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The Age of Initiation

It seems as though Baptism is one of the biggest sacraments in the Catholic tradition. It is when a person is fully welcomed into the church; or so many people believe. Baptism and Confirmation at one point were sacraments that were celebrated together, bringing the person into the faith with both. As of late, the Catholic Church has separated the two; celebrating Baptism as an infant and Confirmation years later as a teenager. There are reasons that exist for both infant and adult Baptism. Neither way is necessarily incorrect. The idea of infant or adult Baptism is one based solely on the preference of the person or the diocese in which they are parishioners.

Adult Baptism presents one major argument. This is the idea that if a person waits until they are an adult or older than an infant; they will be able to decide for themselves whether or not they want to profess their acceptance of God in their lives. They are able to choose when they want to enter into the faith and there is no requirement. The big word here is choice. If someone is baptized as an infant it was the parent making the choice for them. At this point in their life they should be mature and making the decision because they actually want to. As teenagers, Confirmation or even the decision to be baptized, feels like something they are forced to do. Not many people are sincere when they feel pressure to do something. As an adult, they are free to choose whether or not to be baptized and confirmed.

At some points in church history, Baptism and Confirmation were celebrated together. That meant if the child was baptized as an infant, they were confirmed with oil not long after. Eventually the two were separated. Infant Baptism is the tradition that is most heavily utilized. Many believe that if a child is baptized as an infant they will feel a sense of community when they are growing up. They will be able to share faith filled experiences with family and friends. The Baptism itself also builds a sense of community within the church congregation. The church vows to bring the child up in faith. The parents also must commit to doing this. Another reason for infant Baptism can be Original Sin. This is sin we as humans are born with and that is taken away with Baptism. Some believe that if one is not baptized and they die before they are able to celebrate Baptism, they will not be saved. This was a very important reason to early Christians.

Although I understand both viewpoints, I tend to align myself more with the infant Baptism ideas. This may be because this is how I was baptized and I can’t picture how it would have been had I not been baptized as an infant. To me it makes sense that children be baptized soon after birth. A lot of times, Baptism and being baptized is used as kind of a sense of community. If children are baptized before the time they are in school, oftentimes they will feel special, or included in the faith lives of their families and friends. I also see infant Baptism as beneficial because it in some ways confirms the faith of the parents. I however, am not saying that parents should use their infants Baptism as a way to somehow attempt to strengthen or reaffirm their faith. By baptizing their infant, parents commit to raising their child in the Catholic faith.

At the time of my Baptism, I was not confirmed. After much thought about the subject, I still am not entirely sure where I stand when it comes to the age of Confirmation. Part of me agrees with the idea that Confirmation should be celebrated as close to the Baptism as possible. The other part of me believes that one should be able to decide whether or not they want to confirm their lives in the faith they were baptized in. My knowledge of this area has grown immensely throughout the sections on Baptism and Confirmation yet I am still unsure of my own beliefs when it comes to this matter. I see pros and cons in each.

As written, there are reasons behind both infant and adult Baptism. There are ideas surrounding each that some people may find accurate while others disagree. In writing this paper, I was really able to dissect where I stand when it comes to these sacraments. Although I am somewhat unsure when it comes to the age of Confirmation, I believe I am confident in my beliefs on the age of Baptism. This assignment was a good way to really take time to think about whether or not I believe in the ideas that the articles discussed in class presented.