

Baptism of Claire and Tessa
For St. James in St. Marys- 10 July 2022

At our service today we are gathering to not only worship God as we do every Sunday but also to baptise Claire and Tessa Hibbert, beautiful little girls, daughters of Kayla and Philip. What a wonderful occasion, one full of faith and conviction. Their mom contacted me several weeks ago, wanting to have them baptised.

Now there are some who will question me allowing Claire and Tessa to be baptised. The parents are not regular attenders at this church. Will they be brought up knowing about God and developing their faith and conviction? Why do they want to have them baptised?

To those doubters, I read again Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Philip and Kayla have faith that God will welcome Claire and Tessa into the family. Philip and Kayla have faith that Claire and Tessa will grow up knowing that they are loved by God and learning to love God. They have faith and conviction that this is what they want for their children.

Philip and Kayla are expressing their faith today in bringing Claire and Tessa to be baptised. They are sharing God's kingdom with their daughters, ready for the day when they meet God. They are laying up treasure in heaven, strengthening their own faith and conviction.

I was privileged to conduct another baptism that took place several years ago. Early one Friday morning, I was called to the ICU to meet with a man named Ervine who had suffered a massive heart attack. His wife, Roma, came to the hospital with me. When we arrived, the staff were in working on Ervine, so Roma and I sat in the family room. Roma was quite concerned that Ervine had never been baptised. She wanted me to do it, but I clearly stated that as Ervine is an adult, he had to ask me himself.

A nurse came and told us we could now go in to see Ervine. We went in and the usual greetings were exchanged. Then Ervine looked me straight in the eye and, without Roma's prompting I might add, told me about how he had felt called to be baptised for many years but had never felt the time was right. Well, something about being in Intensive Care often makes the time right, and it did for Ervine as he asked me if I would baptise him.

I was deeply moved and of course agreed. As things would have it, his two sons and daughter arrived as we were preparing for the baptism, and we all gathered at the bedside with Roma for the celebration of Ervine's baptism. Even with the oxygen mask covering most of Ervine's face, I could still see the glow he had after the baptism. This glow continued into Saturday when he was moved to Halifax.

None of us would ever see Ervine alive again. But we know that we will meet up again.

Ervine's faith may have come very late in his life but it was not too late. Claire and Tessa's faith will come early in their lives but it is not too early. I cannot see Ervine where he is in heaven. I cannot know that Claire and Tessa understand what will happen to them today. But we have faith that Ervine is with God and that Claire and Tessa are also part of God's family and will someday far in the future, go to be with God.

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Jesus showed His great love of children while He was here on earth. God welcomes them. We are told that we are to have the faith of a child. As we look into the faces of Claire and Tessa or any other child, we can see open devotion, lack of fear and sheer joy. Children have complete trust in their parents doing what is best for them. They are not caught up in the cares of the world or distracted by worry or busyness. They have faith that their parents will provide what they hope for and conviction in things unseen.

We can learn so much from children about what our faith should look like. Ervine allowed the things of the world to get in the way of his faith in God. He could have had a lifetime of knowing God and depending on God and being loved by God. He missed out on all that true faith and commitment could have brought him. Claire and Tessa are blessed to have parents who love them enough to bring them to church and dedicate their lives to God. Being good parents, they will continue to teach Claire and Tessa about God and bring them up in the faith. They will bring them to Sunday School where they can deepen their knowledge of God and form bonds with other Christian children. Their Godparents will ensure that Claire and Tessa are exposed to good teaching and sound doctrine.

And some day, Claire and Tessa will realise what a wonderful gift they have been given and will themselves accept that God is their God. And it all begins as I sprinkle Holy water on their tiny foreheads and declare them as Christ's own forever.

As I do, let us each reaffirm our own faith in Christ as our Saviour and God as our Father and invite the Holy Spirit to move in each of our lives to draw us closer to God. Feel free to take some of the Holy Water and sprinkle it on yourself as an affirmation of that conviction as you come for Communion or at the end of the service.

Thank you, God, that you bring each of us to this day.