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# Welcome

## to We Believe & Celebrate Baptism

Invite volunteers to share stories about their own Baptisms or the Baptisms of other children in their families. Be sensitive to the possible diversity of religious backgrounds.

**F**or all of us, our journey of faith begins with the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism "is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments."

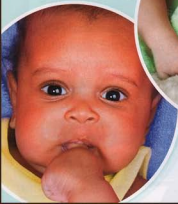
*(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213)*

In the Church today, through the Sacrament of Baptism, Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, continues to include and welcome all those who believe in him. Through the Sacrament of Baptism, we are made members of Jesus' community of believers, the Church, and given the hope of eternal life. We become part of the Body of Christ and are united with all those who have been baptized in Christ.

Point out that Baptism is the first of three Sacraments of Christian Initiation celebrated in the Catholic Church. The other two are Confirmation and Eucharist.

“Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift.”

CCC, 1216





## What is a sacrament?

The Church has seven celebrations, called sacraments, which are special signs of God's love and presence. A sacrament is an effective sign given to us by Jesus Christ through which we share in God's life. Each sacrament truly brings about, or effects, what it represents. So in the Sacrament of Baptism, we not only celebrate being children of God, we actually become children of God.

Sacraments are the most important celebrations of the Church. The bishop, priest, deacon, and other members of the Church who participate in the sacraments represent the whole Church. Thus, the whole Church celebrates each sacrament, and through each sacrament all Catholics are joined with Jesus Christ and with one another.

Ask: What questions do you have about Baptism? You may want to note these on a board or flip chart and refer back to them as the session continues.

Whether you are a parent, godparent, or family member, the journey to Baptism is a grace-filled time, not only for the child to be baptized, but for you as you accept responsibility for this child's life of faith. Each child has a unique life of faith and brings special gifts to the family.

*We Believe & Celebrate Baptism* is designed to guide you as you prepare for the Baptism of your child or godchild, as you celebrate the sacrament together, and as you continue to nurture the faith of this child. The keepsake section, in which you write your thoughts, reflections, and memories will enhance this time of preparation and celebration. May this be a time of special blessing for you, your family, the child to be baptized, and the Church who will welcome this treasured new member.

Explain that this program will offer specific ways for parents and godparents to carry out their roles in nurturing faith in the life of the child.





## Why Do We Receive Baptism?

As Saint Paul tells us, we were “buried with [Christ] through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

At Mass each Sunday, we celebrate Christ’s dying and rising from death to new life. We celebrate that Jesus’ victory over sin and death makes possible our salvation—the forgiveness of sins and the restoration of humanity’s friendship with God. We rejoice that all creation is made new and that we are given the hope of happiness in God’s Kingdom both now and forever.

Yet Jesus tells us, “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. . . . of water and Spirit” (John 3:3, 5). The Sacrament of Baptism is our rebirth in water and the Spirit. Baptism, like faith, is necessary for salvation. It is in Baptism that sin, both original and personal, is taken away. In Baptism, the immersion into water symbolizes that we die to sin and rise to new life in Christ. We are purified and renewed. Belonging to Christ, we are called “Christian,” and God gives us his grace—his own life and love.

Emphasize that Baptism draws us together as the family of God, making us one Body in Christ.

**“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”**

Mark 16:16

What 2/Week 5/Chapter 2 is  
a Baptism

Invite discussion about ordinary ways in which parents and godparents prepare the way for grace to flourish in the life of a child. Examples may be praying with the child, giving the child a hug, or teaching the child about forgiveness.

Baptism is the very first sacrament that we celebrate. We are sealed, or marked forever, as belonging to Christ. This spiritual mark, or character, can never be erased. Once we have received the Sacrament of Baptism, no matter what may happen, we belong to Christ and the Church. Thus, Baptism is a sacrament that is never repeated. Once we have been baptized, we are permanently marked with the sign of faith and have the hope of living in God's love forever. We are welcomed as members of the Church. Baptism leads us to the other two Sacraments of Christian Initiation, the Sacrament of Confirmation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

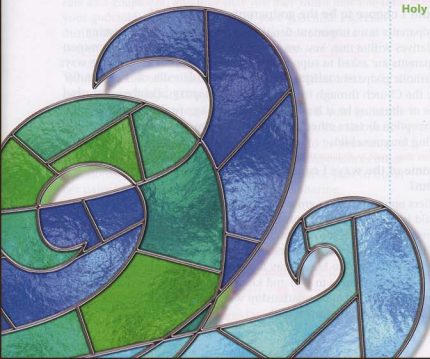
Baptism is celebrated within the community of believers. The participants in the sacrament include the child being baptized, the parents of the child, the godparents, the rest of the child's family, the parish community, and the celebrant—the bishop, priest, or deacon who celebrates the sacrament for and with the community.

## The Gift of Grace

When we are baptized, we receive a precious gift from God, the gift of grace. Grace is a participation, or a sharing, in God's life and friendship. Grace helps us to respond to God with love. As a parent or godparent, you play a vital role in preparing the way for this gift of grace to flourish in the life of your child or god-child. As you look forward to the Baptism of this child, pray for the gift of grace, which you first received when you were baptized, to strengthen and support you now and in the days, months, and years to come.

## Extraordinary Circumstances

A bishop, priest, or deacon is the ordinary minister of Baptism. However, in emergencies, such as the immediate danger of death, anyone can baptize. In such cases, a person baptizes by pouring water over the head of the person to be baptized and saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."



Remember to record your reflections.





## *What I Need to Know As a Parent . . .*

### **Whose responsibility is it to teach my child about the Catholic faith?**

As parents, you are your child's most important teachers. The Rite of Baptism affirms this fact by calling you, as parents, to be the first teachers of your child in the ways of faith. By your attitudes, values, relationships, actions, and lifestyle, you will teach your child each and every day. When your children look for direction in how to live, they look to you.

### **What does the Church ask of me?**

The Church asks you to examine your convictions about your faith and about life. It asks you to encourage your child's full participation in the Church through the sacraments, liturgy, and religious education. It invites you to think about your call to be a model of Christian living and Gospel values for your child. Your life should be an example of faith, and the Church urges you to select godparents who will provide clear examples of how to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.



### **How will the Church help my child to become a disciple of Jesus Christ?**

Each member of the Church is called through his or her Baptism to support every other member. Some Church members will teach your child about the Catholic faith and the sacraments he or she will receive. Some will encourage your child to do good works, helping him or her to find meaningful ways to serve others in your parish, local community, and world. The whole parish community prays with and for your child. All the people in the parish are called on to be examples of Christian discipleship and openness to the Holy Spirit. One of the most important ways to raise a child in faith is by participating together, as a family and a parish community, at Sunday Mass.

*Name examples of how your parish supports parents in raising children in faith.*

### **Whom should I choose to be the godparents of my child?**

Choosing godparents is an important decision. You are not simply honoring friends or relatives with a title. You are asking them to take on a lifelong responsibility. Godparents are asked to support you in nurturing your child in the ways of faith. A Catholic godparent must be a practicing Catholic who has been fully initiated into the Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. He or she must be at least sixteen years of age (unless diocesan policy or pastoral exception dictates otherwise), and should be an example of faith and Christian living for your child.

*If applicable, you may want to discuss the role of a Christian Witness: Code of Canon Law 874.*

### **What are some of the ways I can help my child grow in faith after Baptism?**

Every day offers opportunities to grow in faith with your child. The love you give your child is a wonderful example of God's love in the world. Be conscious that God's love is all around you, in nature and in the people who love you and your child. Share God's word with your child; it is never too early to share Bible stories or to take your child to Mass. Pray for and with your child each day, and be an example of thankfulness to God and kindness to others. Developing and strengthening your own personal relationship with Jesus is another important way you can help your child grow in faith.



## What I Need to Know As a Godparent . . .

Ask godparents to share their hopes, questions, and expectations about raising a child in faith.

### What is a godparent?

A godparent is a person chosen by the parents of the child to be baptized. Being a godparent is a great honor and a lifelong commitment. Godparents are asked to enter a privileged faith relationship with their godchild, promising to support parents in helping their child to grow in the ways of faith.

As a Catholic godparent, you are called to this commitment. To be a godparent you must be a practicing Catholic who has been fully initiated into the Church through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. You must be at least sixteen years of age (unless diocesan policy or pastoral exception dictates otherwise). You should strive to be an example of faith and Christian living for your godchild.

### What are my responsibilities as a godparent?

As a godparent, you will actively participate in the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, but your responsibilities extend beyond the actual celebration of the sacrament. As a godparent you are asked to nourish the faith of the baptized child for life, being for him or her a model of Christian living and discipleship.

### What are some ways that I can prepare for my godchild's Baptism on my own?

You are already preparing for your godchild's Baptism by reading this Family Book. As you do so, take time to reflect on your role as a godparent, and pray that you may fulfill that role for your godchild. Continue to pray for your godchild, especially during this time of preparation. You can also complete the keepsake found in the back of this book for your godchild.

### What can I do after the Sacrament of Baptism to help my godchild grow in faith?

Continue to nurture your faith relationship with your godchild after the Baptism. Pray for the child each day. Contact your godchild each year on this anniversary. Try to be present as your godchild receives other sacraments and experiences other milestones in life. If possible, make time to participate in his or her daily life and to find moments for faith sharing.

“All those preparing for Baptism, including parents and godparents, need the prayerful support and apostolic witness of the people of the local community of faith—the parish.”

National Directory for Catechesis, 36A



## Prayer for Parents

Oh Lord,  
wrap your loving arms around this child. Help us to nurture in this beloved child a love and thirst for you. Help us to be role models who do not criticize our children but challenge them as they grow, who do not lecture them, but love them, who do not fail them on their journey, but form them in their Catholic faith. Help us to choose godparents who will take an active role in encouraging our child to always seek you—in good times and bad and in all the seasons that we, as a family, celebrate with you. Amen.



## Prayer for Godparents

Oh Lord,  
help me to fulfill my responsibility to my godchild. May I support him/her along this journey of discipleship. May I be an example of my own faith in you, and in the faith of the whole Church. Nurture in me a resolve to never look away from you or from this child. Strengthen my commitment to this great ministry within the Church so that I may be a light reflecting your goodness and faithfulness for this child. Amen.



Remember to record your reflections.