THE PASchal MYSTERY AND
THE 'ORDO BAPTISMI PARVULORUM'

(First Part)

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to treat about the paschal mystery and baptism cannot but take into account the various interventions of God in the history of the salvation of mankind. For, according to the designs of God, Christ was to be the mediator between sinful and redeemed humanity, the bridge over which mankind was to pass from death to life, from a state of bondage to that of the freedom of the children of God. It was Christ and his life's work - the paschal mystery: his passion, death and resurrection - which all the Old Testament salvific events prefigured and prepared for, and it is from the selfsame paschal mystery of Christ that salvation and sanctification derive their meaning, value and efficacy for all time. Therefore, to aim at a clear understanding of the sacrament of baptism without having a clear idea of the paschal mystery of Christ under its double aspect of death and resurrection, suffering and glorification, is quite impossible. On the other hand, any attempt to wrench the paschal mystery from its divinely appointed context will only result in giving us an incomplete and warped picture of its true nature and role in the life and history of man. That is why, far from considering the paschal mystery and baptism as isolated events in themselves, the Church has always presented them as two very important links in the great chain of divine interventions that form the history of salvation known to the Greek Fathers as 'oikonomia',¹ and to St. Paul as 'the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God'.² Centuries ago, St. Augustine had strongly ex-

²Cfr. Eph. 3, 9; Rom. 6, 1-11; 11, 25; 16, 25; 1 Cor. 2, 7; 4, 1; 15, 51; Eph. 5, 32; Col. 1, 26-27, etc., in which St. Paul refers to 'the mystery' and to 'the mystery of the will of God'.
horted Deogratias not to fail to instruct candidates for baptism in the
history of salvation and on the role played by the coming of Christ and
by the sacrament of baptism in the same. And in its 'General Prin-
ciples for the Restoration and Promotion of the Sacred Liturgy', the
Second Vatican Council underlined the connection between these sal-
vific events when it said: 'The wonders wrought by God among the
people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ
the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He
achieved His task principally by the paschal mystery of His blessed
passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension, whereby
"dying, he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life" (Easter
Preface in the Roman Missal)... (Furthermore) by baptism, men are
plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ: they die with Him, are
buried with Him, and rise with Him (cfr. Rom. 6, 4; Eph. 2, 6; Col. 3, 1;
II Tim. 2, 11)'.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY AND THE MODE OF PROCEDURE

In the following pages we intend showing how 'in baptism nothing
else than the paschal mystery is commemorated and rendered active in
as much as men pass over from the death caused by sin to life'. In
other words, it will be our endeavour to examine from a theologico-
pastoral point of view the New Rite of Infant Baptism in its relation to
the Paschal Mystery showing how as often as the sacrament of baptism
is administered so often do men 'freed from the powers of darkness'
'pass over from death to life', from subjection to sin to the freedom of
the children of God 'in virtue of the passion and resurrection of Christ'.
In order to attain this end we shall briefly point out the significance of

\[1 De Catechizandis rudibus, 7, PL 40, 294. For further evidence in this regard

\[2 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in W. Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II,

\[3 Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum (OBP), Vaticanum, 1969, p. 8f., n. 6. The translation
is my own here as also in the other places in this study where this document is
cited and referred to as OBP.

\[4 OBP., p. 7, n. 1.

\[5 Ibid., p. 9, n. 6.

\[6 Ibid., p. 8, n. 6.
the pasch in the Old and the New Testaments before passing on to show how the sacrament of baptism according to the New Rite of Infant Baptism is related to it along certain broad lines common to every salvific event, namely, God's initiative in salvation history, man's response to the initiative of God, the divine plan to save man within the context of a gratuitously chosen people and an inner spiritual dynamism which will drive man onwards to aspire after and to work towards the eschatological times when God's plan for the salvation of mankind will be gloriously brought to fulfilment.

Pasch

Pasch in the Old Testament

The pasch did not come into being on the night the Israelites left Egypt 'en masse'. In all probability it existed among the nomadic peoples of those days for a long time as a spring festival which was characterized by the propitiatory offering of the firstlings of the flock. To this feast was closely connected that of the unleavened bread observed by the farmers on the occasion of the first harvest of the year. Both these feasts however although typical of feasts appertaining to a religion of nature linked to the cycle of seasons, became associated with the salvation history of the Israelites because it was on the occasion of their celebration that Jahweh led the Israelites from slavery to freedom, and because Moses made use of these rites to re-present and commemorate a real, historical salvific event. ⁹

The word 'pasch' has been variously interpreted by biblical scholars to mean, among other things, 'passage', 'passion', 'memorial', and 'to save'. ¹⁰ The more common meaning given this word however is the first one, and in this sense it is taken to allude to the 'Passover of the Lord'¹¹ in Egypt when he slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, spared those of the Israelites and effected the 'passover' of his chosen people

¹¹Exod. 12, 11. Here we are concerned with the meaning of the pasch only in the Old Testament.
from the state of bondage to that of freedom. Theologically speaking therefore the event of the pasch according to the Old Testament comprised: (1) the intervention of God when with a strong and mighty hand he rescued his people from slavery; (2) the victory of God over inimical forces; (3) the birth of an elect people when through the covenant at Sinai Israel became 'his firstborn', 'his people', 'the reign of priests' and 'a holy nation' (Exod. 4, 22; 6, 7; 19, 6); and (4) Israel's victorious entry into the promised land.

According to Jewish theology, the true significance of the pasch can be had only when it is viewed 'three-dimensionally' under its past, present and future aspects. Viewed as an event of the past, the pasch refers to the sum-total of those wonderful interventions of God ('mirabilia Dei') in the history of the chosen people whereby with a mighty hand he spared the Israelites from death, providentially brought them out of Egypt and helped them pass over the Red Sea from slavery to freedom. In addition to this reference to the historical events which once occurred in the past, the pasch is also pastorally significant in its reference to the 'memorial feast... which all... generations shall celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord as a perpetual institution'.

Like the followers of so many ancient religions, the Israelites too made use of symbolic rites to convey deeply spiritual truths. Already existing customs and practices reflecting nomadic or agricultural backgrounds were taken up and historisized, that is, charged with the great event of the deliverance of God's people from Egypt and thus given a fresh, salvific significance. In this manner, what was originally a historical ritual for deliverance became a commemorative rite of Israel's salvation.

Thus, the blood of the lamb smeared on Israelite doorposts and lintels was to be a sign of their being spared from death by Jahweh; the bitter herbs were to remind them of their woeful lot as slaves of the Pharao; the unleavened bread was to manifest the hardships encountered during their flight from Egypt; and the paschal lamb itself was to be a memorial of the redemption according to the Old Covenant. For, the pasch, according to the designs of Jahweh, was to be the memorial both of the salvation wrought for the Israelites of old as well as of the

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12 Exod. 12, 14.
covenant made by Him with his people: 'It shall be a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead'. All this was to form the subject-matter of the catechesis which the father of every pious Israelite family was to give during the celebration of the paschal meal.

This memorial, expressed in the ritual of the paschal meal, was not only to look to the past but was also to be salvifically meaningful in the present. It was not only to be a renewal of a past historical salvific event, but was also to be a sacramental means of salvation for the Jews here and now through a liturgical re-presentation of the past intervention of Jahweh in history. The word 'memorial ('zikkaron') did not signify for the Israelites a simple calling to mind or a plain remembrance, but was conceived as having the power of bringing into the present as an actual mystical reality the object remembered. 'This was a night of vigil for the Lord, as he led them out of the land of Egypt; so on this same night all the Israelites must keep a vigil for the Lord throughout their generations; a vigil during the course of which was to be ritually re-presented that which was once brought about historically, 'Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt, that place of slavery. It was with a strong hand that the Lord brought you away... Therefore, it is in this month that you must celebrate this rite'. The Mishna is very clear in its insistence on the sacramental actualization of the salvific event. 'Each one should consider himself, from generation to generation, as if it was he himself who came forth out of Egypt since it is written: "This is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt" (Exod. 13,8). Therefore, do we owe to him acts of thanksgiving, praise, blessing, glorification, homage, reverence and adoration. To him who has performed all these wonderful deeds for us and for our Fathers, who has led us from slavery to liberty, from sorrow to joy, from affliction to jubilation, from darkness to brilliant light, and from bondage to redemption (Pesachim, X, 5).'

14 Exod. 13,9.
15 cfr. Exod. 12,26-27; 13, vv. 8 and 14.
17 Exod. 12,42.
18 Exod. 13,3-5.
19 In the Pesachim, that part of the Mishna dedicated entirely to the legislation of the paschal rite, we have a precious testimony as to the manner in which
An important point to be noted here is the communitarian nature of the pasch. The history of Israel is the salvation history of a people. The Israelites were delivered from Egypt as a people, accepted as partners of a pact with Jahweh as a people and led to the promised land as a people. The legislation with regard to the celebration of the pasch underlined this point by prescribing that the pasch had to be celebrated in communitarian fashion, either in naturally constituted families or in artificially formed confraternities. This was still more strongly expressed by the Scriptures as follows: 'anyone who is clean and not away on a journey, who yet fails to keep the Passover, shall be cut off from his people.'

Lastly, the pasch looked not only to the past and the present but also to the future. The prophets frequently made use of the historic pasch as a type to describe all future salvific interventions of Jahweh. Innumerable are the passages in which, through the idealization of the past, the future is pictured as: 'a new liberation', 'a new Passover', 'a New Covenant', 'a New Law', 'a new journey across the desert', 'a fresh entry into the promised land', 'the advent of another king greater than David and Solomon', 'a new Jerusalem where God will dwell forever...'. The psalms also employ the paschal theme profusely not only under its aspect of a memorial but also as a type of Jahweh's all-powerful and all-merciful interventions on behalf of his people as a whole and each one of the faithful in particular.

According to the prophet Isaias, the benefits of the pasch were not to be limited to the chosen people alone. All the nations of the earth were to take part in this great Passover on the occasion of which would be manifested the pasch was celebrated during the time of Christ — cfr. H.HAAG, art.cit., coll.1140. It would be needless to add here that the 'sacraments' of the Old Law could not cause grace, since this flows only from the Cross of Christ. They did however invite faith, faith in the Messiah to come in virtue of which salvation was given to the Israelites — cfr. A.G.MARTIMORT, The Signs of the New Covenant, Minnesota, 1963, pp.28f., C.VAGAGGINI, Il Senso Teologico della Liturgia, Roma, 1965, pp.542ff.

21 Num. 9, 13.
22 cfr. Osea, 2, 16-25; Is. 31,1-5; 35,1-10; 40,3-5; 43,1-7; 43,16-21; 52,7-12; Jer. 31,10-14; 31, 31-33; etc.
23 cfr. Psalms 18, 44, 66, 68, 74, 77, 95, 105, 106, etc.
strong arm of Jahweh, the glory of Sinai, and the law, the light of all nations'.

An important text of the Targum affirmed that the messianic liberation would occur on the paschal night; and a Qumran text manifested the ardent messianic hopes of the Israelites on the paschal solemnities when it spoke about the custom of leaving a place vacant at the table for the eventual arrival of the Messias. Seen in this light, the entire salvific history of Israel itself presents as one long, hope-filled pasch, an embodiment of the permanent salvific presence of Jahweh in the midst of his people, an event that is at once past, present and future as a rabbinic saying put it: 'On this night they were saved, and on this night they will also be saved'.

By now, it will be easy to recognize from all we have said so far the main lines followed by every salvific event, namely, God's initiative in salvation history and his invitation to man (Israel) to adhere to him; Israel's response (rejection of evil – adhesion to God); the effective salvation of Israel as a community actualized for each individual through the memorial paschal feast; the eschatological expectation for the realization of the fullness of salvation. It is important to remember that the entire history of Israel was a passover that looked more to the future than to the past since all that took place during its course prefigured and presaged the salvation wrought by the true Paschal Lamb, Christ in virtue of whose sacrifice the people of the Old Law were justified. He is the bridge over which the people of the old covenant and all those who were to come after them were to pass over to a new life and a new freedom as children of God.

*Pasch in the New Testament*

If the pasch in the Old Testament was the ritual manifestation of Jahweh's abiding salvific presence among his people, the pasch in the New Testament presents itself as the very incarnation of God himself in the person of his beloved Son Jesus, through whom all mankind is to

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24 cfr. Is. 51, 5; 40, 5; 41, 4.
25 Targum, ex. 12, 42.
pass over from spiritual death to life. For, according to the New Testa-
ment, the pasch refers to the passion, death and resurrection of Christ
through which was effected the redemption of all mankind and the pass-
over of the latter from spiritual slavery to freedom and from death to
life.²⁹ Just as in Old Testament theology, so too in that of the New, the
significance of the pasch can best be understood when considered as a
whole in its past, present and future dimensions. The redemption of
mankind effected by Christ on the cross (and this includes his passion,
death and resurrection) considered as an event circumscribed by time
and space constitutes according to the New Testament the pasch in its
dimension of the past.

The early christian kerygma was loud in its profession of the pas-
chal nature of Christ's redemptive work on the cross: Jesus of Nazar-
eth, delivered up by the settled purpose and foreknowledge of God,
suffered and died for our sins. But God raised him up from the dead,
introduced him into glory making him both Lord and Saviour so that
everyone who repented of his sins and was baptized in the name of
Christ would obtain forgiveness of his sins and the gift of the Holy
Spirit.³⁰ Here, we once again come across the main lines along which
salvific events move: the intervention of God through the preaching of
the apostles, man's response to it through conversion and adhesion to
God in faith, baptism, forgiveness of sins, incorporation into Christ,
the gift of the Holy Spirit and a continual striving so that Christ might
be formed in his soul.³¹

The synoptic gospels point out in various ways to Christ and his
redemptive work as being the true passover. Events in his life are
described as being prefigured in the circumstances of the first pasch,³²
he is presented as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the
world',³³ and 'the Son of Man (who has come) to give his life as a rans-
som for many',³⁴ his transfiguration on Mount Thabor is shown to re-

³⁰ cf. Acts, 2,22-41; 3,17-26; 4,8-12; I Cor. 15,1-8; I Tim. 1,9-10; Rom. 10,
9-13; etc.
³¹ cf. Gal. 4,19.
³² cf. Matt. 2,15; Lk. 4,1ff.; Matt. 5,17; also vv. 21 and 27; Jn. 3,14; 12,32;
6, 48-51; 8,12; 7, 37-38; 10, 1-16.
³³ Jn. 1, 29.
³⁴ Matt. 20,28.
semble in many ways the theophany on Mount Sinai, and on the road to Emmaus Christ himself explains to his disciples the paschal nature of mission: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into his glory?"\(^3\)\(^3\)\(^5\)

But it is in St. Paul that the full significance of the pasch is brought out in all its depth and vision under the designation of 'the mystery of Christ'.\(^3\)\(^6\) Very briefly summarized as to its theological content, the pasch is the passion, death and resurrection of Christ through which all mankind passes over from death incurred through the sin of Adam\(^3\)\(^7\) to life. This divine economy for the salvation of mankind had been hidden in God from all ages,\(^3\)\(^8\) but revealed now through his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit,\(^3\)\(^9\) so that being rescued from the powers of darkness\(^4\)\(^0\) through the passion, death and resurrection of Christ\(^4\)\(^1\) and through the bath of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,\(^4\)\(^2\) all men might pass over from condemnation to justification\(^4\)\(^3\) and from the status of bondsmen to that of the adopted sons of God.\(^4\)\(^4\) These theological ideas regarding the re-presentation of the mystery of Christ in baptism form the solid doctrinal basis upon which is constructed the New Rite of Infant Baptism which we shall now proceed to study.\(^4\)\(^5\)

The Relationship between the Paschal Mystery and Baptism in the New Rite of Infant Baptism

Baptism, the sacramental actualization of the Pasch in individuals

The juxtaposition of the paschal mystery and baptism brings us at once to the consideration of the pasch as the sacramental actualization

\(^3\)\(^5\) Lk. 24, 26-27.
\(^3\)\(^6\) Col. 4, 3; Eph. 3, 4.
\(^3\)\(^7\) Rom. 5, 12ff.
\(^3\)\(^8\) Ibid., 16, 25.
\(^3\)\(^9\) Eph. 3, 5; I Cor. 2, 10.
\(^4\)\(^0\) Col. 1, 13.
\(^4\)\(^1\) Ibid., 1, 21-22; Rom. 4, 24-25; I Cor. 15, 3-6; Heb. 2, 9.
\(^4\)\(^2\) Tit. 3, 5.
\(^4\)\(^3\) Rom. 5, 1-2; and vv. 16-19.
\(^4\)\(^5\) In the course of this study we will limit ourselves to the examination only of the 'Ordo Baptismi pro pluribus parvulis' — cfr. OBP., pp. 23-35, — as it manifests in a more striking manner the ecclesial nature of the baptismal rite.
of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ in the present.

The OBP clearly affirms the connection between these two salvific events when it says: 'Those who are baptized are united with Christ in the likeness of his death and are buried with him into death, but they are also raised up to life and live together with him. For, in baptism nothing else than the paschal mystery is commemorated and rendered active in as much as men pass over from the death caused by sin to life'. The more than close relationship whereby is established a mystical identity between the paschal mystery of Christ and baptism between the paschal mystery of Christ and baptism becomes clear when we remember that the OBP makes use of typically pauline terms such as 'conplantati', 'consepulti', 'convivificantur' and 'conresuscitantur' to describe the manner in which the passion, death and resurrection of Christ are actualized in the lives of the baptized. For, when the Apostle employs words formed with the prefix 'con' he does so precisely in order to underline the close connection that is established between the salvific event wrought for men by Christ on Calvary and the sacramental representation of the same in baptism. In baptism and through it therefore the believer is so closely associated with the salvific death and resurrection of Christ, that he dies sacramentally with Christ in order to rise to effective salvation with him. It is as if the apostle had said: 'In order to obtain salvation, it is necessary not merely to die to sin, but to die completely, totally to sin like Christ or in union with Christ ('commortui'); it is necessary to turn one's back decidedly on sin and to adhere firmly to God through faith so as to rise in union with Christ ('conresuscitati') to a new life in God'.

The Paschal Mystery in Baptism is announced to man on God's initiative

Here, one may ask: 'Where does the inception of the relationship between baptism as the actualization of the mystery of Christ and the

\[^{46}\text{OBP., p. 8, n. 6; cfr. also ibid., p. 7, nn. 1-2; p. 15, n. 3; p. 23, n. 36; pp. 25-26, n. 47; pp. 28-29, nn. 53-54; p. 32, n. 62.}\]


individual human being lie? In other words, how is the individual put in contact with this means of salvation?’ The answer is given to us once again by the OBP when it says: ‘Baptism is above all the sacrament of that faith whereby men, illuminated through the grace of the Holy Spirit, respond to the Gospel of Christ; and again, ‘through the ministry of the Church adults are called to the Gospel by the Holy Spirit and children are baptized and educated in its faith’. In baptism therefore as in every other salvific event God takes the initiative in effecting the salvation of man. He it is who through his ministers announces to mankind the salvation objectively effected by Christ (the paschal mystery) and he it is who invites men to participate subjectively in it through the sacrament of faith (baptism). Baptism then presents itself first of all as a call, an invitation by God to die to sin with Christ in order to rise with him to a new life. This call, as the OBP suggests in many places, comes to man when, through the preaching of the Good News, God makes known to him his divine plan of salvation and invites him to respond to it by imitating in his own life the paschal mystery of Christ in the sacrament of baptism. The celebration of the Word of God during the baptismal rite itself serves to renew the invitation extended to man by God as well as to excite the faith of the People of God (this latter specially in the case of the baptism of infants) so that the whole Church may once again experience the salvific intervention of God when it responds to his invitation to salvation through a reaffirmation of its adhesion to him.

The Paschal Mystery of Christ and Baptism in the Word of God (Gal. 3, 26-28)

The analysis of one of the scripture readings in the OBP will show how the theology of the paschal mystery of Christ as related to baptism is expressed in it. The text cited above forms only a part of one of the apostle’s earliest doctrinal expositions on baptism, and hence should be viewed as a whole along with other related passages of his in order

49 OBP., p. 7, n. 3; and p. 9, n. 7; cfr. also p. 15, n. 2; p. 23, n. 36; p. 28, n. 53; L. BOUYER, Christian Initiation, Burns & Oates, London, 1960, pp. 35ff.
51 cfr. OBP., p. 8, n. 3; p. 9, n. 7; p. 16, n. 5(i); p. 19, n. 20; p. 23, n. 36.
52 cfr. Ibid., p. 8, n. 5; p. 18, n. 17.
to understand his teaching on this subject.\textsuperscript{53} The occasion for the writing of this letter was a controversy. Certain elements among the Galatians had begun sowing discord in the christian community by advocating the practice of a number of jewish rites notably circumcision. Paul immediately writes a letter stressing the fact that with the coming of Christ the Law ceased to hold good. The Law had been given as a temporary means of salvation looking forward as it did to the perfect salvation to be had through baptism in Christ. That is why he says: 'We know that man is not justified by the works of the Law but by the faith of Jesus Christ'.\textsuperscript{54} Already here Paul once again insists on the central position occupied by Christ and his salvific work, the paschal mystery, in the history of salvation. The role of Israel and the Law are depicted as preparing the way for faith in Christ crucified and salvation through baptism in him. With his coming therefore salvation is no more to be had through the works of the Law but through insertion (baptism) into him in faith. 'The Law has been our tutor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come we are no longer under a tutor'.\textsuperscript{55} The Apostle then continues:

v. 26 – 'For you are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus' – As long as the Law was in vigour the Galatians were prisoners of the Law, subject to its dominion as children are subject to the surveillance of tutors until they come of age. But with the coming of Christ they have become free, children of God through faith in his Son. Grammatically, this last sentence admits of two versions, either: 'children of God in Christ Jesus through faith', or 'children of God through faith in Christ Jesus'. Exegetes however are of the opinion that the logical flow of the Apostle's thought here would seem to favour the second version. For, Paul appears to insist that the faith which

\textsuperscript{53}This passage actually comprises 3,26 to 4,7; but it has been badly divided. For our examination of this scripture reading we have found the following works particularly helpful: H. SCHLIER, Lettera ai Galati, Paideia-Brescia, 1965; A. VIARD, San Paolo, Lettera ai Galati, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma, 1970; A. GRAIL, Le Baptême dans l'Epître aux Galates, Rev.Bibl., 58(1951)503-520; T. FEDERICI, op.cit., G. SCHNEIDER, Lettera ai Galati, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma, 1966.

\textsuperscript{54}Gal. 2,16. According to the context the last words are equivalent to 'faith in Christ' – cfr. A. VIARD, op.cit., pp.73ff.

\textsuperscript{55}Gal. 3,24-25.
makes the Galatians children of God is not merely a faith which comes from Christ or a faith of which he is the object, but a faith which plunges them into him, which binds them to him who descended from heaven, died and rose again so that men might become children of God (cfr. Gal. 4, 5; Eph. 1, 15; Col. 1, 4). Faith has therefore been the means which has permitted the Galatians to become children of God, but it is their new ontological relationship to Christ, their being-in-Christ, their immersion into Christ which has actually made them children of God, and that which has established this new relationship between them and Christ is baptism. Objectively speaking then it is baptism that is of prime importance here although faith precedes it in the process of one's becoming a child of God.

v.27 - 'For all you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ' - The foundation of the new existence in Christ is baptism. What Paul says here does in no way contradict what he has said in the previous verse. When he says 'you are all the children of God through faith...' he merely seems to paraphrase what takes place in the process of one's becoming a child of God; for, while faith puts one on the way towards becoming a child of God, baptism actually makes him so. In other words, both faith and baptism go to make one a child of God. Through faith one turns a new leaf and adheres to God, while baptism is the authentic sign, willed by Christ, that faith has in fact really attained its objective, namely, death to sin and participation in a new life in the resurrected Christ. A little later on, he will say: 'They who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk'. It is not too easy to determine the exact meaning of the pauline expression 'baptize into' since it is used in different contexts as in I Cor. 1, 13; 10, 2; 12, 13; Rom. 6, 3; Gal. 3, 27; etc. At the time of his writing this letter the term had a ritual significance of longstanding value which considering its etymology meant 'immersing in'. Here, it means immersion into Christ, a union with Christ through faith and baptism. Just as faith, in the sense of adhesion, is a total surrender of one's being to Christ, so also baptism, which is the sacrament of this faith, is the realization in the soul of a mysterious union with the same Christ,

57 cfr. also Rom. 6, 3ff.
58 Gal. 5, 24-25.
through a sacramental re-presentation of his death and resurrection in virtue of which one is justified. Indeed, the union with Christ effected through baptism is so intimate that the baptized are said to 'have put on Christ'. This expressive figure of speech is not rare in the pauline letters for we come across it, to cite only a few texts, in I Thess. 5,8; Eph. 6, 11; Col. 3, 12; I Cor. 15, 53; and Rom. 13, 14. Here, it serves to stress the reality of the union with Christ. The Septuaginta often speaks about putting on virtues like garments. But Paul wishes the expression to convey something more profound. By saying that the Galatians have 'put on Christ', he does not wish to express a mere moral or ethical relationship but an ontological relationship that exists between the baptized and Christ. Through baptism one is immersed sacramentally in the death of Christ in order to rise with him to a new life. Through baptism the 'old self has been crucified with him and 'the new man created according to God' Christ is put on. It is another way of saying what he had expressed earlier: 'It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me'. As a consequence this putting on of Christ implies that one should continually die to sin in order to live to God. It implies a constant actualization on the existential plane of the paschal mystery of Christ 'until Christ be fully formed' in the souls of the Galatians (the actual and at the same time the eschatological dimension of the paschal mystery).

v. 28 - 'There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free- man; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus' - The new ontological existence in Christ obtained through baptism does away with every sort of difference. The Jews had argued that their insertion into the chosen race according to the Law had entitled them to certain privileges denied to the Gentiles. But Paul affirms that insertion into Christ has made all one in Christ eliminating every sort of difference and every type of privilege: racial (Jew-Gen-

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59 cfr. Job. 28, 14; Ps. 131, 9; Is. 52, 1; Prov. 31, 25.
60 cfr. Rom. 6, 6.
61 ibid.
62 Eph. 4, 24; Col. 3, 10.
64 cfr. Gal. 4, 20.
65 cfr. Gal. 3, 1ff., cfr. also Rom. 3, 1ff.
tile), social (slave-Freeman), and even natural (male-female). All the baptized therefore live a new life which is at once as proper to each one as common to all since all are one in Christ. To put it in another way, all the baptized form one body, the Mystical Body of Christ of which the individuals form the various members.66

Thus, at the very beginning of his apostolic activities Paul launches into his favourite kerygmatic theme; the mystery of Christ in us. This doctrine will naturally assume definite shape and substance as time goes on. Nevertheless, right here itself the solid infrastructure of the theology of baptism in relation to the mystery of Christ is sketched for us in lines that are at once simple and bold, clear and unequivocal: salvation comes through faith and baptism in Christ. To live with Christ it is necessary to die with him. It is no more the Law that justifies (‘I have died to the Law that I may live to God’ – Gal. 2, 19), but insertion into Christ, faith and baptism into Christ (‘It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me’ – Gal. 2, 20). This insertion into Christ effected through baptism is the result of a divine initiative. Indeed, in order to save us ‘God sent his Son to redeem mankind through his death and resurrection, and ‘sent also the Spirit of his Son that we might receive the adoption of sons’ (Gal. 4, 4ff). The action of the Holy Trinity in baptism is one of the points strongly underlined here as elsewhere in the Apostle’s teaching on this subject.67 Furthermore, the faith through which one becomes a child of God is itself a gift of God. ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not from yourselves, for it is the gift of God’.68 At the same time however faith constitutes man’s response to the divine call to salvation. In baptism it (faith) is the element proper to man, and yet under this aspect too it is a gift of God. But faith cannot be separated from baptism, the rite of one’s insertion into Christ. Both these according to Paul go towards making one a child of God. The adhesion of the intelligence to God in Christ must be logically followed up by the surrender of one’s entire self to God in baptism. ‘For you were buried together with him in baptism and in him also rose again through faith...’;69 and again, ‘For if

66 cfr. Rom. 12, 5; I Cor. 12, 12-27.
67 cfr. I Cor. 7, 11; 12, 13; II Cor. 1, 21-22; Eph. 4, 5; Rom. 6, 5.
68 Eph. 2, 8.
69 Col. 2, 12.
you confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved'. In faith one turns away from sin and adheres to God; whereas in baptism one sacramentally dies to sin and lives to God in imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ. One puts on Christ through insertion into his salvific death and resurrection, by imitating in one's own life the supreme obedience of Christ through dying to all that is displeasing to God in order to adhere to him with unqualified obedience. In this manner the Apostle conveys his message to the Galatians: the Law spells slavery and death. On the other hand, faith, baptism and insertion into Christ bring freedom (freedom from the Law, from death, from sin, from concupiscence, from human existence itself) life and divine sonship in which one will have to grow continually until the Day of the Lord dawns.

It is very important to take note of all these points contained in the theology of baptism, in its relation to the paschal mystery of Christ since these should form the sum and substance of the pre-baptismal catechesis. The OBP earnestly urges pastors of souls to see to it that parents, god-parents and relatives of the infants to be baptized as well as all the faithful are most carefully instructed in this matter not only since it is in the faith of the Church that infants are baptized and the duty of instructing the children in the faith in which they are baptized will devolve on those same persons, but also since this doctrine forms the core of Christian life and holiness.

Here one may ask: 'How can infants receive the divine call to salvation to which they are to respond if they have not yet attained the use of reason?' The answer to this question lies in the divine decree which has willed salvation in community which in turn is the foundation for the faith of the Church in which infants are baptized. We cannot go into this point here as it will take us beyond our field.

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(to be continued)

70 Rom. 10, 9-10.
71 cfr. Tom. 6, 3ff., 1 Cor. 15, 3-6; Col. 1, 21-22; 2, 12-15.
73 cfr. OBP, p. 8, n. 3; p. 9, nn. 7 and 9; p. 15, n. 4; p. 17, nn. 9-10; p. 24, n. 39; p. 26, n. 47; p. 35, n. 70. cfr. also A. NOCENT, op. cit., pp. 208ff.
74 cfr. Ibid.