

Essay on baptism

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I was baptized in a swimming pool in my childhood pastor's backyard. I was seven. Asked to make a confession of faith, I mumbled something incoherent through chattering teeth. I was focused on the embarrassing fact that my feet did not reach the bottom; my pastor and my dad had to hold me up.

The congregation was young then and worshiped in a font-less gymnasium. These days it does baptisms either in its baptistry or in a lake across town. The pastor who baptized me is long gone. So is his backyard pool—I checked.

I checked because I've long been vaguely bothered by the fact that my baptism happened in such an arbitrary, rootless place, in neither a church nor a natural body of water. Over time, my sense of self has grown increasingly dependent on a sense of physical place—and my spirituality has grown deeper baptismal roots. I find myself longing to return to the place of my baptism. But that place doesn't exactly exist; the land remains, but not the water.... [Read more in the new issue of the *Century*](#)