

12. The Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism regenerates a person as a child of God, filled with the Holy Spirit. It forgives original and all personal sin and fills the soul with grace. It confers the virtues of faith, hope and love.

Key terms:

Indelible:	Of a permanent and eternal character.
Regeneration:	The completely new life conferred by Baptism, becoming a son or daughter of God.
Sacrament:	An efficacious sign of grace instituted by Christ and administered by the Church that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, imparts divine life.
Ex opere operato:	A sacrament's effects depend on the valid administration of the sacrament itself, not on who administers it.
Seal:	A permanent change in the soul resulting from certain sacraments.
Theological virtues:	The supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love that equip human nature for participation in God's own life which are infused by God at Baptism.
Matter:	1) one of the intrinsic elements of creation, which, together with form make material substances; 2) the essential material substances used in administering a sacrament (such as water or oil), or in the broad sense of the concept of matter, it also is an action, such as the manifestation of contrition in the sacrament of Reconciliation. (See Session Plan 11).
Form:	The essential words and actions of a sacrament. (See Session Plan 11).

BAPTISM IS THE FIRST SACRAMENT OF INITIATION (Acts 2:37-38)

- Baptism was prefigured in the Old Testament (Ref. Exodus 14)
- The words from Mt. 28:19 are the 'form' of Baptism.
- Water (immersion, or poured or sprinkled) is the matter of Baptism, a washing into new life.
- The rite also includes prayers, especially the Litany of the Saints, and material symbols of Baptism's effects, including anointing with the blessed Oil of Catechumens and the consecrated Holy Chrism, the presentation of a lit candle, and the clothing with a white garment.
- It makes an indelible spiritual mark on the soul and so is never repeated.
- The sacraments are necessary for our salvation – they serve the plan of the Father to transform us and be united forever in the divine life (Jn. 3:5 and Jn. 6:53-58).

BAPTISM GIVES US NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

- The sacraments are dispensed and celebrated by the Church and connect us to the Body of Christ.
- It removes original sin, all personal sin, and all punishment for sin, and fills the soul with the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Col. 2:13-14 and Acts 2:38)
- We die with the Lord in Baptism and are born into the new spiritual life of Christ, and are clothed with him.
- We are given access to the Father through Jesus.
- We are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church (1Cor 12:13)
 - Romans 5:6-8 (salvation)
 - Romans 10:9-10 (salvation)
 - Matthew 28:18-20 (baptism)
 - Acts 2:38-41 (baptism)
 - Galatians 3:27 (baptism)

WE RECEIVE THE SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES OF FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

(Gal. 5:5; Titus 3:5-7, Gal. 5:22)

- Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God.
- Hope is the pledge of our salvation.
- Charity is the vocation and strength to live the Christian life of love.
- These virtues are supernatural, equipping us to become partakes in the divine nature.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

‘It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, “This is my Son, You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.”’

READ.... Matthew 3:1-17 DISCUSS.....

1. What was John the Baptist’s mission? How did people respond to John the Baptism?
2. How does Jesus' baptism provide an example for us? Why was it important for Him to be baptised?
3. John realized Jesus was the perfect Messiah and didn’t need to be baptized for the repentance of sin. Yet, Jesus still demanded that John baptize him. Why did Jesus do this?
4. Take a moment to read Acts chapter 2:37-42. What was the biblical requirement for baptism? How long did the people wait until they were baptized? What was the evidence that they were truly saved?
5. In what way did Jesus’ baptism mark the beginning of his missionary and public life? How does the Holy Spirit prepare and commission us in our lives?
6. What do you think are the advantages of ‘adult’ baptism?

THE RITE OF BAPTISM

God uses material things to both signify and accomplish spiritual outcomes (the sacramental principle); the sacraments therefore work *ex opere operato*.

Universal symbols used during the Rite of Baptism:

- Oil of Catechumens & Oil of Chrism
- Water
- White garment
- Light – Paschal Candle and Baptism Candle

Baptism as Journey:

Welcome Door of the church

Reception, Signing with the Cross

Word Lectern – the proclamation of God’s Word

Scripture Readings & Homily, Intercessions, Litany of the Saints, Anointing with Oil of Catechumens

Washing Font (immersion, pouring, sprinkling)

Blessing of water, Renunciation of Sin & Profession of Faith, Baptism. Anointing with Chrism, Clothing with White Garment, Lighting of Baptism Candle, Ephphetha – Prayer over Ears and Mouth

Witness Altar

The Lord’s Prayer, Blessing, Dismissal

EXPLORE!

What does it mean to be a member of the Christian Community? How will the Christian community help them to live out their Baptism?

When baptism is referred to as a ‘call’, what does that mean?

Why have the candidates individually chosen to be baptised?

The Sacrament of Baptism — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is Baptism called a sacrament of initiation or the ‘gateway to the sacraments’?
2. Romans 6:1-6 says we are buried with Christ and raised to new life with Christ. What is the link between our baptism and Christ’s death and resurrection?
3. When we are baptised, we receive sanctifying grace, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How can these help us to live a Christian life?
4. If all sins are forgiven at Baptism, why do we need to go to the sacrament of Reconciliation after Baptism?
5. Why did Jesus say, “Baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit”? What is the significance of formula?
6. Jesus’ ministry began with his baptism. What was the significance of Jesus being baptised?
7. If Jesus’ identity as God’s ‘Beloved Son’ was revealed and proclaimed at his baptism, what does that say about our identity when we are baptized?

PRAYER

Pray Hymn – **Breath on Me**

Hatch

O breathe on me, O Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love the things you love,
And do what you would do.

O breath on me, O Breath of God,
My will to yours incline,
Until this selfish part of me
Glows with your fire divine.

O breath on me, O Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure;
Until my will is one with yours,
To do and to endure.

O breath on me, O Breath of God,
So I shall never die.
But live with you the perfect life,
For all eternity.

or

Gospel Reflection: Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Year A Mt. 3:13-17

Year B Mk. 1:7-11

Year C Lk. 3:15-16, 21-22

The following format will be used for all Gospel reflections:

- Read the text aloud.
- Pause for a minute's silence.
- Read the text aloud again.
- Ask everyone to pick a word or a phrase that struck them. They just say the word or phrase without comment or discussion.
- Read the text again.
- Ask those present to comment on their word or phrase. What struck them about it? Why/how is it speaking to them?
- Continue with the discussion.

The following questions may be helpful:

What does this mean to me?

How does it make me feel?

Did I find the text disturbing/hopeful/confusing?

What images of God emerge for me?

What do I think that God is saying in this text?

What impact does this have on my life?

Scripture and Catechism Resources

The Sacrament of Baptism

Scripture

Gen. 7:1-8:18	Noah and his family are saved from death by water in an ark.
Ex. 14:10-30	The Israelites are saved from Pharaoh by God's miraculous parting of the waters.
Mt. 13:17	Jesus is baptised by St. John and anointed by the Holy Spirit for his ministry.
Mt. 28:18-19	Jesus commissions his apostles to baptise all nations in the name of the Trinity.
Mk. 16:16	Belief in God must be accompanied by Baptism.
Jn. 3:1-18	Belief in God is necessary for salvation, and regenerative Baptism is also necessary.
Rom. 6:3-11	Baptism into Jesus is Baptism into his Death, and the Resurrection of Christ means that we too might have eternal life.
1 Cor. 12:27-13:13	The virtues of faith, hope and love are greater than the gifts of ministry.
2 Cor. 5:17	The person in Christ, is a new creation.
Eph. 4:4-6	In the one Body of Christ, there is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.
Eph. 5:25-27	Christ's Paschal mystery was for the purpose of sanctifying his Bride, the Church, through Baptism, which regenerates the Church as a perfect, holy Bride.
Col. 2:12	Buried with Christ through Baptism, we are brought to new life with him.
2 Pt. 1:3-4	God has called us to everlasting life and to partake of his own nature.

Catechism

537	Baptism sacramentally joins the Christian to Jesus.
977-978	Baptism is the principal sacramental means for forgiveness of sins and birth into new life, a forgiveness so complete that every sin, including original sin, is gone.
1113-1130	The sacraments in general.
1127-1128	By their very action, the sacraments accomplish what they symbolise, working by the power of Christ and not by the holiness of the minister of the sacrament.
1213-1274	The sacrament of Baptism: names, prefigurements, in the New Testament, how it is celebrated, who can receive it, who can administer, its necessity, its graces.

(Source: Adapted from RCIA Catechist's Manual, Association for Catechumenal Ministry, Maryland, 2007)

LITANY OF SAINTS

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Saint Michael,
Holy Angels of God,
Saint John the Baptist,
Saint Joseph,
Saint Peter and Saint Paul,
Saint Andrew,
Saint John,
Saint Mary Magdelene,
Saint Stephen,
Saint Ignatius of Antioch,
Saint Lawrence,
Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity,
Saint Agnes,
Saint Gregory,
Saint Augustine,
Saint Athanasius,
Saint Basil,
Saint Martin,
Saint Benedict,
Saint Francis and Saint Dominic,
Saint Francis Xavier,
Saint John Vianney,
Saint Catherine of Siena,
Saint Teresa of Jesus,

Additional saints may be invoked

All holy men and women, Saints of God,

[illegible]

pray for us.

Lord, be merciful,
From all evil,
From every sin,
From everlasting death,
By your Incarnation,
By your Death and Resurrection,
By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

[illegible]

Be merciful to us sinners,
Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Bring these chosen ones to new birth through the grace of Baptism,

Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Make this font holy by your grace for the new birth of your children,

Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Jesus, Son of the living God,

Lord, we ask you, hear our prayer.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.