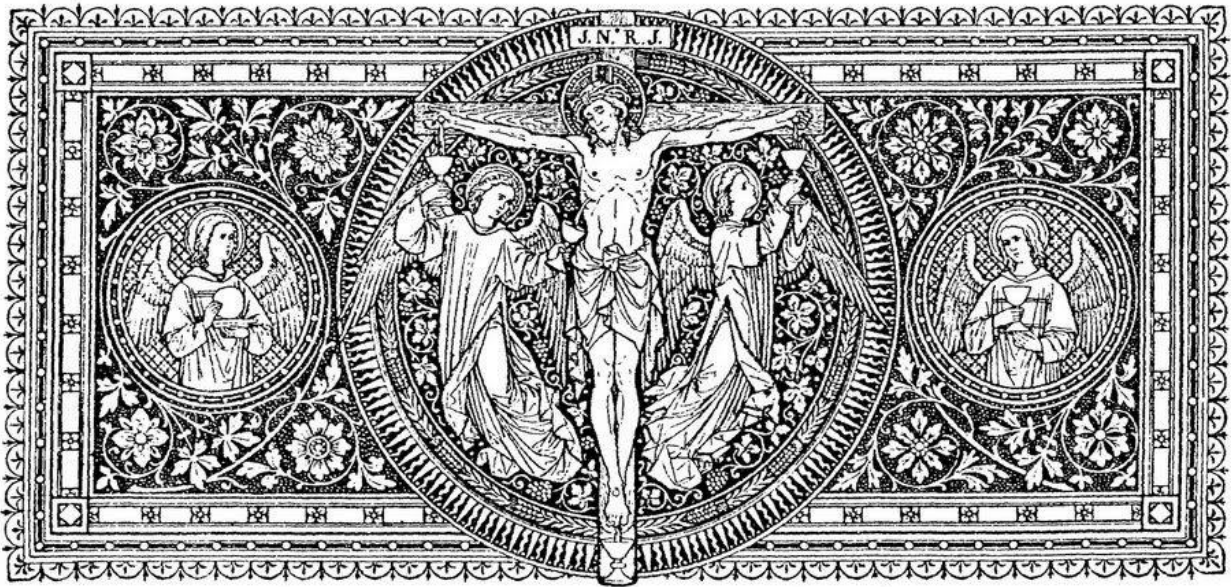


The Sacraments

Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures
Attested to by the Fathers of the Early Church



Compiled by the Rev. David V. Miller, Pastor
Lutheran Church of the Ascension, Atlanta, Georgia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Sacraments: God's Real Presence in His Means of Grace

1. Foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures* 5
2. Fulfilled in the New Testament Scriptures* 11
3. Usefulness of Patristic Studies15

Holy Baptism: The Sacrament of Salvation for All

1. Baptismal Regeneration
 - a. Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures* 17
 - b. Patristic Attestations23
2. Infant Baptism
 - a. Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures* 35
 - b. Patristic Attestations37
3. Administration by Immersion, Infusion, & Aspersions 45

Confession: The Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures* 49
2. Patristic Attestations 53

Holy Communion: The Sacrament of Divine Life

1. Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures* 59
2. Patristic Attestations 63

*Scriptural quotations from English Standard Version (ESV). Some text boldened for emphasis.

THE SACRAMENTS

Foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures

In the beginning, God was fully present with mankind, united in perfect friendship:

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8-9).

After man's Fall into sin, he made himself an enemy of God, which estranged him from God. Thus, mankind was banished from the fullness of the Lord's presence:

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24).

Ever since, man in his sin is unworthy of the fullness of God's presence and is unable to withstand the holiness of the Lord. For this reason, out of great mercy for mankind, God no longer presents Himself fully:

"But," [the LORD] said, "you [Moses] cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Exodus 33:20).

Alternatively, God's real presence comes to us in hidden ways, behind visible elements. This is demonstrated first with the altars of the Old Testament Patriarchs:

Cain and Abel

In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard (Genesis 4:3-5).

Noah

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:20-22).

Abram/Abraham

Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord (Genesis 12:7-9).

Jacob/Israel

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you" (Genesis 28:10-22).

God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

And as they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them, so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother (Genesis 35:1-7).

Later, in addition to altars, God hid His presence behind various other visible elements:

Burning Bush

And the angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:2-6).

Pillar of Cloud/Pillar of Fire

And the Lord went before them [the Israelites] by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people (Exodus 13:21-22).

Mercy Seat/Lid of Ark of Covenant

{The Lord said to Moses:] “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (Exodus 25:17-22).

Solomon’s Temple

And they brought up the ark of the Lord, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered. Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the Most Holy Place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the Holy Place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand

to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (1 Kings 8:4-11).

Flesh of Jesus Christ

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Holy Spirit as a Dove

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him (Matthew 3:16).

Holy Spirit as Tongues of Fire

And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them [the Apostles] and rested on each one of them (Acts 2:3).

In addition to His real presence in visible elements, God used tangible means as instruments of grace to His people. Besides the obvious example of the Ceremonial Law of Moses, here are other instances:

Adam and Eve's Garments of Skin

And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them (Genesis 3:21).

Covenant of Circumcision to Abraham

And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:9-14).

Moses' Bronze Serpent

So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live (Matthew 21:9).

Naaman's Cleansing Water

So [Naaman] went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (2 Kings 5:14).

Isaiah's Atoning Coal

Then one of the seraphim flew to me [Isaiah], having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:6-7).

Fulfilled in the New Testament Scriptures

Recognizing in the Old Testament that God has hidden His real presence behind visible elements and used tangible means to convey His grace, it is no surprise that Christ Jesus does not break with this tradition in the New Testament. Indeed, He continues this *modus operandi* by promising His grace and Real Presence to the Church through the Sacraments. These Sacraments are namely Holy Baptism, Confession, and Holy Communion. Consider how odd it would be if our immutable (unchanging) God were to suddenly halt His real presence in visible elements and to stop using tangible means to dispense His grace! Rather, Christ Jesus carries on the tradition by promising, before His Ascension, to be really present through His Sacraments despite His departure into heaven:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [Sacrament of Baptism] . . . And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age [Real Presence]" (Matthew 28:18, 20).

Christ Jesus hides His real presence behind the visible forms of the Sacraments (water of Baptism; ordained minister of the Gospel in Confession; and bread and wine of Holy Communion). This fact will be addressed in each individual section. However, what about the communication of the grace of Jesus Christ through the Sacraments? Are the Sacraments to be understood as means of grace?

Before we answer this, we must first answer some other questions. Firstly, how is it that anyone may receive salvation? It must be imputed to each Christian personally, or else the heretical doctrine of Universal Salvation would be the case (i.e. every human being who ever lived is saved by default, regardless). But the Scriptures teach that it is by personal faith that saving grace is received:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. . . For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (Romans 3:21-22; 4:3).

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

So, again, how is it that we receive the saving grace of Jesus Christ? The Scriptures teach that it is imputed to us on account of faith. But then, a second question emerges—how is this necessary faith obtained? St. Paul says that faith is received through the Word:

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

And while easy to concede that said faith-giving Word is received aurally, now a third question arises—may the Word be received in other ways? This same St. Paul seems to indicate that it indeed may when he calls Holy Baptism a “washing of water with the Word”:

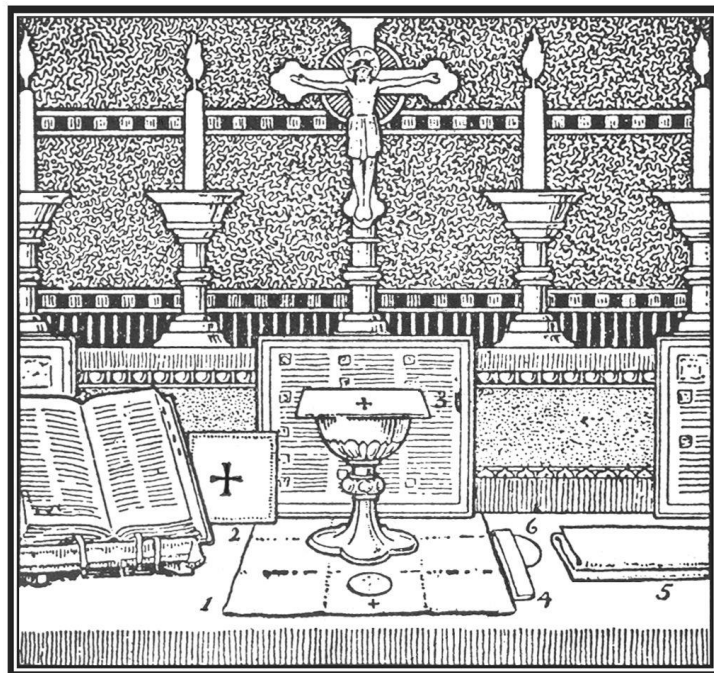
Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [Baptism], so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Not only by preaching the Gospel is it that “faith comes . . . through the Word of Christ,” but, as St. Paul just mentioned, that word may also be joined to the element of water to make Holy Baptism an efficacious washing. This means that when the Word is combined with an earthly element, according to our Lord’s institution, the Word may be received not only aurally but visibly. Hence, the Church has historically called her Sacraments the “Visible Word.” And it is only by this Word of God that the Sacraments have any efficacy at all. But because the Word is there, they are not only instruments of grace but also provide the very faith required to receive that grace. As Augustine of Hippo once formulated, this is the universally accepted definition of a Sacrament: an outward sign of an inward grace, that has been instituted by Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Sacraments are not only the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ hidden behind visible elements, but also tangible conduits of His grace.

One concern that often comes up is that the Sacraments seem to imply that faith in the grace of Jesus Christ isn’t enough. As if we’re adding a good work to the mix by requiring believers to partake in Holy Baptism, Confession, and Holy Communion in order to be saved. This is a misunderstanding. The grace of Christ Jesus is, of course, ample for salvation. However, as posed above, the question is, how does that salvation of Christ Jesus come to the believer? Every gift must be given, so how is this gift of saving grace given directly to the heart?

Think of it in terms of food. You wish to nourish your body with good nutrients. However, you don't consume each nutrient at the raw molecular level only. Rather, they come in different foods, each with a unique flavor, texture, and presentation to whet the appetite. In like manner, the nutrients of faith are the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, in order for said nutrients to nourish and strengthen faith, they come under visible forms like food and drink. We call these Sacraments, and they are how we receive nourishment for our souls by feeding our faith.

Like St. Paul said, "Faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." But that Word comes to us also when it joins itself to visible elements, therefore making the Sacraments means of grace. In this way, the Sacraments aren't additional to the Gospel but are the very Gospel of Jesus Christ distributed to believers. If we wouldn't think to pit the preaching of the Gospel against the Gospel itself, then we shouldn't pit the Sacraments of the Gospel against the Gospel either.



Usefulness of Patristic Studies

As each Sacrament is individually addressed, the real presence of Christ and the communication of His grace will become clear. Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church Fathers will help bring this out. While neither divinely inspired nor inerrant like God's Word, the voices of the Early Church serve as guides to help us understand the sacred text. They are a sort of compass to point the way, indicating whether or not we are on the right track and not way off. While there were some doctrines that were hotly debated among them, interestingly the nature of the Sacraments in so far as the real presence and means of grace are concerned were never in question.

As the Patristic examples will show, Sacraments have been an important part of the Church from the beginning. The champions of Orthodox Christianity, who defended the faith against Christological controversies and other errors, have always held to a sacramental theology. For example, Irenaeus of Lyons wrote against the Gnostics. Cyprian of Carthage wrestled with the Donatists. Athanasius of Alexandria was outspoken against Arianism. Cyril of Alexandria went head-to-head with Nestorius. Augustine of Hippo took on the Pelagian heresy. Every Christian today has these Fathers of the Faith to thank for the inheritance of the Gospel they have received. Yet, every one of these giants of theology held to a conservative sacramentology. To argue against a sacramental theology is to go on the offensive against every great theologian in the Church up to the Reformation.

To put it into even better context, all Christians belonged to the two historical churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, until the sixteenth century. Such churches have always subscribed to the Sacraments. Not only is it then that *every* Christian had a sacramental point of view for 1,500 years, but the majority of Christians today still adhere to this doctrine. While the Southeastern United States may seem to be populated by many non-sacramental Christians, globally it is a different story. According to the *Annuario Pontificio*, in 2019 there were an estimated 1.345 billion Roman Catholics worldwide. The *Atlas of Religion* in 2007 reported 220 million Eastern Orthodox Christians on a global scale. And in 2021, the Lutheran World Federation reported 90 million Lutherans around the world. Compare these three sacramental churches combined to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity's 2017 study of an approximated 800 million Protestants throughout the earth. Not only do most Christians still honor the Sacraments, but *every* Christian for the first three quarters of Church history held to a sacramental theology. But don't take anyone's word for it, let the reader see it for him or herself.

HOLY BAPTISM

Baptismal Regeneration

Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures

Disciples of Christ are made by Holy Baptism:

*And Jesus came and said to them [the disciples], "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age**" (Matthew 28:18-20).*

Holy Baptism saves:

*[Jesus said:] "**Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned**" (Mark 16:16).*

***Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ** (1 Peter 3:21).*

***[H]e saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing [Baptism] of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:5).*

Holy Baptism is a rebirth into the heavenly family of God, the Church. Just as temporal life is given by a fleshly birth, so is eternal life given by the spiritual birth of Holy Baptism:

***But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born [Baptism], not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God** (John 1:13).*

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).

Holy Baptism is a new circumcision. Just as circumcision was necessary to enter the Old Covenant (Testament) with God so is Holy Baptism necessary for entering the New Covenant (Testament):

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, **by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him** through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:11-12).*

By Holy Baptism, believers become participants in the saving work of the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3-11).

***. . . having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him** through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:12).*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, **he has caused us to be born again [Baptism] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead** (1 Peter 1:3).*

Holy Baptism covers our sin and shame and clothes us with the righteousness of Christ:

***For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ** (Galatians 3:27).*

*Then one of the elders addressed me [John the Apostle], saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. **They have washed [Baptism] their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**" (Revelation 7:13-14).*

*[Jesus said:] "**Blessed are those who wash [Baptism] their robes**, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates" (Revelation 22:14).*

Holy Baptism washes away sins (which therefore justifies and sanctifies):

*[Paul said:] "And now why do you wait? **Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins**, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).*

*And such [sinners] were some of you. **But you were washed [Baptism], you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God** (1 Corinthians 6:11).*

... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [Baptism], so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

The Holy Spirit is given through Baptism:

*[John the Baptist said:] "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**" (Matthew 3:11).*

*[John the Baptist said:] "I have baptized you with water, but **he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit**" (Mark 1:8).*

*John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**" (Luke 3:16).*

*[John the Baptist said:] "I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, **this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit**'" (John 1:33).*

*[Jesus said:] "[F]or John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now'" (Acts 1:5).*

*And Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 2:38).*

And such [sinners] were some of you. But you were washed [Baptism], you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

{H}e saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration [Baptism] and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).



Patristic Attestations

Letter of Barnabas 11:1-10 (A.D. 74):

*Regarding [baptism], we have the evidence of Scripture that Israel would refuse to accept **the washing which confers the remission of sins** and would set up a substitution of their own instead [Ps. 1:3–6]. Observe there how he describes both the water and the cross in the same figure. His meaning is, ‘Blessed are those who go down into the water with their hopes set on the cross.’ Here he is saying that after we have stepped down into the water, burdened with sin and defilement, we come up out of it bearing fruit, with reverence in our hearts and the hope of Jesus in our souls.*

The Shepherd of Hermas 4:3:3:1-2 (A.D. 80):

*‘I have heard, sir,’ said I, ‘from some teacher, that there is no other repentance except that which took place **when we went down into the water and obtained the remission of our former sins.**’ He said to me, ‘You have heard rightly, for so it is’.*

Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Polycarp 6 (A.D. 110):

*Let none of you turn deserter. **Let your baptism be your armor;** your faith, your helmet; your love, your spear; your patient endurance, your panoply.*

Clement of Rome, Second Epistle 6:7-9 (A.D. 150):

*For, if we do the will of Christ, we shall find rest; but if otherwise, then nothing shall deliver us from eternal punishment, if we should disobey his commandments. . . . **[W]ith what confidence shall we, if we keep not our baptism pure and undefiled, enter into the kingdom of God?** Or who shall be our advocate, unless we be found having holy and righteous works?*

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61:14-17 (A.D. 151):

*As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly . . . **are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.** For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Except you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:3].*

Theophilus of Antioch, *Epistle to Autolycus* 12:16 (A.D. 181):

*Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time **receive repentance and remission of sins through water and the bath of regeneration**—all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God.*

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Fragment* 34 (A.D. 190):

*'And dipped himself,' says [the Scripture], 'seven times in Jordan.' It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but it served as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, **we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes,** even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'*

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children* 1:6:26:1 (A.D. 191):

*When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we become immortal . . . 'and sons of the Most High' [Ps. 82:6]. This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. **It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins, a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted, an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation.***

Tertullian, *Baptism* 1 (A.D. 203):

Happy is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. . . . [But] a viper of the [Gnostic] Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism — which is quite in accordance with nature, for vipers and asps . . . themselves generally do live in arid and waterless places. But we, little fishes after the example of our [Great] Fish, Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water. So that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew full well how to kill the little fishes — by taking them away from the water!

Tertullian, *Baptism* 7:2 (A.D. 203):

*Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while **its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins.***

Tertullian, *Baptism* 12 (A.D. 203):

Without baptism, salvation is attainable by none.

Hippolytus of Rome, *The Apostolic Tradition* 22:1 (A.D. 215):

And the bishop shall lay his hand upon them [baptismal candidates], invoking and saying: ‘O Lord God, who did count these worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled with your Holy Spirit and send upon them thy grace, that they may serve you according to your will.

Hippolytus of Rome, *Homilies* 11:26 (A.D. 217):

*[P]erhaps someone will ask, 'What does it conduce unto piety to be baptized?' In the first place, that you may do what has seemed good to God; in the next place, **being born again by water unto God so that you change your first birth, which was from concupiscence, and are able to attain salvation**, which would otherwise be impossible. For thus the [prophet] has sworn to us: 'Amen, I say to you, unless you are born again with living water, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Therefore, fly to the water, for this alone can extinguish the fire. He who will not come to the water still carries around with him the spirit of insanity for the sake of which he will not **come to the living water for his own salvation**.*

Origen of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Martyrs* 30 (A.D. 235):

It is not possible to receive forgiveness of sins without baptism.

Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle to Donatus* 3-4 (A.D. 246):

*While I was lying in darkness . . . I thought it indeed difficult and hard to believe . . . that divine mercy was promised for my salvation, so that anyone might **be born again and quickened unto a new life by the laver of the saving water**, he might put off what he had been before, and, although the structure of the body remained, he might change himself in soul and mind. . . . But afterwards, **when the stain of my past life had been washed away by means of the water of rebirth**, a light from above poured itself upon my chastened and now pure heart; afterwards, through the Spirit which is breathed from heaven, a second birth made of me a new man.*

Council of Carthage VII (A.D. 258):

*And in the Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His divine voice, saying, "Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This is the Spirit which from the beginning was borne over the waters; for neither can the Spirit operate without the water, nor the water without the Spirit . . . **Unless therefore they receive saving baptism in the catholic church, which is one, they cannot be saved**, but will be condemned with the carnal in the judgment of the Lord Christ.*

Aphraahat the Persian Sage, *Treatises* 6:14:4 (A.D. 340):

From baptism we receive the Spirit of Christ. At that same moment in which the priests invoke the Spirit, heaven opens, and he descends and rests upon the waters, and those who are baptized are clothed in him. The Spirit is absent from all those who are born of the flesh, until they come to the water of rebirth, and then they receive the Holy Spirit. . . . [I]n the second birth, that through baptism, they receive the Holy Spirit.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 3:10, 12 (A.D. 350):

If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who, even without water, will receive baptism, for the Savior calls martyrdom a baptism [“Baptism of blood”; Mark 10:38]. . . . Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness.

Hilary of Poitiers, *Trinity* 9:9 (A.D. 359):

We are circumcised not with a fleshly circumcision but with the circumcision of Christ, that is, we are born again into a new man; for, being buried with Him in His baptism, we must die to the old man, because the regeneration of baptism has the force of resurrection.

Athanasius of Alexandria, *Discourse Against the Arians* III:33 (A.D. 360):

And with reason; for as we are all from earth and die in Adam, so being regenerated from above of water and Spirit, in the Christ we are all quickened.

Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns for the Feast of the Epiphany* 6:9 (c. A.D. 373):

The baptized when they come up are sanctified; the sealed when they go down are pardoned. They who come up have put on glory; they who go down have cast off sin.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 10:26 (A.D. 375):

And in what way are we saved? Plainly because we were regenerate through the grace given in our baptism.

Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 15:35 (A.D. 375):

*This then is what it is to be born again of water and of the Spirit, the being made dead being effected in the water, while our life is wrought in us through the Spirit. In three immersions, then, and with three invocations, the great mystery of baptism is performed, to the end that the type of death may be fully figured, and that by the tradition of the divine knowledge the baptized may have their souls enlightened. **It follows that if there is any grace in the water, it is not of the nature of the water, but of the presence of the Spirit.***

Basil the Great, *Sermons on Moral and Practical Subjects* 13:5 (A.D. 379):

*For prisoners [to sin], **baptism is ransom, forgiveness of debts, the death of sin, regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, a chariot to heaven, a royal protector, a gift of adoption.***

First Council of Constantinople, *Nicene Creed* (A.D. 381):

We believe . . . in one baptism for the remission of sins.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 2:8 (A.D. 382):

*[T]he birth by water and the Spirit, Himself led the way in this birth, drawing down upon the water, by His own baptism, the Holy Spirit; so that in all things He became the first-born of those who are spiritually born again, **and gave the name of brethren to those who partook in a birth like to His own by water and the Spirit.***

Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ* (c. A.D. 394):

Baptism, then, is a purification from sins, a remission of trespasses, a cause of renovation and regeneration . . . Let us however, if it seems well, persevere in enquiring more fully and more minutely concerning Baptism, starting, as from the fountainhead, from the Scriptural declaration, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Why are both named, and why is not the Spirit alone accounted sufficient for the completion of Baptism? Man, as we know full well, is compound, not simple: and therefore the cognate and similar medicines are assigned for healing to him who is twofold and conglomerate: for his visible body, water, the sensible element, for his soul, which we cannot see, the Spirit invisible, invoked by faith, present unspeakably. For 'the Spirit breathes where He wills, and thou hearest His voice, but canst not tell whence He cometh or whither He goeth.' He blesses the body that is baptized, and the water that baptizes. Despise not, therefore, the Divine laver, nor think lightly of it, as a common thing, on account of the use of water. For **the power that operates [Baptism] is mighty, and wonderful are the things that are wrought thereby.**

Siricius of Rome, *Letter to Himerius* 3 (A.D. 385):

It would tend to the ruin of our souls if, from our refusal of **the saving font of baptism** to those who seek it, any of them should depart this life and lose the kingdom and eternal life.

John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood* 3:5-6 (A.D. 387):

For if no one can enter into the kingdom of Heaven except he be regenerate through water and the Spirit, and he who does not eat the flesh of the Lord and drink His blood is excluded from eternal life, and if all these things are accomplished only by means of those holy hands, I mean the hands of the priest, how will any one, without these, be able to escape the fire of hell, or to win those crowns which are reserved for the victorious? **These verily are they who are entrusted with the pangs of spiritual travail and the birth which comes through baptism: by their means we put on Christ, and are buried with the Son of God, and become members of that blessed Head.**

John Chrysostom, *Homily on Philippians 3:24* (A.D. 404):

*Weep for the unbelievers; weep for those who differ in nowise from them, those who depart hence without the illumination [baptism], without the seal! They indeed deserve our wailing, they deserve our groans; they are outside the Palace, with the culprits, with the condemned: for, 'Verily I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.' Mourn for those who have died in wealth, and did not from their wealth think of any solace for their soul, **who had power to wash away their sins and would not.***

Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary on Luke 2:83* (A.D. 389):

*The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. **Whoever comes, therefore, to the washing of Christ lays aside his sins.***

Ambrose of Milan, *Concerning Repentance 2:8* (A.D. 390):

*And that the writer was speaking of baptism is evident from the very words in which it is stated that it is impossible to renew unto repentance those who were fallen, inasmuch as **we are renewed by means of the laver of baptism, whereby we are born again**, as Paul says himself: 'For we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that, like as Christ rose from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we, too, should walk in newness of life.'*

Ambrose of Milan, *Sympathy at the Death of Valentinian* (A.D. 392):

*But I hear you lamenting because he [the Emperor Valentinian] had not received the sacrament of baptism. Tell me, what else could we have, except the will to it, the asking for it? He too had just now this desire, and after he came into Italy it was begun, and a short time ago he signified that he wished to be baptized by me. Did he, then, not **have the grace which he desired ["Baptism of Desire"]**? Did he not have what he eagerly sought? Certainly, because he sought it, he received it. What else does it mean: 'Whatever just man shall be overtaken by death, his soul shall be at rest [Wis. 4:7]'?*

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons to Catechumens on the Creed* 7:15 (A.D. 395):

There are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptism, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance; yet God does not forgive sins except to the baptized.

Augustine of Hippo, *Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 1:24:34 (A.D. 412):

*It is an excellent thing that the Punic [North African] Christians call baptism **salvation** and the sacrament of Christ's body nothing else than life. Whence does this derive, except from an ancient and, as I suppose, apostolic tradition, by which **the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal?** This is the witness of Scripture too.*

Augustine of Hippo, *Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 2:27:43 (A.D. 412):

The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration.

Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* 13:7 (A.D. 419):

*Those who, though they have not received the washing of regeneration, die for the confession of Christ ["Baptism of Blood"]—**it avails them just as much for the forgiveness of their sins as if they had been washed in the sacred font of baptism.** For he that said, 'If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5], made an exception for them in that other statement in which he says no less generally, 'Whoever confesses me before men, I too will confess him before my Father, who is in heaven' [Matt. 10:32].*

Augustine of Hippo, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians* 3:3:5 (A.D. 420):

*Baptism washes away **all, absolutely all, our sins**, whether of deed, word, or thought, whether sins original or added, whether knowingly or unknowingly contracted.*

Augustine of Hippo, *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love* 13[41] (A.D. 421):

This is the meaning of the great sacrament of baptism, which is celebrated among us: all who attain to this grace die thereby to sin—as he himself [Jesus] is said to have died to sin because he died in the flesh (that is, ‘in the likeness of sin’)—and they are thereby alive by being reborn in the baptismal font, just as he rose again from the sepulcher. This is the case no matter what the age of the body. For whether it be a newborn infant or a decrepit old man—since no one should be barred from baptism—just so, there is no one who does not die to sin in baptism. Infants die to original sin only; adults, to all those sins which they have added, through their evil living, to the burden they brought with them at birth.

Jerome, *Epistle to Oceanus* 69:7 (A.D. 397):

Time would fail me were I to try to lay before you in order all the passages in the Holy Scriptures which relate to the efficacy of baptism or to explain the mysterious doctrine of that second birth which though it is our second is yet our first in Christ.

Apostolic Constitutions 6:3:15 (A.D. 400):

Be ye likewise contented with one baptism alone, that which is into the death of the Lord . . . For the Lord says: ‘Except a man be baptized of water and of the Spirit, he shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ And again: ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.’

Leo the Great, *Homilies* 15:10[11] (A.D. 445):

And because of the transgression of the first man, the whole stock of the human race was tainted; no one can be set free from the state of the old Adam save through Christ’s sacrament of baptism, in which there are no distinctions between the reborn, as the apostle [Paul] says, ‘For as many of you as were baptized in Christ did put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Greek . . .’ [Gal. 3:27–28].

Fulgentius of Ruspe, *The Rule of Faith* 43 (A.D. 524):

From that time at which our Savior said, 'If anyone is not reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5], no one can, without the sacrament of baptism, except those who, in the catholic church, without baptism, pour out their blood for Christ ["Baptism of blood"], receive the kingdom of heaven and life eternal.



HOLY BAPTISM

Infant Baptism

Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures

Holy Baptism saves, which makes it necessary for children to receive for their salvation:

[Jesus said:] “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21).

[H]e saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

The Apostles are commissioned to baptize all peoples without discrimination of age, ethnicity, or gender:

[Jesus said:] “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

St. Peter preaches specifically that the promises of Holy Baptism are not for his adult hearers only, but also for their children:

And Peter said to them [the Jews gathered at Pentecost], “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:38-39).

Whole households were baptized in the New Testament, inferring the inclusion of children:

*One who heard us [Paul and Silas] was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. **And after she was baptized, and her household as well** . . . (Acts 16:14-15).*

*And they [Paul and Silas] spoke the word of the Lord to him [the jailer] and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; **and he was baptized at once, he and all his family** (Acts 16:32-33).*

*(**I did baptize also the household of Stephanas.** Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else) (1 Corinthians 1:16).*

Holy Baptism is a rebirth, since one must be “born again of water and the Spirit.” Just as infants are born into earthly life, Baptism births them anew unto eternal life:

*Jesus answered, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:5-6).*

Holy Baptism is the New Testament fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant of circumcision. Just as Hebrew baby boys were circumcised on the eighth day after birth, so are infants brought into the new covenant of Baptism:

*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, **by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism**, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:11-12).*

Patristic Attestations

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 18, 41 (A.D. 160):

*For since you have read, O Trypho, as you yourself admitted, the doctrines taught by our Saviour, I do not think that I have done foolishly in adding some short utterances of His to the prophetic statements. Wash therefore, and be now clean, and put away iniquity from your souls, as God bids you be washed in this laver, and be circumcised with the true circumcision . . . **The command of circumcision, again, bidding [them] always circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision [Baptism; cf. Col. 2], by which we are circumcised from deceit and iniquity through Him who rose from the dead on the first day after the Sabbath, [namely through] our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 2.22:4 (A.D. 180):

*For He came to save all through means of Himself—**all, I say, who through Him are born again to God [Baptism; cf. Jn 3]—infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men.***

Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition* 21 (c. A.D. 215):

***And they shall baptize the little children first.** And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family.*

Origen of Alexandria, *Homily on Luke* XIV (A.D. 233):

[T]herefore children are also baptized.

Origen of Alexandria, *Homily on Romans* V:9 (A.D. 244):

For this reason, moreover, the Church received from the apostles (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot and Matthias) the tradition of baptizing infants too.

Origen of Alexandria, *Homily on Leviticus 8:3* (A.D. 244):

*Baptism is given for the remission of sins; and according to the usage of the Church, **Baptism is given even to infants.** And indeed if there were nothing in infants which required a remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous.*

Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle to Fidus 58 (64): 2, 6* (A.D. 251):

*But in respect of the case of the infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded, so that you think one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day . . . **And therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in council, that by us no one ought to be hindered from baptism . . . we think it is to be even more observed in respect of infants and newly-born persons.***

Optatus of Mileve, *Against Parmenium 5:10* (A.D. 365):

It shows no crease when infants put it on [i.e. their baptismal garment; cf. Gal. 3:27], it is not too scanty for young men, it fits women without alteration.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism 40:28* (A.D. 381):

*Be it so, some will say, in the case of those who ask for Baptism; **what have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them too? Certainly,** if any danger presses. For it is better that they should be unconsciously sanctified than that they should depart unsealed and uninitiated.*

Ambrose of Milan, *Abraham 2.11:79* (A.D. 387):

*'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' **No one is excepted: not the infant,** not the one prevented by necessity.*

John Chrysostom, *Ad Neophytos* (A.D. 388):

We do baptize infants, although they are not guilty of any sins [i.e. actual sins].

Augustine of Hippo, *On Baptism against the Donatists* 4:24:31 (A.D. 400):

*And if any one seek for divine authority in this matter, though what is held by the whole Church, and that not as instituted by Councils, but as a matter of custom, is rightly held to have been handed down by apostolical authority, **still we can form a true conjecture of the value of the sacrament of baptism in the case of infants, from the parallel of circumcision**, which was received by God's earlier people, and before receiving which Abraham was justified, as Cornelius also was enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit before he was baptized.*

Augustine of Hippo, *The Literal interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39 (A.D. 408):

The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic.

Augustine of Hippo, *On Forgiveness of Sin and Baptism* 39:26 (A.D. 412):

*Now, seeing that they [the Pelagians] admit the necessity of baptizing infants — finding themselves unable to contravene that authority of the universal Church, which has been unquestionably handed down by the Lord and His apostles — **they cannot avoid the further concession that infants require the same benefits of the Mediator, in order that, being washed by the sacrament and charity of the faithful, and thereby incorporated into the body of Christ, which is the Church, they may be reconciled to God, and so live in Him, and be saved and delivered, and redeemed, and enlightened.** But from what, if not from death, and the vices, and guilt, and thralldom, and darkness of sin? And, inasmuch as they do not commit any sin in the tender age of infancy by their actual transgression, original sin only is left.*

Augustine of Hippo, *On Forgiveness of Sin and Baptism* 43:27 (A.D. 412):

But the sacrament of baptism is undoubtedly the sacrament of regeneration: Wherefore, as the man who has never lived cannot die, and he who has never died cannot rise again, so he who has never been born cannot be born again. From which the conclusion arises, that no one who has not been born could possibly have been born again in his father. Born again, however, a man must be, after he has been born; because, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' Even an infant, therefore, must be imbued with the sacrament of regeneration, lest without it his would be an unhappy exit out of this life; and this baptism is not administered except for the remission of sins. And so much does Christ show us in this very passage; for when asked, How could such things be? He reminded His questioner of what Moses did when he lifted up the serpent. Inasmuch, then, as infants are by the sacrament of baptism conformed to the death of Christ, it must be admitted that they are also freed from the serpent's poisonous bite, unless we wilfully wander from the rule of the Christian faith. This bite, however, they did not receive in their own actual life, but in him on whom the wound was primarily inflicted.

Augustine of Hippo, *Epistle* 98:2 (A.D. 412):

It is this one Spirit who makes it possible for an infant to be regenerated . . . when that infant is brought to baptism; and it is through this one Spirit that the infant so presented is reborn. For it is not written, 'Unless a man be born again by the will of the parents' or 'by the faith of those presenting him or ministering to him,' but, 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit.' The water, therefore, manifesting exteriorly the sacrament of grace, and the Spirit effecting interiorly the benefit of grace, both regenerate in one Christ that man who was generated in Adam.

Augustine of Hippo, *Epistle* 166:8:23 (A.D. 412):

The blessed Cyprian, indeed, said, in order to correct those who thought that an infant should not be baptized before the eighth day, that it was not the body but the soul which behooved to be saved from perdition — in which statement he was not inventing any new doctrine, but preserving the firmly established faith of the Church; and he, along with some of his colleagues in the episcopal office, held that a child may be properly baptized immediately after its birth.

Augustine of Hippo, *Epistle* 167.7.21 (A.D. 415):

Likewise, whoever says that those children who depart out of this life without partaking of that sacrament shall be made alive in Christ, certainly contradicts the apostolic declaration, and condemns the universal Church, in which it is the practice to lose no time and run in haste to administer baptism to infant children, because it is believed, as an indubitable truth, that otherwise they cannot be made alive in Christ.

Jerome, *Epistle to Laeta* 107:6 (A.D. 403):

While the son is a child and thinks as a child and until he comes to years of discretion to choose between the two roads to which the letter of Pythagoras points, his parents are responsible for his actions whether these be good or bad. But perhaps you imagine that, if they are not baptized, the children of Christians are liable for their own sins; and that no guilt attaches to parents who withhold from baptism those who by reason of their tender age can offer no objection to it. The truth is that, as baptism ensures the salvation of the child, this in turn brings advantage to the parents. Whether you would offer your child or not lay within your choice, but now that you have offered her, you neglect her at your peril.

Jerome, *Against the Pelagians* 3:18 (A.D. 415):

*C. Tell me, pray, and rid me of all doubts, why little children are baptized?
A. That their sins may be forgiven them in baptism.*

Council of Mileum II, Canon 3 (A.D. 416):

[W]however says that infants fresh from their mothers' wombs ought not to be baptized, or say that they are indeed baptized unto the remission of sins, but that they draw nothing of the original sin of Adam, which is expiated in the bath of regeneration . . . let him be anathema. Since what the apostle [Paul] says, 'Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so passed to all men, in whom all have sinned.' [Rom. 5:12], must not be understood otherwise than the catholic Church spread everywhere has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who in themselves thus far have not been able to

*commit any sin, are therefore truly baptized unto the remission of sins, so that which they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them **be** regeneration.*

Council of Carthage, Canon 2 (A.D. 418):

Canon 2. Likewise it has been decided that whoever says that infants fresh from their mothers' wombs ought not to be baptized . . . let him be anathema.

African Code, Canon 47/51 (A.D. 419):

Concerning the Donatists it seemed good that we should hold counsel with our brethren and fellow priests Siricius and Simplician concerning those infants alone who are baptized by Donatists: lest what they did not do of their own will, when they should be converted to the Church of God with a salutary determination, the error of their parents might prevent their promotion to the ministry of the holy altar.

Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on John 7 (A.D. 428):

Believest thou this? . . . when a newborn child is brought forward to receive the anointing of initiation, or rather of consummation through holy baptism.

Leo the Great, Epistle to Rusticus 167 (A.D. 459):

QUESTION XIX. Concerning those who after being baptized in infancy were captured by the Gentiles, and lived with them after the manner of the Gentiles, when they come back to Roman territory as still young men, if they seek communion, what shall be done?

REPLY. If they have only lived with the Gentiles and eaten sacrificial food, they can be purged by fasting and laying on of hands, in order that for the future abstaining from things offered to idols, they may be partakers of Christ's mysteries. But if they have either worshiped idols or been polluted with manslaughter or fornication, they must not be admitted to communion, except by public penance.

Gregory the Great, *Epistle to Leander* 43 (A.D. 591):

But with respect to triune immersion in baptism, no truer answer can be given than what you have yourself felt to be right; namely that, where there is one faith, a diversity of usage does no harm to holy Church. Now we, in immersing three thrice, signify the sacraments of the three days' sepulchre; so that, when the infant is a third time lifted out of the water, the resurrection after a space of three days may be expressed.



HOLY BAPTISM

Administration by Immersion, Infusion, & Aspersation

How is the Sacrament of Baptism to be administered? There are three possibilities: Immersion (full submersion), Infusion (pouring), and Aspersation (sprinkling). Some have taken a dogmatic position that only Baptism by immersion is valid. This is due to a mistranslation of the word for Baptism in the Greek New Testament. They believe that the word βαπτίζω (baptizō) means exclusively “to submerge.” However, while that is one possible translation, it isn’t the only one. It may also be translated more generally as simply “to wash.” Therefore, any form of washing with water might be acceptable. As one example of how this word is used more generally as “to wash” and *not* “to submerge” is in the Gospel of Mark. Here, the Greek word for Baptism is used to refer to the Jewish ritual washing of cups and pots and dining couches. This would have been by infusion as said vessels were cleaned under running water and because a dining couch couldn’t have been submerged:

Mark 7:3-4:

(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash [baptize]. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing [baptism] of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.

As an aside, those who are dogmatic about immersion as the only method for the administration of Holy Baptism are inconsistent when it comes to their zeal for the proper administration of other Christian observances. For instance, when it comes to Holy Communion, Christ’s instructions are clear for how He desires us to administer the bread and wine. Because the Passover seder is the context in which He first institutes the Lord’s Supper, He would have used unleavened bread. And when He takes the wine, He uses only one chalice (a.k.a. “Common Cup”). Yet, these same churches often tend to overlook these plain instructions by making use of leavened bread and individual glasses. Many times, even grape juice is used instead of wine!

While true that immersion is usually the form of administration most referred to in the New Testament, as well as the most preferred method in the Early Church, this has led to the false assumption that only adults were baptized since later in the West infusion and aspersion became popular for baptizing infants due to its convenience factor. However, this isn't necessarily the case because the Eastern churches still baptize their infants to this day by immersion. And despite this being the case, the Orthodox Church still recognizes the baptisms of other Christians that were administered by infusion or aspersion. What we find is that there are many examples in the writings of the Church Fathers that suggest that infusion and aspersion were perfectly acceptable ways to baptize:

Didache 7:1-4 (A.D. 70):

*And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, [Matthew 28:19] in living [running] water. But if you have not living water, baptize into other water; and if you can not in cold, in warm. **But if you have not either, pour [infusion] out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit.** But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.*

Hippolytus of Rome, Apostolic Tradition 21 (A.D. 215):

If water is scarce, whether as a constant condition or on occasion, then use whatever water is available.

Eusebius of Caesarea, Ecclesiastical History 6:4311 (A.D. 251):

[Pope Cornelius I wrote that as Novatian was about to die] he received baptism in the bed where he lay, by pouring [infusion].

Cyprian of Carthage, Letter to a Certain Magnus 69:12 (A.D. 255):

[No one should be] disturbed because the sick are poured upon [infusion] or sprinkled [aspersion] when they receive the Lord's grace.

Tertullian, *Baptism* 2 (A.D. 203):

*[Baptism is done] with so great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, and finally, without cost, **a man is baptized in water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled [aspersion], and then rises again, not much (or not at all) the cleaner [physically].***

CONFESSION

Instituted by Christ in the Holy Scriptures

Our Lord Jesus Christ was accused of blasphemy for claiming to have the authority to forgive sins, which was God's alone:

*And getting into a boat [Jesus] crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. **And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."** And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**" —he then said to the paralytic— "Rise, pick up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. (Mark 2:1-12).*

Jesus nevertheless has authority over sins because God the Father vested His Son with such authority. This is why in the last passage, it said that "the crowds . . . glorified God, who had given such authority to men [Jesus]." Jesus confirms said authority:

*So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, **and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me**" (John 8:28).*

*[Jesus said:] "No one takes it [life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, **and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father**" (John 10:18).*

*[Jesus said:] "**For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak**" (John 12:49).*

*[Jesus said:] “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? **The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works**” (John 14:10).*

Before His Ascension, Jesus took the authority He received from the Father and vested the Apostles with that very same authority to be used in His absence. The Apostles then bore Christ’s Holy Office and served the Church on His behalf (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:20). Before leaving this world themselves, the Apostles also took their authority and vested other men into the Holy Ministry by way of ordination (cf. Acts 13:2-5; 14:23; 20:28; 2 Corinthians 8:19; Ephesians 4:11-12; Titus 1:5). Therefore, the same authority Christ exercised on behalf of the Father, pastors now exercise on behalf of the Lord:

*And Jesus came and said to them [the disciples], “**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age**” (Matthew 28:18-20).*

*[Jesus said to the seventy-two:] “**The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me**” (Luke 10:16).*

*[Jesus said to the disciples:] “**And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high**” (Luke 24:49).*

*Jesus said to them [the disciples] again, “**Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “**Receive the Holy Spirit**” (John 20:21-22).*

Since Jesus had authority to forgive sins, pastors have authority to exercise the keys of binding and loosing sins, which is why it is called the Office of the Keys:

[Jesus said to Simon Peter:] “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

[Jesus said to His disciples:] “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:18).

[Jesus] said to them [the disciples], “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you” (Luke 24:46-49).

[Jesus said to the disciples:] “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:23).

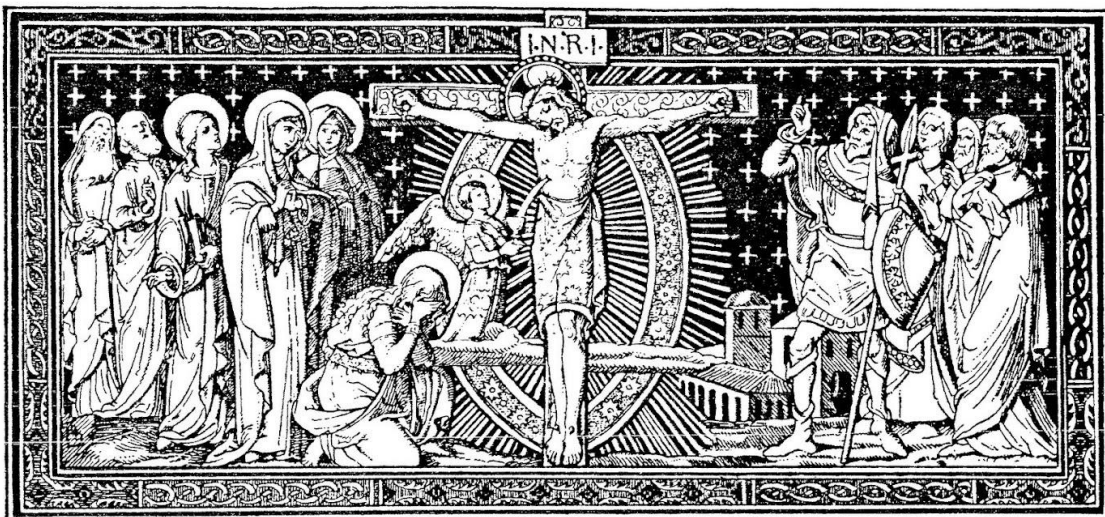
Also many of those who were now believers came [to Paul], confessing and divulging their practices [sins] (Acts 19:18).

It is no surprise that God gives authority over sins not only to Jesus but also to sinful men. In the Old Testament, Nathan the prophet exercised authority over the sins of King David. Not only did Nathan give pastoral counsel and hear David's Confession in private, but he also bestowed on David Holy Absolution, the forgiveness of his sins:

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” Then David's anger was greatly kindled

against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" **David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."** And Nathan said to David, **"The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die"** (2 Samuel 12:1-13).



Patristic Attestations

Didache 4:14, 14:1 (A.D. 70):

Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . . On the Lord's Day gather together, break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure.

Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 (A.D. 110):

For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance [Confession], return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ.

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 1:22 (A.D. 189):

[The Gnostic disciples of Marcus] have deluded many women. . . . Their consciences have been branded as with a hot iron. Some of these women make a public confession, but others are ashamed to do this, and in silence, as if withdrawing from themselves the hope of the life of God, they either apostatize entirely or hesitate between the two courses.

Tertullian, *Repentance* 10:1 (A.D. 203):

[Regarding confession, some] flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves, or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation, like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians; and thus they perish along with their own bashfulness.

Tertullian, *Modesty* 1 (A.D. 220):

The Pontifex Maximus—that is, the bishop of bishops—issues an edict: 'I remit, to such as have discharged (the requirements of) repentance, the sins both of adultery and of fornication.'

Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition* 3 (A.D. 215):

*[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, **and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command.***

Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Leviticus* 2:4 (A.D. 248):

[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance [Confession], when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, 'I said, "To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity"'.

Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed* 15:1-3, 28 (A.D. 251):

*The apostle [Paul] likewise bears witness and says: ' . . . Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [1 Cor. 11:27]. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these warnings; **before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and at the hand of the priest . . . they do violence to [the Lord's] body and blood, and with their hands and mouth they sin against the Lord more than when they denied him. . . .***

Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistles* 9:2; 51[55]:20, 22 (A.D. 253);

[S]inners may do penance [Confession] for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion. [But now some] with their time [of penance] still unfulfilled . . . they are admitted to Communion, and their name is presented; and while the penitence is not yet performed, confession is not yet made, the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the Eucharist is given to them; although it is written, 'Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [1 Cor. 11:27].' . . .

*And do not think, dearest brother, that either the courage of the brethren will be lessened, or that martyrdoms will fail for this cause, **that penance [Confession] is relaxed to the lapsed, and that the hope of peace [i.e., absolution] is offered to the penitent.*** . . . For to adulterers even a time of repentance is granted by us, and peace is given . . .

But I wonder that some are so obstinate as to think that repentance is not to be granted to the lapsed, or to suppose that pardon is to be denied to the penitent, when it is written, 'Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works' [Rev. 2:5], which certainly is said to him who evidently has fallen, and whom the Lord exhorts to rise up again by his deeds [of penance], because it is written, 'Alms deliver from death' [Tob. 12:9].

Aphraahat the Persian Sage, *Treatises* 7:3 (A.D. 340):

*You [priests], then, who are disciples of our illustrious physician [Christ], you ought not deny a curative to those in need of healing. **And if anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance.** And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public [Confessional Seal], lest because of it the innocent might be reckoned as guilty by our enemies and by those who hate us.*

Basil the Great, *Rules Briefly Treated* 288 (A.D. 374):

*It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God's mysteries is entrusted. Those doing penance of old are found to have done it before the saints. **It is written in the Gospel that they confessed their sins to John the Baptist [Matt. 3:6], but in Acts [19:18] they confessed to the apostles.***

John Chrysostom, *The Priesthood* 3:5 (A.D. 387):

Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed.' Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding; but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? 'Whose sins you shall forgive,' he says, 'they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' What greater power is there than this? The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men [Matt. 10:40; John 20:21–23]. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven.

Ambrose of Milan, *Penance* 1:1 (A.D. 388):

For those to whom [the right of binding and loosing] has been given, it is plain that either both are allowed, or it is clear that neither is allowed. Both are allowed to the Church, neither is allowed to heresy. For this right has been granted to priests only.

Jerome, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 10:11 (A.D. 388):

If the serpent, the devil, bites someone secretly, he infects that person with the venom of sin. And if the one who has been bitten keeps silence and does not do penance [Confession], and does not want to confess his wound . . . then his brother and his master, who have the word [of absolution] that will cure him, cannot very well assist him.

Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 3:16, 19 (A.D. 398):

Just as in the Old Testament the priest makes the leper clean or unclean, so in the New Testament the bishop and presbyter binds or looses not those who are innocent or guilty, but by reason of their office, when they have heard various kinds of sins, they know who is to be bound and who loosed.

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed* 7:15; 8:16 (A.D. 395):

*When you shall have been baptized, keep to a good life in the commandments of God so that you may preserve your baptism to the very end. I do not tell you that you will live here without sin, but they are venial sins which this life is never without. Baptism was instituted for all sins. For light sins, without which we cannot live, prayer was instituted. . . . But do not commit those sins on account of which you would have to be separated from the body of Christ. Perish the thought! **For those whom you see doing penance [Confession] have committed crimes, either adultery or some other enormities.** That is why they are doing penance. If their sins were light, daily prayer would suffice to blot them out. . . . **In the Church, therefore, there are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptisms, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance.***

Augustine of Hippo, *Christian Combat* (A.D. 397):

All mortal sins are to be submitted to the keys of the Church and all can be forgiven; but recourse to these keys is the only, the necessary, and the certain way to forgiveness. Unless those who are guilty of grievous sin have recourse to the power of the keys, they cannot hope for eternal salvation. Open your lips, then, and confess your sins to the priest. Confession alone is the true gate to Heaven.



HOLY COMMUNION

Instituted by Christ in Holy Scripture

Our Lord Jesus Christ declares plainly that the bread and wine of Holy Communion are much more than mere bread and wine, but are His very body and blood:

Now as they [the disciples] were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29).

And as they [the disciples] were eating, [Jesus] took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:22-25).

And when the hour came, [Jesus] reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this (Luke 22:14-23).

For I [Paul] received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Some take these sayings to be figurative. Yet, none of the four examples just given suggest that Jesus is being anything but literal. He never says, "This is *like* my body" or "This cup *represents* my blood." Clearly, He says it *is* His body and blood. Unless we are willing to suggest that anything Christ says literally can be taken figuratively, we should proceed with caution and take Him at His Word. While the "I am" sayings (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1) are an exception, they are limited to John's Gospel (which does not contain the Words of Institution from the Last Supper) and have a unique formula "I am the . . ."). Also missing from the Words of Institution are the traditional cues of a parable, such as a narrative ("A man had . . ." or "A man went out . . ." etc.) or an obvious comparison ("The kingdom of heaven is like . . .").

In addition, we find that St. Paul himself seems to believe in the Real Presence of Christ's true body and blood in Holy Communion:

*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1
Corinthians 10:16).*

Jesus also foreshadows the literal meaning of the bread and wine of Holy Communion as His true body and blood when He speaks to the Jews in Capernaum. He lost the entire crowd because His saying was so "hard" (cf. John 6:60, 66). He even came close to losing His twelve disciples over it (cf. John 6:67). If Jesus didn't mean that His body and blood were to be literal food and drink, then why didn't He explain that He was only speaking figuratively? Surely, this would have won them back to Him. After all, why would He wish to put an obstacle in the way of their faith unnecessarily? Perhaps it's because He actually meant what He said literally, no matter how offensive it was. He even unequivocally says that His body and blood are literal food and drink:

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever" (John 6:52-58).

Perhaps such a literal interpretation is why St. Paul says that those who partake of Holy Communion unworthily are guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. How could one be guilty of giving offense if the body and blood were altogether absent? He also says that some have come under judgment, even taken ill, or died, because of their offense:

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

Not only is Holy Communion a grave matter because of the dangers described above, but to those who receive it in faith it gives great benefits. Such benefits would be difficult for one to receive if it were only mere bread and wine:

[Jesus said: "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

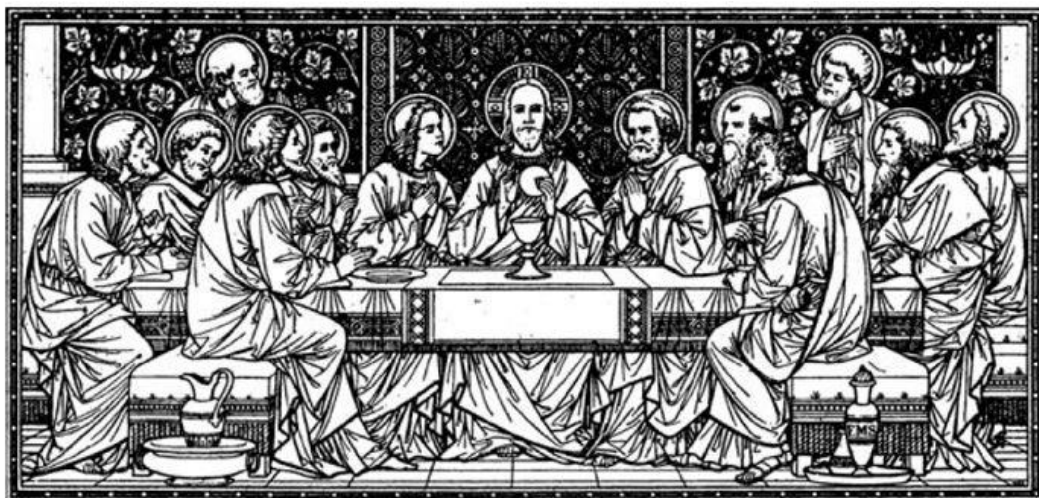
Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

[Jesus said:] "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6:48-51).

[Jesus said:] "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever" (John 6:54-58).

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16).

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).



Patristic Attestations

Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 7:3 (A.D. 110):

I have no taste for corruptible food nor for the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David; and for drink I desire his blood, which is love incorruptible.

Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4:1 (A.D. 110):

Take care, then, to use one Eucharist, so that whatever you do, you do according to God: for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the union of His blood; one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbytery.

Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2-7:1 (A.D. 110):

Take note of those who hold heterodox opinions on the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us, and see how contrary their opinions are to the mind of God. . . . They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again. They who deny the gift of God are perishing in their disputes.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66 (A.D. 151):

We call this food Eucharist, and no one else is permitted to partake of it, except one who believes our teaching to be true and who has been washed in the washing which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration [i.e., has received baptism] and is thereby living as Christ enjoined. For not as common bread nor common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nurtured, is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus.

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 4:32-33 (A.D. 189):

If the Lord were from other than the Father, how could he rightly take bread, which is of the same creation as our own, and confess it to be his body and affirm that the mixture in the cup is his blood?

Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 5:2 (A.D. 189):

[Jesus] has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be his own blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, he has established as his own body, from which he gives increase unto our bodies. When, therefore, the mixed cup [wine and water] and the baked bread receives the Word of God and becomes the Eucharist, the body of Christ, and from these the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they say that the flesh is not capable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life—flesh which is nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, and is in fact a member of him?

Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor of Children* 1:6:43:3 (A.D. 191):

'Eat my flesh,' [Jesus] says, 'and drink my blood.' The Lord supplies us with these intimate nutrients, he delivers over his flesh and pours out his blood, and nothing is lacking for the growth of his children.

Tertullian, *The Resurrection of the Dead* 8 (A.D. 210):

[T]here is not a soul that can at all procure salvation, except it believe whilst it is in the flesh, so true is it that the flesh is the very condition on which salvation hinges. And since the soul is, in consequence of its salvation, chosen to the service of God, it is the flesh which actually renders it capable of such service. The flesh, indeed, is washed [in baptism], in order that the soul may be cleansed . . . the flesh is shadowed with the imposition of hands [in confirmation], that the soul also may be illuminated by the Spirit; the flesh feeds [in the Eucharist] on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may be filled with God.

Hippolytus of Rome, *Fragment from the Commentary on Proverbs* (A.D. 217):

'And she [Wisdom] has furnished her table' [Prov. 9:2] . . . refers to his [Christ's] honored and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper [i.e., the Last Supper].

Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Numbers* 7:2 (A.D. 248):

Formerly there was baptism in an obscure way . . . now, however, in full view, there is regeneration in water and in the Holy Spirit. Formerly, in an obscure way, there was manna for food; now, however, in full view, there is the true food, the flesh of the Word of God, as he himself says: 'My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink' [John 6:55].

Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Exodus* 13:3 (A.D. 244):

I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence.

Cyprian of Carthage, *The Lapsed* 15-16 (A.D. 251):

*He [Paul] threatens, moreover, the stubborn and forward, and denounces them, saying, 'Whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [1 Cor. 11:27]. All these warnings being scorned and contemned — [lapsed Christians will often take Communion] before their sin is expiated, before confession has been made of their crime, before their conscience has been purged by sacrifice and by the hand of the priest, before the offense of an angry and threatening Lord has been appeased, [and so] violence is done to **his body and blood**; and they sin now against their Lord more with their hand and mouth than when they denied their Lord.*

First Council of Nicaea, Canon 18 (A.D. 325):

It has come to the knowledge of the holy and great synod that, in some districts and cities, the deacons administer the Eucharist to the presbyters [i.e., priests], whereas neither canon nor custom permits that they who have no right to offer [the Eucharistic sacrifice] should give the Body of Christ to them that do offer [it].

Aphraahat the Persian Sage, *Demonstration IV: On Prayer* (A.D. 337):

*What is this blood that Isaiah foresaw, if not the Messiah's, which they took upon themselves and their children, and the blood of the prophets whom they slew? This is the blood that was red as scarlet and crimson, and it marked them. **They can only be cleansed by 'washing' in the water of baptism, and partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ.** Blood is washed by Blood, and body is cleansed by Body. Sins are washed away in water, and prayer converses with God's majesty.*

Aphraahat the Persian Sage, *Treatises 12:6* (A.D. 340):

After having spoken thus [at the Last Supper], the Lord rose up from the place where he had made the Passover and had given his body as food and his blood as drink, and he went with his disciples to the place where he was to be arrested. But he ate of his own body and drank of his own blood, while he was pondering on the dead. With his own hands the Lord presented his own body to be eaten, and before he was crucified he gave his blood as drink.

Athanasius of Alexandria, *Sermon to the Newly Baptized*, from Eutyches:

You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread is become the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine — and thus is His Body confected.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 19:7 (A.D. 350):

The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 22:6, 9 (A.D. 350):

Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by the faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ. . . . [Since you are] fully convinced that the apparent bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the body of Christ, and that the apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so, . . . partake of that bread as something spiritual, and put a cheerful face on your soul.

Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity* 8:14 (A.D. 359):

When we speak of the reality of Christ's nature being in us, we would be speaking foolishly and impiously -- had we not learned it from Him. For He Himself says: "My Flesh is truly Food, and My Blood is truly Drink. He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will remain in Me and I in Him." As to the reality of His Flesh and Blood, there is no room left for doubt, because now, both by the declaration of the Lord Himself and by our own faith, it is truly Flesh and it is truly Blood. And These Elements bring it about, when taken and consumed, that we are in Christ and Christ is in us. Is this not true? Let those who deny that Jesus Christ is true God be free to find these things untrue. But He Himself is in us through the flesh and we are in Him, while that which we are with Him is in God.

Ambrose of Milan, *The Mysteries* 9:50, 58 (A.D. 390):

Perhaps you may be saying, 'I see something else; how can you assure me that I am receiving the body of Christ?' It but remains for us to prove it. And how many are the examples we might use! . . . Christ is in that sacrament, because it is the body of Christ.

Basil the Great, *Letter of Basil to a Patrician Lady Caesaria*:

To communicate each day and to partake of the holy Body and Blood of Christ is good and beneficial; for He says quite plainly: "He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life." Who can doubt that to share continually in life is the same thing as having life abundantly? We ourselves communicate four times each week . . . and on other days if there is a commemoration of any saint.

Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* 37:

This Body [in the Eucharist], by the indwelling of God the Word, has been made over to divine dignity. Rightly then, do we believe that the bread consecrated by the word of God has been made over into the Body of God the Word. For that Body was, as to its potency, bread; but it has been consecrated by the lodging there of the Word, who pitched His tent in the flesh. From the same cause, therefore, by which the bread that was made over into that Body is made to change into divine strength, a similar result now takes place. As in the former case, in which the grace of the Word made holy that body the substance of which is from bread, and in a certain manner is itself bread, so in this case too, the bread, as the Apostle says, "is consecrated by God's word and by prayer"; not through its being eaten does it advance to become the Body of the Word, but it is made over immediately into the Body by means of the word, just as was stated by the Word, "This is My Body!" . . . In the plan of His grace He spreads Himself to every believer by means of that Flesh, the substance of which is from wine and bread, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, so that by this union with the Immortal, man, too, may become a participant in incorruption. These things He bestows through the power of the blessing which transforms the nature of the visible things to that [of the Immortal].

Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Day of Lights or On the Baptism of Christ*:

The bread again is at first common bread; but when the mystery sanctifies it, it is called and actually becomes the Body of Christ. So too the mystical oil, so too the wine; if they are things of little worth before the blessing, after their sanctification by the Spirit each of them has its own superior operation. This same power of the word also makes the priest venerable and honorable, separated from the generality of men by the new blessing bestowed upon him.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Sermon on the Resurrection of Christ*:

*He offered Himself for us, Victim and Sacrifice, and Priest as well, and "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." When did He do this? **When He made His own Body food and His own Blood drink for His disciples**; for this much is clear enough to anyone, that a sheep cannot be eaten by a man unless its being eaten be preceded by its being slaughtered. This giving of His own Body to His disciples for eating clearly indicates that the sacrifice of the Lamb has now been completed.*

Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies* 5:1 (A.D. 405):

When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, 'This is the symbol of my body,' but, 'This is my body.' In the same way, when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, 'This is the symbol of my blood,' but, 'This is my blood'; for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements] after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit not according to their nature, but receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord. We ought . . . not regard [the elements] merely as bread and cup, but as the body and blood of the Lord, into which they were transformed by the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Augustine of Hippo, *Explanations of the Psalms* 33:1:10 (A.D. 405):

Christ was carried in his own hands when, referring to his own body, he said, 'This is my body' [Matt. 26:26]. For he carried that body in his hands.

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons* 227 (A.D. 411):

*I promised you [new Christians], who have now been baptized, a sermon in which I would explain the sacrament of the Lord's Table. . . . **That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ.***

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons* 272 (A.D. 411):

What you see is the bread and the chalice; that is what your own eyes report to you. But what your faith obliges you to accept is that the bread is the body of Christ and the chalice is the blood of Christ. This has been said very briefly, which may perhaps be sufficient for faith; yet faith does not desire instruction.

Council of Ephesus, Session 1: *Letter of Cyril to Nestorius* (A.D. 431):

We will necessarily add this also. Proclaiming the death, according to the flesh, of the only-begotten Son of God, that is Jesus Christ, confessing his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, we offer the unbloody sacrifice in the churches, and so go on to the mystical thanksgivings, and are sanctified, having received his holy flesh and the precious blood of Christ the Savior of us all. And not as common flesh do we receive it; God forbid: nor as of a man sanctified and associated with the Word according to the unity of worth, or as having a divine indwelling, but as truly the life-giving and very flesh of the Word himself. For he is the life according to his nature as God, and when he became united to his flesh, he made it also to be life-giving.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Treachery of Judas* 1:6:

Christ is present. The One who prepared that [Holy Thursday] table is the very One who now prepares this [altar] table. For it is not a man who makes the sacrificial gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ, but He that was crucified for us, Christ Himself. The priest stands there carrying out the action, but the power and grace is of God. "This is My Body," he says. This statement transforms the gifts.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 82:4:

*Let us therefore in all respects put our faith in God and contradict Him in nothing, even if what is said seems to be contrary to our reasonings and to what we see. Let His Word be of superior authority to reason and sight. This too be our practice in respect to the [Eucharistic] Mysteries, not looking only upon what is laid out before us, but taking heed also of His words. **For His Word cannot deceive; but our senses are easily cheated. His Word never failed; our senses err most of the time. When the Word says, "This is My Body," be convinced of it and believe it, and look at it with the eyes of the mind.** For Christ did not give us something tangible, but even in His tangible things all is intellectual. So too with Baptism: the gift is bestowed through what is a tangible thing, water; but what is accomplished is intellectually perceived: the rebirth and the renewal. . . . How many now say, "I wish I could see his shape, His appearance, His garments, His sandals." **Only Look! You see Him! You touch Him! You eat Him!"***



[illegible]

[illegible]

