

Faith in 5 – Adults The Sacrament of Baptism



1. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1213 states that the **Sacrament of 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”. Not only are we freed from sin through baptism, but we are “reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission”. In accordance with God’s will, baptism is necessary for salvation (1257). As a sacrament of faith, it needs the community of believers who also believe so that it can further develop (1253).
2. To baptize means to plunge or immerse. This sacrament is also called "the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit," which allows us to enter the kingdom of God. Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift. St. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, “We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; grace since it is given even to the guilty” (CCC 1215, 1216).
3. **Through the grace of the sacrament of Baptism:**
 - a. we have forgiveness of sins
 - b. we are made anew and become an adopted child of God. We are partakers of His divine nature, members of Christ and a co-heir, in addition to becoming a temple of the Holy Spirit. This grace of justification allows us to believe, hope and love God; to live and act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This grace allows us to grow in the fruits of the Spirit which leads to holiness.
 - c. we enter into the Church, the Body of Christ and her mission.
 - d. we are united with all Christians, including those not Catholic.
 - e. we are given an indelible spiritual mark. Baptism is given once for all and cannot be repeated.
4. Anyone who has not already been baptized can receive the sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church. There is evidence of infant baptism in both Scripture and Tradition: “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38,39). Infant baptism can be traced back to the second century, where entire households received baptism. While infants have not committed personal sin, they have been stained by the transmission of Adam’s original sin. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant baptism - they need to be freed from any sin which is death to the soul. For this reason, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin. Adults becoming Christians in the Catholic Faith enter a process of initiation. The faith journey includes intense study, conversion, a profession of faith, and the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and admission to Eucharistic Communion.



5. The best gift Catholic parents can give their children is a life in the Church. “The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth (CCC, 1250; cf. Code of Canon Law [Codex Iuris Canonici; CIC], can. 867). However, the Church also teaches that the Baptism of an infant may be postponed if there is not a “founded hope” that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Faith (CIC, can. 868 §2). There are the children—born and unborn—who die without Baptism. The Church entrusts them to the mercy of God, who wills that all people be saved. We recall Christ’s tender welcome of children saying, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them” (Mark 10:14). Because of this, the Church confidently hopes for the salvation of children who die without Baptism ([Source](#)).
6. Parents are responsible for bringing their child to the Sacrament of Baptism as soon after birth as possible. Except in case of necessity, the church is the usual place of baptism. In order that a child be baptized, the parents must consent, (at least one of them, or someone legally standing in their place), and acknowledge there is reasonable hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Faith.
7. Godparents for Catholic Baptism help in the faith development of the person being baptized. Godparents can be helpful through their prayers and example even if the child’s parents fulfill their own promise to raise the child in the faith. The faith of the godparents is as important in fulfilling the baptismal promise of raising the child in the Catholic faith.

A person may only have one or two godparents (also called sponsors); if two are chosen, they must be male and female. A baptized person who belongs to another Christian community may be admitted only as a “Christian witness” (not a godparent) provided that there is at least one Roman Catholic godparent who fulfills the above criteria. A non-baptized person cannot be a witness (Code of Canon Law, cc. 867-868, 872-874; CCC 1251,1255).

8. The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In an emergency, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize using the Trinitarian formula, ‘I baptize you, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’. The intention needed is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Roman Catholic Church presumes that a baptism is valid if it is done with water and the Trinitarian formula. Only those baptized in this way may approach the other sacraments.
9. **What takes place during a Catholic Infant Baptism?** The Ordinary Form - Rite of Baptism is the version of the sacrament performed by most Roman Catholic churches around the world today. The ceremony is commonly held on Sundays. The infant is usually dressed in white, which symbolizes being made into a new creation, being clothed in Christ. The ceremony is also known as a christening, especially when a Christian name is given.
 - a. **Reception of the Child and Baptismal Promises** – parents are asked what they want

for their child (“Baptism”) and make promises on behalf of their child. Godparents are asked if they are willing to help the parents raise and instruct the child in the faith, which they are expected to accept.

b. **The Sign of the Cross** is traced on the forehead of the person by the priest or deacon, as a sign that they belong to Christ. Parents and godparents are asked to do the same.

c. **Word of God** – a passage from the Bible is read along with a brief homily or reflection on the readings. Intercessional prayers and prayers to the saints may be invoked.

Roman Catholic baptism ceremonies include a prayer of exorcism. This is an important baptismal rite. The priest asks God to free the child from original sin, for the Holy Spirit to dwell in him, and to strengthen and watch over the child.

d. **Baptism with water** – There is a blessing and invocation of God over the baptismal waters. During this time, the parents and godparents renew their baptismal vows, reject Satan and sin, and profess the faith. Pouring water over the infant’s head three times, one for each time a Name of the Trinity is invoked, the priest says, “I baptize you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.

e. **Anointing with oil** – the child is anointed on the chest with the oil of Baptism, which symbolizes strength and healing. The forehead of the child is anointed with the oil of Chrism which symbolizes the seal of the Holy Spirit.

f. **Candle** – a baptismal candle is lit from the flame of the Paschal Candle, which symbolizes the light of Christ and is held by the parent or godparent.

g. **The Ephphatha or Prayers Over the Ears and Mouth** - The ephphatha (be opened) ritual is optional in modern baptisms. If done, the priest touches the child's ears and mouth with his thumb: ears to receive Christ's word, and mouth to proclaim faith to the praise and glory of God.

h. **Baptismal certificate** – the parents are given a record of the sacrament, which is used in preparation for future sacraments of the Church.

10. Infant Baptism begins the stages of Christian initiation and requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. There is a need for faith instruction and guidance for the baptismal grace to flourish. The role of parents, godparents, and the Church is essential to Catholic faith formation (CCC 1231).
11. Sacraments are milestones in our life as Catholics and cause for celebration! The baptism may be followed by a family reception to acknowledge that the child – God’s beloved child – is part of a true faith community. The baptismal candle, christening gown, photos, and special gifts given mark the important date. Many families keep the date as important as a birthday and celebrate yearly as part of their personal faith history. Sharing faith related memories and celebrations strengthen our love and devotion to Christ, the center of our lives.

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