

Why does the Church baptize infants?

First, the Church from the earliest New Testament times did baptize infants, the notion of waiting until they became adults came much later, about 15 centuries later. It is also to be noted that as the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles were almost all Jewish converts and the Jewish practice was to circumcise on the eighth day after birth, these parents would have found it profoundly odd not to baptize their children into the new Faith immediately!

Secondly, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, chapter 2 verses 14 to 36. The people were moved and asked what to do? The answer was, "Repent, and be *baptized everyone of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is *to you and to your children ...*"

Thirdly, the Prayer Book, (p 523 first prayer and p 529 prayer after Lord's Prayer) states, following Scripture, that through God's gift of baptism,

- 1) child is born again,
- 2) adopted as God's child and
- 3) made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Regarding point one, read John chapter 3:1-15 where Jesus says about baptism, "unless one is born again (or anew) he cannot see the kingdom of God.@ Note also Mark 16:16 A He who believes and is baptized will be saved..."

Regarding point 2, read Galatians 3:26, 27 "for in Christ Jesus you are *all sons of God*, through faith. For as many of you *as were baptized* into Christ have put on Christ."

Regarding point 3, read Romans 8:16, 17 "that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Strongly suggestive proof that children were baptized along with adults in New Testament times is found in Acts chapter 16. There the story of Lydia (verses 11-15) tells us that "she was baptized, with her household" (verse 15) - a household included all slaves, servants and children! Also in verses 16 - 40 we read of the jailer, who, upon conversion, "was baptized at once with *all his family*." (verse 33) - it is only natural to understand this term as including children!

In conclusion, the notion of waiting until the child grows up is clearly contrary to centuries of Christian practice, contrary to New Testament practice and contrary to the inclusiveness of the Gospel of love. God loves all, Christ died for all - including infants and children. Christ wants all to be fully included in His Church which means giving to infants and children all His blessings - including baptism. To clothe, feed, and send our children to school are obvious parts of a parent's job. So too is the task of teaching them manners and right from wrong, surely our children's spiritual well-being does not fall outside a parent's love and care!