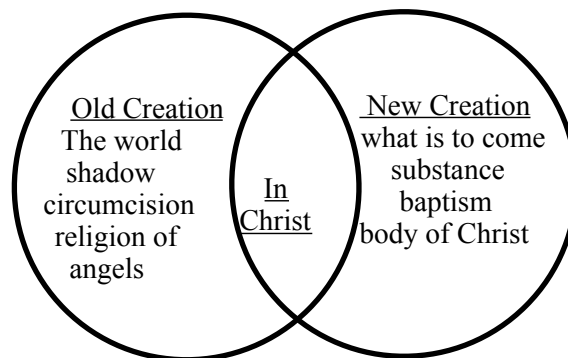


Circumcision and Infant Baptism (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Colossians 2:12-14—Baptism and Circumcision in Christ

[¹¹ *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ;*] ¹² *and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.* ¹³ *And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,* ¹⁴ *having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.* (Col 2:12-14)

1. New Circumcision: “without hands” = baptism (2:11; cf. 2:12)
2. Baptism: “burial” with Christ into death (2:12)
3. Resurrection: “you were also raised with him” (2:12)



4. Canceled Bond: “legal demands” of law “canceled” (Greek *exaleipho*) (cf. 2:14).

Living Tradition

Cyprian of Carthage: [A]s for the fact that among the Jews *circumcision of the flesh* was observed on the eighth day, that was but a holy sign, an anticipatory image, a prefiguring given in prophecy which has been brought to reality and fulfillment with the coming of Christ... *That image has ceased now that the reality has superseded it and we have been given circumcision of the spirit. And that is the reason why, in our view, no one is to be prevented from obtaining grace...* Rather, every man without exception has the right to be admitted to the grace of Christ.... *No one is denied access to baptism and grace. How much less reason is there then for denying it to an infant who, being newly born, can have committed no sins. The only thing that he has done is that, being born after the flesh as a descendant of Adam, he has contracted from that first birth the ancient contagion of death...* And so, ...our verdict at the Council was this: *we ought not to be the cause for debarring anyone from access to baptism and the grace of God, for He is merciful, kind,*

and loving toward all men. (Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 64.4.3-6.1; trans. G. W. Clarke)¹

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. How is baptism a “new” circumcision? And what are the implications of this mystery for the practice of infant baptism?

For Further Reading

1. Dennis Hamm, S.J. *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013.
2. Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John Kincaid. *Paul, a New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2019.

¹ Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter* 64.4.3-6.1. In *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage: Volume III, Letters 55-66* (trans. G. W. Clarke; Ancient Christian Writers 46; New York, N.Y.; Mahwah, N.J.: Newman, 1986), 111-12.