

Dear People of St. Andrew the Apostle:

Last week we began our reflection series on the Sacraments of the Church.

The Church itself is sacramental in nature because it is an external sign instituted by Christ to be a source of grace in our lives. As the people of God, we are the Church and thus we are called to live lives that are sacramental – that become a source of grace and blessing to others.



I would like to further our reflection on the Sacrament of Baptism by taking up three topics related to Baptism:

- a. Original Sin
- b. Age for Baptism
- c. Baptism and Mission

We know **Original Sin** as the “sin of Adam” that affects us all. We believe that Baptism washes the “stain” of original sin from our souls. What does that mean?



Often we think of the “sin of Adam” as eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the center of the garden. What is harder to comprehend is why thousands of years later we would all be “stained” from that sin committed in the Garden of Eden. I would like to suggest that the “sin of Adam” is multi-dimensional and not just the act of disobeying God.

- a. Where is Adam when Eve faces the temptation presented by the snake? Scripture is silent here, but it is obvious that Adam has failed to defend Eve against the temptation of evil. He is off doing his own thing and unconcerned about Eve. This lack of concern for another human’s condition is part of the concept of original sin.
- b. Both Adam and Eve fail to trust God’s word. They take matters into their own hands. They are tempted to believe that “God knows you will not die” if you eat of the forbidden fruit. And they didn’t! But their world was turned upside down. Failing to trust in God’s word, and His will for us, is part of the concept of original sin.
- c. Both Adam and Eve avoid taking responsibility for their actions. Adam tells God that “the woman you put here with me made me do it”, and Eve tells God “the serpent tempted me to do it”. Neither says to God, “I confess that I did not trust in your word and I am sorry. I take responsibility for my sin, and I ask your forgiveness”. This effort to shirk responsibility and failure to trust in God’s mercy are part of the concept of original sin.

These dimensions of original sin are ever present in our lives. We tend to ignore the needs of others, to do our own thing, to not trust in God’s word, to want to control and do things the way we think they should be done, to fail to seek God’s will, and to shirk

responsibility for our actions. Thank God that he is so slow to anger and so rich in mercy!



We are all subject to the “stain” or the effects of original sin, and the story of Adam and Even confirms for us that this has been true since the origin of our species. It is not our “fault” – it is the reality of our human nature. Baptism is necessary to free us from this condition so that we can embrace God and seek His will in our lives. Baptism is necessary for our salvation!

What is the *appropriate age for Baptism*? The New Testament suggests that when someone converted to follow Christ, not only that person but their *whole household* was baptized and brought into the Church. Their whole household would include spouses, children, slaves – anyone living in their household. Insofar as we can tell, the baptism of infants has always been a practice of the Church.

It has been argued at various points in the history of the Church that because an infant or a small child cannot consent to being Baptized, they should not be baptized. A group known as “Ana-Baptists” broke away from the Church in 1521 over this issue. Churches that grew out of this movement against infant baptism include the Baptists, the Mennonites, and the Amish, as well as some Pentecostal churches today.

However, this denies the reality that Baptism is a gift from God – He chooses who is to be baptized and we simply follow His will. If an infant is born into a baptized household, then we believe that their birthright includes the gift of Baptism. Parents promise at the Baptism to raise their child in the faith and to do everything possible for their child to come to know, love, and serve Christ. Thus their home becomes a domestic Church – a place where the Gospel is first heard, where Christian living is modeled, and where Jesus lives as an unseen guest in their household.

Pope Francis has reminded us that *Baptism calls each and every baptized person to*



engage in the ongoing mission of Jesus. Reaching out to serve others and heal the world’s hurts – in whatever way our gifts and talents would suggest we can do. This would include prayer, direct service, financial support of charitable organizations, being there for others in the midst of difficult times, AND

Engaging in activities to share the Gospel with others – engaging in evangelization. This can be as simple as inviting others to “come and see” or as difficult as door-to-door ministry. Placing a religious picture on our desk at work could result in others wanting to talk about their hurts, questions, doubts, etc. Jesus touched people in many ways and opened their hearts. He was not always successful, but he never gave up.

May God bless you all. Fr. John