

**Baptism: The Doorway to Christian Life: 1. What Is Baptism?** Baptism is the first and foundational Sacrament of the Church, the “gateway to life in the Spirit” (CCC 1213). Through Baptism, a person is freed from original sin, reborn as a child of God, incorporated into Christ and His Church, and marked with an indelible spiritual seal that can never be erased. The Church teaches that Baptism is not merely a ritual or symbol but a saving action of God. As Jesus declared: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5). According to the Council of Trent and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, Baptism is necessary for salvation, at least in desire (cf. Lumen Gentium, 14; CCC 1257). **2. Teachings of the Church on Baptism:** The Magisterium consistently teaches that Baptism: *Forgives all sins (original and personal) (CCC 1263). Makes the baptized a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) Incorporates the person into the Body of Christ, the Church (CCC 1267. Grants a share in the common priesthood of the faithful. Imprints a permanent sacramental character (CCC 1272).* Canon Law (Can. 849) defines Baptism as: “The gateway to the sacraments... by which people are freed from sins, reborn as children of God, and configured to Christ.” Liturgically, Baptism is celebrated with water and the Trinitarian formula—“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”—as mandated by Christ Himself (cf. Mt 28:19). **3. Who Can Be Baptized?** According to Canon Law (Can. 864): “Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is capable of baptism.” This includes: *Infants, baptized in the faith of the Church. Children of catechetical age, properly instructed. Adults, after a period of catechesis (RCIA/OCIA).* The Church baptizes infants because Baptism is a gift, not a reward. As St. Augustine beautifully taught, the child is carried by the faith of the Church until he or she can personally profess it. For adults, Baptism requires: *Faith in Christ. Repentance from sin. A desire to live as a disciple.* The Church also acknowledges: Baptism of Desire (explicit or implicit). Baptism of Blood (martyrdom). These affirm God’s mercy while upholding the necessity of the sacrament (CCC 1258–1261). **4. How Is Baptismal Grace Nurtured?** Baptism is the beginning, not the end, of Christian life. Its grace must be nurtured and strengthened. The Church teaches that baptismal grace grows through: *Regular participation in the Eucharist. Frequent Confession. Daily prayer and Scripture reading. Living according to the moral teachings of the Church. Works of charity and service. Participation in parish life.* The renewal of baptismal promises—especially during Easter Vigil and Easter Season—is a liturgical reminder that Baptism is meant to be lived daily. St. John Paul II emphasized: “Baptism is not magic. It is the beginning of a journey that requires lifelong conversion.” **5. Is Baptism Alone Enough for Salvation?** The Church clearly teaches that while Baptism is necessary, it is not sufficient by itself if a person later freely rejects Christ. Jesus Himself warned: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father” (Mt 7:21). The Catechism (CCC 1257) states: “God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but He Himself is not bound by His sacraments.” Therefore, the baptized are called to: Live in faith, hope, and charity. Remain in communion with the Church. Persevere in grace until the end. Salvation is a relationship, not a one-time event. **6. A Parish Story: “The Candle That Stayed Lit”:** In one parish, a grandmother brought her grandson for Baptism. She held tightly to the baptismal candle during the ceremony. When asked why, she said, *“This flame must not go out.”* Years later, that same child drifted away from the Church as a teenager. Yet one Easter night, he returned quietly to Mass. He later shared that during a dark period in his life, his grandmother’s words haunted him: “This flame must not go out.” That baptismal grace, long neglected, was not extinguished. It waited. And when he returned to the sacraments, it burned again—stronger and brighter. This is the mystery of Baptism: a grace that endures, a seal that remains, a call that never fades. **Conclusion:** Baptism is God’s initiative, the Church’s sacrament, and our lifelong mission. It makes us children of God, members of the Church, and missionaries in the world. As the Church teaches, to be baptized is to belong, and to belong is to live differently. May we never forget our Baptism—and may we help one another keep its flame alive.

**Happy Birthday & God’s blessings: Paul Newton; Daniel Hoffman; Joy Simonis; Karl Eileen.**

### **Announcements:**

**Public Call for Testimony & Information by Bishop Ricken to Share your Stories and experiences regarding the holiness of Servant of God Adele Brice- witnessed Our Lady, in Champion, WI.**

**A special thanks to all those who helped with removing the Christmas decorations.**

**Bishop Ricken asked all the parishes to pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit after the Universal prayer at the Weekend masses starting from Jan. 17&18.**

**There will not be weekend masses at St. Hubert’s Church from Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> through Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>.**

**A thank you from Fr. John Cerkas for the gifts, Cards and prayers this Christmas.**