

Connecting Narnia and Baptism

The Crowning Scene

At the end of the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the three Pevensie children are crowned in the presence of Aslan. In Baptism, we are truly crowned and anointed as priests, prophets and royalty with a claim to heavenly treasure and a birth certificate stamped with the address of our heavenly home. Once we were no people, now we are God's people. Our new family is God's family and our new home is heaven.

The Lamp

In ancient times baptism was also called "illumination," and being baptized meant "having been illuminated" . Baptism changes us. We receive eyes of faith, the desire for heaven (hope) and the capacity to love; all in seed form. These theological virtues make it possible to navigate a new world.

The Battle Scene

Before we arrive at our new home, we are called to be a militant participant in our own salvation and confront the ruler of this world, the source of blindness and the angel of darkness. Without presumption or despair, hope to get home is a battle cry in the spiritual combat all around. With eyes of faith we can now see our role and our destiny as children of God in a hostile, fallen world in the process of a slow and painful redemption brought about by the king Himself. Our physical natural life based on biology is now fully alive in a higher spiritual, supernatural life based on the order of grace and the life of the

sacraments. Like a frog who finally emerged from his watery past as a tadpole we emerge into a new world now capable of living in both.

Entering Narnia

As Lucy first discovers the wardrobe she pulls down a linen veil to reveal the door. This revelation or 'unveiling' is what begins her adventure. The wardrobe door signifies Baptism. Baptism is indeed a door through which we enter into the life of grace. We become a living, breathing, walking temple of God who makes in us his abode. In Baptism as in Narnia, we are adopted as his own. We are claimed by Christ and stolen from the clutches of Satan in the water's depths. It is the beginning of the turbulent spiritual life in which we die and rise over and over in a thrilling adventure of life in God's own family. His story recorded in the Bible becomes our story, his people (the Church) becomes our family, his Father becomes our Father and his mother becomes our mother. His arch-enemy becomes our enemy and his angel army becomes our protection. The Chronicles of Narnia captures the epic reality of its spiritual effect. The wardrobe could be thought of as Baptism and Narnia as the spiritual world that the door of Baptism opens to us.

Narnia and the Supernatural Life

Rev. Raymond de Souza explains, "The children soon discover that their arrival in this frosted world has been expected prophesied, to be precise and they are soon caught up in an epic battle between the evil White Witch and Aslan, the majestic lion, son of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea and the proper ruler of Narnia. Aslan, who allows himself to be killed to atone for the betrayal of Edmund Pevensie, is resurrected and definitively defeats the White Witch. It is a glorious tale, much beloved as fantasy, and much beloved by those who

recognize in Lewis's masterpiece a brilliant re-telling of the Christian story the story of redemption in Christ Jesus as it might have taken place had the Son of God come in the flesh to a world of Talking Beasts like Narnia instead of to Earth.”¹

After reflecting on the spiritual effect of Baptism and the change that it brings about in our lives through Narnia, the theology and ritual of Baptism is more understandable. Because we just covered the categories of sacraments we begin the discussion of Baptism with slides on minister, matter, form and effect. When we get to effect it is a review of what we learned in the Narnia allegory. the door to introduce the reasonable teaching of ‘baptism of desire’ and ‘baptism of blood’.

Rev. Raymond de Souza helped us see this in his analysis of CS Lewis masterpiece, *The Chronicles of Narnia... ‘Narnia lies just on the other side of the mysterious wardrobe. The Christian imagination is that the mystical and the supernatural lie just on the other side of the ordinary, the mundane, and the natural’*. Our world is "charged with the grandeur of God," Lewis's fellow Englishman Gerald Manley Hopkins wrote, and in Narnia we are reminded of just that. Christianity is not about some faraway place where the pains of this world are given over to palliative care; it is about this world, amidst the brokenness of which the great redemption was won, and where even today the graces of salvation are poured out. Just on the other side of the dreariness of history lies the splendor of eternity, constantly whispering to us. Lewis heard those whispers better than most, so to him goes the last word, explaining that the extraordinariness of Narnia is present here and now”.²

¹ <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/literature/the-other-side-of-the-wardrobe.html>

² <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/literature/the-other-side-of-the-wardrobe.html>

