

Baptism - The Administration and Effects.

Baptism is the first and most necessary of all the Sacraments, that -which, by exterior washing and the invocation of the Blessed Trinity, effects the spiritual regeneration of man, and purifies him from all sins. We call it the first of the Sacraments, because we could not receive any other of them unless previously baptized; the most necessary, because no man can enter heaven if he has not received Baptism, even though he should be deprived of it without his fault. This necessity is called necessity as means.

The administration of Baptism may be private or solemn. The first takes place in a case of necessity, the second in ordinary cases. In a case of necessity any person may baptize. It suffices that he have the intention of administering the baptismal rite of the Church, that he take natural water and pour it on the head of the child, at the same time pronouncing these words : I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism has three effects: (i) The remission of all sin, not only original, but also actual, and of all the punishments due to sin; (2) the infusion of sanctifying grace, accompanied by the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, as also the other virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost; (3) the impression of the character, by which the baptized becomes an adopted child of God and His heir, a member of Jesus Christ and of the Church. The character of a child of God consists in his resemblance to the only Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

These effects of Baptism were typified in the healing of Naaman in the waters of the Jordan (4 Kings v.), and especially by the marvellous occurrences at the Baptism of Jesus Christ (St. Matt. iii. 6).

Since Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, how great should be the anxiety of parents to procure it for their children! How grateful ought we not be to God for the blessing of our Baptism, especially when we consider how many are deprived of it! This gratitude we ought to show by a life truly Christian, and conformable to our baptismal obligations.