

BAPTISM WORKSHOP PREVIEW

What is Baptism?

“Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the doors which gives access to the other sacraments. Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God; we become members of Christ, incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission. (*Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213.)”

Why do we Baptize Infants in the Catholic Church?

When the Church baptizes infants, we rely on the faith of the parents, godparents, and the larger parish community of Saint Joseph’s. Parents naturally have to give their child language, culture, and so they also share with their children their faith and the faith of the Church. When parents ask to have their child baptized, they are publically committing themselves to, “*training their child in the practice of the faith, by modeling for them how to keep God’s commandments, by loving God and our neighbor* (Rite of Baptism, 77)”

The Validity of Baptism Outside the Catholic Church

Baptism is conferred with water by immersion or pouring, with the Trinitarian formula—in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “*It is therefore of the utmost importance for all the disciples of Christ that baptism be administered in this manner by all and that the various Churches and ecclesial Communities arrive as closely as possible at an agreement about its significance and valid celebration* (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, 93).

The following are some non-Catholic churches and ecclesial communities whose baptism is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church: Episcopalian, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Evangelical, United Church of Christ, Assembly of God, Church of the Nazarene, Church of the Brethren, Amish, Church of God, Disciples of Christ, Adventist. Baptisms considered not valid: Christian Scientists, Quakers, Salvation Army, Jehovah Witnesses, Unitarians, Mormons/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The Baptism Ceremony

The Sign of the Cross

The celebrant (priest, bishop or deacon) traces the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the one being baptized. This recalls Christ's saving death and the redemption that became possible because of it. Baptism is a Sacrament of salvation.

Readings from Scripture

Proclaiming the Word of God in the midst of the community sheds divine light on the celebration and is meant to build the faith of all the participants. The Holy Spirit fills the heart and mind with the light of revealed truth and enables the response of faith.

Exorcism and Anointing

An exorcism prayer is recited over the one being baptized, preparing the person to renounce sin and be released from evil. The celebrant anoints the person with Oil of Catechumens which symbolizes that the person belongs not to the world but to God and heaven.

Blessing the Baptismal Water

The blessing prayer asks God the Father "that through his Son the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water, so that those who will be baptized may be 'born of water and the Spirit'". Water represents new life, the washing of sin, deliverance from slavery, and a new beginning.

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Those being baptized are asked to reject sin and Satan, and to profess their faith in the Triune God. In the case of infants, parents, godparents, and the entire community present for the liturgy do this on behalf of those who cannot yet speak for themselves.

The Essential Rite of the Sacrament

Water is poured three times over the person's head (or the person is immersed three times) as the celebrant says, "[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Anointing with Sacred Chrism

The celebrant anoints the newly baptized with the sacred Chrism (a perfumed oil signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit). The word *Christ* means *anointed*, and a *Christian* is someone who's anointed in Jesus Christ. It also means the person is now to share in the mission Christ, as priest, prophet and king.

Reception of the White Garment and the Candle

The white garment shows that the newly baptized have put on Christ and have risen with him. To be clothed in the baptismal white garment is to be clothed in Christ's protective love. Included in this ceremony is the admonition to keep the garment unstained by sin. The white garment symbolizes the white garments that Jesus wore when he was placed in the tomb after his death on Good Friday. So it represents the promise of the Resurrection, made at Baptism. The promise is that the baptized body will one day die, like Christ's did, but it will be raised from the dead someday by Christ. The candle is lit from the Paschal Candle, which represents the Risen Christ. The lighted candle reminds the newly baptized of the light of Christ they have received. It also reminds us that all those baptized in Christ are to be lights for the world.