

Baptism 11: Welcoming in the Name of Jesus is Welcoming Jesus Himself:

The birth of a new baby is a great event. It touches the lives of so many people. The parents are excited, delighted, and grateful, but so is the extended family. No one takes it for granted. It touches something very deep within us. We just don't say that life is very sacred; we also experience it to be sacred. It is no wonder that Jesus says today "that anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes him". It is important to note that he says that we are to welcome the child in his name. This means that we are to accept Jesus as the creator with whom the parents have cooperated in bringing the child into the world. When we welcome the child in the name of Jesus we also accept that this child is made in the image of God, and therefore will be able to relate with God and with other people.

This capacity to relate with God and other people is the greatest gift God has given the baby, for the baby is created for a relation with God and neighbour now, and for all eternity with them in Heaven. This child comes from God, and will return to God. This child will learn to relate to God and to others. This child is destined to live with God now, and in Heaven. This child will become a son or daughter of God in Baptism. This child will become a brother or sister with Jesus in Baptism. This child will receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism. This child will learn to listen to God and to respond to God in prayer. This child who is gifted with the capacity to relate will pray not just as an individual, but will come together with others to pray and celebrate the Eucharist. The Eucharist foreshadows the great banquet in heaven to which the child is invited when she dies. The child will celebrate the banquet on earth, so that she can join in the great banquet in heaven. One banquet leads to the great banquet. Jesus welcomes this child to the Banquet and Parents are asked to do the same.

Parents are privileged to welcome a child into the world, and they are asked to welcome the child "in Jesus' name". This is the greatest privilege of all. In welcoming the child "in Jesus' name" they help the child to experience God in the home. "God is love and where there is love God is present". They help the child to experience God's love by their love for one another, and through the atmosphere of love which they create in the home. Their love for one another and the love they have for the child becomes an expression of God's love for the child. "Where there is love God is present". And because God is present the parents pray together, and through their prayer together they introduce their child to prayer.

The Parents also pray with the community each week, and so without a word introduce the child to the Eucharist. The parents create not just a loving atmosphere, but also a forgiving atmosphere in the home. In this way they introduce their child to the forgiving God, who hung on the cross to forgive each of us. Parents hand on the faith through example or they don't hand it on at all. This is why the parents who want their child baptised recognise that the original and first mark of a believer is the celebration of the Eucharist each Sunday. So they themselves should be celebrating Eucharist each Sunday. Without the celebration of the Eucharist the faith is dead. This tradition goes back to Christ, and to the time after the resurrection. After the resurrection the early followers of Jesus met each Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. Their coming together was so obvious that they became the talk of the Roman Empire, and some accused them of coming together to plot against the state, while others accused them of cannibalism. Parents who are having their child baptised should go to Mass on Sunday, and so should the sponsors. Otherwise they should postpone the baptism, until they decide what they want for their child, for themselves, and for God. "For God says: "Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me".