

**Theology of Baptism
Reflected in
The Design of the Baptismal
Font**

**Jean Iacino
September 15, 2015**

Baptism

- from the Greek baptizein, which means to plunge or immerse

Roots of Baptism in Scripture and Tradition

- From the beginning, Baptism was linked to a profession of faith
 - Belief and water went together.
 - On the first Pentecost Sunday, 3,000 people who heard the preaching of Peter were baptized (Acts 2:41).

Roots of Baptism in Scripture and Tradition

- By the second century, a verse was inserted into the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch; just before Philip baptizes him, this version of the story has the eunuch say, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37)

Roots of Baptism in Scripture and Tradition

- At the turn of the third century, Tertullian expected those to be baptized to renounce the devil, his works, and his angels (The Crown 3), and to express belief in God and the Church (Baptism 2; 6; 13).

Roots of Baptism in Scripture and Tradition

- early examinations of candidates for baptism led to the formulations of the faith known as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.
 - lex orandi, lex credendi
- reciting a creed, is a renewal of faith
 - in the early Church, candidates for baptism were asked about their faith, phrase by phrase, before they could be baptized
 - And still today

Roots of Baptism in Scripture and Tradition

- “What could be more extraordinary than this, that the Jewish people passed through the midst of the sea? Yet all who made that passage died in the desert. But he who passes through the waters of this font... he who passes through these waters does not die; he rises again.”
Ambrose

A Liturgical Approach to Baptismal Theology

- Lex orandi, lex credendi
 - How we pray reflects what we believe
 - What we believe is reflected in how we pray
- Easter Vigil prayer over the baptismal waters
 - the prayer reflects the core elements of our beliefs about baptism

The Multivalent Symbolism of Water

- flows and gives life (wellspring of all holiness)
- in excess is a force of destruction (the waters of the great flood)
- cleanses (make an end of sin, may be cleansed from sin)

The Multivalent Symbolism of Water

- quenches thirst
- cools and refreshes
- generates power
- “Sister water, useful and pure, lowly freeing sharing her life”

What Does Baptism Do?

- Washes us clean of effects of original sin
- Initiates us into the community of faith, the Body of Christ
- Symbolically incorporates us into the death and rising of Christ
- Configures us to Christ
- Makes us a new creation, born again of water and the spirit

Discussion Questions

- What image of baptism appeals to you and why?
- What image of baptism is emphasized with infant baptism?
- What image of baptism is emphasized with adult baptism?

Font Shapes

- Different shapes emphasize different aspects of baptismal theology

Cruciform Fonts

- Emphasize:
 - the cross of Christ
 - sharing in Christ's suffering and death

St. Francis



University of Portland



Holy Family San Jose



St. Rita Wellington, FL



Tomb-Shaped Fonts

- Emphasize:
 - the death of Christ

Good Shepherd Elk Grove



St. Pius X Omaha



Octagonal Fonts

- Eight represents the first day of the new creation, the day after the Sabbath, the day Christ rose
- Emphasize:
 - The resurrection of Christ

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Sacramento



Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament Sacramento



St. Katherine Drexel Jackson



St. Katherine Drexel Jackson



St. Raphael Cathedral Dubuque



Divine Savior Orangevale



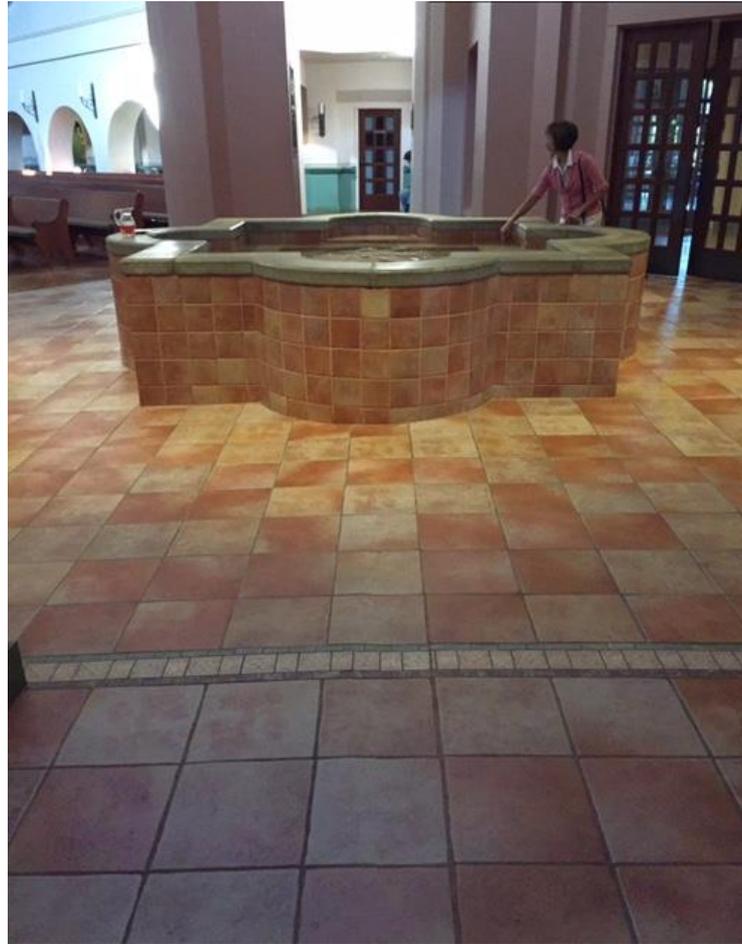
Divine Savior Orangevale



St. Clare Roseville



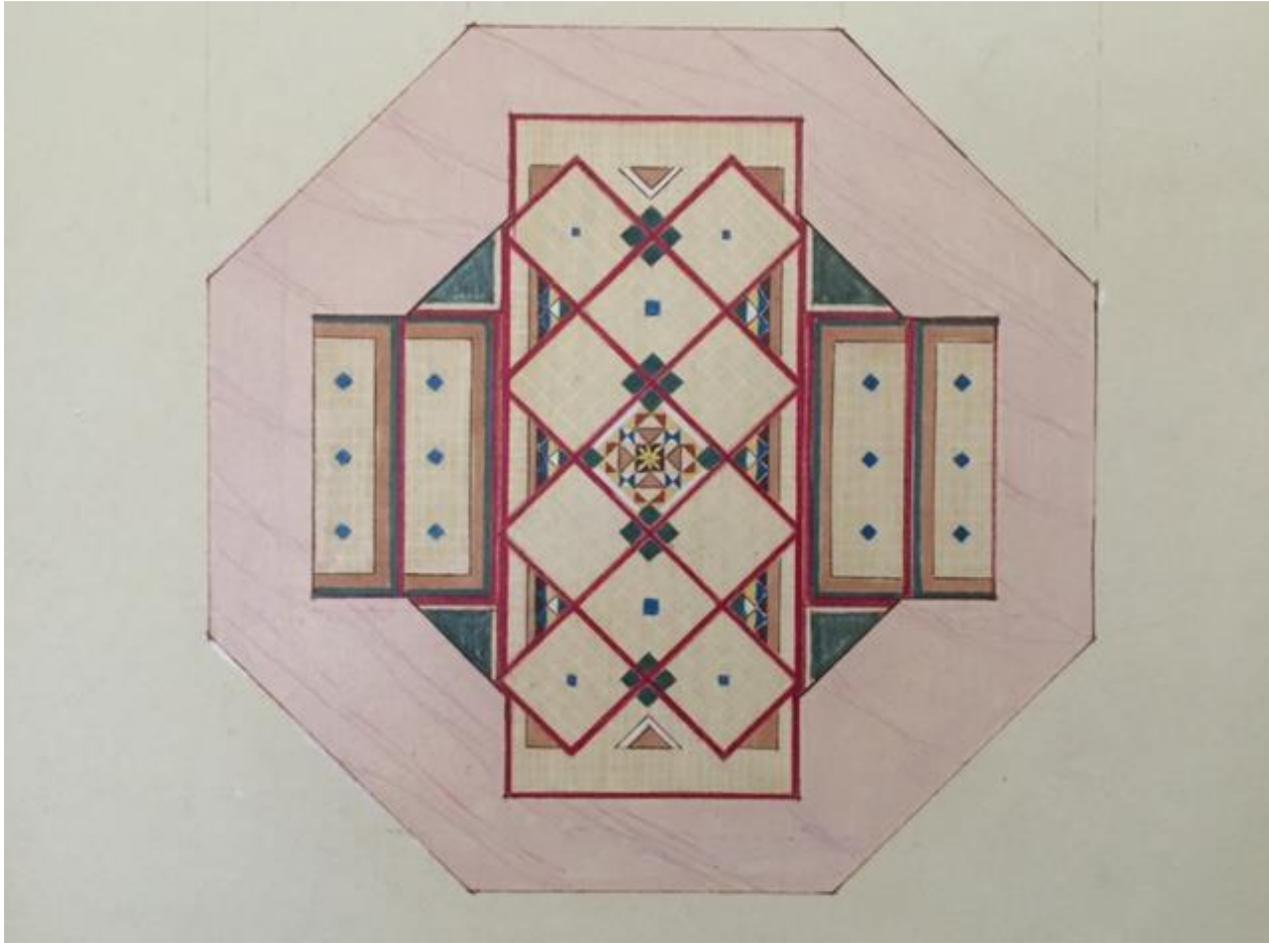
St. Clare Roseville



St. Francis Old



St. Francis 1993 Proposal



The Church of the Holy Apostles McHenry, IL



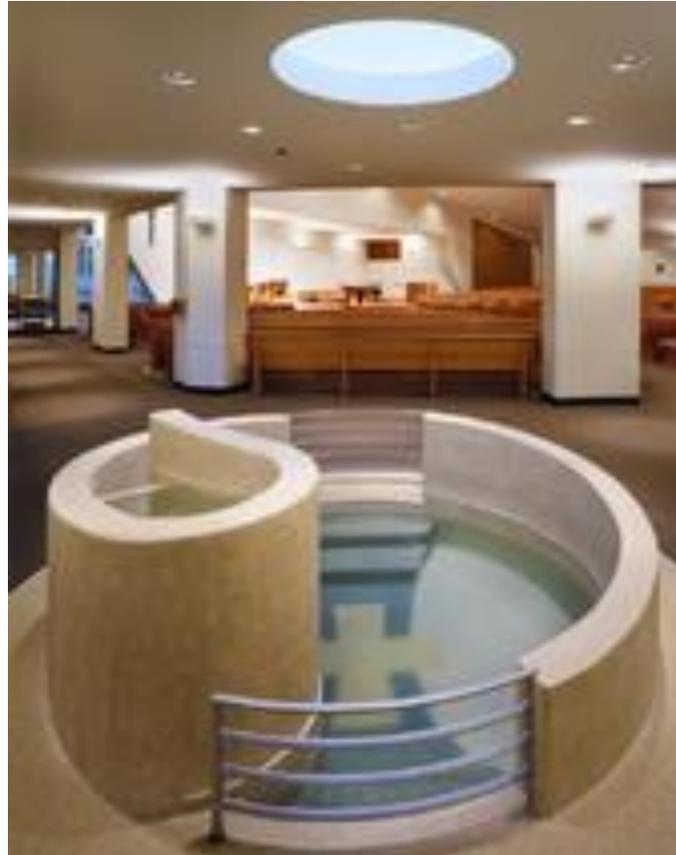
Womb-Shaped Fonts

- Emphasize:
 - transformation
 - new creation
 - being born again

Round or Tub-Shaped Fonts

- Emphasize:
 - Being washed clean of sin

Old St. Mary's Chicago



Resurrection Aptos



Holy Family of Nazareth Irvine, TX



Other Shapes

- Emphasize:
 - Multivalent symbolism

St. Leo Tacoma



Christ the King Las Vegas



St. Jude New Lenox, IL



St. Lawrence North Highlands



Discussion Questions

- What shape do you prefer and why?
- Does your preferred shape emphasize the image of baptism that speaks to you most?