

# A White Christening

I didn't realize it was snowing until I clipped downstairs in my highest heels to find my cousins Becky and Brittany, Collin and Leo's godmothers, wearing flat shoes with their dresses.

"You might want to change your shoes," they said in unison.

I looked through the half-moon stained glass window on my front door and saw a winter wonderland. Normally I ADORE snow, but today was different. It was Leo's Baptism day.

"Oh no," I said, my thoughts focused on the two block walk we had to church. But, we bundled everyone up and headed to St. Joan's in cars or on frigid foot.



*Leo and his godmother, Brittany*

When we got to the church, I wondered if we were really early. We'd left the house in such a panicked rush, and the pews were bare. My aunt and uncle came in right behind us and told us that my cousin and her family weren't going to make it because their windshield wipers were broken. Brittany told me her mom's brakes went out on her, too.

"Oh no," I said, worried that someone might be risking an accident if they tried to drive all the way out to Aberdeen.

We were asked to take our seats for Mass, and shortly thereafter, another aunt and uncle arrived - safely, thank God! The church remained largely unoccupied; perhaps 100 parishioners were in attendance.

After Mass, I looked out the back windows of the church and saw nothing but white. We waited a little longer than our 12:30 ceremony time to accommodate any guests who found themselves struggling in the battle against the weather. Once my in-laws arrived, after being stuck behind a stalled tractor trailer on a country road, we began.

When Collin and Frank were baptized, we filled almost an entire section of the church. On the day of Leo's Baptism, I looked out and saw 20 people. The weather (and, to a lesser extent, an outstanding at-home Ravens game) had kept most of our friends and family from being able to celebrate this sacrament with us. It made me a little sad, but I set my negative feelings aside to be positive and present during the ritual.

It was a beautiful ceremony. The light from a candle so new and so tall that the godfathers, both tall, struggled to reach the flame.

The smell of chrism every time I kissed Leo's forehead. The sound of water splashing gently. The feel of Irish linen from Leo's gown brushing over my bare arms. The warmth I felt in those moments made me forget about the frightful weather.

While we were taking pictures after the Baptism, Patrick saw the caterer's truck head down the street towards our house.

"Oh no!" I said. I'd completely forgotten about the food. I'd ordered enough for 60 people. It was already paid for. I just needed someone to tip the driver and let him in. Luckily, my brother was quick to respond.

I wanted to walk home from church, but halfway home the snow began to jam into my Dansko Mary Janes and penetrate the bottom of my pantyhose. My friend, Ashtin, saw me, stopped her Jeep and insisted that I get inside. I'd turned down every other offer for a ride, but at this point, I obliged.

I was greeted at my front door with an entryway full of towels posing as rugs. The aroma of Italian food wafted through the air.

"Thanks for taking care of all of this," I told my brother.

The guests began arriving, with many of them changing out of their church clothes and into Ravens gear. The football game was on. Snacks and drinks were served.



My mom and I went upstairs to change the boys and take some pictures of Leo in his gown.

"What am I going to do?" I asked my mom. "I was expecting 60 people!"

"Stop worrying about who's not here, and focus on who is here. Today, Leo is a child of God, and that's all that matters."

She was right. Like a young bride, I'd been so caught up in the details of the day, and I'd lost my focus on the purpose of the event, itself. I was glad that I'd taken the time to be present during the ceremony, but disappointed that I'd spent so much of the morning worrying when I should have been rejoicing.

Having a smaller party ended up having a number of benefits. None of our guests went hungry. In fact, there was enough food and cake left over to send some home with them for our loved ones who couldn't make it. Everyone could see the football game, especially during a breathtaking fourth quarter of touchdown tennis. I actually got the time to talk to everyone, even if it was just a little. And there was a lot less clean up!

We were blessed to have some wonderful friends and family spend this special day with us in prayer and in presence, and grateful that no one suffered as a result of the storm. What matters most is that even if they couldn't join us on Leo's Baptism day, all of our friends and family members will accompany Leo on his lifelong journey of faith.