

Blessed Augustine (354-430) theologian and Church Father said of infant baptism: ***"This is what the Church always had, always maintained; This is what she received from the faith of our ancestors, this is what she perseveringly keeps even to the end."***

The Council of Carthage, in 253, condemned the view that infants should be deprived of Baptism until the eighth day after birth.

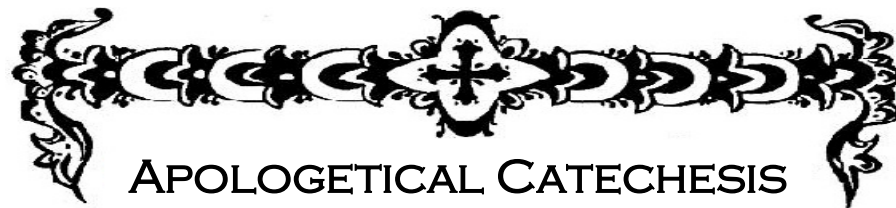
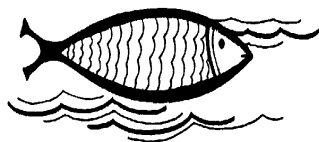
The Orthodox Church baptizes new-borns by the faith of their parents and godparents. That is why godparents exist during baptism, to take charge of the faith of the baptized person before the Church. When he/she grows up, they are obligated to teach him/her the faith and see to it that his/her godchild is a true Christian. This is the sacred duty of godparents, and they sin seriously if they despise this duty.

Regarding that we receive grace through the faith of others, it has been established in the Gospel during the healing of the paralytic: ***"When Jesus saw their faith (those who brought the sick man), he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'"*** (Mark 2:5).

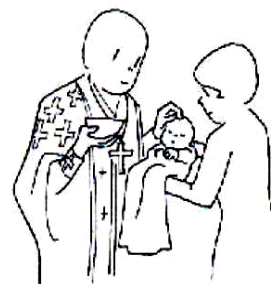


***"We were born in the water like little fish according to our fish, Jesus Christ"***

***(Tertullian, De Baptismo 1).***



## ***Should We Baptize Infants?***



***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."*** (Matthew 28:19-20)

Baptism is a sacrament that cleanses us from sin, grafts us into the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and makes us Christians.

Some Christian groups and sects teach that children should NOT be baptized, that personal faith is necessary, and that children are incapable of understanding. According to them, children cannot confess their faith, therefore, they cannot be baptized. And they quote the following passage: ***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned"*** (Mark 16:16).

None of the ancient Churches condemned infant baptism. It was the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century who began to question Infant Baptism.

The above verse is not found in most ancient manuscripts of the Bible. Mark 16:8-19, is a later interpolation (see note in the *New International Version*, in the *Jerusalem Bible*, the *New American Bible*, etc.) Even if it had been said by Jesus, it does not refer to children, but to people outside the Church and adult converts.

The Bible does not forbid infant baptism. There is not a single reference in the Holy Scriptures to the children of certain families having remained unbaptized until they reached maturity.



## **ORTHODOX ANSWERS 6**





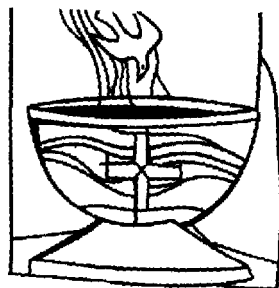
At least five baptized families are mentioned in Acts and Corinthians (Acts 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8 and 1 Corinthians 1:16). It is unimaginable that only the adults of these families were baptized, for from the Jewish point of view of the family, the family is a unit. When Achan sinned, the whole family was stoned (Joshua 7).

On the day of Pentecost, when the Apostle Peter had finished speaking, the people asked, *"What shall we do, brethren?"* He told them that they should be baptized and explained, *"... for the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call"* (Acts 2:39).

Children can receive blessings without the need for faith. St. John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother's womb when he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41).

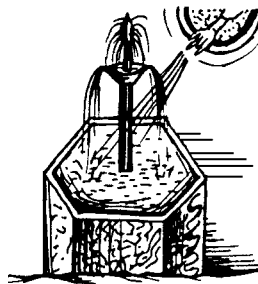
Jesus blessed the children brought by their mothers (Mark 10:3-14) and said to those who want to separate them from Him because of their age, *"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them."*

If children can receive the blessing of the laying on of Jesus' hands, they can also receive the regenerating grace of Baptism, being born again... For *"except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5). In everyone, even in children, God takes the initiative of salvation and grants us the grace of regeneration without the precondition of faith. Our duty is to respond to each other with faith and obedience.



#### THE CIRCUMCISION ANALOGY

The Law in the Old Testament commanded new-born babies to be circumcised on the eighth day of birth (Leviticus 12:3). Our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised also on the eighth day (Luke 2:21) and as a connection between the Old Testament and the New; he submitted to Baptism. For us Christians, Baptism is Circumcision: *"You were circumcised... by circumcision in Christ. Buried with him in baptism..."* (Colossians 2:11-12).



The Council of Jerusalem decided that Jews and Gentiles did not need circumcision, but Baptism, to be incorporated into the Body of Christ (Acts 15).

Unlike circumcision, Baptism is given to men and women equally, for in Christ there is no longer any difference, there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Gentile.

#### THE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH.

According to the history and Tradition of the Church, infants were and are baptized. Holy Tradition tells us that St. Polycarp was baptized as a child in the apostolic era. St. Cyprian (200-258 A.D.), Church Father, Bishop of Carthage and Head of the Church in Africa, wrote that: *"of Baptism and Grace... the infant should not be deprived."*

St. Gregory the Theologian, addressing Christian mothers, says: *"Do you have a child? Don't let time increase the damage; May he be enlightened from his childhood and consecrated to the Spirit from his youth. Do you fear the "seal" because of the weakness of your nature as a frightened mother of little faith? But Hannah promised God that she would consecrate Samuel to him before he was born. Soon Samuel was born, and she dedicated and educated him to the priesthood, fearing no human weaknesses and with faith in God."*



St. Dionysius the Areopagite, an author always highly esteemed by the Church: *"It was the will of our Divine instructors that children receive baptism on the holy condition that parents entrust their children to educators who are faithful persons and who instruct in the Christian faith, and who then take care of children as guardians and appointed parents of Heaven to guide them to eternal salvation."*

Origen (A.D. 185-254), one of the most celebrated authors of the early Church, wrote that: ***"The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of baptizing infants also."***

