that it is Christ Himself who is the founder of His church. We mentioned that while

there are those who try to interpret away the meaning of this scripture, there is no denying that Jesus Christ is the founder of His church and that it is this church in which we should seek membership as Jesus promised, “*the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.*” (Matthew 16:19)

As we endeavor to discern how scripture guides us as members of the church Christ built upon Peter, I mentioned we should not only look at the individual verse of scripture for meaning, but we must look at the greater context in which the scripture exists. To reinforce the meaning of this scripture, we must also look to the behavior we observe in subsequent scripture, for example, the role of Peter (Acts 15:7). We must also look at history and the efforts of the Apostles and the early church to accomplish what Jesus commissioned His disciples to do, when He said to them, “*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 28:19-20)

Even during the early days of the church, there were disagreements as to what eyes observed and what ears comprehend, but these questions were discussed, debated, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter performed the first responsibilities of the church, to share the truth to which the Holy Spirit testifies (Acts 15:7, 1 John 5:6) Through scripture and the evangelization of the Apostles to the nations and the generations, what has been brought to our day is the fullness of the faith we profess.

So, today, we turn our discussion to the **one baptism for the forgiveness of sin**. In a previous discussion, Dan asked about the history of **baptism**, which is a great place for us to start. So, let's take a look.

We, of course, recognize the **baptism** of which John the **Baptist** spoke, however, what Dan was getting to is where we might find the roots of **baptism** prior to John. The first question we might ask is whether we find **baptism** in the Old Testament? The answer is, not the word itself, but that does not mean we do not find practices which we might view as precursors to our understanding of **baptism**.

The Jews used the cleansing properties of water as part of their rituals of purification. Let's look at an example in the book of Leviticus:

4 He [Aaron] shall wear the sacred linen tunic, with the linen pants underneath, gird himself with the linen sash and put on the linen turban. But since these vestments are sacred, he shall not put them on until he has first bathed his body in water.
(Leviticus 16:4)

(Question 1: As we read this verse, we see water used to first bathe the body prior to donning sacred vestments. What relationship might we observe as to the purpose of water in this case and the use of water associated with **baptism**?)

23 But I will show the holiness of my great name, desecrated among the nations, in whose midst you desecrated it. Then the nations shall know that I am the LORD—oracle

of the Lord GOD—when through you I show my holiness before their very eyes. 24 I will take you away from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back to your own soil. 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)

(Question 2: In this example, we see reference to the Lord sprinkling clean water over the chosen nation of Israel to cleanse them of their impurities. What relationship do we observe here of God's use of water in relation to our understanding of **baptism**?)

3 *Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love;
in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.*

4 *Thoroughly wash away my guilt;
and from my sin cleanse me.*

5 *For I know my transgressions;
my sin is always before me.*

6 *Against you, you alone have I sinned;
I have done what is evil in your eyes
So that you are just in your word,
and without reproach in your judgment.*

7 *Behold, I was born in guilt,
in sin my mother conceived me.*

8 *Behold, you desire true sincerity;
and secretly you teach me wisdom.*

9 *Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

(Psalm 51:3-9)

(Question 3: This is the song of David after Nathan brought David to the attention of the sin David had committed. For what do we see David asking God and for what purpose? How might this be related to our understanding of **baptism**?)

A voice proclaims:

*In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!*
(Isaiah 4:30)

(Isaiah 4:30 NABRE Footnote: A description of the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem (Zion). The language used here figuratively describes the way the exiles will take. The Lord leads them, so their way lies straight across the wilderness rather than along the well-watered routes usually followed from Mesopotamia to Israel. Matthew 3:3 and gospel parallels adapt these verses to the witness of John the **Baptizer** to Jesus.)

*1 In those days John the **Baptist** appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea 2 [and] saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 3 It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said:*

*“A voice of one crying out in the desert,
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.’”*

*4 John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him 6 and were being **baptized** by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. (Matthew 3:1-6)*

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ [the Son of God]. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*“Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*

*3 A voice of one crying out in the desert:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.’”*

(Mark 1:1-3)

(Question 4: As we encounter the first mention of the word, “**baptism**” in the New Testament, we observe a reference to John the **Baptist**. What do these first verses of scripture which reference John the **Baptist** reveal to us and how do they relate to the scripture we discussed from the Old Testament?)

(Matthew 3:6 NABRE Footnote: Ritual washing was practiced by various groups in Palestine between 150 B.C. and A.D. 250. John’s **baptism** may have been related to the purificatory washings of the Essenes at Qumran.)

*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. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Matthew 3:7-12)*

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

(Question 5: Here, we see John the **Baptist** instructing the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to “his **baptism**.” What do we learn from this segment of scripture and the meaning of **baptism**?)

*13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be **baptized** by him. 14 John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be **baptized** by you, and yet you are coming to me?” 15 Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. 16 After Jesus was **baptized**, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. 17 And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)*

(Question 6: As we read about the **baptism** of Jesus, John brings to our attention that Jesus has no need for **baptism**. As we reflect on this scripture, why do we think John said what he did and why did Jesus respond to John to “*Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness?* What do we observe happening in this moment?”)

(Matthew 3:14 NABRE Footnote: This dialogue, peculiar to Matthew, reveals John’s awareness of Jesus’ superiority to him as the mightier one who is coming and who will **baptize** with the holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). His reluctance to admit Jesus among the sinners whom he is **baptizing** with water is overcome by Jesus’ response. To fulfill all righteousness: in this gospel to fulfill usually refers to fulfillment of prophecy, and righteousness to moral conduct in conformity with God’s will. Here, however, as in Matthew 5:6; 6:33, righteousness seems to mean the saving activity of God. To fulfill all righteousness is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race. This involves Jesus’ identification with sinners; hence the propriety of his accepting John’s **baptism**.)

1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6 What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born from above.’” (John 3:1-7)

(John 3:3 NABRE Footnote: “From above:” the Greek adverb *anōthen* means both “from above” and “again.” Jesus means “from above” (see John 3:31) but Nicodemus misunderstands it as “again.” This misunderstanding serves as a springboard for further instruction.)

(Question 7: Here, as explained in the footnote, we see a bit of a challenge in communication. Jesus uses an adverb with double meaning. Nicodemus apparently chooses the wrong meaning,

so Jesus clarifies. Given what we have already discussed about water and Spirit, what do we believe Jesus is saying, and what is the nature of this water and Spirit of which Jesus speaks?)

*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 He is the one of whom I said, ‘A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.’ 31 I did not know him, but the reason why I came **baptizing** with water was that he might be made known to Israel.” 32 John testified further, saying, “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. 33 I did not know him, but the one who sent me to **baptize** with water told me, ‘On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will **baptize** with the holy Spirit.’ 34 Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.” (John 1:29-34)*

(**Question 8:** As we reflect on this scripture, we see references to sin, water, and the Holy Spirit. What appears to be the relationship of the three and how might this help us understand the explanation of Jesus to Nicodemus?)

*15 He said to them, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. 16 Whoever **believes** and is **baptized** will be saved; whoever does not **believe** will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)*

(**Question 9:** This scripture appears at the conclusion of the book of Mark. It is part of what Jesus spoke to the Apostles as He commissioned them to go and preach the gospel. What are the relationships we see in these two versus of scripture, and what does that relationship reveal to us about salvation?)

14 And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

*16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him might not perish but might have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever **believes** in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not **believe** has already been condemned, because he has not **believed** in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)*

Quotes:

The Lord was **Baptized**, not to be cleansed Himself, but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of **Baptism**.
– St. Ambrose of Milan

By **Baptism** we are made flesh of the Crucified – Pope St. Leo the Great

If, therefore, there is any grace in the water, it is not from the nature of water but from the Spirit's presence there. – St. Basil the Great, Doctor of the Church, c. 375 A.D.

Every **baptized** person should consider that it is in the womb of the Church where he is transformed from a child of Adam to a child of God. – *St. Vincent Ferrer*

The soul is regenerated in the sacred waters of **baptism** and thus becomes God's child.
– *St. Maximilian Kolbe*

No one can begin a new life, unless he repent of the old. – *St. Augustine, Doctor of the Church*

Just as a man cannot live in the flesh unless he is born in the flesh, even so a man cannot have the spiritual life of grace unless he is born again spiritually. This regeneration is effected by **Baptism**: "Unless a man is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5) – *St. Thomas Aquinas*

Final Thoughts:

So, unless you are a first time listener, you may have noticed that we typically use both scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as the foundations of our discussion. Today, you may have noticed, we only discussed our observations from scripture. That should probably be a clue that there is more to discuss as we study and reflect upon the meaning of **baptism**, not only in relation to our **faith**, but also to the leading of our lives and the life to come.

During part II of our discussion concerning our belief in **one baptism for the forgiveness of sins**, we will look at what the Catechism reveals to us. In preparation of that discussion, let us reflect upon the scripture we reviewed today 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 of the forgiveness of sins.

Wrap Up: Well, another hour has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up part II of our discussion of **one baptism for the forgiveness of sins**.

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: One Baptism for the Forgiveness of Sins – Part II.