

Beginning at the Beginning: Baptism 101

As noted in the last installment here, our next several topics will be the sacraments, with particular attention to how the Church's current understanding and teaching about them are different from what Old Timer Catholics may have learned about them 'back when'. Here a bit of a related side note about how 'changes' in Catholic Church teaching are done. One of the very interesting features of our Catholic tradition and teaching is that while we rarely ever change our teaching outright, we do *shift our emphasis around* within it in very significant ways. Our Catholic Treasury of tradition and teaching is so vast and rich that the seed or core of what might seem entirely new and different to some has actually been there all the time. For example, when I first learned about Baptism long ago, the emphasis was on the removal of original sin from the soul, and the consequent ability to get into heaven. In connection with this understanding and emphasis, there was urgency about baptizing newborn babies, should anything happen to them at their very vulnerable early age. More recently, with the changes introduced since the Second Vatican Council, the emphasis in our understanding of Baptism has shifted from *the cleansing of original sin* to *incorporation into the Community* of Salvation, the Body of Christ, the Church. We have always understood Baptism as the beginning of one's life in the community of faith, and the rite of Baptism still refers explicitly to how Baptism sets us free from sin. But the emphasis has shifted from the one to the other, so now, for example, the communal celebration of the sacrament at weekend Mass is encouraged as the norm, rather than the private celebration as soon as possible, should "anything happen" to the baby.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about.
Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.