

ST. DOMINIC 6-8TH GRADE FAITH FORMATION: 2ND SESSION

**Jesus is the Sacrament of God
We are the Sacrament of Jesus**

Review: 7 Sacraments / 3 Sacraments of Initiation / 2 Sacraments of healing / 2 Sacraments of lifelong vocational commitment

Recall: Mystery (the unseen, hidden reality) and Sacrament (reveals the mystery)

BAPTISM

Saint of the Day

St. Peter Claver (June 26, 1580, to September 8, 1654) He was born in 1580 in central Spain to a very religious, prosperous farming family. Remember the year Christopher Columbus sailed in the name of Spain to the Americas? 1492. 18 years later, King Ferdinand legalized slavery for the Americas, what was at the time called "New Spain". That was 70 years before Peter Claver's birth. After graduating from the University of Barcelona, he joined the Jesuits. He considered slavery a horrible abuse of the human dignity of the slaves and in 1610 at the age of 30 years old, while still a novice (preparing to become a full-fledged member of the Jesuits), he went to join a Jesuit community in Cartagena, Colombia, the center of the slave trade in New Spain.

There he completed five years of study to be ordained as a priest, living in Tunja (the city where some of our Spanish teachers from St. Dominic school are from) and Bogota. During those years, he was deeply disturbed by the harsh treatment and living conditions of the black slaves who were brought from Africa. Cartagena, as I mentioned, was a slave-trading hub. 10,000 slaves were brought there each year, crossing the Atlantic from West Africa under conditions so foul that an estimated one-third died during the crossing.

Claver's predecessor, Alonso de Sandoval, was his mentor and inspiration. Sandoval devoted himself to serving the slaves for 40 years before Claver arrived to continue his work. Sandoval visited the slaves on plantations where they worked. Peter Claver preferred to serve them at the wharfs as soon as a slave ship entered the port. Boarding the ship, he entered the filthy and diseased holds to treat and minister to the badly-treated Africans who had survived a voyage of several months under horrible conditions. It was difficult to move around on the ships, because the slave traffickers filled them to capacity. After the slaves were herded from the ship and penned in nearby yards to be scrutinized by crowds of buyers, Peter Claver joined them with medicine and food. With the help of interpreters and pictures which he carried with him, he gave basic instructions and assured the slaves of their human dignity and God's saving love.

Peter Claver had conflicts with some of his Jesuit brothers who accepted slavery. He considered the slaves as fellow human beings and encouraging others to do so as well. During his 40 years of ministry he instructed and baptized an estimated 300,000 slaves. He made the rounds of all the plantations to try to assure that they were receiving good treatment and to try to instill the idea in the minds of their owners that these slaves were their brothers and sisters in Christ.

After four years suffering with Parkinson's disease, he died in 1654. He was canonized or named a Saint in 1888.

The most I ever baptized in a day was 100 children on the Sunday before Christmas my first year in Venezuela. St. Peter Claver baptized around 145 people per week for 40 years = 300,000 baptisms

Small Group Discussion

Saints are examples of faith for us to follow. What do you admire about St. Peter Claver? What do you think would be the most difficult part of his work?

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was asked in an interview what she thought when people said she was a living saint. Her answer: "Isn't that what we're all supposed to be?" What is the most difficult thing for you to be a living saint and an example for others?

BAPTISM IS BEING ADOPTED BY GOD AS A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY

Around 130,000 children are adopted in the United States each year. Couples spend long hours and incur a lot of expenses when they adopt a child, particularly from other countries where they may have to travel two or three times to Vietnam or Korea or Poland or Russia before going the final time to receive their child. It is not unusual for expenses to reach \$40,000 or more...and that's before they get them home and feed them, buy clothes, provide health care, dentists, school, and a thousand other expenses. Anyone willing to go through all that to adopt a child must have a lot of WHAT in their heart? A lot of LOVE.

Meg and Chris Nelson from St. Paul have adopted two daughters. Six-and-a-half-year-old Lizzie and three-and-a-half-year-old Kate. They began the adoption process shortly after they decided to start their family. "My sister adopted all three of her kids," Meg says, adding she was concerned about her chances of getting pregnant. "Chris said, 'Why wait?' So we started pursuing adoption early." They chose Catholic Charities Adoption services because they felt it provided personal care in domestic adoptions and, wanting to raise their children in the Catholic faith, were drawn to Catholic Charities' values. Meg said, "The two birth mothers chose us partly because they were raised Catholic and wanted faith and education to be important for the family they chose." The Nelson family sees each birth mother four times a year and keep in touch through monthly e-mails and phone calls. Ongoing communication between adoptive families and the birth parents, known as "open adoption", has become the norm. Anonymous adoptions aren't as common.

Small Group Discussion

Why do you think the Nelson's adopted their first child? Why do you think they adopted their second girl?

It would have been a lot easier for them **not** to adopt. They would have had a lot more money to spend on vacations and going out to restaurants, etc. But having children to love and care for was more important to them than money and material things. They had so much love in their hearts, they would have **burst** if they hadn't had someone to love.

In love God destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ. *Ephesians 1:4-5*

God *is* love and had so much love, it couldn't be held only within the Trinity. God wanted to share his love and so chose to adopt you and me as his children in his family.

Small Group Discussion

What does this story of the Nelson's have in common with God's love for us? It cost the Nelson's and other adopting couples a lot of time and money to adopt their children. What did it cost God to adopt us?

God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life. *John 3:16*

We learned last time that a "sacrament" is an outward visible, audible sign that reveals the unseen mystery. What are the visible items, signs, and audible words used in baptism?

WATER

nourishment: biking or running you need a lot of water just as plants need rain to grow

cleaning / washing / purifying: water is the major cleaning agent in the world

There is something else about water that makes it a symbol for baptism...something that, when it happens to someone, it is very sad. (hint: it may happen when there are floods. hint 2: it may happen when someone who doesn't know how to swim gets out in deep water)
...**drowning, being submerged in water.**

We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were, indeed, buried with him through baptism into his death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, might live in newness of life. *Romans 6:3-4*

We are REBORN in Baptism, dying to an old self without God and rising to a new life with God.

SACRED CHRISM

consecrated perfumed oil marking the person as a child of God forever

LIGHT

passed from the Easter Candle to a baptismal candle to symbolize receiving the light of Christ that we might be a light of Christ for others

SACRAMENTS ARE NOT ONE-DIRECTIONAL FROM GOD TO US. THEY ARE A "CONVERSATION" OR EXCHANGE OF SIGNS AND WORDS BETWEEN GOD AND US.

Example: You go to McDonald's and order a Big Mac meal. They give you the food, you give them money.

Example: Your grandma calls you, "Hello, how are you doing?" What do you do? You talk...a conversation. You might tell her that you love her. She might already know, but she likes to have some sign.

An external sign is only good as long as it truly expresses the unseen intentions of the heart. On their anniversary day, a husband may give his wife flowers, candy, a card or some other gift (symbolic items), tell her he loves her (audible words) and give her a hug and kiss (physical gestures). If the items given, the gestures and words express what is in his heart, his wife will be pleased and express her love in return. If he is only going through the motions and she realizes it, she may throw the flowers and candy in the trash since they do not truly express love.

So it is with the Sacraments. The words, actions and items used are only good as long as they express what is within our hearts. Example from Sacrament of Reconciliation: if the person confessing isn't truly sorry for his sins, they are not forgiven despite the priest's prayer of absolution. God wants to bless us through the Sacraments and express God's love for us, but we must do our part in the conversation or exchange of signs for the sacraments to be fruitful in our loves.

NEXT SESSION

Bring some wax...a small candle, a bit of wax dripped from a candle, a crayon or two. We'll melt all the wax into one candle as a symbol of together being the light of Christ.

Next week we'll join in a ceremony in church to renew our baptism. Invite your parents and godparents. Have them bring along your baptismal candle.

If you have a picture of your baptism, please drop it by the parish office or bring it to church on Sunday...one per person. I will incorporate all the photos I get ahead of time into a Powerpoint presentation for our ceremony next week.

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