

(10) The *Baltimore Catechism No 3* (1949), Questions 315-317

315. What is Baptism?

Baptism is the sacrament that gives our souls the new life of sanctifying grace by which we become children of God and heirs of heaven.

(a) Our adoption as sons of God through the sanctifying grace is more perfect than human adoption whereby children are adopted by foster parents. In human adoption nothing is given to the foster son that makes him similar to the foster parent. Into the souls of the adopted sons of God, however, sanctifying grace is infused, which gives them supernaturally a likeness to God. In human adoption the foster son succeeds to his inheritance only after the death of the father; in God's adoption the eternally living Father lets us share in our inheritance at the time of the adoption, that is, when the sacrament of Baptism is administered. By means of sanctifying grace received in Baptism we are spiritually reborn; we become members of the family of God, who becomes our Father in the supernatural order.

(b) The Baptism preached by Saint John did not have the same power as the Baptism instituted by Christ. The Baptism instituted by Christ directly produces grace; the Baptism preached by Saint John was intended to arouse in souls sorrow for sin. The Baptism of St. John prepared the way for the Baptism of Christ.

(c) After His Resurrection, Christ commanded all to receive Baptism as a necessary condition for salvation.

316. What sins does Baptism take away?

Baptism takes away original sin; and also actual sins and all the punishment due to them, if the person baptized be guilty of any actual sins and truly sorry for them.

(a) Baptism takes away both the eternal punishment of hell due to unforgiven mortal sin, and the temporal punishment on earth or in purgatory due to venial sin or to forgiven mortal sin.

(b) Though Baptism takes away original sin and restores sanctifying grace to the soul, It does not take away all the consequences of original sin. For example, it does not take away death, suffering, ignorance, and a strong inclination to sin.

317. What are the effects of the character imprinted on the soul by Baptism?

The effects of the character imprinted on the soul by Baptism are that we become members of the Church, subject to its laws, and capable of receiving the other sacraments.

(a) Baptized persons remain members of the Church as long as they are united to It by profession of the same faith and have not broken the bonds of communion with It.

(b) All validly baptized persons are subjects of the Church, even if they are not members. Hence they are obliged to obey the laws of the Church unless exempted. If, however, they are invincibly ignorant of their