



Carmelite Spiritual Center

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8433 Bailey Road * Darien, Illinois 60561 * 630-969-4141

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Life is Worth Giving

THE CONTRAST OF LIFE AND DEATH AT BAPTISM

by Fr. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.

It seemed a rather ordinary request. I had promised to baptise the infant child of some friends. Then came a return phone call: Would you mind baptizing the six-year-old daughter of their friends on the same day? The homes, I was assured, were quite close and I would be accompanied to the second baptism. The local pastor had given permission. Fine, I agreed.

Then I began to wonder. Why was this second child not baptized sooner? Why did the baptism have to be this particular Sunday? What preparations had been made for instructions?

Then the story began to unfold. The young girl's Mother had been in and out of several marriages and relationships. Drugs, abuse, and co-dependency had added to the Mother's problems. Now cancer had attacked her already ravaged body, and she had little time to live. But before she died, the Mother wanted to make certain of her daughter's baptism, Then, and only then, could she die in peace.

Would I still come? Of course!

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When I arrived at the home where the Mother was being cared for by loving, Christian relatives, I asked to see her first. The pallor of death had tinged her emaciated body with a sallow hue, and etched the clasp of pain on her skeletal features. There was little time for life.

But there was time for reconciliation. We talked about Jesus Christ and His life, and her life.

"Do you want the Lord's forgiveness?" I asked.

"Yes," she whispered, and bowed her head to receive the forgiveness and peace of the Lord Jesus.

"Now I wanted to see my daughter baptised," she pleaded.

We all gathered in the garden of the home. So many really concerned relatives and friends had gathered that there was insufficient room within the home.

A small canopy in the garden provided shade for the Mother who was brought out in a wheel-chair. She was smiling weakly. Her daughter, smiling bravely, stood next to her. Sponsors stood by to support both. There is was: Life and death; Baptism and Anointing.

"Do you renounce Satan? Do you believe in Christ?" I fairly shouted to the assembled group.

I asked the Mother, and all others who wished to do so, to ~~mark~~ mark the sign of the cross on the child's forehead. It was the passing of Faith from one generation to another. The unbroken chain of belief ~~in~~ in Jesus Christ.

