

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

**The Sacrament of Baptism is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sacrament of Initiation. The principle effects of baptism are the forgiveness of Sin (s) and the incorporation into the Family of God, the Church. Baptism is the beginning of a life of grace. Each person has 'inherited.' original sin from the sin of the first couple. There are five universal symbols of baptism: the cross, a white garment, oil, water, and light.**

**Ritual cleansings of the Old Testament, Entrance to a life of grace, seed of Faith**

1213 Holy 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. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

### **Baptism in the Church**

1226 From the very day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy Baptism. Indeed St. Peter declares to the crowd astounded by his preaching: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The apostles and their collaborators offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, the God-fearing, pagans. Always, Baptism is seen as connected with faith: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household," St. Paul declared to his jailer in Philippi. And the narrative continues, the jailer "was baptized at once, with all his family." Acts 16:31-33.

1227 According to the Apostle Paul, the believer enters through Baptism into communion with Christ's death, is buried with him, and rises with him: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. The baptized have "put on Christ." Through the Holy Spirit, Baptism is a bath that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies. [Rom 6:3-4; cf. Col 2:12, Gal 3:27, 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13].

1228 Hence Baptism is a bath of water in which the "imperishable seed" of the Word of God produces its life-giving effect. [1 Pet 1:23; cf. Eph 5:26] St. Augustine says of Baptism: "The word is brought to the material element, and it becomes a sacrament."

1231 Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The catechism has its proper place here.

1232 The second Vatican Council restored for the Latin Church "the catechumenate for adults, comprising several distinct steps." The rites for these stages are to be found in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). The Council also gives permission that: "In mission countries, in addition to what is furnished by the Christian tradition, those elements of initiation rites may be admitted which are already in use among some peoples insofar as they can be adapted to the Christian ritual."

1233 Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. 1241 The anointing with sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, one "anointed" by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.

1243 The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has "put on Christ," has risen with Christ. The candle, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are "the light of the world." [Paschal Candle]

## VI. THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. [Jn 3:5] He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. [Matt. 28:19-20] Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. 1258 The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This Baptism of blood, like the desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament.

1259 For catechumens who die before their Baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament.

1260 "Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery." Every man who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved. It may be supposed that such persons would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had known its necessity.

1261 As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them," [Mk 10 14; cf. 1 Tim 2:4]. allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.

## VII. THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

. . . the two principal effects are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit.

For the forgiveness of sins . . .

1263 By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

Incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ

1267 Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: "Therefore . . . we are members one of another." [Eph 4:25] Baptism incorporates us into the Church. From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." [Heb 13:17].