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Baptism of Daniel Robert Matthew Carswell

Date: Saturday, October 8, 2022 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 | **Response:** Psalm 91:15b
Gospel Acclamation: Mark 9:7
Gospel Reading: Mark 1:7-11
Preached at: the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein **in the** Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa**.**

We gather today to celebrate the baptism of Daniel Robert Matthew Carswell. As Christians, we belong to the Mystical Church of the Body of Christ, and as the first of the Sacraments of initiation, we are all gathered here to welcome young Daniel into a relationship with Jesus Christ. In some parts of the world we call this occasion a 'Christening' – that is, where he takes on Christ and Christ claims him for himself. It is a special occasion for the parents, and for the god-parents, and his wider family. But it is also a wonderful celebration for the Church.

When Daniel was born, Meghan and Peter named their child. In giving him a name, this was the first of many gifts he would receive. The second was welcoming him into a loving family. Today we celebrate the third gift, of welcoming him into the family of faith.

One of the greatest gifts he can receive is the gift of faith, a gift that is constantly given and received as he grows older and takes on his own role in life and in the Church and in Society. It is by baptism that God gives the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us recall from the scriptures when Jesus was being baptized that the heavens opened and God the Father said this is my son, the beloved. Jesus said let the little children come to Him.

Today we honor this command as the Church accepts Meghan's and Peter's request that their child be baptized. The entire Church rejoices with this family and with Daniel, and we willingly embrace him as a Christian and follower of Jesus Christ – the name that is above all other names.

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When we entered the Church we began this service by asking what was the name that Meghan and Peter had given their son. This is because when one is baptized, they enter into a relationship with God not as a slave, but as a friend and child of God who knows each other's names. If I remember rightly, Daniel means 'God is my Judge'. And we know that God judges with love and mercy. Our prayer today is that Daniel will grow up to know that loving and merciful God. And so it is that we are doing the formal introductions this morning between Daniel and God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – and we are all witnesses to that joyous event.

We also signed Daniel with the sign of the cross, which is the mark of all Christians, because Jesus Christ died on the cross for all.

But we are also all gathered here because we too remember our own baptism, and how important the Faith is for each one of us. In different ways and at different times of our life it meant more or less but I know in this family, it has always been an important part. Even if we practice it differently – we recognize a common baptism and belief in Jesus Christ – and this is what we celebrate this morning.

For those of us unfamiliar with Baptism in this Church, please allow me to just explain briefly what is going to happen in this service. Just now we shall say some prayers, to which the response is 'Lord, graciously hear us'. These prayers are to intercede to God and ask him to bless Daniel, and his family. We then ask the Saints to pray for us too, because we believe they can pray for us when we can't. We then exorcise and anoint Daniel with the Oil of Catechumens. This is to remove the stain of Original Sin from him and to prepare him to receive the new life we all believe that we all receive in Jesus Christ.

In Baptism we make use of several symbols – these are outward signs representing a deeper reality. The oils have been blessed at the Cathedral during the Chrism Mass before Easter. After we have anointed Daniel we then bless the water which will cleanse Daniel, and we publicly, on Daniel's behalf, renounce sin and Satan. At that point the actual baptism takes place and we then anoint Daniel again with another oil, the Oil of Chrism. This signifies that Daniel is a full Christian, a priest, a prophet and a king in the eyes of God. In this royal, priestly and prophetic state we then clothe him in White to signify he is a new creation.

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We will then light the candle, that represents the flame of faith the parents and God-parents have promised to keep alive for Daniel until he is old enough to tend it herself.

Let us for a brief moment pause to thank God for our own faith, and ask him for the Grace that we might be better examples for Daniel. And now, let us pray to God together so that we might share this gift of Faith to Daniel as well.

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