

The Baptismal Font

... building for our future!

Message from Father Dave ...

Baptism is the first of the *Sacraments of Initiation* by which children and adults become full members of the Catholic Church. Together with *Confirmation* and *Eucharist*, the Sacrament of Baptism welcomes new members into the Body of Christ - the Church.

For Catholics, the Sacrament of Baptism is usually celebrated in the church by the parish priest or deacon. In a danger of death situation any Christian, intending to do what the Church does in baptism, can baptize. We celebrate baptism with the pouring of water and the invocation of the Blessed Trinity: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism can only be celebrated one time. The Catholic Church recognizes the baptismal celebrations of other Christian churches who use water and the words of the baptismal form in their ritual.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the "gateway" to the Sacramental life of the Church. It sets us apart and conforms us to Christ. Through Baptism we share in Jesus' *priestly, prophetic, and sovereign* mission.

Greetings! I trust that this new year finds you well. Today the Church celebrates the *Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on the Sacrament of Baptism and specifically the Baptismal Font and its place in the church. I hope this brochure will support the message of today's homily and help us all understand more fully the important role of the Sacrament of Baptism in our parish and in our lives as Christians.



"Here is reflected the mystery of the church. The church is fruitful, made holy by the blood of Christ: a bride made radiant with his glory, a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith, a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit."

Rite of Dedication of a Church, #62

The container is not the primary symbol of baptism. *Water* is poured over the one being baptized. Without water there is no baptism. Water is alive and constantly changing. Its power can create and sustain life, damage or destroy it. Water cools and refreshes, cleans and invigorates, heals the body and buries living things. It takes different forms according to our needs and the realities of nature. When water is used in our ritual prayer it brings about transformation. It signals the end of an old way of living and the beginning of a new life ... a new community and a vision of life lived eternally in heaven. Whenever we enter the church and we dip our hand into the baptismal water, we embrace this transformation again and again.

The *baptismal font* is located near the entrance of the worship space because the Sacrament of Baptism is the *gateway of the sacramental life* of Christians. It is located in proximity to the Altar - the table of the Eucharist - as a reminder that we must pass through the waters of baptism and the community of the Church to come to the table of Eucharist.

In the history of the church the shape of the baptismal font has taken many forms which are reflective of local communities and of the universal church's understanding of what is accomplished in this Sacrament. Many traditional fonts consisted of a shallow pool accessed by three steps down into the font - representing our death to Christ in baptism - and exiting with three steps - our rising to new life through the waters of baptism. In many churches, built in our Catholic tradition, the baptismal font takes a "cruciform" or cross shape.

The font in our new parish church will follow this ancient tradition. It will be a cruciform shape in reference to the name of our parish. There will be three steps leading into a shallow pool in which an adult might stand as water is poured for baptism and three steps leading out of the font and oriented toward the altar. The baptism of infants and the signing with blessed water will take place from an elevated "arm" of the cross shape. Water will flow freely as a sign of the living waters of baptism.

Other symbols associated with the Sacrament of Baptism ...

The Paschal Candle

The Paschal or "Easter" candle is the large candle which is lighted from the "new fire" blessed at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. It is lighted during the Easter Season (near the Ambo or pulpit) and also during the celebrations of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The paschal candle is also lighted during the Funeral Mass as a reminder of the baptismal dignity of the deceased. Its pride of place is near the baptismal font. The light of the paschal candle reminds us of the fact that Christ is the true light of the world which cannot be extinguished. It also hearkens back to the *pillar of fire* which guided ancient Israel from slavery to freedom through the leadership of Moses. The light of this candle also reminds Christians that it is Christ the Light who enlightens our journey through earthly life to eternal life with God.

Sacred Oils

In preparation for the celebration of baptism, adults are anointed with the *Oil of Catechumens* for strength as they ready themselves for their new way of life as Christians. In baptism, we are anointed with the *Oil of Chrism* - an aromatic mixture of oil and precious balm - as a reminder that we are sealed with the life of Christ in baptism. These Sacred Oils, together with the *Oil of the Sick*, are blessed and consecrated by our Bishop each year at the *Mass of Chrism* during Holy Week. These same Oils are carried from that Mass in the Cathedral and presented to parish for the sacramental life of our community in the coming year. These Sacred Oils are to be kept in a special vault or *ambry* which can be located near the baptismal font.

Why is the font so important?

It is clear, in the teaching of the church, that the Baptismal font is a sign of our belief in the importance of baptism in the Christian life. A significant font reminds of the reality of our baptismal call each time we pass by it, each time we take its water, each time we baptize. If the Sacrament of Baptism is the "gateway of the Sacraments", then the font of baptism should be a noble and fitting symbol of this reality for us.

When the Bishop dedicates our new parish church, he will sprinkle the walls, the altar, and the people with water blessed at our new font. After the sprinkling with blessed water he will say ...

"May God, the Father of mercies,
dwell in this house of prayer.
May the grace of the Holy Spirit cleanse us,
for we are the temple of his presence."

Prayer for the building of our new Church

God and Father of us all,
you have created all things through your Son, Jesus Christ,
the cornerstone of your Church.

Through the gift of your eternal wisdom
guide and direct us as we build our new church:
a temple dedicated to your eternal glory
and a home for all who seek to worship you
in spirit and in truth.

Grant that our may progress day by day to its successful completion.
Shaped anew by your grace may we, like living stones,
be built into a spiritual house
to offer you our sacrifice of praise.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Remember ...

"Meet the Architects"

Sunday, January 27th, 2008

4:00 p.m.

**Holy Cross Church
(Parish Hall)**

View the plans, hear the presentation, enjoy the company of fellow parishioners and warm yourself with some hot chocolate!