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# Scripture Teaches about Baptism

## KEY TERMS IN THIS SECTION

**Sacrament of Baptism** the first Sacrament of Initiation; through the pouring of water, or immersion into water, and the words of Baptism, Original Sin, and any personal sins committed, are washed away, a person is born to new life in Christ, and becomes a member of the

Church, a temple of the Holy Spirit as well as sharers in the priesthood of Christ

**ablutions** ceremonial acts of washing parts of the body

**Original Sin** the loss of original holiness and justice in human nature, handed

down from the first sin of Adam and Eve, our first parents

**conversion** "A radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God" (CCC, Glossary, p. 873)

**W**ater is one of those things that we often forget about because it is all around us. Our own bodies are up to sixty percent water. We use water to generate electricity, grow food, bathe, swim, snowboard, and fish, just to name a few. It has power to give life and take life away.

The people of the Old and New Testaments could never take water for granted. The desert was never far away and the struggle of their day-to-day survival depended on it. From the very beginning of Scripture, there are images of

water and expressions of its importance. At the Easter Vigil, the Church commemorates these great events that prefigure the **Sacrament of Baptism** (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1217). In the first account of creation, the Spirit of God moves over the waters:

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

—Genesis 1:1-2

Newly baptized Catholics hold lit Baptism candles at an Easter Vigil Mass.



In the account of Noah and the ark, the Book of Genesis describes, “On that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:11-12).

Water also has an important role in the Exodus account. The newly freed Israelites were fleeing the Egyptian army and stood at the edge of Red Sea. Here the power of God was manifested.

## IDENTIFY

Religious imagination enables us to see spiritual meaning carried by ordinary objects. It is characteristic of Catholic prayer.

- Exercise your religious imagination by listing several of water's spiritual functions and/or meanings. Be sure to include a brief explanation to everything you list.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them. . . . Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians.'

—Exodus 14:21-23, 26

The sea blocked and swallowed up the Egyptians and kept the People of God safe, ensuring their freedom. Later, when the Israelites completed their forty-year journey through the desert, they entered the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan River: "The people crossed over in haste. As soon as all the people had finished crossing over, the ark of the LORD, and the priests, crossed over in front of the people" (Joshua 4:10-11).

The **Book of Revelation** contains much symbolic language, including images that connect to Baptism.

Read **Revelation 7:13-17**.

- Which images connect to Baptism?
- What does the symbol of tears represent in your own life?
- Where is the greatest hunger and thirst in the world today?

### New Testament Times

Water takes on a prominent role in New Testament accounts as well. The Gospel according to Matthew tells us about Saint Peter literally sinking in water. He was with some of the Apostles in a boat on the sea during a storm. They saw Jesus walking toward them on the water. Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Jesus commanded him to come forward, but Peter began to sink when he became afraid.

### Baptism Prefigured in Old Testament

|                              | What Scripture Tells Us   | What Happens in Baptism  |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| The Creation (Genesis)       | God brought forth life out of the waters of creation.   | In Baptism, we go down into the water and rise to new life in Christ in the care of the Church.  |
| Noah and the Flood (Genesis) | Because sin had overtaken the world, God sent the waters and brought a new beginning out of the flood, people not burdened by the previous sinful environment.                        | The waters of Baptism are an efficacious sign of the cleansing from sin that we receive through the Sacrament, through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Baptism.               |
| The Red Sea (Exodus)         | The Israelites left the slavery of Egypt by crossing through the Red Sea. They began a new life as free people. The Egyptians die in the sea after holding the Israelites in bondage. | Through the waters of Baptism, we pass from the slavery of sin into the freedom of the children of God. Baptism is a tomb in which we die to sin and death.                                |
| Crossing the Jordan (Joshua) | The Israelites crossed through the waters of the Jordan into the land God had promised them.  | Baptism brings us into the new life promised by Jesus, into his Body, the Church. The Promised Land prefigures Heaven. It is the waters of Baptism that open up the possibility of Heaven. |



In this artistic depiction, Saint John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River.

Jesus reached out and saved him. “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31). The Apostles then did believe and worshipped Jesus as the true Son of God.

Near the beginning of the Gospel according to Mark, the entire message of Jesus’ preaching is summarized in these words: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1:15).

Jesus delivered this message after his baptism by John the Baptist. We know from Scripture that the ritual bath described in the ministry of John the Baptist was a sign of repentance. It also reminded people of the passage through the Red Sea—from slavery to freedom. It was not the Sacrament. It was a Jewish purification ritual.

### COMPARE

- Find out more about John the Baptist’s baptism of repentance by reading Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:3-6, 21-22; and John 1:19-34.
- Compare and contrast the passages, identifying three truths of faith.

## GO TO THE SOURCE

When James and John ask Jesus for a favor, Jesus refers to his Passion as a “baptism.”

Read Mark 10:35-45.

- Summarize what happens in this passage.
- Why do you think James and John asked their question?
- What would it mean for you to be baptized with the baptism of Jesus?

In Acts Chapter 19, there is an exchange between Paul and some disciples in Ephesus. The disciples tell Paul they were baptized into John’s baptism. They said they didn’t know about the Holy Spirit. Paul tells them:

‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.

—Acts 19:4-6

Because Jesus was free from sin, he had no need to change his way of life or to make a public declaration of a change of heart. He didn’t need to be baptized by John the Baptist. However, he allowed himself to be baptized and stood with those he came to save (see CCC, 1223). At his baptism, we also learn about the Trinity and Jesus’ unique relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through Christian Baptism, the Holy Spirit brings Christ’s sacramental grace, so that that the faithful follower’s new birth in the Holy Spirit can bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Covenant. The ritual bath of Baptism effects what it symbolizes because by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus is at work within us (see CCC, 1127). Jesus is at work establishing our new life, a soul born again; a soul born to be God’s love in the world. For the Catholic community, there is no longer any need to repeat **ablutions**, or ritual

## GO TO THE SOURCE

Jesus' command to go and baptize begins to be fulfilled in the Acts of the Apostles.

Read *Matthew 28:19-20* and *Acts 2:37-41*.

- What was the teaching and practice in the early Church concerning Baptism?
- Who does Peter say the promise is for?
- How do Saint Peter's words impact your thoughts about your own Baptism?

washings, as people did during Jesus' time. Jesus, as the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end—established a new everlasting Baptism through the forgiveness of **Original Sin** and person sin that proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus preached repentance, calling people to a **conversion** of heart and mind, urging them to turn from their sinful ways and to turn back to God. In some ways, his message mirrored that of John the Baptist. Jesus also instructed his Apostles to continue his ministry of healing and forgiveness after he was gone. When he instituted the Sacrament, Jesus showed that Baptism is the first Sacrament of forgiveness. So from the Church's beginning, she linked forgiveness of sins to Baptism: Repent and be baptized. The result of Baptism is described in terms of being born again. It is a rebirth.

**Recall** Who baptized Jesus?

**Explain** Why did Jesus spend much of his time in the company of sinners?

### Forgiveness in Baptism

The generations that followed the Apostles continued to reflect on how Baptism was celebrated and the meaning it had in the lives of believers. In the fifth century, Saint Augustine of Hippo preached and wrote about the Church's growing understanding of sin, forgiveness, and Baptism, echoing the Apostle Paul's original teaching from Romans:

Sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.

—Romans 5:12

In his autobiographical *Confessions*, Saint Augustine wrote that he was obsessed with the question of why evil exists in the world, but he “found no answer.” By reflecting on Sacred Scripture and his own experience of conversion and Baptism as an adult, Saint Augustine better understood the mystery of sin and forgiveness. Starting with the biblical accounts of Creation, Augustine noted that the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve—which he called Original Sin—resulted in the loss of the paradise God had intended for them and all their descendants. That paradise was a state of holiness and justice, a harmony within the human person, between man and woman, and between humankind and all of God's Creation.

The sinful rebellion of Adam and Eve had consequences for all their descendants. Deprived of original holiness, people had a wounded nature and were forever inclined toward evil; everyone would experience ignorance, suffering, and death. Every person born after the sin of the first humans was destined to be born into this fallen state. Without God's help, they would not be able to rise above the power of sin that weakened all humanity. It was then that God proved his love for us because Christ died for us even though we were still sinners.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

—Romans 5:18-19

### COMPARE

Recall that we are made in the image of God, but we see that Original Sin brings us into the world in need of salvation.

- Find a partner and outline what Scripture and the Church tell us about this.

To understand Original Sin, it helps to remember that Saint Paul spoke of it as a state of being we inherit as members of the human race. It is not because of an act we freely commit—in other words, not personal sin.

The practice of infant Baptism has been around since at least the second century and probably from the earliest days of the Church when whole households were baptized (see CCC, 1252). By Saint Augustine's time, however, it was common to wait until individuals were adults to offer

them the Sacrament of Baptism. Saint Augustine linked our need to be freed from Original Sin to our need for forgiveness for our personal sins. While the two types of sin differ, we cannot overcome either one on our own. That is why God the Father sent his Son—to save us from our sins, both from the state of Original Sin and from the personal sins we have committed. For Augustine, salvation brought us a restored intimacy with God—an intimacy that surpasses all human expectations because it offers us a share of God's own divine life.

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

In a document titled, **"Water, an Essential Element for Life,"** the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace said **clean water is a human right, not a product to be marketed.** But how much does the rest of the world believe?

The document, released in March 2012, was an update to previous published documents. It was presented at the Sixth World Water Forum in Marseille, France. Here are some important points from the document.

- "There persists an excessively commercial conception of water which runs the risk of mistaking it for just another kind of merchandise, and making investments for the sake of profit alone."
- "There is a risk of not seeing one's brothers and sisters as human beings possessing the right to a dignified existence, but rather seeing them as simply customers."
- "The concept of 'family of nations' recalls that responsibility for the destiny of the less favored countries rests also with those more richly blessed. In a family, every member is responsible for each and every other member, the suffering of one becomes the suffering of all."

- "The many children who die each year in poor countries due to the lack of access to safe water and sanitation are a loss for the future of the whole world and for humanity as a whole."
- "Solutions for access to safe water and sanitation should express a preferential love and consideration for the poor. It is for those that the water issue is crucial for life."

What do you think about these statements and especially the idea of a "family of nations?"

A young man drinks clean water.



➔ Go to the student site at [hs.osvcurriculum.com](http://hs.osvcurriculum.com)

Each generation of believers continues to ponder the mystery of sin and the reality of God's forgiveness. Aspects of our faith that one generation may be aware of but not fully appreciate may be disclosed or manifested in another generation, as faith continues to seek understanding.

**Explain** Describe the paradise that God originally created for all people.

**Contrast** What is the difference between Original Sin and personal sin?

## SECTION 1 REVIEW

### QUICK REVIEW

- 1a. List** Name three Old Testament stories that use water images.
  - b. Answer** Did Jesus need to be baptized? Why or why not?
  - c. Explain** How did Jesus expand on the message of John the Baptist?
- 2a. Explain** Why are people inclined toward sin and evil?
  - b. Recall** According to Saint Augustine, what does salvation do for people?

**Pray** Compose a short prayer thanking God for your conversion experience.

### SELF-ASSESS

Which statement best reflects where you are now?

- I'm confident enough about the material in this section to be able to explain it to someone else.
- I have a good grasp of the material in this section, but I could use more review.
- I'm lost. I need help catching up before moving on.



# Significance of the Sacrament

## KEY TERMS IN THIS SECTION

**Sacraments of Initiation** the three Sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist—through which a person is fully initiated into the Church

**character or mark** an indelible spiritual sign imprinted on the soul in the non-repeatable Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders

**Magisterium** the official living, teaching office of the Church—the bishops in communion with the Pope—that interprets Scripture and Tradition and ensures faithfulness to the teachings of the Apostles regarding matters of faith and morals

**Chrism** the fragrant, sacramental oil used during the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders that is consecrated by the bishop during Holy Week and distributed to the parishes. It signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Chrismation** the name for Confirmation in the Eastern Catholic Church

**P**rior to his Ascension into Heaven, Jesus gave a final command to his closest disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20a).

The Apostles were sent to baptize in the name of the Trinity and teach new members all that Jesus had taught them. Baptism was more than an initiation—it was to be a life-changing and holy transformation.

Baptism is the first of the Seven Sacraments, and the gateway that gives access to the other Sacraments. Baptism is the chief Sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with

Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification. Only through Baptism can the stain of Original Sin be removed. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the **Sacraments of Initiation**. Through them a person begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ.

Each Sacrament gives a special grace. The grace of the Holy Spirit in Baptism is given to enable us to be like Christ. Through Baptism, we partake in God’s very nature; united in Christ, we become adopted children of God. The *Catechism* also tells us that through Baptism, we become members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit, and we share in Christ’s priesthood.

The essential elements, meaning the main symbols or efficacious signs used in the Sacrament of Baptism are (see CCC, 1240):

- Triple immersion into a baptismal pool or the triple pouring of water on the head.
- The minister of the Sacrament saying the words of the formula: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Roman Rite). “The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Eastern Rite).

**Recall** What was Jesus’ final command to his disciples?

**Explain** How does Baptism enable us to be like Christ?

Jesus gives his Apostles the Great Commission to go and preach the Good News.



## Minister of Baptism

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are bishops, priests, or deacons (see CCC, 1256). However, because Baptism is so important for salvation, the Church has made it possible for someone other than a deacon, priest, or bishop to administer it in cases of absolute necessity. The essential rite of the Sacrament is quite simple: water must be used, and the water must flow over the person while the traditional formula invoking the name of the Trinity is used.

The person baptizing must have the intention of baptizing according to the mind of the Church, even if the person's understanding of what that means is minimal. In order for the Sacrament to be valid in the case of adults, the person being baptized must have the necessary faith and desire to be baptized. Baptism by someone other than an ordained minister is limited to emergency situations when no ordained person is available. As long as the essential rite is performed correctly and with the proper intention, the Baptism is a valid one.

For the valid reception of the Sacrament of Baptism, the following are required: the proven intention of the celebrant; the desire to be baptized for an adult; and the water must flow, and the Trinitarian formula must be used.

In summary, we have considered some aspects of what is required for a person to be baptized. But we also know that Baptism is only a beginning, the start of a lifelong journey of discipleship. As is the case with each of the Sacraments, there are very real implications for one who has received the Sacrament of Baptism.

## GO TO THE SOURCE

Jesus tells the woman at the well that he is the source of living water.

Read [John 4:7-14](#).

- What meaning does water have in this passage?
- What connection might there be with the Sacrament of Baptism?



Water cleanses, nourishes, and replenishes us.

**Recall** Who generally administers the Sacrament of Baptism?

**Tell** What is the Baptismal formula that invokes the name of the Trinity?

## Effects of the Sacrament

Living creatures emerge from the waters in the first account of creation. In the Book of Jeremiah, God speaks of himself as “the fountain of living water” ([Jeremiah 2:13](#)). The Gospel according to John tells of Jesus’ encounter with a woman from Samaria.

Water is associated with God and with the gift of new life that Jesus brings. Thus, it is no wonder that the waters of Baptism are important to the Church. Indeed, as Jesus tells us, these waters are “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” ([John 4:14](#)). Baptism is not only the gateway to the other Sacraments, it is the gateway to eternal life. But we don’t have to wait for death to experience the effects of Baptism. Baptism transforms our present experience because it is based on the meaning of love at its root—the divine love of the Trinity that is responsible for the creation of the universe itself.

What are the effects of Baptism? What does each bring about?

## Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism

This chart follows the Rite of Baptism for Children. The Rite ideally takes place within Mass. If done this way, the Liturgy of the Eucharist would follow the explanatory rites at the end of this chart.

| Ritual Actions / Symbols                                | Toward a Deeper Understanding   |
|---|---|
| <b>RECEPTION</b>  |   |
| Reception of those to be baptized                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reception takes place at the entrance or doorway of the church. At the threshold, those seeking Baptism are invited into the church where they will bless themselves with the waters of Baptism for years to come.</li> </ul>  |
| Naming  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The parents are asked what name they have given their child. It is a tradition in the Catholic Church to name a child after a saint or virtue. The saint is a role model and prayer for the child. It teaches children about the Communion of Saints.</li> <li>The name that a person is given is the name called by God: "The name one receives is a name for eternity. In the kingdom, the mysterious and unique character of each person marked with God's name will shine forth in splendor" (CCC, 2159).</li> </ul>   |
| Questions to parents                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The parents are asked what they ask of the Church and if they are ready to undertake raising their child in the faith.</li> <li>The celebrant is greeting the parents, who publicly state their intentions and commitments. The parents take on the serious responsibility of raising their children in the faith when they bring them to Baptism.</li> </ul>  |
| Questions to the godparents                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Godparents also have a serious responsibility to be a role model and may even reproach parents if they fail in their duties (see CCC, 1255).</li> <li>The Catholic Church community also has a responsibility for helping to form the faith of those to be initiated.</li> </ul>   |
| Signing with the Cross                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cross reminds us that the Paschal Mystery of Jesus is at the heart of what it means to be made one of his disciples (see CCC, 1235).</li> <li>The pledge of the Church culminates in the signing with the Cross. This is one of the most ancient symbols associated with Baptism.</li> <li>The infant's forehead is traced with a Cross by the celebrant, parents, godparents, and others gathered. This is a public liturgical gesture on the part of the parents and godparents that says this child belongs to Christ.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>LITURGY OF THE WORD AND ANOINTING</b>                |   |
| Scripture Readings                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As in all Sacraments, we must first encounter the Word of God before we celebrate the sacramental rite. We celebrate God's initiative and our attempt to respond (see CCC, 1236).</li> <li>Parents of the infants are invited to hear God's Word so they may have faith. Life after Baptism is strengthened by the faith and commitment of the adult believers.</li> </ul>   |
| Litany of Saints  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking the Saints to pray for those to be baptized reminds us that Baptism makes one a member of the Communion of Saints. We are initiated into a Church that is larger than any local parish.</li> <li>Baptism incorporates us into the Body of Christ that extends to every time and place. If the parents choose a Saint's name for child it is included in the litany. The Saints in Heaven are at the child's Baptism.</li> </ul>   |
| Prayer of exorcism<br>Anointing with oil of catechumens | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the minor rites preceding the Sacrament, a baptismal exorcism takes place, meaning that a simple exorcism prayer is offered to prepare for Baptism. This prayer asks for God's help to overcome the power of Satan and evil.</li> <li>We know that the lives of those who have journeyed this path of faith have been tested by the power of evil. In the prayers of exorcism, the Church asks that the one to be baptized be freed from evil and filled with new life.</li> <li>The anointing with the oil of catechumens is used to mark the person as one called by God and filled with the power of God. In Baptism for children, this anointing marks a transition and conclusion to the Liturgy of the Word (see CCC, 1237).</li> </ul> |

## Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism

This chart follows the Rite of Baptism for Children. The Rite ideally takes place within Mass. If done this way, the Liturgy of the Eucharist would follow the explanatory rites at the end of this chart.

| Ritual Actions / Symbols                            | Toward a Deeper Understanding   |
|---|---|
| <b>LITURGY OF THE WORD AND ANOINTING</b>            |   |
| Procession to the site of Baptism                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processions are important symbols and intend to invoke the Christian journey of pilgrim people. We are led by God into the Church to hear the word and respond.</li> <li>• The procession benefits the entire assembly, drawing them to the water. It marks a clear and decisive shift to another set of rites.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT</b>                 |   |
| Blessing and invocation over the waters             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a prayer of thanksgiving and remembrance of God's action in history and how often he used water to bring salvation to his People. God is petitioned to continue the legacy of saving action (see CCC, 1238).</li> <li>• This prayer includes an <i>epiclesis</i>, an invocation of the Holy Spirit's power in the sacramental action about to take place.</li> </ul>   |
| Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These promises include both a renunciation of sin and a profession of faith. They show that conversion is both a turning away from sin and a turning toward God. When infants and young children are baptized, parents make these promises.</li> <li>• This ritual reminds the assembled community what we believe and what we invite this new member to accept and believe.</li> </ul>  |
| Baptism   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the Roman Rite, the preferred way of baptizing is by immersion, because it is a fuller, more expressive symbol of dying and rising with Christ. However, a three-fold pouring of water is also permitted (see CCC, 1239).</li> <li>• Either way, the water ritual is accompanied by the <i>Trinitarian formula</i>, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (<i>The Rites</i>).</li> </ul>  |
| <b>EXPLANATORY RITES</b>                            |   |
| Anointing with Chrism                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infants are anointed immediately after Baptism with Chrism. This anointing on the crown of the head with perfumed oil symbolizes that this son or daughter of God is becoming like Christ; it is "a priest, prophet, and king" anointing (see CCC, 1241).</li> </ul>   |
| Clothing with white garment                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is one of the "explanatory rites" after Baptism that is catechetical in nature. It reveals a particular dimension of what the Sacrament means.</li> <li>• The putting on of the white garment means the person drops the old distinctions, and now "puts on Christ."</li> <li>• The new garments indicate that the baptized are "clothed" with new ways of living. The parents and godparents are instructed to help the child keep the white garment of their soul unstained (see CCC, 1243).</li> </ul> |
| Lighted candle                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The baptismal candle is lighted from the Paschal Candle, which symbolizes the light of Christ that has illuminated the mind and heart of the newly initiated. Once again the parents and godparents are reminded of their responsibility to keep the light of faith burning brightly.</li> </ul>   |
| Ephphetha, or Prayer over ears and mouth (optional) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This ritual is an optional element in the rite with infants.</li> <li>• It symbolizes the hope that Christ will touch the infant's ears to hear God's Word and open his or her mouth in praise of God.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>CONCLUSION OF THE RITE</b>                       |   |
| Lord's Prayer / Blessing                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A song is sung, followed by the Lord's Prayer.</li> <li>• Then the celebrant blesses the mother, who holds the child, then the father, and then everyone gathered.</li> </ul>  |

## GO TO THE SOURCE

When we are baptized we share in Christ's Death and Resurrection.

Read *Romans* 6:2b-11.

- Summarize Saint Paul's argument about dying and rising like Christ.
- Have you ever thought about Baptism as verse 11 describes? How can we be dead to sin and alive in Christ?

A baptized person:

- Dies and rises with Christ—a new birth in Christ—and receives sanctifying grace
- Is freed from Original Sin and all personal sins
- Becomes an adopted child of God
- Becomes a member of the Church
- Receives an indelible **character** or **mark**, meaning the Sacrament cannot be repeated
- Receives the Holy Spirit and begins the journey of discipleship
- Gives us the right to receive the other Sacraments.
- Receives actual grace and the special sacramental graces proper to the Sacrament of Baptism.

### Die and Rise with Christ

Our participation in the Sacraments connects us to the Paschal Mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity and the Paschal Mystery both reveal that love focuses on the other—not our own self-interests. Original Sin causes people to focus on their own desires and be self-centered. Each of the Sacraments reminds us that the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a model we should imitate. Each of the Sacraments reminds us that Jesus' suffering, dying, rising, and ascending is the experience all of us can expect as his disciples. These mysteries reflect complete unselfishness. The Sacraments require us to die to our own interests in order to live as God intended, and they provide the grace to do so. This is

important, because although Baptism washes away Original Sin, certain consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as human suffering, weakness of character, and the inclination to sin (called concupiscence).

Baptism is not just a share in the Death of Jesus; it is also a share in his risen life, in this life and the next. This balanced approach of dying to ourselves so that we can live more freely is found in Saint Paul's teaching on Baptism in his Letter to the Romans.

The grace of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Baptism has the power to justify, meaning the cleanse of from our sins and to know from God that we are dead to sin, but alive through Jesus Christ (see CCC, 1987). So we have a share in the Death and Resurrection of Christ. Prayer and reflection on this is important to know the full meaning of our Baptism. It is how we will continue the conversion of our new life in Christ that will help us keep turning away from sin and selfishness (see CCC, 2015).

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. . . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

—Romans 6:3-4, 11

### Freed from All Sin

The *Catechism* teaches that "Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of the forgiveness of sins: it unites us to Christ . . . and gives us the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 985).

This was a radical concept to the people of Jesus' time. The theology of their time taught that problems they faced were caused by their sin or the sin of their parents, or even their parent's parents. It would be like a tree falling on you because you told a lie when you were 10, or because your grandfather did something wrong when he was 17.

Knowing that the Paschal Mystery was the source of their forgiveness was another reason people flocked to Jesus and the early Church communities. Baptism brought people into the family of Christ. It brought them forgiveness, and it reminded them that they too could expect to experience the Paschal Mystery dynamics of life: suffering, loss, and new beginnings.

Baptism plays a crucial role in our salvation. It frees us from Original Sin and personal sin. Baptism joins us to Christ and makes us Temples of the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we are welcomed into the mysterious life of the Blessed Trinity itself—the eternal love among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The sanctifying grace received at Baptism makes us holy. Mortal sin destroys sanctifying grace within us. Each Sacrament confers its own unique sanctifying grace. That grace gives us a real share in God's own holiness. This extraordinary gift of God's life in us prompted Saint Paul to write, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20). We are doubly blessed by God's grace. It is his grace that makes us aware of our sinfulness, and it is through God's grace that we are redeemed and made right with him. "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" (*Roman Missal*).

Saint Paul himself was told by Ananias not to delay his initiation:

"Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name."

—Acts 22:16

## GO TO THE SOURCE

In the Gospel according to John, we read two different conversations connected by the same message.

Read John 3.

- What is Jesus really telling Nicodemus?
- What truth is Saint John the Baptist pointing to?
- What do both of these two conversations have to do with Baptism?

## DISCUSS

- How might the understanding of Baptism as cleansing us from our sins influence a community's celebration of the Sacrament?

The **Magisterium** uses this teaching to illustrate the Church's official doctrine. Today, Baptism is sometimes described by the Magisterium as a washing away of sin, a spiritual bath that cleanses us of all that separates us from God. The water of Baptism is the way God bridges that gap. It brings about and celebrates our new life in him. We are no longer slaves to the power of sin and everlasting death, for Christ has conquered these consequences of Original Sin.

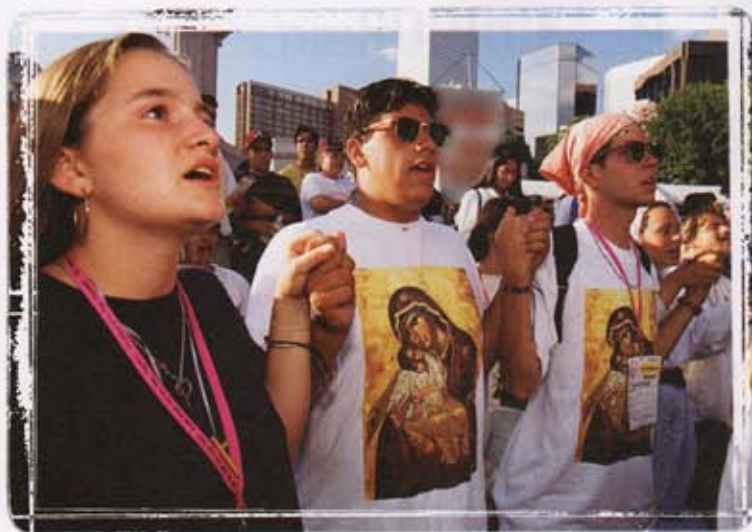
And baptism . . . now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

—1 Peter 3:21-22

Personal sin is also washed away by Baptism. If the person baptized is old enough to have sinned, that person's sins are forgiven in this Sacrament. Likewise, the punishment due to those sins is completely removed. Nothing remains of the person's old life. Baptism is truly a rebirth.

A baby is anointed with Sacred Chrism during the Sacrament of Baptism.





Young Catholics pray together at an event.

### Adopted Children of God

The *Catechism* tells us that “Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte ‘a new creature,’ an adopted son of God, who has become a ‘partaker of the divine nature,’<sup>12</sup> member of Christ, and co-heir with him,<sup>13</sup> and temple of the Holy Spirit”<sup>14</sup> (CCC, 1265). This reference to adopted children highlights the idea that we have been chosen by God. We are called to live our lives with gratitude.

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. . . . So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

—Galatians 3:26-27, 4:7

Saint Paul points to another important idea: children of God are also heirs. As God’s sons and daughters, all the riches of Heaven will be ours. Any worldly inheritance is nothing compared to our heavenly inheritance. And there is no end to our sharing in God’s blessings. The treasures of Heaven are everlasting. We share not only in God’s family, but in God’s very nature, in his holiness. Our happiness will never end.

Think about all the times we put our self-worth in the amount of wealth we may or may not have. In faith, we realize our real worth and happiness comes not from the amount of money at our disposal, but by how willing we are to live

as children of God. Remember, a rich kid from Assisi, Italy, named Francis became a beggar and changed the world.

Christianity raised the worth of every man, woman, and child. This began a transformation of society that, until the time of Christ, saw women and children as the property of the man who was the head of the household. Even men who were not royalty were property of the kingdom. In Baptism, we remember that our true worth and our true joy comes from being adopted sons and daughters of God.

### Member of Christ’s Body

The prayer that accompanies the post-baptismal anointing with **Chrism** contains the phrase, “united with his people, you may remain forever a member of Christ.” Membership in the Church—the Body of Christ—is another consequence of the baptismal ritual. God has chosen to save us as a People, not just as isolated individuals. By being joined to the Body of Christ, we experience baptismal grace as entrance into a community of believers.

Not only does the Sacrament of Baptism bring us into the family of God, it marks our entrance into the family of the Church. We become sisters and brothers of all Christians and especially of those in the Catholic Church. Baptism makes us members of the entire Communion of Saints that transcends every time and place. It joins us to the Church universal, putting us in communion with Catholics everywhere around the globe.

## GO TO THE SOURCE

Saint Paul reminds us that the Church is one Body with many members.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

- How closely does this represent the Church parish that you attend? Explain.
- What part of the body represents you? Explain.

Belonging to Christ through Baptism implies a process of belonging to a specific faith community. That is why Catholics are expected to support their parish through gifts of time, talent, and treasure. The result of our awareness of this belonging is a desire to be actively involved in the life of our parish. There we discover firsthand that one of the outcomes of belonging is a life of service, with both hard work and many joyful rewards.

### Indelible Character

In many cultures, marking the body is part of the rituals that celebrate a significant event in the life of the recipients. In our Jewish heritage, circumcision is such a mark to signify the covenant with God. As we see in Acts of the Apostles 15:1-11, this was a huge debate in the early Church. Many Jewish Christians believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Pagan converts did not want to go through this ritual, and it also left out women.

The Apostle Peter, acting in the special role Jesus gave him, settled the matter at the Council of Jerusalem. He gave witness to the fact that God had already granted the Holy Spirit to Gentiles by their faith. Following his teaching, the Church saw that in Baptism, people receive a permanent spiritual mark through the Holy Spirit.

'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

—John 13:35

In three Sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders—the person receiving the Sacrament is sealed with an indelible character, or spiritual sign. This mark is imprinted on the soul, marking the person for Christ forever. These Sacraments, therefore, cannot be repeated. The three non-repeatable Sacraments are examples of permanent spiritual events. Once baptized, always baptized. Once confirmed, always confirmed. Once a deacon or priest or bishop, there is no repetition of that order. The Sacrament is not repeated unless there is some reasonable doubt about whether the person's Baptism took place earlier or whether it was valid.

If serious investigation raises such prudent doubt and it seems necessary to confer baptism again conditionally, the minister should explain beforehand the reasons why this is being done and a nonsolemn form of baptism is to be used.

—RCIA, 480

### Holy Spirit and Discipleship

A newly baptized Christian receives the Holy Spirit and begins the journey of discipleship. One part of the baptismal rite is anointing with Chrism. This anointing with oil is a sign of the person being sealed and anointed by the Holy Spirit. Through this anointing, the new Christian is "incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king"<sup>15</sup> (CCC, 1241).

Here too we see the signs and symbols of royalty. In ancient days, someone becoming a king or being commissioned to do the work of the king had perfumed oil poured on his head. In the early Church, the perfumed oil was poured on the head of the new Christian being Confirmed to be sealed in the Holy Spirit. It was another way to signify the permanent nature of the Sacrament.

In the Eastern Catholic Church, this anointing with Chrism is called **Chrismation**, the second Sacrament of Initiation. In the West, the anointing is the separate rite called the Sacrament of Confirmation. In both instances, the Holy Spirit comes upon the baptized person. In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus says to his Apostles: "This . . . is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4-5).

### LIST

- Draw up a list of what you think are the five most important responsibilities a person assumes as a baptized Christian.
- Compare lists and explain to one another the reasons for your choice of priorities.



Jesus, before his return to the Father, promised that he would not leave us alone. He promised to send the Holy Spirit, who is given to us in Baptism. We do not journey alone on the path of discipleship. The Holy Spirit guides and prompts us, teaches us. The community of faith is with us as well. One in Christ, we share in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly office. We become members of Christ's priesthood. We, in company with the entire Communion of Saints, are consecrated for worship and for service to the People of God.

Sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are given the spiritual powers we call the theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. These virtues direct us to God and assist us in living as disciples of Jesus.

*Virtue of Faith* When we possess faith in God and everything that he has revealed, we have

the theological virtue of faith. Faith allows us to seek God, and is our loving response to God's love for us.

*Virtue of Hope* The theological virtue of hope is our desire to live in eternal happiness with God. Hope is how we trust Christ, and how we rely less on ourselves and more on the grace of the Holy Spirit.

*Virtue of Love* Also known as the theological virtue of charity, this virtue allows us to follow Christ's commands to love God above all things and to love each other as we love ourselves.

**Explain** What are the effects of Baptism, and what does each bring about?

**Recall** What is the name of the sacramental oil used to anoint the person during the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders?

## SECTION 2 REVIEW

### QUICK REVIEW

- 1a. Explain** Why are initiation rituals useful?
- b. Distinguish** How were early Christian rituals different from Jewish rituals?
- 2a. Explain** How did Jesus' followers know that they were to baptize people?
- b. Recall** What does the special grace that is given at Baptism do for us?
- c. Recall** When can a person who is not ordained perform a Baptism?
- 3a. Explain** Why is Jesus' Resurrection as important and emphasized as his Death?
- b. Recap** In what way is Baptism a spiritual cleansing?
- c. Describe** What does it mean to be an adopted son or daughter of God?
- d. Recognize** What obligation does becoming a member of God's body entail?
- e. Tell** Why can't a person be baptized twice?

**Listen and Discuss** With a group of classmates, talk about one thing that stands out or remains a question about the Sacrament of Baptism.

### SELF-ASSESS

Which statement best reflects where you are now?

- I'm confident enough about the material in this section to be able to explain it to someone else.
- I have a good grasp of the material in this section, but I could use more review.
- I'm lost. I need help catching up before moving on.