

SESSION 2

ENTERING THE MYSTERY: THE RITE EXPLAINED



REBORN

YOU, YOUR CHILD, AND THE HEART OF BAPTISM

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▶ OPENING PRAYER

Parents and godparents,
this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.
This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ.
He (she) is to walk always as a child of the light.
May he (she) keep the flame of faith alive in his (her) heart.
When the Lord comes, may he (she) go out to meet him
with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.

Lord God, you are light, and in you there is no darkness at all.
In Baptism you have given us your light and called us to be light for
the world. Help us to nurture the flame of faith we have received,
to walk in your light, and to guide and encourage our children and
godchildren to grow in your light.
May we always live our lives to give glory to you.
We ask this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

*—From the Blessing and Invocation of God
over Baptismal Water, Rite of Baptism,
new translation of the Roman Missal*

▶ INTRODUCTION OF THE SESSION

As we discussed in the last session, the Sacrament of Baptism is an essential part of God's plan for salvation, actually conferring the grace it represents. In a society that highly celebrates personal choice, it may come as a surprise that something as important and life-changing as Baptism can be chosen on behalf of an infant; the sacrament is not reserved for consenting adults or children. What is the Church's rationale for baptizing infants?

We'll also explore the significant signs and symbols in the Rite of Baptism in order to understand the vital change effected by this sacrament. It's much more than just pouring water and pronouncing the name of the Trinity.

FLYING HIGHER

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic."

—St Augustine



“The meaning and grace of the sacrament of Baptism are clearly seen in the rites of its celebration. By following the gestures and words of this celebration with attentive participation, the faithful are initiated into the riches this sacrament signifies and actually brings about in each newly baptized person.”

—CCC 1234

How do the different prayers and actions in the rite reveal a different part of the deep and beautiful truth of Baptism? That’s what we’ll discover today.

▶ VIDEO

THE FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE TOPICS COVERED IN THE VIDEO TEACHING.

ENTERING THE MYSTERY: THE RITE EXPLAINED

I. Baptism is a necessary part of salvation

- A. New life came by way of water in both creation and the Exodus
- B. Jesus included baptism in his last instructions to his disciples

II. Just as parents take care of their child’s physical well-being without the child’s consent, Baptism is an important piece of the child’s spiritual well-being, even if the baby can’t choose it or consent to it

- A. Baptism should bring relief because it cleanses us from the guilt of original sin and frees us from slavery to the power of darkness
- B. Infant Baptism follows the precedent of the Jewish tradition of infant circumcision
- C. Baptism brings us into the family of God

III. Rite of Baptism

- A. Introductory Rites
 - 1. Sign of the Cross—victory of Christ
 - 2. Reception of the child
- B. Liturgy of the Word—evokes a response of faith
 - 1. Readings and Homily
 - 2. Intercessions
 - 3. Invocation of the Saints—the child is welcomed into the whole Church, across time and cultures

4. Renouncing of Satan/exorcism

5. Anointing with oil of catechumens—cleansing

C. Celebration of the Sacrament

- 1. Blessing of the Baptismal Water
- 2. Renunciation of Sin and Profession of faith—the parents and godparents renew their vows and take on the responsibility of raising the child in the faith
- 3. Baptism—pouring of water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

D. Explanatory Rites

- 1. Anointing with chrism of salvation—consecration/dedication and gift of the Holy Spirit; sealed=indelibly marked for God
- 2. Clothing with the White Garment—symbolizes pure and unstained souls after Baptism
- 3. Lighted Candle—the baptized is now a child of the light
- 4. Prayer over ears and mouth, to receive God’s word and proclaim his praise

E. Conclusion of the Rite

- 1. Our Father—shows the newly baptized are now children of God
- 2. Blessings for the mother and the father

▶ SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What are some choices you have already made for your child (or that you have observed parents making for their children)? What would be the potential consequences of delaying these decisions until the child is old enough to make those decisions for him/herself? Why do you think it is important for you to choose Baptism for your child (or to support the parents in choosing for their child)? What are some of the reasons you are choosing Baptism for your child or godchild?

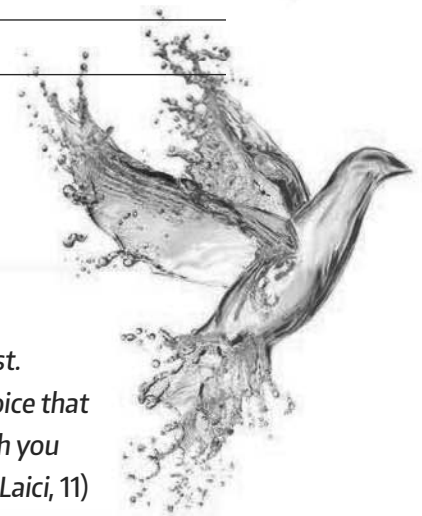
2. Baptism brings us into the family of God, the Church. This means so much more than just being welcomed into the local parish. The family of God stretches across time and culture. What does it mean to you to be a part of the family of God? How will you help your child or godchild understand and live out his or her identity as part of the family of God?

3. The *Catechism* states, "Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark (character) of his belonging to Christ" (CCC 1272). This indelible seal marks us as belonging to God, and nothing can change or erase the seal of Baptism. What does it mean to you to be marked as belonging to Christ? Why is it important to you that your child or godchild be marked by this seal now?

FLYING HIGHER

"With Baptism we become children of God in his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Rising from the waters of the baptismal font, every Christian hears again the voice that was once heard on the banks of the Jordan River: 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'"

—St. John Paul II (*Christifideles Laici*, 11)



▶ PARENT/GODPARENT PROMISE

TO THE PARENT

The Baptism of your child will be a once-for-all, life-changing event. Studying and prayerfully preparing for this significant occasion is an opportunity to look not only to your child's future as a member of the family of God, but also to reflect on the meaning and effects of your own Baptism.

As a parent choosing Baptism for your child, you will be asked to renew your own baptismal vows. Reflect on the questions from the Renunciation of Sin (form A) in the Rite of Baptism:

*Do you reject Satan?
And all his works?
And all his empty promises?*

After rejecting sin, you will be asked to make a profession of faith for yourself and your child. Afterwards the priest or deacon says:

*This is our faith.
This is the faith of the Church.
We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Faith is both communal and individual. As your child grows, he or she will need to develop a unique, individual relationship with Christ and make your faith, the faith of the Church, his or her own personal faith as well. All of that begins with this decision you make for the spiritual well-being of your child. Your faith and commitment now and in the years to come have a very real impact on the fruits that baptismal grace will bear in the life of your child.

Consider the effects of your Baptism and your own life of faith, the faith you will profess at your child's Baptism. What is going well in your spiritual life? Where could you use some improvement to be the best model and guide for your child?



Baptism of St. Ursula / Scala / Art Resource, NY

TO THE GODPARENT

As a godparent, you are participating in a life-changing event for your godchild. Preparing for this momentous event should include a deepening of your own understanding of Baptism, the impact you will have on your godchild's future as a member of the family of God, and the meaning Baptism holds for you personally.

One way to make your godchild's Baptism real for you is to reflect upon your own baptismal vows as you are asked to renew them in the rite itself:

*Do you reject Satan?
And all his works?
And all his empty promises?*

After rejecting sin, you will be asked to make a profession of faith along with the parents and the rest of the congregation gathered for the Baptism. Afterward, the priest or deacon says:

*This is our faith.
This is the faith of the Church.
We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The growth of your godchild will involve both a unique, individual relationship with Christ and a communal relationship with his Church. As a godparent, you are in a special position to nurture those relationships— now and in the years to come. You will have a very real impact on the fruits that the baptismal grace will bear in the life of your godchild. Your prayers and example will play an important part in your godchild's spiritual development.

Consider the effects of your Baptism and your own life of faith, the faith you will profess at your godchild's Baptism. What is going well in your spiritual life? Where could you use some improvement to be the best possible model and guide for your godchild?

FLYING HIGHER

"As we were baptized, so we profess our belief. As we profess our belief, so also we offer praise. As then Baptism has been given us by the Savior, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, so, in accordance with our Baptism, we make the confession of the creed, and our doxology in accordance with our creed."

—St. Basil



▶ CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

in Baptism you have made us your own
and marked us with an indelible seal.
May we have the strength and courage
to truly live our lives conformed to Christ,
and to guide those entrusted to us
in the faith of the Church.

We ask this in the name of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1235–1245
- *Instruction on Infant Baptism*, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1980
(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19801020_pastoralis_actio_en.html)

Sacramentals for infant Baptism in the Church ©
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