

Fr. Perozich comments —

Catholic minds can be distracted from Jesus and salvation by the Iran strife, the pope-president conflict, gas prices, congressional scandals, and other worldly things such as were 3 cardinals on a CBS news program, a missed opportunity to witness to Jesus and salvation.

Being born again through baptism, and taking an active participatory role in our transformation into the image of Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, should be the prime focus of Catholic life.

“Baptism is an important outward sign of repentance and faith, but the new birth itself is God’s inward work—something no ceremony can mechanically produce.” — Mychal Massie

(A sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace — Baltimore Catechism Question 304)

Attractive as it is, the non Catholic belief that a mere confession alone of faith in Jesus brings eternal life, once saved always saved, simply is not true.

Once baptized, the Christian is prepared to bear the cross WITH Jesus’ holy presence and grace throughout this life.

Baptism is like the weeding and preparation of “good soil” into which the seeds of grace are planted. But we must cooperate with that grace for the new growth to flourish. The cleansing of Baptism is only a first step – and in an important sense, a first step toward the Cross. Baptism gives us the grace to take up the Cross. — Randall Smith

Bearing the cross means “that surrender of our selfishness, however – taking that heavy burden of the Cross on ourselves – is that, although at first, we feel its weight, in time, the Cross we think we are bearing is actually lifting us up.” — Randall Smith

So while many inside and outside the church present worldly messages of conflict, political fighting, false ideas of rights to do whatever one wants, and other distractions, this time of year above all, Christians glory in the Resurrection of Jesus and in our future resurrection with Him, begun in baptism, fully engaged in word, sacrament, and charity, with a conscious effort of continued transformation until Jesus comes again.

Crossing Yourself When You Enter the Church

Randall Smith on Tuesday, April 14, 2026

Many readers here likely witnessed Baptisms recently, especially if they went to the Easter Vigil Mass. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we seem to have been blessed with a good number of Baptisms this year. Let's pray that this undeserved gift continues and grows like the proverbial mustard seed.

That prayer is one we must make for ourselves too, of course, for our own **Baptism is like the weeding and preparation of "good soil" into which the seeds of grace are planted. But we must cooperate with that grace for the new growth to flourish. The cleansing of Baptism is only a first step – and in an important sense, a first step toward the Cross. Baptism gives us the grace to take up the Cross.**

It has long been a tradition in the Church to connect Baptism and the Cross. As St. Paul writes in *Romans 6*, "all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death," so that "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

We must put to death "the old man" says Paul in Ephesians 4 – the "old man" with its pride, greed, and lust for domination – and rise to put on the "new man," re-made in the image of Christ. But Paul is not making things up on his own authority. He is proclaiming "what had been handed on to him." Let me explain.

Pope Benedict, in his wonderful exposition of the Baptism of Jesus in *Jesus of Nazareth*, asks the question which many have asked: If Baptism is a confession of sins and a putting off of the

old, sinful life to receive a new one, is this something Jesus could do? If Jesus was sinless (and He was), why does he get baptized? Indeed, John the Baptist says: “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus replies: “Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

“Looking at the events in light of the Cross and Resurrection,” wrote Benedict, “the Christian people realized what happened: **Jesus loaded the burden of all mankind’s guilt upon his shoulders; he bore it down into the depths of the Jordan. He inaugurated his public activity by stepping into the place of sinners. His inaugural gesture is an anticipation of the Cross.**” He “fulfill all righteousness” with His complete yes to God’s will, even to death on the Cross.

Pope Benedict notes three aspects of Jesus’s Baptism.

The first is that, as Jesus rises from the waters: “Heaven stands open above Jesus. His communion of will with the Father, his fulfillment of ‘all righteousness,’ opens heaven, which is essentially the place where God’s will is perfectly fulfilled.”

The second aspect is “the proclamation of Jesus’ mission by God the Father: not only in what He does but by who He is. He is “the beloved Son” who does the will of the Father.

The third aspect of the scene, finally, is the descent of the Holy Spirit. With this, writes Benedict, we find the mystery of the Trinitarian God “beginning to emerge.”

To some people, the doctrine of the Trinity is a confusing jumble. Why bother with “three persons in one Being?” Can’t we just talk about “God”? We can, and we do, but then we lose something of the inner dynamic character of God.

It is important to understand that God is a threefold communion of love being shared for all eternity between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That divine love has been extended to us by the Son who takes on our humanity, “becomes flesh,” and dwells among us. This is a transformative love so great that it can transcend even sin and death.

“It is to your benefit that I go away,” Jesus tells his disciples. How could that be better? Because if He does not go, then everyone would constantly be going to *Him* for more bread, more healing, more miracles.

But then *we* would not be transformed. *We* are to be the “members” of Christ’s Body in the world. *We* are to be Christ’s hands and feet and eyes now.

We do not do this alone. Christ’s promise is that, when He has gone, he will send the Holy Spirit to “spread charity abroad in our hearts” so that we, like Him, “can fulfill all righteousness”; we too can be instruments of God’s will and God’s love.

But we cannot be those instruments of love if we hold onto the **“old man” of selfishness and greed and the lust for domination. Those things must be cleansed away.** And yet, if it were easy, everyone would be doing it. If it were easy, God wouldn’t have had to sacrifice Himself on a Cross.

The thing about that surrender of our selfishness, however – taking that heavy burden of the Cross on ourselves – is that, although at first, we feel its weight, in time, the Cross we think we are bearing is actually lifting us up.

So, when you dip your finger in that holy water font going into the church, you remember we are a baptized people, baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection.

Then you make the Sign of the Cross and say, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” When you do this, whether you think consciously about it or not, you have proclaimed in that gesture the essence of the Christian faith – Baptism, the Cross, the Triune God – even though you’ve barely crossed the threshold of the church.

You’ve repeated the essential things, now you’re ready to go in and listen and enter more fully into that communion into which we are being invited by a God

whose love can reach even into the depths of the most sinful soul.

Being Born Again; What Does It Mean? –

April 11, 2026
Christian

Thought For The Day

I concluded the “Sunday Thought For The Day” the week before we celebrated Resurrection Day, by telling you I would the after Resurrection Day I would discuss “what is being born again.” Let us begin.

“Born again” is Jesus’ own language for the kind of new beginning a person needs in order to belong to God. In His conversation with a religious teacher named Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3).

Nicodemus assumed Jesus meant a second physical birth, but Jesus was describing **a spiritual birth—an inner change God brings about.**

Why a new birth is necessary

The Bible presents the human problem as deeper than lack of education, self-control, or guidance. It is a heart problem: **we are separated from God by sin and cannot fix that separation by effort alone.** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Being “born again” addresses that root issue: not merely improving the old life, but receiving new life from God.

What “born again” means

To be born again means God gives you a new kind of life—spiritual life—so that you become His child in a real, relational sense. John explains it this way: “But to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God” (John 1:12–13).

This is not mainly about adopting a religious label. **It is about God changing who you are at the deepest level and bringing you into His family.**

The role of the Holy Spirit

Jesus connected the new birth directly to the Holy Spirit: “Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh is born of flesh, but spirit is born of the Spirit” (John 3:5–6).

The point is that spiritual life does not come from human nature (“flesh”) or human willpower. It comes from God’s Spirit giving life from the inside out.

“Water and the Spirit” in plain terms

Jesus’ phrase points to cleansing and renewal that only God can provide. The Bible often links “water” with washing and purification, and it links the Spirit with inner transformation. Another passage summarizes this same idea: “He saved us, not by righteous deeds we had done, but because of His mercy. **He**

saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

Baptism is an important outward sign of repentance and faith, but the new birth itself is God’s inward work—something no ceremony can mechanically produce.

How the new birth happens

The new birth is received, not achieved. The Bible describes a personal response to God that includes repentance (turning from sin) and faith (trusting Christ).

At the center is Jesus—His death and resurrection as God’s provision for sinners. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Salvation is not earned by good deeds: “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

What changes when someone is born again

Being born again does not mean instant perfection, but it does mean a real new beginning and a new direction. “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Common evidences include:

- ◇ A growing desire to know God and take His word seriously.
- ◇ A clearer conviction about sin, along with a willingness to confess and turn from it.

- ◇ New affections: love for Christ, love for other people, and a changed relationship to what once ruled you.
- ◇ Ongoing transformation over time, not merely a one-time emotional experience.

What being born again is not

Being born again is not:

- ◇ Simply becoming more moral or disciplined.
- ◇ Joining a church or adopting Christian culture.
- ◇ An emotional moment you can manufacture.
- ◇ A private spiritual upgrade that leaves your life unchanged.

The new birth is God's work that results in real change, even if that change includes struggles and growth rather than instant maturity.

How assurance fits

A common concern is, **“How can I know it's real?”** **The Bible points assurance to Jesus Himself and God's promise, not to flawless performance.** “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:12–13).

The message at the center

Being born again means receiving new life from God through Jesus Christ—life given by the Holy Spirit, grounded in God's mercy, received by faith, and evidenced by a transformed life. “For you have been born

again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23).

I would like to thank the “Bible Hub Team” for their prodigious work in providing this message.

READ:

Ephesians 2:4-10 (KJV)

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Take action and share this!

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