

◆ Ad Veritatem ◆

Volume 6 Issue 8

Official Publication of the St. Thomas More Society

September 2001

SEPT. MEETING Fr. Ray Skonezny CURSILLO: WHAT IS IT & WHY DO I NEED IT?



Saint Thomas More never confused learning and intellectual agility with virtue and character.

**Thomas More:
A Portrait of
Courage**

This month our featured speaker is Father Ray Skonezny who will speak about the Cursillo Movement.

Father Ray entered the Navy as a teenager. After being discharged, he entered the Trappist Monastery in Ogden, Utah where he lived under a vow of silence for 14 years. In 1981, Fr Ray became the Director of Orange County Cursillo.

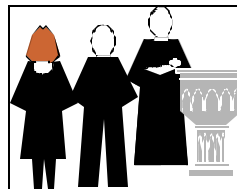
The Cursillo Movement started in 1934 originating in Spain following the Spanish Civil War. Dedicated to advancing the education of practicing Catholics in their Faith, the Cursillo Movement has spread around the world. It is a special experience that has a profound effect leading Catholics to renewed dedication in spreading the Faith.

For more information, contact Dave Belz at (949) 347-0447 dbelz@kuhnbelz.com or Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 alanphar@firstam.com.

Everyone is welcome! †

Baptism: Born Again The Early Church Knew How To Get Born Again the Bible Way

Fr. Hugh Barbour, O. Praem, Ph.D.
Our Chaplain



Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven." Jesus was speaking about baptism, the effects of which are eradication of original sin, remission of all actual sins, and an infusion of sanctifying grace.

In spite of the scriptural evidence (Acts 2:14-40, 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:27; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21), most Protestants, along with the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Mormons, deny that baptism is necessary for salvation and that it has any sacramental power to take away sin or bestow divine grace. Let's look at what the earliest Christians believed and taught on this subject.

Hermas: "Before a man bears the name of the Son of God he is [spiritually] dead, but when he receives the seal he lays aside his

Born Again (Continued on page 2)

SEPT. MEETING:

TOPIC: **CURSILLO: What is it and Why Do I Need It?**

SPEAKER: **Fr Ray Skonezny**

WHEN: **Lunch (\$10) Mtg
Noon Wed. Sept. 19th**

PLACE: **First American Title
3 First American Way, Santa Ana**

*Editor's Note:
"Ad Veritatem"
is Latin for
"toward the truth."*

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deadness and receives life. The seal then is the water; they descend into the water dead and they arise alive. And to them accordingly was this seal preached, and they made use of it that they might enter into the kingdom of God" (The Shepherd 9:16[A.D.96]). "Regarding [baptism], we have the evidence of Scripture that Israel would refuse to accept the washing which confers the remission of sins, and would set up a substitution of their own instead . . . Here he is saying that after we have stepped down into the water burdened with sin and defilement, we come up out of it bearing fruit, with reverence in our hearts and the hope of Jesus in our souls" (ibid. 11:1-10).

The Epistle of Barnabas: "We descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear of God and trust in Jesus in our spirit" (11 [A.D. 138]).

Epistola Apostolorum: Just as in the Gospels, baptism is an indispensable source of forgiveness and salvation, under the condition of faith and good works: "[Christ says] And I poured out upon them with My right hand the water of life and forgiveness and salvation from all evil, as I have done unto you and to them that believe in Me. But if any believes in Me and does not follow My commandments, although he has confessed My Name he shall have no profit from It" (27 [A.D. 140]).

St. Justin Martyr: This great apologist for the Catholic Faith is worth quoting more than once. He defended the Church's teachings against pagan attacks. "Then they [catechumens] are brought by us to where there is water, and they are reborn in the same manner in which we were ourselves reborn. For in the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our

Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.' . . . That they may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again and has repented of his sins, the Name of God the Father and Lord of the universe . . . But also in the Name of Jesus Christ Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the Name of the Holy Spirit, Who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed" (First Apology 61 [ante A.D. 165]).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons: This great defender of the Faith refuted the prominent heresy of his day, Gnosticism (an early version of today's New Age Movement). He was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. Irenaeus speaks of how Polycarp taught him the truths of the Faith and how he often heard Polycarp reminisce about his personal encounters with St. John. "Before all else the Faith insistently invites us to remember that we have received baptism for the remission of sins in the Name of God the Father and in the Name of Jesus Christ, Son of God incarnate, dead and risen, and in the Holy Spirit of God, that baptism is the seal of eternal life, the new birth in God, so that we are no longer sons of mortal men, but of God, eternal and indestructible" (Demonstration of the Apostolic Teaching 3 [A.D.175]). "The baptism which makes us be born again passes through these three articles of faith (in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), and permits us to be reborn to God the Father through His Son and in the Holy Spirit" (ibid. 7 [A.D. 175]).

Born Again (Continued on page 6)

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SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

"The denial of Truth is just as fatal to the mind as the denial of light is to vision. Truth in its fullness is not easy to attain, even if one does admit its existence.

There are certain psychological and spiritual conditions which are essential for its discovery, and the most important of these is the virtue of humility." †



PRIDE:

The Deadliest of the Deadly Sins*



Anne Lanphar Esq.

Our society encourages us to have “*pride*” in ourselves. Pride is promoted as an important character trait euphemistically called “*self-esteem*.” On the other hand, “*humility*” is seen as a virtue that one should “*appear*” to have only so as to not seem to be egotistical. False humility is, of course, merely the flip side of pride. But is pride a virtue or a curse, an asset or a sin? Why has pride been universally condemned across the ages by the Bible, the Church, and the Saints?

“*Pride*” is defined in the Encyclopedia of Catholicism (p. 1048) as “...*the disordered love of self or one’s own success to the exclusion of others and God. Pride is a capital sin because it is often the source of other sins.*” Pride is the first of the seven deadly or capital sins (pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust). These sins or vices are “...*the wellsprings from which sinful thoughts, behavior, and omission arise...It is more precise to think of the capital sins as dispositions toward sinning rather than as sins properly speaking; that is, they are tendencies in our character that threaten moral goodness by predisposing us to sin.*” (Ibid., p. 225) These designations were first used by Pope Gregory the Great, reinforced by St. Thomas Aquinas and even immortalized by Dante in his great work The Divine Comedy in which the prideful were assigned to the lowest level in purgatory, these sinners having committed the most grievous of sins now owed the greatest atonement to God.

The first sin in recorded history was the disobedience of Adam and Eve which was driven by pride: they were tempted to believe that they could become as great as God. The sin that led to the downfall of Lucifer and his followers was also pride—they refused to bow down and adore Christ as the God-Man.

Our society appears to believe that some pride is good but that it is merely a matter of “*balance*.” But if pride has had such a central part in the downfall of both man and the angels, can it really be good at any level? Is it possible to allow this sin in our hearts on a limited basis and to control it? The greatest Christian writers over 2,000

years say absolutely not.

Pride, being the disordered love of one’s self, causes a person to believe that he is in total control and, therefore, should receive full credit and recognition for all accomplishments. Admittedly the person may have worked hard and contributed to that success. A common response to the observation of being “*lucky*” is: “*Well, that’s funny but the harder I work, the luckier I get.*” Although we may have worked to develop a gift, logically we can not take credit for God’s gifts to us which include the very opportunity to develop those gifts. We have done nothing to “*deserve*” being born with intelligence and health in one of the richest countries of the world, to parents who were able to provide the educational opportunities. To do so is as absurd as a flea on a dog bragging that *he* is great because he was born on the largest dog!



Christ often condemned the Pharisees, the leaders and most successful persons of their age and society, for their deafness to His Word pointing out that this “*deafness*” was caused by their pride. Christ repeatedly warned all men against pride and the fatal error of getting caught up with the riches of this world. How many times did He say it and how many times have we heard His words and how many times have we justified continuing our conduct with the argument that He didn’t *really* mean it or that it did not *really* apply to us? Christ not only repeatedly told us that we must be humble and serve others in this life but He also emphasized His words through His example of washing the feet of His Apostles at the Last Supper, which was the act of a lowly slave.

Pride is so devious and can be so blinding that Saint Thomas More literally feared it knowing he was not immune. He noted that pride can form a “*blindness almost incurable*” because it “*covereth the eyes of their soul.*” He wrote about pride extensively and, more importantly, personally *fought* against it taking root in his own life.

More knew that pride distorted ones judgment. He knew that the greatest danger to self-possession and clarity of conscience was pride and he refused to appeal to any circumstance. Admittedly appealing to one’s pride is

Pride (Continued on page 4)

* All quotes in this article are taken from Gerard Wegemer’s Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage and Thomas More on Statesmanship

(Continued from page 3) **Pride**

the easiest way to motivate a person since our fallen condition and original sin makes us susceptible to it. More motivated his children in their educational pursuits through his personal friendship with each one of them—they sought to please him out of love and respect for him.

More studied and wrote about pride trying to focus on its dangers and to identify its characteristics. He tried to develop analogies to help others focus on its dangers to the soul. More noted that pride was the “...perversion of the rational creature’s highest and most distinctive power of free will.” Pride was the most pervasive theme in all of More’s writings calling it “the chief of all plagues,” “the root of all sin,” “the head and root of all other sins and of them all, most pestilent,” “the most dangerous habit there is,” and “mischievous mother of all manner of vices.” “Pride, therefore, arises from the soul’s intrinsic power to imagine what it wants and then to freely delight in that image regardless of its truth or goodness. With this spiritual freedom, rational creatures can will to devise ‘worldly fantasies’ of their own creation that are actually opposed to what exists.” More pointed out that a lack of rational consistency is not the greatest obstacle to clear thinking but rather it is hardened pride which gives delusions that can displace knowledge one knows to be true. “More noted that heresy is such a difficult social disorder in that hardened pride is inevitably involved. Since ‘pride is the very mother of all heresies,’ heretics can come to a point where only the frantic pleasure of their own will can satisfy and content them. These proud fantasies arise among the learned ‘because they want to be singular among the people’; they arise among the not-so-learned because they ‘long to seem far better learned than they are.’ In either case, the reward for their labor is the ‘delight of beholding what pleasure the people have in their preaching.’”

More noted that God provided three major safeguards in men against pride:

1. God made the body of man from the slime of the earth while creating his soul in the image and likeness of God.
2. God gave man precepts and commandments so he should remember and consider himself as a servant.
3. God “graciously fenced and hedged in their hearts” with fear of punishment if they disobeyed.

More took very specific actions in his own life to ward off this insidious evil. First and foremost, he prayed daily which included attending morning Mass. More knew that only through the Eucharist can we actually start to subordinate our will to God’s and to acknowledge God as the Supreme Being and the source of all our blessings.

Through prayer More acknowledged God’s greatness in all things and his subservience to Him. Second, More also believed that development of virtues was a critical guard against pride—in fact, he emphasized that development of virtues should be first, and learning second. More’s favorite metaphor focused on cultivating the garden of the soul. “In this garden must be planted good affections, virtues and principles, while ‘the nettles, briars, and other...barren weeds’ of pride and deceptive pleasures are carefully and consistently rooted out.” In pursuit of virtues, More practiced humility as Christ directed by personally serving the poor and needy including feeding them from his own home. More did not just give money and allow others to do the work—he did give generously but he also personally served the poor in Christ’s name. Although a powerful and famous lawyer and author, More sang in his parish choir, served as a parish clerk and performed other lowly services. “Besides serving Mass, he took part in long and tiring parish processions like anyone else—on foot. Even as Lord Chancellor, he refused to ride his horse in the processions. ‘I will not,’ he explained, ‘follow my Lord on horseback, Who goes on foot.’” Thirdly, More not only studied extensively the truths of the Faith but also contemplated Christ’s humble life in silence. Through study, prayer and contemplation, he sought to come to know God’s will in his life. More also believed that developing a good wit was important to maintaining balance in life and not taking the things of this world too seriously.

Finally, More urged the contemplation of the “four last things” being death, judgment, heaven and hell in order to remain properly focused in this life. It is all too easy to assume that death is far away and that there will be plenty of time to do “good” after we make it financially! Pride leads us to think that we are independent of God which in turn leads us not to trust in Him but to try to “be wise in the ways of this world” and to take care of ourselves, ensuring our savings are large and our future secure. Justification is often based the old adage “God helps those who help themselves.” To really trust God, to trust Him today, to trust Him financially, to trust Him in all things, is not easy to do. But if we quietly contemplate the inevitability of death, that it will come for us “like a thief in the night,” and that we will then face God’s judgment followed by eternity in either heaven or hell, we will naturally focus on the proper order of importance of all matters in our life.

St. Thomas More, please pray to our Lord to grant us the grace to avoid pride in our lives and to trust God in all things, to open our hearts to His word and open our hands to His service. †



THE HOLY FATHER

The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter,
is the perpetual and visible principle and
foundation of unity of both the
bishops and of the faithful.

LUMEN GENTIUM, 23



HOLY FATHER'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER

The Holy Father's general prayer intention for September is:

*“That the adolescents and young people of the
third millennium may discover a profound ideal to devote themselves to.”*

His missionary intention is:

*“That the population of Indonesia, compounded of many ethnic groups, languages,
cultures and religions, may increasingly try to build a more democratic
and just future in mutual respect and harmony.”* †



Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem*

*Latin for “To turn truth into laughter”



DIED IN THE SERVICE

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. The plaque was covered with names, and small flags were mounted on either side of it.

The seven-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, “Good morning, Alex.”

“Good morning, pastor,” replied the young

man, still focused on the plaque. “Pastor McGhee, what is this?” Alex asked.

“Well, son, it’s a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the service.”

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he asked, “Which service, the 9 o' clock or the 11 o' clock?” †



The Writings of Thomas More

MORE ON HONESTY

As a lawyer, he acquired a reputation for honesty and integrity. One early biographer reports that *“to his clients [More] never failed to give advice that was wise and straightforward, always looking to their interests rather than to his own. In most cases he used his best endeavors to get the litigants to come to terms. If he was unsuccessful in this, he would then show them how to carry on the action at least expense. He was so honorable and painstaking that he never accepted any case until he had first examined the whole matter thoroughly and satisfied himself of its justice. It was all the same whether those who came to him were his friends or strangers...his first warning was ever that they should not in a single detail turn aside from the truth. Then he would say: ‘If your case is as you have stated it, it seems to me that you will win.’ But if they had no justice on their side, he would tell them so plainly, and beg them to give up the case, saying that it was not right either for him or for them to go on with it. But if they refused him, he would refer them to other lawyers, himself giving them no further assistance.”*



Gerard B. Wegemer

Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage

Scepter Publishers (1995)

page 51-52 †

(Continued from page 2) **Born Again**

St. Theophilus of Antioch: Theophilus, like Ignatius, was bishop of Antioch in Syria. He wrote a treatise to a pagan friend explaining Christianity and answering his friend's objections. Interestingly, he is the first Christian writer to use the word *“trinity”* (Greek: **triados**, the cognate of the Latin, **trinitas**) in reference to the mystery of three Persons in one God. Here he discusses the divine life which is at the heart of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: *“Those three days of creation before the lights in the heavens are an image of the Trinity, of God, of His Word, and His Wisdom (i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). God blessed the creatures of the water, so that this might be a sign that men would receive penance and remission of sins through water and the bath of rebirth, as many, that is, as came to the truth and were re-born, and received blessing from God”* (Ad Autolycum 2:15 [A.D. 181]).

Tertullian: While he was still a Catholic, during the time of persecutions before the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire, Tertullian wrote the only complete work on the sacrament of baptism. This treatise, *On Baptism*, is a powerful defense of baptismal regeneration. Specifically, he refutes those who claim that faith in Christ alone (apart from the sacrament of baptism) is sufficient for the forgiveness of sins and spiritual rebirth described by Christ in John 3:3-5: *“A treatise on our sacrament of water, by which the sins of our earlier blindness are washed away and we are released for eternal life will not be superfluous. . . . [t]aking away death by the washing away of sins. The guilt being removed, the penalty, of course, is also removed. . . . Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins”* (On

Baptism 1:1; 5:6; 7:2 [circa A.D.198]). *“Good enough, but faith means faith in all Christ did and said to do, so it includes being baptized. . . . And so they say, ‘Baptism is not necessary to them to whom faith is sufficient, for after all, Abraham pleased God by no sacrament of water, but of faith. But in all cases it is the later precedent that proves the point. Grant, for the sake of argument, that in days gone by, there was salvation by means of bare faith, before the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord. But now that faith has been enlarged, and has become a faith which believes in His Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection, there has been an amplification added to the faith; this is the sealing act of baptism. . . . For the law of baptism has been imposed, and the formula prescribed: ‘Go,’ He said ‘and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ The comparison of this law with that definition, ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,’ has tied faith to the necessity of baptism”* (Ibid. 13 [A.D. 198]).

St. Clement of Alexandria: *“When we are baptized we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we become immortal. ‘I say,’ God declares, ‘you are gods and sons all of the Most High’ (Psalm 81:6). This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins; a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted; an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation - that is, by which we see God clearly; and we call that perfection which leaves nothing lacking. Indeed, if a man know God, what more does he need? Certainly, it were out of place*

Born Again (Continued on page 8)



THE RED MASS

The first recorded Red Mass, a special Mass for the Bench and Bar, was celebrated in Paris in 1245. For many centuries it was held in the chapel of the Order of Advocates, La Sainte Chapelle, which was built by Louis IX. In certain localities of France, the Red Mass was celebrated in honor of St. Ives, the patron Saint of Lawyers. In England, the tradition began about 1310 during the reign of Edward I. The entire Bench and Bar attended the Red Mass together at the opening of each term of Court. The priest and judges of the High Court wore red robes thus the Eucharistic celebration became popularly known as the "Red Mass." The tradition of the Red Mass has continued in the United States. In Washington, D.C., the members of the United States Supreme Court join the President and members of Congress in the celebration of the Red Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The Red Mass is also celebrated in Sacramento and most other state capitals and major cities throughout the United States.

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE RED MASS IN 2001

This year the Red Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Tod Brown on
Monday October 15, 2001 at 6:00 p.m.
 at Holy Family Cathedral in Orange.

**All members of the legal community are invited to join us
 for the Red Mass followed by dinner and a reception.**

**Jurists who wish to participate in the procession, please contact
 Judge Mary Erickson: Office: (714) 896-7151 or Cell phone: (714) 749-0870**

R.S.V.P. If you plan to attend, please R.S.V.P. to David Belz
 @ (949) 347-0447 Ext 100 or via email at dbelz@kuhnbelz.com †



Scriptural Corner:

"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38

Comment from the Navarre Bible:* Each person's eternal destiny will be decided by Christ. He is the Judge who will come to judge the living and the dead (Mt 16:27). The sentence will depend on how faithful each has been in keeping the Lord's commandments—to love God and to love one's neighbor, for God's sake. On that day Christ will not recognize as his disciple anyone who is ashamed to imitate Jesus' humility and example and follow the precepts of the Gospel for fear of displeasing the world or worldly people: he has failed to confess by his life the faith which he claims to hold. A Christian, then, should never be ashamed of the Gospel (Rom 1:16); he should never let himself be drawn away by the worldliness around him; rather he should exercise a decisive influence on his environment, counting on the help of God's grace. The first Christians changed the ancient pagan world. God's arm has not grown shorter since their time (cf. Is 59:1). Cf Mt 10:32-33 and note on same."

**The Navarre Bible, a renown edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University, consists of the New Vulgate, the Revised Standard Version and commentaries.*

Thought

For

The

Day



EAGLES IN A STORM

Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly to some high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm. It simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us - and all of us will experience them - we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us. We can allow God's power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure, and disappointment in our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle them.

*"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles." Isaiah 40:31 †*



(Continued from page 6) **Born Again**

to call that which is not complete a true gift of God's grace. Because God is perfect the gifts he bestows are perfect" (The Instructor of Children 1:6, 26:1 [ante A.D. 202]).

St. Cyprian of Carthage: "As water extinguishes fire, so almsgiving quenches sin." Here also is shown and proved, that as in the bath of saving water the fire of hell is extinguished, so by almsgiving and works of righteousness the flame of sins is subdued. And because in baptism the remission of sins is granted once only, constant and ceaseless labor, following the likeness of baptism, once again bestows the mercy of God. . . ." (On Works and Alms 2 [A.D. 254]). "In the baptism of water is received the remission of sins, in the baptism of blood, the reward of virtues," (To Fortunatus preface [A.D. 257]).

St. Ephraim the Syrian: Outside the Roman Empire, coming from a background that was neither Latin nor Greek, the teachings of this Syrian Father, St. Ephraim, are proof that the Catholic Faith is not some Greco-Roman perversion of the New Testament Church. Here is a passage from one of his hymns for use in liturgical worship, a hymn still used today by Syrian Catholics. It is addressed to the newly baptized: "Your garments glisten as snow; and fair is your shining in the likeness of angels. . . . Woe in paradise did Adam receive, but you have received glory this day. . . . The good things of heaven you have received; beware of the devil lest he deceive you. . . . The evil one made war and deceived Adam's house; through your baptism, behold! he is overcome today. . . . Glory to them that are robed in the birth that is from the water; let them rejoice and be blessed!" (Hymn for the Feast of the Epiphany: of the Baptized 12 [A.D. 370]).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem: "If any man does not receive baptism, he does not have salvation. The only exception is the martyrs, who, even without water will receive baptism, for the Savior calls martyrdom a baptism (cf., Mark 10:38). . . . Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon.

You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness" (Catechetical Lectures 3:10,12 [circa A.D. 350]).

St. Basil the Great: "For prisoners, baptism is ransom, forgiveness of debts, death of sin, regeneration of the soul, a resplendent garment, an unbreakable seal, a chariot to heaven, a protector royal, a gift of adoption" (Sermons on Moral and Practical Subjects: On Baptism 13:5 [ante A.D. 379]).

St. Ambrose of Milan: "The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the Flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. Whoever comes, therefore, to the washing of Christ lays aside his sins" (Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 2:83 [circa A.D. 389]).

St. John Chrysostom: "How then shall we be able to give an account of the unseen birth by baptism, which is far more exalted than these? . . . Even angels stand in awe while that birth takes place . . . the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work it all. Let us then believe the declaration of God, for that is more trustworthy than actual seeing. The sight often is in error, but God's Word cannot fail; let us then believe it . . . What then does it say? That what happens is a birth. . . . If any inquire, 'Why is water needed?' let us ask in return, 'Why did God use earth to form man?'. . . Do not be over-curious. That the need of water is absolute and indispensable you may learn in this way" (Homily 25 on John 2 [A.D. 391]).

St. Augustine of Hippo: Baptism is not merely an external sign of faith already possessed by the one to be baptized; it is the power of God cleansing the soul of the sinner, even in the case of infants: "The cleansing would not at all be attributed to a passing and corruptible element, unless the word were added to it. This word possesses such power that through the medium of him who in faith presents, blesses, and pours it, even a tiny infant is cleansed, although he is as yet unable to believe with the heart unto justice, and to make profession with the mouth for salvation" (Commentaries on St. John 80:3 [A.D. 411]). †

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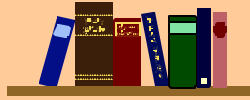
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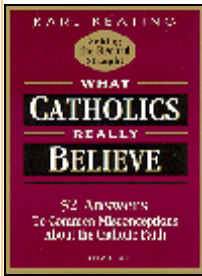
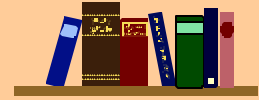
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