

## The Baptismal Font

Baptism is one of the most revered and significant actions of the Church. It is clearly rooted in Jesus' own baptism by John the Baptist and grounded in the theology of St. Paul: "*Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*" (Romans 6:1-4)

The earliest evidence of special places for baptism is in a third-century house church in present-day Syria. In the fourth century, buildings called **baptistries** were provided for baptism. The container, or **font**, was large enough for an adult to be baptized by **immersion**. (To **baptize** means "to dip." "Immersion" means that the one being baptized stands or kneels in inches or feet of water while copious amounts of water are poured over his or her body.) It is unlikely that these early fonts were large enough for **submersion**, that is, the whole body going under the surface of the water. Eventually, as infant baptism became the norm, the font became smaller and moved from the baptistry into the main church.

With the Second Vatican Council, sacramental rites were revised; the rites for the celebration of baptism for infants (1969) and adults (1972 and 1988), and the earlier reform and restoration of the Easter Vigil (1951), the font regained its place and larger size in churches. The

Bishops of the Church have also stated that baptism by immersion (standing or kneeling in water) is to be considered the norm for baptism in the United States.

Why is a nobly, properly constructed, and beautiful font necessary in our church?

Baptism is celebrated at the threshold of the life of faith, so it is appropriate for the font to be near the entrance of the church. This provides ample space for funeral processions to pause in front of the font for the blessing of the casket with holy water from the font. The design and scale of the font must clearly reflect the significance that the Church attaches to initiation: to the mystery of incorporation into the eternal life of Christ that it celebrates.



The sign of baptism is the **water** that the font holds. The nobleness of the font is to be respected and studied; however, the abundant water it holds speaks of the generous, life-giving grace of Christ poured over and into those who are "called by the name" to put

on the new life of Christ. The Church, acting in Jesus' name, must show by its gestures and symbols the fullness of hospitality toward all those initiated.

The font is the place for memorable rituals marking births and deaths, and the blessings of many spiritual journeys. The water of this font calls all who enter it, or touch it, or are blessed by it, into that transformation whereby "*we are alive for God in Jesus Christ*" (Romans 6:11).

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***As you may know, the Baptismal Font at Holy Angels has experienced many problems since it was built in 2004. The font was built as a temporary structure. Our Pastor, Fr. Fiore, our Director of Liturgy & Music, Stephen Adams, and our Coordinator of Art & Environment, Patti Walters, are researching options to replace the font and find a permanent solution that honors the Sacrament of Baptism and reminds the baptized of our baptismal promises. We will explore the issues surrounding the font (which will remain empty until replacement) for the next few weeks in the bulletin. Next week we will discuss particular issues surrounding the current temporary font.***

For those of you, who are able to assist with **DONATIONS** towards the new baptismal font project, please mail your tax-deductible donation to the parish office. Thank you for your kindness!

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