



## Ask, Father James:

### *“Why Does the Catholic Church Baptize Infants?”*

Baptism is a Christian rite wherein a person is either immersed in water or has water poured over her head. The ritual symbolizes one’s rebirth, renewal, or regeneration as a follower of Jesus Christ. The practice has its origins in the New Testament. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan, as he stepped out of the waters; When Jesus was baptized:

- the heavens opened
- the Spirit of God descended like a dove and came down upon him
- And a voice spoke from heaven, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved

At our own baptism, either as adults or as infants, the same experience is repeated. This was why, following his resurrection, Jesus commissions his followers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

In the Nicene creed we profess the statement: ‘We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. The Church’s practice of baptism (adult or infant) is for original sin to be cleansed. Original sin is the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden, and all people are born with original sin. In order to be free them from the bondage of original sin, the church baptizes people. Why wait till adulthood to be freed of this sin. There is lots of evidence from church fathers that indicates that baptism of children was common even in the early church.

We know that since the Reformation in the 16th century, churches and sects emerged that was critical of the practice of infant baptism. Especially the Anabaptists (today’s Mennonites). They re- (ana-) baptized themselves as adults. Also, the Baptist church too. They perhaps, influenced by the Anabaptists, objects to infant baptism. They argue that; “Repentance from dead works, and Faith towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, is required in persons to be Baptized” and as such the person himself or herself actually need to make a confession of faith and that an “infant [is] incapable of making confession of either.

The Catholic Church in the Catholic liturgy for Baptism, the priest asks the parents and the god-parents and sponsors the following: You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of catechizing and raising the child in the practice of the faith. This is because, parents are the first teachers of the child. Just as we do not wait until a child is an adult to be sent to school to get educated so also, it is the duty of parents to bring a child up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says; the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth” (CCC #1250).

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