

Lyceum 131 - January 29, 2026 – a forum to Think, Discuss, Share, and Learn from one another. Your input is welcomed - Iron sharpens iron.

Neighborhood “The 1826, in Connecticut, a farmer named Josiah Holbrook started a school for ‘the general diffusion of knowledge and raising the moral and intellectual taste’ of Americans. In those days, the opportunities for higher education were limited to those venerable old universities that had long served the upper crust. Holbrook’s vision was to make learning – practical, liberal, and humane – available to working people of all kinds. He named his school the Lyceum, after the garden where Aristotle once taught his students philosophy.... We need to go deeper than the superficial fights that characterize public life. We need to return to the first principles and meet each other there as human beings.” – Nathan Beacom, Plough Magazine, Autumn 2023, p. 9.

During our spirituality discussion group which gathers on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at Resurrection parish, I asked for feedback on diverse topics we could discuss, and sacraments were one of them. So, I thought sacraments would also be appropriate for the Lyceum forum as well. Therefore, I will feature a sacrament each Thursday for the next 7 weeks beginning today, and thus available for discussion with the members of the spirituality group. Note: Regarding the sacraments, some of the materials I have used before in other writings and have been published in various journals over the years since 1983.

-Roger J. Vanden Busch, baptized January 4, 1941. Yearly, celebrate the month, year, and date of your sacramental life.

Sacraments – Moments of Grace. A source of spirituality of spiritual nourishment and growth. Reflections on the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Penance, Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination, and Anointing of the healing of one’s ailment.

Sacraments are doorways to the sacred, pathways to mystical moments and icons of the living God who scratches the underbelly of our spiritual musings. At times, however, the doors are bolted, the pathways become uncharted mazes, and mystical moments slip into magical rites especially when we find ourselves simply moving through the motions. Do you spend time thinking about the meaning, the message, and the opportunities to tap into the graces every day of the sacraments, if kept alive,

will allow God's divine energy to flow in, around, though, and within you? "Grace or "gracelets" are moments of meaning in your everyday life, that is, a state of mind that sees God in everything which is indicative of growth in grace and a thankful heart." - Charles G. Finney.

Are you consciously living a life of sacramentalism? That is, objects, places, events, and relationships can be reminders, reflections, metaphors, analogies, symbols, and experiences of God's divine reality. "The winds of grace are always blowing, but you must raise the sail. These gifts move across the waters. We cannot control or earn them, but we must be willing to receive them." – Ramakrishna.

Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen hosted a television weekly series in the early 1950s which was immensely popular. He used the image of the universe as a windowpane; you see through the visible to the invisible God. The world around you is infused with the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom traditions of our Catholic faith encourage us to look for hints of God in the world around us.

Poetry and story are vital and essential ingredients in exploring the inner world of OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). OCIA restores the original order and meaning to the sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation – the trinity of the sacramental life of the church. Poetry and story can be "soul friends" of OCIA. They can inject new life, power, and relevance into the drooping liturgical and spiritual lives of all of us as Catholic Christians.

Baptism: A Slice of Springtime

The following poem captures my experience, vision, and imaginative expression and celebration of Baptism:

SPRING - your journey has ended here, In a draught.

SEEDING – the planter scatters. The seed is sown. It is covered by plowed earth. Caressed and held, waiting for the rain.

WAITING – heat dances on the crackled, earthen floor. Skipping down the city streets, it tiptoes on colored roof tops.

CRAVING – a solitary cloud creeps across the empty creek moaning, rain, rain, rain.

In this poem, I am concerned with how water transforms the hungry earth into a paradise of sounds, colors, smells, and emotions. The earth is the child to be baptized. Baptism, like rain, falls on thirsty soil. The seed is sown. It awaits the rain for

nurturing, caressing, and growth. The rain falls as the water scatters over the delicate skin of new life. The marriage of water with the earth creates fertile soil within which a person blossoms. The later rains are the parents, godparents, and community of believers who continue to share their life-giving witness that Jesus Christ is Lord. The rains do not return empty to their source. Rather, there is a permanent relationship bonded between heaven and earth. This spiritual cementing is enhanced and deepened by Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Confirmation. Relentlessly, God plows and disturbs the earthiness of our fragile seedlings.

What is your poetic vision of Baptism when you drink water, take a shower, go swimming, bless yourself from the water font, or are reminded that more than a billion people on this earth do not have clean drinking water? Do you take water for granted, wasting water, appreciating water, giving thanks for water, or do you in the words of Socrates, move through life without ever thinking about the meaning of your baptism, and how vital and life-giving water is?

Baptismal Soulmates.

Speaking of blessing yourself from the water font, during my priestly ministry I was asked to be the witness at a marriage ceremony. Little did the couple know they were baptized at the same church, but at different dates, days, and times as I discovered from their baptismal certificates. At the exchange of vows, I asked the couple to go with me to the baptismal font for the exchange of vows, and upon arrival I explained that both were baptized on different days, dates, and time in this church at this baptismal font. I asked them to join their hands over the waters of the baptismal font and to exchange their vows of love, commitment, fidelity as they now emerged from the waters of the Jordan River with Jesus as husband and wife.

Baptism: A Story to Remember

While poetry captures the depth of sacramental life in a few carefully chosen words, the story complements, completes, and creates a happy, lasting, and living remembrance.

During the baptismal rite, the parents are reminded of their formidable Christian responsibility: “You are to be the first teachers of your child...” Have your parents fulfilled this mandate? The following story is called: “First Teachers” – When John was six years old, he was with his father who was stopped for speeding. His father slipped

the officer a twenty-dollar bill with his license. “It is OK son, everyone does it.” When John was nine years old, he went shopping with his mother. The cashier accidentally gave her too much change. As she slipped the extra money in her purse, she whispered to her son, “Everyone does it.” At sixteen, John landed his first summer job at the supermarket. One of his jobs was to put the overripe tomatoes at the bottom of the basket and the greener ones at the top. The boss told him, “It is good business.” John began his college career. One day he was approached by another student and asked if he wanted to buy some tests. He did and was subsequently caught for cheating. He was placed on probation. His parents were disappointed and said, “Son, how could you have done such a dishonest action like cheating? You have disgraced us!” Ironically, it was the parents, friends, and the employer who were not models, mentors, motivators, and messengers of their faith life and work ethic.

Matthew 3:13-17

**Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan
to be baptized by him.**

John tried to prevent him, saying,

**“I need to be baptized by you,
and yet you are coming to me?”**

Jesus said to him in reply,

**“Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us
to fulfill all righteousness.”**

Then he allowed him.

After Jesus was baptized,

**he came up from the water and behold,
the heavens were opened for him,
and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove
and coming upon him.**

And a voice came from the heavens, saying,

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of Matthew does recognize the baptism of Jesus, while the focus is more on the words of God’s voice as he identifies Jesus as the Son upon whom his favor rests. Jesus is baptized to obey his Father’s command and to fulfill his plan of salvation. When Jesus is baptized, he has an intimate, religious experience of his Father as related to his role as messiah. As Jesus begins his ministry to the marginalized, he comes to a deeper understanding of the challenges, demands, and

implications of his role as messiah. Each one of us, because of our baptism, is challenged to renew and affirm our baptismal commitment every day. Otherwise, the waters of our baptism will become stagnant and still.

At Jesus' baptism, he received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the benediction of his Father. As the eternal Son, Jesus will be ever obedient and pleasing to his Father. Jesus' prayer in the Jordan might have been, "I must remember, John the Baptist, to tell you about this experience some day." The experience will be transforming in that we will throw off the old and put on the new. Baptism will be transfiguring because we become renewed children of God. Baptism will be tranquilizing because we will be at peace, filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Final prayer: Today, Father, we join the Spirit of your son, Jesus, who is baptized and challenges us to review the vows of our baptism. Help us to stir the waters of our baptismal commitment and nourish the seeds of our spiritual renewal. Amen.

The Meaning of Baptism

If the meaning of baptism could be summarized in one word, that would be identification. Baptism in Christian faith speaks primarily of personal, public identification with Jesus Christ.

In [Romans 6:3-4](#), the Apostle Paul puts the matter this way:

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Notice the strength of the expressions "baptized into Christ," "baptized into His death," and "buried with Him in baptism." Someone may suggest that the primary reference here is to Spirit baptism. That is true, but at the very least, water baptism is in the background of this passage.

How important is your baptism? It is your personal identification with the greatest act of human history—the death, burial, resurrection, and eternal life of Jesus Christ. Baptism doesn't save you—salvation comes by faith alone ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). Your guilt before God is removed the moment you trust in Christ. But baptism is your personal

testimony to, and the inward assurance of, your passage from the old life to the new life.

What is the Purpose of Baptism?

Charles Stanley [explains](#) the importance of baptism, quoting the Great Commission saying:

"Our Savior commands us to follow His example in all things, including baptism: [Matthew 28:19](#) says, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."* At the beginning of His public ministry, Jesus chose to be baptized. [John the Baptist](#) was calling the Jewish people to confess their sins and demonstrate repentance through immersion in the Jordan River. Sinless Jesus joined the crowd at the river and asked John to baptize Him. The Lord chose to affiliate Himself with sinful man. When we follow His example in the baptismal water, we are publicly confessing our faith in the Savior and identifying ourselves with Him.

Baptism represents the forgiveness and remission of sins that believers receive through this covenant of grace with Jesus Christ. It is an outward demonstration of the transformation of new birth in the Lord Jesus. It is an act of obedience to the commands of Christ. It reflects a believer's willingness to follow Christ's example and teachings, being a servant of God, marking a significant step in Christian life. Historically, the rite of baptism is the Christian initiation into the faith community, signifying a person's entry into the body of Christ.

How Baptism Relates to Jesus

1. It means we have turned from the old life of sin to a new life in Jesus Christ.
2. It means we are publicly identifying with [Christ's death, burial, and resurrection](#).
3. It means we are openly joining the ranks of those who believe in Christ.

When you are baptized, you are visually preaching the gospel. As you stand in the water waiting to be baptized, first, you symbolize Jesus dying on the cross. Second, you symbolize Jesus buried in the tomb as you are lowered into the water. As you are raised from the water, you symbolize Jesus rising from the dead.

And since you personally are being baptized, you are also saying, "I died with Jesus Christ, I was buried with Him and now I am raised with Christ to a brand-new life."

In short, in your baptism, you are confessing the faith without using any words at all. And your confession in your baptism will be more effective with your friends than any sermon the pastor preaches on Sunday morning—the effects of baptism will be even more effective because it comes directly from you.

The Greek word translated as “baptize” is the verb *baptizo*. Most contemporary lexicons say the primary meaning is “to dip, plunge, immerse.” The secondary meaning is to “bring under the influence.” [Dr. Merrill Tenney](#) notes that “after making allowances for certain occasional exceptions, such as passages where washing is implied, the etymological meaning indicates that baptism was originally by immersion.” (Basic Christian Doctrine, p. 257)

-Resources, Catholicism volumes 1 and 2, Fr. Richard McBrien.