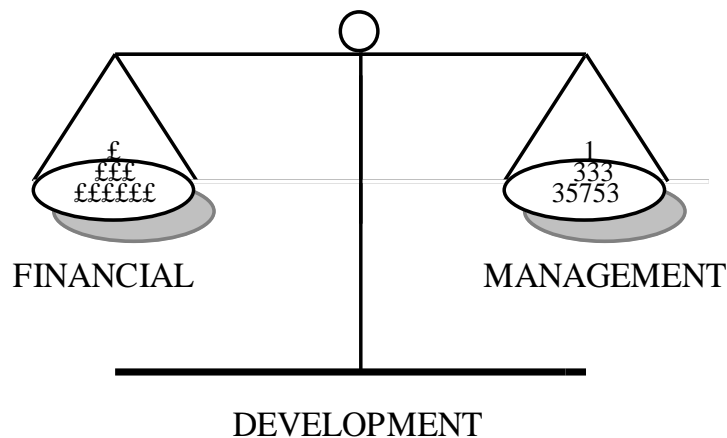


FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

CHRISTIAN MANAGEMENT

NO 911

WHY BAPTISE INFANTS



ONE OF A SERIES OF GUIDES FOR
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

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WHY BAPTISE INFANTS?

BAPTISING INFANTS - JUST AN EXCUSE FOR A PARTY?

I was recently asked to Baptise a baby in danger of death. As I walked towards the house, I wondered should I suggest waiting till the baby was better, waiting for the family to get together? Surely a loving God would not refuse Heaven to a Baby, just because I failed to get there in time? But if that is true, does Baptism matter?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 28:19 "Go and Baptise all nations." They were his last words to His disciples. Yes he said "pass on" His teaching, but the one explicit commandment was to Baptise. In John 3:5 He said "No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Holy Spirit." IT DOES MATTER. It is what we were baptised to do.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has 72 statements on Baptism (1212 -1284). Here are some of the key points made (summarised in most cases – so please read the full text):

1212 The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the foundations of every Christian life. The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life.

1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission:

1214 Baptism in water symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as "a new creature."

1215 Baptism signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one "can enter the kingdom of God."

1216 Having received in Baptism the Word, "the true light that enlightens every man," the person baptized has been "enlightened," he becomes a "son of light," indeed, he becomes "light" himself: Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift....We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift.

1217 -23 In the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, during the blessing of the baptismal water, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of Baptism: Spirit breathing on the waters, Noah's ark, crossing of the Red Sea and liberation from slavery, crossing of the Jordan River and the gift of the promised land, Christ's Baptism.

1226 From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is offered to anyone who believed in Jesus: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and

your household," St. Paul declared to his jailer in Philippi. and the narrative continues, the jailer "was baptized at once, with all his family."

1227 According to the Apostle Paul, the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ's death, is buried with him, and rises with him: Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Galatians 3:27)

1229 Becoming a Christian is a journey, covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.

1231 Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. the catechism has its proper place here.

1233 Today in both Latin and Eastern rites, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. In the Eastern rites the Christian initiation of infants also begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the Eucharist, while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian initiation.

1235 - 43 The sign of the cross: The proclamation of the Word of God; exorcism and anointing; laying on of hands; baptism with water in the name of each person of the Most Holy Trinity; anointing with sacred chrism as priest, prophet, and king. In the Eastern Churches, the post-baptismal anointing is the sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation). In the Roman liturgy the post-baptismal anointing announces a second anointing with sacred chrism to be conferred later by the bishop Confirmation, which will as it were "confirm" and complete the baptismal anointing; white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ," has risen with Christ. the candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world." The newly baptized is now a child of God entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: "Our Father."

1244 Having become a child of God clothed with the wedding garment, the neophyte is admitted "to the marriage supper of the Lamb" and receives the food of the new life, the body and blood of Christ. The Eastern Churches maintain a lively awareness of the unity of Christian initiation by giving Holy Communion to all the newly baptized and confirmed, even little children, recalling the Lord's words: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them." The Latin Church, which reserves admission to Holy Communion to those who have attained the age of reason, expresses the orientation of Baptism to the Eucharist by having the newly baptized child brought to the altar for the praying of the Our Father.

1245 The solemn blessing concludes the celebration of Baptism. At the Baptism of newborns the blessing of the mother occupies a special place.

The Baptism of infants

1250 Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.

1251 Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.

1252 The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.

1253 Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. The catechumen or the godparent is asked: "What do you ask of God's Church?" the response is: "Faith!"

1254 For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises. Preparation for Baptism leads only to the threshold of new life. Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

1255 For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized - child or adult on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function. The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

The Necessity of Baptism

1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. (John 3:5) He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. (Matthew 28:20) Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

1260 "Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery." Every man who is

ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.

1261 As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them," allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.

1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and coheir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ

1267 Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: "Therefore . . . we are members one of another." Baptism incorporates us into the Church. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."

1268 The baptized have become "living stones" to be "built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood." They share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. They are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."

1271 Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: For all who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, they are incorporated into and are brothers of the children of the Catholic Church. Baptism is a sacramental bond of unity.

An indelible spiritual mark

1272 Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark of belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation. Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.

1273 Incorporated into the Church by Baptism, the faithful have received the sacramental character that consecrates them for Christian religious worship. The baptismal seal enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the holy liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity.

1274 The Holy Spirit has marked us with the seal of the Lord. "Baptism indeed is the seal of eternal life." The faithful Christian who has "kept the seal" until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his Baptism, will be able to depart this life "marked with the sign of faith," with his baptismal faith, in expectation of the blessed vision of God - the consummation of faith - and in the hope of resurrection.

IT IS A GOOD THING THAT GOD COMMANDS US TO DO.....so do it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!