

## Easter Day Homily

Baptisms have changed over the ages. Sometimes it is a chilly dip in the river. In the old days the mother was not there. Today quite often it is part of a great family and friends' party. But the heart of it has not changed.

At some point water is poured over you. A white garment is wrapped around you. A candle is held by you, or for you by another.

And the words are always similar. As we wrap the white garment round the new Christian we say: 'Now you have become a new creation, you have put on Christ.'

There used to be a TV programme where people were taught to be someone completely different. A bouncer or chef, dancer, or air steward. But this is not like that.

When we put on Christ, we are not becoming different people, we are entering into what it is like to be truly ourselves.

St. Paul tells us we are predestined, planned, from the start to be adopted brothers and sisters of Christ. Before the world was made God chose us, each of us, to be holy and spotless, and it was through Christ that we and all things were created and brought into peace through his cross.

Now Jesus does not ask us to physically suffer the cross, he has done that for us.

What he invites us to do is make our own what he has done for us, his life and death and resurrection.

It is in him that we find our own resurrection, new life. How can we do this? Well, we do it symbolically, but remember that, like the Eucharist, here symbolically does not mean, as if..., it means truly with him. It is the mystery of the sacraments that make us children of God, part of Christ's life.

Who can manage this for us? Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, who was the same power by which Jesus was raised from the dead. As we enter the water we let our own egos, self, go, and surrender to God, to a form of death to self under the water, and as we rise up out of the water, it is no longer us, but us in Christ. Still us, but yet a brother or sister of Christ.

So as we wrap the white cloth around us we are a new, a renewed creation. Christ-like.

Yes we can still fail, we have free will, but that plan God has for each of us is now underway.

At the baptism a candle is then lit for us, or by us, and the priest says; “Receive the light of Christ. This candle of faith is to be kept burning brightly, a flame of faith in your heart.”

In a moment we are going to renew our baptismal promises. (No individual candles today) but one is lit for us already, the Paschal Candle, our shared candle, the light of the resurrection.

As we answer the questions, what has to be in our hearts is, ‘Am I ready to live by what was offered at my baptism?’

Am I ready to carry on trying to live as a new creation, as a brother and sister of Christ? Am I ready to keep on trying to keep that flame of faith alive in my heart?

As Saints Paul and John tell us, it is a question of belief. This does not mean that we know, but that ‘we are going to keep looking for the things that are of heaven, what Christ will reveal to us.’

This is what Paul was explaining to Cornelius and his household. As Mark says to the disciples at the end of his gospel, ‘he is not here, you must go and look for him.’

The search for faith is a life-long one, but if we hold onto faith always successful.

Through the Prophet Ezekiel God says to us: ‘I will give you a new heart.’ If we are ever flagging or doubtful, or tired that nothing seems to change or be happening, or faith seems to be dwindling, even gone, it is in these times we have to go back to the promise of our baptism, to the font, and ask again for that new heart. As Aslan is killed by the witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, she says to him: ‘Despair.’ Then arisen he says: ‘If she could have looked more deeply into the words she would have understood.’

At Easter we look more deeply into the mystery and believe, and, above all, hope.

Christ is Risen.