

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Baptism

Baptism at the Campus Church
By Stephen Somerville

A couple of Sundays ago, I was invited to attend a baptism. It was not your traditional baptism of a baby. It was for my sister-in-law Cindy and my seventeen-year-old nephew Brock.

I had been to a few Catholic Church baptisms before so I kind of knew ? or at least thought I knew - what to expect. I have to admit that I was a little nervous when Cindy told my wife that the ceremony would last about one hour and a half. This seemed long to me and I envisioned some cringe-worthy ceremony that would last a long time.

But I was proven wrong. The ceremony itself did take about 1.5 hours but it was very moving emotionally. The event was held at the Campus Church on Bathurst Street, in the southern portion of Aurora.

Three things immediately struck me as different from my regular attendance at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Aurora. First, there were comfortable chairs for everyone as opposed to the pews that I am used to. Also, these pews did not have a padded knee board to kneel and prey on.

Secondly, on the screen at the front, there was an electronic counter counting down the time until the service began. This was kind of neat and was required as it seems most people congregate before the service as opposed to the service that I attend where everyone is there in the seats before the mass.

Third, I could not help but notice the large tank at the front on the side. This was going to be used for the baptism. There were a number of songs sung at the start of the service, accompanied by a very good band. The Pastor then offered some introductory comments and a collection was held seeking financial donations. Then it came time for the baptism ceremony itself.

I was both interested to see this baptism initiation for adults but I was also dreading some potential long-winded ceremony. I was wrong.

Video testimonials were used by most of the people seeking baptism. The first video testimonial put up on the screen featured a young lady ? probably seventeen or eighteen years old. The video lasted about one minute and she spoke directly about her reason for wanting to be baptized. The testimonial was very good and uplifting.

A supporter of her baptism was then called who read a piece of scripture to the audience. The young lady then was asked by Pastor Jim Nolson two questions and after answering both, she was put under the water. When she came out, the newly baptized lady was greeted with applause.

This process was repeated in total I believe six times. Each of the individual stories for finding the Lord was truly compelling but a couple stood out for me.

One gentleman spoke of the hardships in his life ? and based on what he told the audience via his video testimonial - he has had enough dark times for three lives. This man spoke of how the Lord has helped him overcome these obstacles and how blessed he is to have the family that he does.

As I listened to this man's testimonial, I had a large lump in my throat and I tried to wipe away some tears without anyone seeing me. I did not dare look around except at the large video screen at the front of the room as I think everyone around me was witnessing and feeling the same way.

My sister-in-law, Cindy's, testimonial was also very heartfelt and I was very happy and proud to witness her baptism. My nephew, Brock, did not have a video testimonial but he rather spoke to the audience and did a good job. His friend, Liam, read the scripture and had the best one liner of the day when he said ?I am very happy to see you in that tank?. At that point I leaned over to my wife, Julie, and said ?It would be nice if we had that tank for your mother?. She just shook her head at me and went back to viewing the ceremony.

The Lead Pastor, David Payne, then gave a lovely sermon about the origins of Baptism and its meaning, which I think rather nicely placed the entire ceremony into perspective.

I congratulate all the baptism celebrants that day and hope that this was a very special day in their individual spiritual journey. I also offer a special shout out to my sister-in-law and nephew Brock for allowing my family and me to bear witness to their special day.

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