

Catholic

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ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI, MO
63057-9999

800-325-9521
LIGUORI.ORG

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BAPTISM

OUR LIFELONG CALL

BY NICHOLAS LOHKAMP, OFM



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Do you know the date of your baptism? It was the most important day of your life! Let's explore, more fully at the mystery of our baptismal calling. We'll look first at being loved into existence (creation). Then we'll explore what it means to be loved into being-in-Christ (through water and the Spirit). Finally, we'll consider in greater detail how we are called through our baptism to live the life God wants for us.

A Mystery of Love

Over my long life, little by little, by grace and experience, through teaching and study, I have come to believe in the depth and wonder of the mystery of my baptismal calling. It is a mystery that defines me, marks me, purges me, penetrates me, and transforms me to the depth of my being. My baptism shapes who I am and the way I try to live. For me, and for everyone, it all starts with God.

Through faith, I know I am loved by God. Everything flows from this. I don't understand it, and I surely don't deserve it! But that's why I am a Catholic: to become more and more caught up in the love of God, the Holy Trinity.

Did you ever get on your knees before a little child? God—Father, Son, and Spirit—abides in and continually loves each little child. How precious and sacred that child! Through baptism, I, too, have become a child of God.

Like everyone else, I take God's love for granted. We forget the gentle and creative power of the Father's love. We presume Jesus will continue to be merciful and compassionate to us. Sadly, we easily take for granted the abiding presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Yet we are loved by God, in every moment, in every way! We don't earn the love of God. Through grace, it is freely given! Everything good in our lives, in the world, is a gift of God. Without God's love, we are nothing, and I am nothing. We can do nothing good. We cannot live, we cannot love.

That's why gratitude is at the heart of being a Catholic. Once we realize how little we can be without God, we can only be thankful.

Baptism means I am *Christened*. I am plunged into the mystery of Jesus. I can't fully understand what that means. Paul puts it clearly: "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

Christening is not just some nice social event. It is God's work. It defines who I am: a Christian. Christening describes how I live: following Jesus. Christening challenges me to be true to my calling. It challenges me to follow Jesus daily with the help of the Spirit, to live every day to the glory of the Father, to live every day as a member of the Church, thus, to be a Catholic.

Jesus: Fully Human, Fully Divine

Our baptism puts us in touch with Jesus, the Word made flesh, the incarnate expression of God's love. The Father so loved the world that he gave us his Son that we might have life through him.

Jesus became human, and he is our God. Jesus is, precisely as human, the way, the truth, the life. Jesus is my way to live and find God. Jesus is the truth of who I am and who I am called to become. Jesus is my very life. He shows me how to live as a son of God. Put simply, Jesus is my all.

I paid little attention to the humanness of Jesus before the Second Vatican Council. I was striving to lead a "spiritual" life. I wanted to cultivate and save my soul by performing



spiritual exercises. To be human was a bother; it always got in the way. I thought to be pleasing to God I had to renounce my humanness.

ZVONIMIR ATLETIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

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