

BAPTISM

If I were to ask most folks here what they remember of their baptism, the answer would be a “a big nada.” After all, at least in my generation children were baptized around the age of 6 weeks.

But what if I were to ask what you might remember of others’ baptisms? Memories of the baptism of a child (especially a first child) are often burned far more deeply into the memory of the parents than that of their own wedding. Sometimes the babies are robed in a gown handed down over three or four generations; sometimes the gown is new and is hoped to be the beginning of another series of “handing-down” (not at all to be confused with “hand-me-downs”!).

What about RCIA? We baptized in an “immersion-style” pool, but I can guarantee that other adults will never forget their Holy Saturday night experiences, even if they only were soaked from the neck up. Sponsors who walked with these folks for a period of months are also caught up in the occasion—it is a mixture of pride, of joy, and of prayerful hope for the neophytes.

Sometimes baptisms in hospitals (especially in ICU) can bring us to our knees. Sometimes the baptismal vessel is a Styrofoam cup, and the “garment” is a full body ice-blanket, desperately trying to lower a blistering fever. Sometimes the anointing is a tricky thing because 80% of the person’s body is covered with third-degree burns...

In all of these, perceived or not,

“...the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur”). The Spirit of God, the “Breath of Heaven” (as the Amy Grant song describes it) longs to touch us and allow us to be a vehicle of divine revelation. We were plunged (all of us) into the water, into the reality of Romans 6; we came up enfolded in the warm breast and bright wings of the Breath of Heaven.

I, for one (and don’t you, too?) long to be definitively re-wrapped in those wings! I long (as you do) to be, like Christ, “the beloved Son” in whom God is well pleased. I don’t have to see the heavens torn open; I only want to know the pleasure of His hand on me. Knowing that, He can lead me where He wills, and I know I’ll be well.