

*“He who believes and is baptised will be saved, he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

Sometimes I get tired and weary. Sometimes I can feel overwhelmed by the amount of work I need to do. Interestingly, and very reassuringly, this is something that Pope Francis preached about in Holy Week. It was at the Chrism Mass, when he was preaching to the priests of his own diocese, the priests of Rome. His basic message was that falling down under the weight of one's duties and responsibilities is necessary and good. We need to fall down. It's what makes us human. It's a bit like the Stations of the Cross where Jesus falls down, not just one time but three times. What's important is knowing what it is we are falling into. It's so easy to fall into self-pity, anger or laziness. But as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, what we are falling into is the arms of God. We are in his hands. When our own strength fails, when our own efforts can no longer sustain us, we have to rely on God alone.

This is what the Ascension of Christ is: *When it says ‘he ascended’ what can it mean if not that he descended right down into the lower regions of the earth? The one who rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things is none other than the one who descended. To ascend with Christ to the highest heaven we must first descend into the depths. To be raised up we must first fall down. To live in the presence of God we will also need to know what it means to live in the absence of God. To know love and joy in all its fullness we will also need to know rejection and desolation.*

If we had in the church a proper full immersion font, then the symbolism would be clear. Baptism is about falling into the depths, falling into a grave, falling into the immensity of the waters, dying to self, allowing your own identity to be submerged and subverted. The Scriptures are quite clear about this. It is only the one who believes and is baptised that will be saved, only the one who believes and is baptised that will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, only the one who believes and is baptised that will survive snakes and deadly poison. It is only the one who believes and is baptised that will be able to preach the gospel, cast out devils and heal the sick.

Relive your baptism, pray your baptism over and over. Enter the depths. Fall into the eternal arms of your loving Father. Let Him pick you up and lead you to Paradise.

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Fr Michael