

Sunday, May 22, 2011

# The sacrament of Baptism

As we live the period of the Holy Fifties, we would like to briefly talk about the sacrament of Baptism which is death and resurrection with Christ, and through it, we acquired new life.

I will talk about three focus points: the significance of Baptism, Baptism by submersion, and the Baptism of children.

## First: The significance of Baptism:

1- Through it, salvation is fulfilled:

+ *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."* (Mark 16:16).

+ *"according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."* (Titus 3:5)

+ *"While the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism."* (1 Peter 3: 20, 21)

2- Through it, we obtain regeneration through water and the Spirit:

+ *"Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3)

+ *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5)

+ *"... But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,"* (Titus 3:5)

+ *"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word"* (Ephesians 5:26)

3- Cleansing and forgiveness of sins:

+ *"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word"* (Ephesians 5:26)

+ *"... But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,"* (Titus 3:5)

+ *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* (Acts 22:16)

+ *"But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Cor. 6:11)

+ *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38)

4- It is death and burial with Christ, and resurrection with him:

+ *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:3-4)

+ *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."* (Colossians 2:12)

5- Through which we wear Christ:

+ *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal 3:27)

## Second: Why baptism is performed by submersion?

1- Because such was the Baptism of Christ, to whom glory is due. He gave us an example to follow, as the Bible said: *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water"* (Matthew 3:16)

2- Baptism is burial with Christ as the Bible said (Romans 6:6, Colossians 2:12), which cannot be burial except by submersion.

3- If Baptism was not to be done by submersion, John the Baptist would have not needed to baptize at the banks of the Jordan River, and a small amount of water anywhere would have been sufficient.

4- When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, he commanded the chariot to stand still and both of them went down to the water. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Phillip away. This is also an indication that he was submerged in water (Acts 8:36-38) and, of course, the eunuch must have had water with him in the chariot as he travelled, but it was not enough for submersion.

5- The word Baptism comes from a Greek origin that means to "dye" and dyeing can only be done by means of submersion.

## Third: Why does the church baptize children despite their lack of understanding of the nature of Baptism?

1- Because all humans have the corrupt nature as a result of Adam's sin and therefore they are all, adults and children, in need of regeneration through water and the Spirit.

2- Because of Christ himself said: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5) and therefore we have no right to deprive children from entering the kingdom because of their lack of understanding, especially since Jesus said: *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them..."* (Matthew 19:14)

3- The church followed the tradition of baptizing children since the Apostles era, as we see on the Pentecost day when St. Peter declared: *"For the promise is to you and to your children."* (Acts 2:38), also Lydia the seller of purple was baptized with her household (Acts 16:15) and the prison keeper in Philippi and his family (Acts 16:33) and the three thousand people of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). It is very unlikely that all these groups of people devoid of children.

4- One of the symbols of Baptism in the Old Testament is "crossing the Red Sea" which included children and adults. Also, "circumcision" which is a sign of entering a covenant with God, the child is circumcised on the eighth day of his birth without understanding the meaning of the covenant. Additionally, circumcision is a sign for the membership in God's people, and like so, baptism is essential for the membership of the Body of Christ.

*Fryohanna Naseef*

[fryohanna@hotmail.com](mailto:fryohanna@hotmail.com)

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL