

LESSON FOURTEENTH.

ON BAPTISM.

152 Q. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians, children of God, and heirs of heaven.

“Christians,” that is, members of the Church of Christ. “Children of God,” that is, adopted children. All men are children of God by their creation, but Christians are children of God, not merely by creation, but also by grace and union with Our Lord. “Heirs of heaven.” An heir is one who inherits property, money, or goods at the death of another. These things are left by a will or given by the laws of the State, when the person dies without making a will. A will is a written statement in which a person declares what he wishes to have done, at his death, with whatever he possesses—the charitable objects or the persons to whom he wishes to leave his goods. This will is called also the last testament. It is signed by witnesses, and after the death of the testator is committed to the care of a person—called the executor—whose business it is to see that all stated in the will or testament is carried out. There is an officer in the State to take these things in hand and settle them according to law, when the amount left is large, and there is a dispute about it. You can understand better now why we call the Bible the Old and the New Testament. When Our Lord died we were left an inheritance and spiritual property. The inheritance was heaven, which we had lost through the sin of Adam and regained by the death of Our Lord. The spiritual property was God’s grace, which He merited for us. The Old Testament contains the promise of what Our Lord would leave us at His death, and the New

Testament shows that He kept His promise and did leave what He said. The Old Testament was written before He died, and the New Testament after His death. The witnesses of these testaments were the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and evangelists, who heard God making the promises through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The Church is the executor of Christ's will, and it is its business to see that all men receive what Christ left them, namely, God's grace and heaven. It must also see that they are not cheated out of it by their enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh.

153 Q. Are actual sins ever remitted by baptism?

A. Actual sins and all the punishment due to them are remitted by baptism, if the person baptized be guilty of any.

We know that baptism remits original sin. But suppose a person is not baptized till he is **twenty-five** or thirty years old; he has surely committed **some** sins since he was seven years of age—the time at which he received the use of reason. Now the question asks, Are all his sins, those he committed himself as well as the original sin, forgiven by baptism? The answer is, Yes. All his sins are forgiven, so that he has not to confess them. But he must be heartily sorry for them and have the firm determination of never committing them again, just as in confession. Moreover, that he may not have to confess these sins, we must be absolutely certain that he was never baptized before. Besides remitting the sins themselves, baptism remits all the temporal punishment due to them.

In the Sacrament of Penance the sinner is saved from the eternal punishment—that is, hell—and from part of the temporal punishment. But although the sins have been forgiven, the sinner must make satisfaction to God for the insult offered by his sins.

Therefore, he must **suffer** punishment in this world or in purgatory. We call this **punishment** temporal, because it will not last forever. You can **make this** satisfaction to God while on earth, and thus avoid much of the temporal punish-

ment by prayers, fasting, gaining indulgences, alms, and good works ; and even by bearing your sufferings, trials, and afflictions patiently, and offering them up to God in satisfaction for your sins.

In baptism both the eternal and temporal guilt are washed away; so that if a person just baptized died immediately, he would go directly to heaven, not to purgatory : because persons go to purgatory to pay off the temporal guilt. Neither could that person gain an indulgence, because indulgences are only to help us to pay the temporal debt. Neither could that person receive the Sacrament of Penance, because penance remits only sins committed after baptism, and that person had no sins to remit, because he died just after receiving baptism. See, then, the goodness of Our Lord in instituting baptism, to forgive everything and leave us as free from guilt as our first parents were when God created them.

154 Q. Is baptism necessary to salvation ?

A. Baptism is necessary to salvation, because without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Those who through no fault of theirs die without baptism, though they have never committed sin, cannot enter heaven—neither will they go to hell. After the last judgment there will be no purgatory. Where, then, will they go? God in His goodness will provide a place of rest for them, where they will not suffer and will be in a state of natural peace; but they will never see God or heaven. God might have created us for a purely natural and material end, so that we would live forever upon the earth and be naturally happy with the good things God would give us. But then we would never have known of heaven or God as we do now. Such happiness on earth would be nothing compared to the delights of heaven and the presence of God; so that now, since God has given us, through His holy revelations, a knowledge of Himself and heaven, we would be miserable if left always upon the earth. Those, then, who die without baptism do not know what they have lost, and are naturally

happy; but we who know all they have lost for want of baptism know how very unfortunate they are.

Think, then, what a terrible crime it is to wilfully allow any one to die without baptism, or to deprive a little child of life before it can be baptized! Suppose all the members of a family but one little infant have been baptized; when the day of judgment comes, while all the other members of a family—father, mother, and children—may go into heaven, that little one will have to remain out; that little brother or sister will be separated from its family forever, and never, never see God or heaven. How heartless and cruel, then, must a person be who would deprive that little infant of happiness for all eternity—just that its mother or some one else might have a little less trouble or suffering here upon earth.

155 Q. Who can administer baptism?

A. The priest is the ordinary minister of baptism; but in case of necessity any one who has the use of reason may baptize.

“Ordinary”—that is, the one who has a right to baptize and generally does; others can baptize only in case of necessity.

“Priest” and all above him—bishops, and the Pope; for they have all the power the priest has, and more besides. **“Minister”** is the name given here to one who performs any of the sacred rites or ceremonies of the Church. **“Necessity.”** When the ordinary minister cannot be had and when baptism must be given; for if it is not absolutely necessary to give the baptism, then you must wait for the ordinary minister.

“Any one.” Even persons not Catholics or not Christians may, in case of necessity, baptize a person wishing to receive baptism, if they know how to baptize and seriously wish to do what the Church of Christ does when it baptizes. You cannot baptize a person against his will. Neither can you baptize an infant whose parents are unwilling to have the child baptized, or when the child will not be brought up in

the Catholic religion. But if the child is dying, it can and should be baptized, even without the consent of the parents.

“**Use of reason.**” Because the person must intend to do what Our Lord ordered to be done in giving baptism ; and a little child could not understand, and could not therefore baptize.

156 Q. How is baptism given ?

A. Whoever baptizes should pour water on the head of the person to be baptized, and say, while pouring the water: **I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**

When the priest baptizes in the church, he uses consecrated water—that is, water blessed for that purpose on Holy Saturday, and mixed with holy oil. When he or any other, in case of necessity, baptizes in a private house, he may use plain, clean water, and he baptizes without the other ceremonies used in the church. Remember, in baptism you can use ordinary clean water, warm or cold. When the priest or any one baptizes by simply pouring the water and pronouncing the words of baptism, we call it private baptism. The baptism given in church with all the ceremonies is called solemn baptism. Any person baptized privately should be brought to the church afterwards to have the rest of the ceremonies performed.

It will increase your respect for the sacrament to know what ceremonies are used in solemn baptism, and what they signify. The following things must be prepared: the holy oils, a little salt, a little pitcher or something similar to pour the water from, a vessel to receive the water when poured, some cotton, two stoles, one white and one purple, towels, a white cloth, candle, and candlestick.

All being ready, the person holding the infant takes it on the right arm, face up, and the priest, having learned the name it is to be given, begins by asking the one to be baptized, “What do you ask of the Church of God?” And the godparents answer for the child, “Faith.” If the person

receiving baptism is capable of answering for himself, he must do so. Then the priest exhorts the child to keep the commandments and love God; then he breathes three times upon it and bids the evil spirit depart. He next prays for the child and puts a little salt into its mouth, as a sign of the wisdom that Faith gives, and again prays for the child. Then he places the end of his stole over it as a sign that it is led into the Church; for baptism is given in a place called the baptistery, railed off from the church and near the door, because formerly the ceremony up to this point was performed outside the church, and at this part of the ceremony the person was led in to be baptized. Then before baptism the person says the Creed and the Our Father; for when a grown person is to be baptized he must first be instructed in all the truths of religion, and he must say the Creed to show that he believes them. Again the priest prays and places a little spittle on the ears and nose of the child, using at the same time the words used by Our Lord when He spit upon the ground, and rubbing the spittle and clay upon the eyes of the blind man, healed him (John ix. 6). The priest next asks the child if it renounces the devil and all his works and pomps—that is, vanities and empty shows; and having received the answer anoints it with holy oil on the breast and back. Then he again asks for a profession of faith, and finally baptizes it. After baptism he anoints its head with holy chrism, places a white cloth upon it to signify the purity it received in baptism, and as a sign that it must keep its soul free from sin. Then he places in its hand a lighted candle, to signify the light of faith it has received in baptism. We are baptized at the door of the church to show that without baptism we are out of the Church. We are often signed with the sign of the cross to remind us that our salvation is due to the cross and passion of Our Lord. The priest's stole is placed over us to show that the Church takes us under its protection and shields us from the power of the devil. We are anointed as a sign that we are freed from our sins and strengthened to fight for Christ. The white cloth or garment

is placed upon us to remind us of the glory of the Resurrection ; the light is placed in our hand to show that we should burn with Christian charity.

*** 157 Q.** How many kinds of baptism are there ?

A. There are three kinds of baptism : baptism of water, of desire, and of blood.

*** 158 Q.** What is baptism of water ?

A. Baptism of water is that which is given by pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized, and saying at the same time, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

*** 159. Q.** What is baptism of desire ?

A. Baptism of desire is an ardent wish to receive baptism, and to do all that God has ordained for our salvation.

“ Ardent wish ” by one who has no opportunity of being baptized—for no one can baptize himself. He must be sorry for his sins and have the desire of receiving the baptism of water as soon as he can ; just as a person in mortal sin and without a priest to absolve him may, when in danger of death, save his soul from hell by an act of perfect contrition and the firm resolution of going to confession as soon as possible. Baptism of desire would be useful and necessary if there was no water at hand or no person to baptize ; or if the one wishing to be baptized and those about him did not know exactly how baptism was to be given—which might easily happen in pagan lands. One thing you must especially remember in giving baptism in case of necessity : namely, that it would not do for one person to pour the water and another to say the words. The same person must do both, or the baptism will not be valid. If you are called to baptize in case of necessity, be very careful to observe the following points, otherwise the baptism will not be valid : use clean water and nothing but water—no other liquid would do. Say every one of the exact words : “ I bap-

tize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It would not do to say, "I baptize thee in the name of God;" or, "I baptize thee in the name of the Blessed Trinity;" nor would it do to say simply, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," without saying, "I baptize thee." Say the words at the same time you pour the water, and be sure the water touches the skin. It would not do to pour the water simply on the hair. You must not sprinkle the water, but pour it upon the head.

When you have followed the above instructions carefully and are sure you have baptized properly, never under any circumstances repeat the baptism on the same person. It is a sin to try to baptize more than once when you know baptism can be given only once. The sight of the person dying and the fact that you are called for the first time may cause you to be somewhat excited; but be calm, remember the importance of the sacrament, and you will administer it as directed. Parents should not baptize their own children in case of necessity, if there is any other person present who can validly do it. Remember those who administer baptism contract a spiritual relationship with the person they baptize and with his parents. If they wished, years afterwards, to marry either the person they baptized or the parents of the person, they must make this relationship known to the priest.

Sponsors are not necessary in private baptism. A person may be sponsor for a child in baptism without being present at the baptism, provided some one else holds the child in his name and answers the questions he himself would answer if he were present. Such a sponsor is said to stand for the child by proxy, and he, and not the one who holds the child, is then the real godparent when, at the request of the parents or priest, he has consented to be sponsor.

*** 160 Q. What is baptism of blood?**

A Baptism of blood is the shedding of one's blood for the faith of Christ.

Baptism of blood, called martyrdom, is received by those who were not baptized with water, but were put to death for their Catholic faith. This takes place even nowadays in pagan countries where the missionaries are trying to convert the poor natives. These pagans have to be instructed before they are baptized. They do everything required of them, let us suppose, and are waiting for the day of baptism. Those who are being thus instructed are called Catechumens. Some day, while they are attending their instructions, the enemies of religion rush down upon them and put them to death. They do not resist, but willingly suffer death for the sake of the true religion. They are martyrs then and are baptized in their own blood; although, as we said above, blood would not do for an ordinary baptism even when we could not get water; so that if a person drew blood from his own body and asked to be baptized with it, the baptism would not be valid. Neither would they be martyrs if put to death not for religion or virtue but for some other reason—say political.

* 161 Q. Is baptism of desire or blood sufficient to produce the effects of baptism of water?

A. Baptism of desire or of blood is sufficient to produce the effects of the baptism of water, if it is impossible to receive the baptism of water.

* 162 Q. What do we promise in baptism?

A. In baptism we promise to renounce the devil with all his works and pomps.

* 163 Q. Why is the name of a saint given in baptism?

A. The name of a saint is given in baptism in order that the person baptized may imitate his virtues and have him for a protector.

The saint whose name we bear is called our patron saint. This saint has a special love for us and a special care over us. People take the names of great men because they admire their good qualities or their great deeds. So we take saints' names because we admire their Christian virtues and great Christian

deeds. We should, therefore, read the life of our patron saint and try to imitate his virtues, and the day on which the Church celebrates the feast of our patron saint should be a great day for us also. The Church generally celebrates the saint's feast on the day on which he died, that is, as we believe, the day on which he entered into heaven.

* 164 Q. Why are godfathers and godmothers given in baptism?

A. Godfathers and godmothers are given in baptism in order that they may promise in the name of the child what the child itself would promise if it had the use of reason.

* 165 Q. What is the obligation of a godfather and a godmother?

A. The obligation of a godfather and a godmother is to instruct the child in its religious duties if the parents neglect to do so or die.

This is a very important obligation, and we should be faithful in the fulfilment of it before God. Godfathers and godmothers are also called sponsors. The following persons cannot be sponsors: (1) All persons not Catholics, because they cannot teach the child the Catholic religion if they do not know it themselves. (2) All persons who are publicly leading bad lives; for how can they give good example and teach their godchild to be good when they themselves are public sinners? (3) All persons who are ignorant of their religion should not take upon themselves the duties of godparents. Therefore parents should select as sponsors for their children only good, practical Catholics—not Catholics merely in name, but those who live up to their faith, and who will be an example for their children. To repeat what has already been said, godparents contract a spiritual relationship, and in the event of their marriage, they must make known this relationship to the priest. The godfather and the godmother do not contract a relationship between them-

selves, but only with the child and its parents; so that neither the godfather nor the godmother could marry the child or its parents without first obtaining a dispensation; that is, permission from the Church granted by the bishop or Pope. With regard to names, parents should never be induced by any motive to give their child some foolish or fancy name taken from books, places, or things. Above all, they should never select the name of any enemy of the Church or unbeliever, but the name of one of God's saints who will be a model for the child. Whatever name is taken, if it be not a saint's name, the name of some saint should be given as a middle name. If this has been omitted in baptism, it should be supplied in confirmation, at which time a new name can be added. Again, if a saint's name has been taken in baptism it should not be shortened or changed so as to mean nothing; as, for example, Mazie, Miz, etc., for Mary. When your correct name is mentioned your saint is honored, and I might say invoked, because it should remind you of him. For that reason you should not have meaningless or foolish pet names, known only to your family or your friends.