



From A Bishop's Journal (655)

What do You Say about Your Baptism? (1)

Imboldened myself to ask a few persons who had followed a session on baptism ministry to write a short testimony on what baptism means to them. I thank them for the time they took and the readiness they showed. What follow are four of these testimonies.

Witnesses of Jesus

I am from a Catholic family of 13 children. I am the 11th in the family, and the 7th daughter. The family was very poor but full of affection and love. I imagine that I was not really wanted because of the number of children, but God wanted me for His child. My parents chose to have me baptised so that I would have a place for God in my heart and be a witness of Jesus. I thank the Lord for giving me the strong faith I now have, to strengthen me in times of trial. I am proud to have been baptised and to be a practising Catholic. I am always ready to receive the Lord's kindnesses and blessings, in my daily life. The door to my heart is widely open, so that I may share my love and be open to the peace I want for those I love. I love giving and being of service to others, and taking part in the pastoral work. - Fernande Albert

An Open Door on Hope

I am certain that my parents had only one objective, from the time of my birth: to give me the best of themselves. I have received very much. For people of their time, they had very specific values. A good education was a priority, and my parents sacrificed a lot so as to offer me instruction that many youth in my milieu could never have. However, I can affirm that the first responsible act they had at heart was that of my baptism. Living as a child of light allows one to experience wonderful things. And this was their greatest gift. I have always tried to make choices – at times quite difficult – to respond to this deep feeling of belonging to the Christian family I belong to. I am convinced that despite all my weaknesses, God welcomes me into His life. Being a Christian fills me with hope. Baptism identifies my faith in Christ. I believe that he enlightens and guides me by his Word which, to me, is truly light. My baptism was the first gift I received, the greatest one, the most meaningful, the one which makes me aware that whatever happens, I shall never be alone. In other words, for me, baptism is an open door to hope. - Claudette Babineau

Everything is Possible

I was lucky to be raised in a Christian family, and I am most grateful for it, today. However, when I reached adulthood, I abandoned all religious practise. One cannot hurry the moment of spiritual awakening! Even God our Father leaves us free. In my case, I had to go through many trials to reach God, my final goal. I come from God and shall return to Him. When I have come to Him and asked for His help, He reached out His hand. I had no fear of Him, I asked Him for a guide, the Holy Spirit. Everything is possible to the believer, “less difficult for the one who hopes, easier for the one who loves, and easier still for the one who perseveres in the practise of these three virtues” (Narihira). Here is how I live out my baptism in daily life: I thank God for being there for me, and I always ask Him to send me the Holy Spirit to guide me. I still make mistakes, but I am proud to be on the right path, I feel this in the deepest recesses of my heart. And we cannot go wrong when we follow our hearts. - Léda Babineau

Committing Myself Still Further

My baptism is at the basis of my entire life as a Christian. It is, so to say, the door to the other sacraments. I would not have been able to receive any of them without first being baptised. I know that I could be saved without baptism, but I could never have been a Christian, without it. It is through baptism that we are introduced to the Church, sign of the Father’s welcome into the great family of the children of God, and disciples of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple of Jesus means partaking in his royal, prophetic, and priestly mission, and following him against all opposition, like him and in his name, in order to eventually share in his life for eternity. Through baptism you are forever a member of Jesus Christ. I have lately learned that the word “baptise” did not have an exclusively religious connotation, in the days of Jesus: it simply meant “to immerse.” it is with this meaning that in an ancient text, the term is used in reference to an old tub of a boat which its owner pulled out to sea, to sink it. It is our own old tub, our self-centred, materialistic ego that Christ asks us to abandon and sink at sea. I realise that being baptised means to die to myself so as to adopt a new life, a new model, and new values. When the Apostle Paul writes to us about putting on Christ, this is what it means to act as a baptised person. It means to see the world with new eyes, to love as he loves, to show concern for the weak and the deprived, and to live for them as he himself gave us the example. To be baptised means to be critical of one’s way of acting, it is a refusal to encourage the exploitation of workers by multinationals, just for the sake of saving a few pennies. Being baptised means encouraging fair trade. Being baptised means to take care of the poor among us without ever forgetting that they, too, are rich compared to the immense poverty of third-world countries. Many people tell me that we have our own poor to look after. When will we have to begin giving like Christ demands of us? When we no longer have a single poor person, a single handicapped person, a single sick child, a single person dying of cancer, a single illiterate person, a single sick person in our hospitals... ? We may as well say – never! During that time, and on the sidelines of our rich societies, millions of these excluded will be left without the vital minimum in food and water. What does my baptism tell me? It tells me that they are my brothers and sisters in

Christ. It tells me that this injustice is unbearable, and that I must commit myself still further.
-Alfreda Bérubé

+ François Thibodeau *in*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

07-26-06