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✧ — Why Baptism? — ✧

Baptism marks the formal beginning of an infant's Christian life. Without Baptism there can be no sharing in the other sacraments. Baptism is "the gateway to life in the Spirit" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213). No longer an "outsider," this child will be an "insider," a member of the Body of Christ, a person filled with God's own life.

During the Baptism liturgy, the priest or deacon will say to your godchild: "[Name], the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Savior by the sign of his cross."

Being claimed for Christ is being claimed by God. God's grace is first. From all eternity God desires to share divine life with us. The Son of God became man to share God's life, God's grace, with us.

Like every human being born since our first parents (with the exception of Christ himself and Mary, the Mother of God), your godchild is born into the human condition. Sadly for everyone, sin is part of that condition. Original sin is part of human life. No one can avoid it.

But Jesus Christ has overcome sin and death. No one need be trapped forever in either. Jesus died and rose from the dead and ascended to the Father to free us from death and sin. In Baptism we become adopted children of God. In Baptism we receive salvation in Christ.



✧ Sacraments ✧

Signs That Are Real



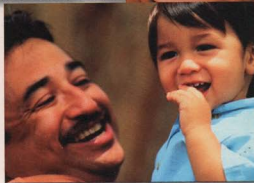
How can we know anything about God or the life of a person? Probably the best way to know things is to experience them—seeing, touching, hearing, tasting. Experiencing things through the senses is part of being human. God communicates to us in these very human ways.

Through the Church we have tangible, physical signs that not only tell us about God but also manifest his presence to us. We call these special signs *sacraments*. They are God's mighty works.

Any sign points to something real, but sacraments do more than merely point. Sacraments *cause* what they signify. The Church's seven sacraments give us seven ways to experience God, to receive his life, to meet him.

The Church itself is lovingly described as the sacrament of communion that brings us to Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1108).

Because the Son of God became man, all of human life can point to God. We can find something sacramental about many things in our everyday lives. Godparents help their godchild see and understand and appreciate this.

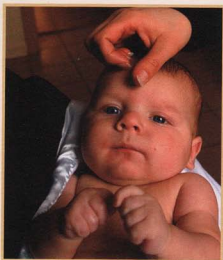


✧ Signs of Baptism ✧

Welcoming and Anointing

There will be much to notice at your godchild's Baptism. Each sign and symbol and each ritual action is important and has special meaning.

- ✧ **The gathered community** signifies the whole Church, standing to welcome this new member and assenting to the profession of our faith.



- ✧ **Signing with the cross** is one of the first ritual actions. The parents will be invited to join the celebrant in tracing the Sign of the Cross on their baby's forehead to claim this new member for Christ. Godparents, family members, and parishioners may be invited to do the same.

- ❖ **Anointing** occurs twice in the Baptism of small children. Before the immersion or pouring of water, the baby will be anointed on the breast with the oil of *catechumens*. This first anointing calls on Christ to strengthen the one who will be baptized. Later in the rite the baby will be anointed on the head with *chrism*. This second anointing—with sweet-smelling chrism, which takes its name from Christ—joins the newly baptized to Christ, who is Priest, Prophet, and King. Because of Christ, the newly baptized will be strengthened to live a life that is priestly, prophetic, and royal.

