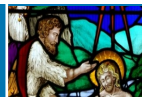




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THE POWER OF BAPTISM: A Living-out of Our Christian Faith and Identity



Welcome to the second edition of *The Brother-to-Brother Disciple*, the new-look newsletter of Brother-to-Brother Ministries.

Our hope is to make this an informative and useful tool to help our readers grow in their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.

What is Brother-to-Brother Ministries about?

We are a Catholic evangelization ministry dedicated to evangelizing Catholic men. Our mission is to form men in their Catholic faith and provide them with the knowledge and skills to help them form other men in their Catholic faith. We do this through:

1. A one-to-one discipling process that utilizes the Bible and time-honored Catholic resources.
2. Workshops where we help men understand what it means to be an active Christian leader and teach them the one-to-one discipling process.

By Rick Lentz

The week before Christmas, at morning mass, the priest's homily was on the power of our baptism. His homily consisted of three questions:



1. Do you understand the power of your baptism?
2. Do you understand how to access that power?
3. Do you understand how to use that power?

He never answered the questions; rather, the questions were for our reflection and contemplation.

As I reflected on the questions and re-read the section on the Sacrament of Baptism in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, I began to understand that you had to look at each part of the Sacrament of Baptism with fresh eyes. It is only when you look at what occurs during each part of the sacrament, that you can discern the power of baptism for your life.

The sign of the cross. The sign of the cross marks you with the imprint of Christ and signifies the grace of redemption won for us by Christ's death on the cross (CCC 1235).

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REFLECTION ON

Psalm 8:4
(RSV-CE)

By Rick Lentz

While praying Psalm 8 during *Morning Prayer* on a recent Saturday morning, verse 4, "what is man that you should keep him in mind, mortal man that you should care for him?" seemed to leap off the page. As my spiritual director and I had been discussing the need for me to spend more time in contemplative prayer, I went back to the verse after finishing *Morning Prayer*.

I asked God, "Who am I that you should keep me in

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REFLECTION ON

Psalm 8:4 (RSV-CE)

mind, a mortal man that you should care for me?" The first thought the Holy Spirit brought to my mind was verse 5, "Yet you have made him little less than the angels, and you have crowned him with glory and honor." This gave me more to ponder as I sat and listened to God and later as I drove to morning Mass. I arrived at the church and went to a pew, knelt in prayer, and again asked God, "Who am I that you should keep me in mind, a mortal man that you should care for me?" I then looked up at the Crucifix behind the altar and heard the following thought in my mind, "I care for you and died for you because you are precious in my sight" (Isaiah 43:5). At that moment with tears in my eyes, I was totally humbled before God.

Almost two weeks later, I am still pondering Psalm 8:4 and how wonderful it is to be loved by God.



THE POWER OF BAPTISM

The oil of catechumens. When anointed with the oil of catechumens, we are liberated from sin and Satan and sealed for Christ. This prepares you to confess *the faith of the church* with which you will be "entrusted" by Baptism (CCC 1237).

The baptismal water and the Holy Spirit. By the prayer of consecration, the Holy Spirit is sent upon the water so the baptized person may be "born of the water and the Spirit" in accordance with John 3:5 (CCC 1238). When you are immersed in the water three times or the water is poured over your head three times, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it signifies and brings about actual death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ (CCC 1239).

Anointing with the sacred chrism. The anointing with the sacred chrism signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to you, the newly baptized. You are now a Christian and incorporated into the body of Christ who is priest, prophet, and king (CCC 1241).

The white garment and the candle. The white garment signifies that you have "put on Christ"; you have risen with Christ to new life (Galatians 3:27). The candle you receive, that was lit from the Easter candle, signifies you are to be "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14; Philippians 2:15) (CCC 1243).

The bottom line is that we have the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit with us at all times. This power can keep us free of sin and help us to make correct moral choices. The next question is "How do I access that power?"

Accessing and using the power of our baptism

Accessing the power of your baptism requires prayer. In your prayer, you share your needs, desires, trials, and fears with God. You must listen to the Father/Son/Holy Spirit so you can receive the guidance you need. Some of the time, you may "hear" God's answer; at other times, especially during trials or temptations, you have to trust God "will provide a way of escape so you may be able to endure it" (1Cor 10:13). Let me provide an example:

As soon as I become aware of the temptation to sin, I ask for God's help, the intercession of our Blessed Mother, and my guardian angel to prevent me from giving into the temptation; to help me focus on Christ. Whatever the temptation to sin may be, I often say the following in imitation of Christ, "Get thee behind me Satan." This helps me focus on the fact that as a baptized Christian, I have the power of Christ in me to defeat Satan. The problem all of us run into is that we forget to call on this power. This does not mean you or I alone can defeat Satan; it means that when we turn to Christ for help, He will defeat Satan for us. Another thing to do is to begin praying and thanking God for deliverance from the temptation. Again, this takes your focus from yourself and the temptation and puts it on Christ.

Another aid is to ask our brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for us. I have personally experienced the benefits of the intercessory prayer of by brothers and sisters in Christ and have seen the effects my prayers have had in the lives of others.

These techniques of prayer will work in all areas of one's life not just in the areas of temptation. We often have choices to make and prayer can help us access the power of our baptism to make correct choices.. Finally, learning to access and use the power of our baptism will help to become the self-giving, life-giving servant God is calling us to be. I do not mean to imply it is easy, but it is always possible.

Perhaps someone will ask, since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the [Catholic] Church's interpretation? For this reason—because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters.... Therefore, it is very necessary. On account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation (Notebooks 2:4-6).

St. Vincent of Lerins (ca. A.D. 434)

Good Reading

BOOKS

Open Mind, Faithful Heart: Reflections on Following Jesus
Pope Francis

The Fathers Know Best: Your Essential Guide to the Teachings of the Early Church
Jimmy Akin

Crossing the Tiber: Evangelical Protestants Discover the Historical Church
Stephen K. Ray

Philothea: An Introduction to the Devout Life
St. Francis de Sales

PAPAL WRITINGS

Quod Apostolici Muneris: On Socialism
Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, 1878

Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World
Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 1975

BROTHER-TO-BROTHER MINISTRIES

PO Box 26537
Colorado Springs, CO 80936

Tel: 1-719-650-3261

BrotherToBrotherMinistries.com

Meet the Team

Rick Lentz - Executive Director,
Mentor, Speaker
Dennis Speer - Secretary, Speaker
Bob Tomlinson - Treasurer, Speaker
Dennis McCormack - Board Member
Terry Vice - Board Member
Mario Dance - Board Member
Jim Arlien - Webmaster, Newsletter