

Baptism

FOR PARISHIONERS:

If you are newly registered in the parish, we welcome you and want you to feel at home in the parish.

If you need to have someone baptized at our parish, please contact the parish office @ 573-483-2555 to talk with our Priest.

Below is some information about the Sacrament of baptism. To learn more about this special sacrament, please read.

Who can receive a Catholic baptism?

Anyone who has not already been baptized can receive the sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is able to be baptized,” (paragraph 1246). Baptism leaves an *indelible* (permanent) mark on the soul and there is no way nor any reason that one could be re-baptized.

There are no age restrictions for baptism; you cannot be too old or too young to be baptized.

The Gift of Baptism

When it comes down to it, baptism is a gift from God to humanity. Baptism initiates us into the family of God and cleanses us of sin. We do not need to earn this gift. God gives it freely to all who are open to it. For someone who is baptized as an infant, the personal response of faith comes as the child grows to respond to the graces given in baptism.

Baptism is connected to faith, and this connection is not lost when an infant is baptized. The *Apostolic Tradition* (usually attributed to St. Hippolytus) was written in the early third century. It states:

Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them.

Today, the Church still recognizes the connection between faith and baptism. When a child is baptized, the parents' faith speaks for the child who is too young to have explicit faith on his or her own. This is why the Church requires a reasonable hope that the parents will raise the child in the Catholic faith before a child is baptized.

Why are children baptized?

Children receive baptism primarily to remove **original sin**, but can serve as a great family tradition to initiate one's child into the faith of the family. **Infant baptism** has been debated for centuries. First, let us appeal to the Bible. John 3:5 says, "Jesus answered, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.'" Note that Jesus says "no one" can enter heaven in that passage. In the spirit of brevity here is the short answer straight from the Catechism:

"The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized," (Acts 16:15,33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16).

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1252)

What is the role of Godparents?

Godparents for Catholic Baptism are like **sponsors** for **Confirmation**. However, they take on a different role since usually only children have godparents for baptism. Their role is to take over or assist in the faith development of the person being baptized. This is especially important in the event that the parents cannot or do not adequately raise their children in the faith. Godparents can also be helpful through their prayers and example even if the child's parents fulfill their own promise to raise the child in the faith. Therefore, the faith of the godparents is important in fulfilling the baptismal promise of being raised in the Catholic faith.

Who can perform a Catholic baptism?

Anyone can perform a baptism, however this is typically done only in extreme cases in which someone's life is in danger. The Catholic Church has *ordinary ministers* for sacraments and those are **bishops, priests, and sometimes deacons**. An ordinary minister is one who has the authority to perform the sacrament under normal circumstances. The ordinary minister of a sacrament can sometimes delegate this authority to others. For example, a bishop is the ordinary minister for **Confirmation**, but he can give permission to a priest to do a Confirmation. A priest does not have the authority to do a confirmation without the permission of his bishop. However, priests do have the authority to do baptisms without the permission of the bishop and sometimes delegate the responsibility to a deacon if one is available.

In the Catholic Church today, people are usually baptized as infants by a priest or deacon. There are extreme cases, however, when even an unbaptized person can baptize someone. All that is required is the will to do what the Church does when she baptizes, and to apply the Trinitarian Baptismal formula.

What is the form and matter of Baptism?

The *form* of a sacrament is the words that are said when performing or receiving the sacrament. In the case of Baptism this would be, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The

matter of a sacrament is the physical signs that are used. In the case of baptism, water is the matter of the sacrament.

What does the Grace of Baptism accomplish?

1. It forgives all sins that may have been committed prior to a person's baptism including **original sin**, **mortal sins**, and **venial sins**, and it relieves the punishment for those sins.
2. It makes the newly baptized person "a new creature."
3. It turns the person into a newly adopted son of God and a member of Christ. Baptism incorporates a person into the Church, which is the body of Christ.
4. It brings someone into the flock of the faithful and brings them to share in the royal priesthood of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Catholic baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers and it also brings about the sacramental bond of the unity of Christians. Paragraph 1271 of the Catechism says it best:

Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: "For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, [they] are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church. Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn."

5. Last, but certainly not least, baptism leaves an indelible spiritual mark (character) of belonging to Christ on the soul. Nothing you can do will take away this mark even if you sin a million times. Those sins may prevent you from being open to the salvation God offers through baptism, but you will always carry the mark of a Christian on your soul, therefore making re-baptism impossible.

Can someone receive the Grace of Baptism without being baptized?

Yes, those who die for their faith but were never baptized receive the grace of baptism. This is often called baptism by blood – being killed for your faith and never, not even for a second, compromising it. Also, those truly seeking baptism, but are unable to receive it due to extenuating circumstances (for example, if they die before they can be baptized) can receive the grace. This is called 'baptism by desire.' If the person has an explicit desire for baptism and is repentant of their sins then they will receive these graces.