

SUPPLYING THE CEREMONIES OF BAPTISM

WHEN a person has been privately baptised *in periculo*, he is brought to a church in order that the ceremonies omitted in the private baptism may be performed. This is commonly done in the case of infants.

Some such rite is very proper. It expresses, I suppose, the 'formal' or public introduction of the new member to the Christian community, which he has already privately joined. It would be unjust to deprive the baptised child of any benefit which may come to him through the unctions; he has a right to his salt, his white robe and his taper.

But I plead that consideration be given to the manner of performing this rite; for at present the reality is grievously misrepresented and obscured.

Here comes a baptised Christian, strong in his unsullied innocence. He has but recently escaped the peril of death. His parents, his friends are rejoicing and thankful. The Church rejoices with them.

Why, then, is this Christian stopped at the church door? Why is the priest's stole of violet hue? And what conceivable purpose is there in the repeated exorcisms? Devils there are in plenty, and possessive in the extreme; but surely the one person wholly safe from them is a newly-baptised baby? He is the 'strong man armed' indeed!

Should not the rite begin with rejoicing and thanksgiving? *Baptizatus est—Alleluia, Alleluia; Deo gratias—Alleluia, Alleluia.* The *Gloria in excelsis* would not be out of place. Let the first entry of the newly baptised be a triumphant procession to the altar-rails, and there, not at the font, let him receive the salt, the unctions, the robe and the taper.

Such a rite would have meaning and purpose: it would reveal, not obscure, the essential dignity of baptism. And to many parents it would be an occasion of thanksgiving for a deliverance from death of their child.

May those who have the privilege of approaching the Sacred Congregation of Rites consider this matter.

IDDESLEIGH