



SESSION 15: ENTER

TOPIC: Baptism

GOAL

The goal of this session is to give the teens an overview of the Sacrament of Baptism — its purpose, effects, and responsibilities.

KEY CONCEPTS

The water of Baptism literally washes away all of our sin, especially our original sin — that mark left on our souls, inherited from our first parents when they decided to turn their hearts away from God's will.

Baptism leaves an “indelible mark” on the soul. This means that through Baptism, a permanent change of the very essence of the individual takes place. Forever, in this life and in the next, the baptized soul is sealed with the mark of belonging to Christ.

It is through Christ that we have life, and through our baptism that we are brought to new life by His death and Resurrection.

KEY TERMS

Baptism: The first of the seven sacraments, and the “door” which gives access to the other sacraments. It is the chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification.

Original Sin: The sin by which the first human beings disobeyed the commandment of God, choosing to follow their own will rather than God's will. Describes the fallen state of human nature which affects every person born into the world, and from which Christ, the “New Adam,” came to redeem us.

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 2:5

Luke 3:22

Acts 2:38

Mark 10:38

Ephesians 4:25

Matthew 28:19

John 3:3, 3:5

Romans 6:3-4

CATECHISM

1213-1222

1256-1261

1225

1263

1229-1231

1265-1269

1237-1243

1272-1274

1247-1254

TEACHING

Read through the teaching with or separate from your Sponsor, and then spend time using the discussion questions to discuss the topic of this session.



What It Is

Baptism. The very term brings to mind babies, white baptismal outfits, candles, and the Godfather.

The truth of Baptism is much more than our imaginations will allow us to see. Just to give a quick overview of what happens: Original sin and personal sins are forgiven, we become a new life, a new child of God the Father, members of the Body of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, members of the Church, participants in the priesthood of Christ. We are given a permanent character of being a Christian.

1 Peter 2:5

Baptism has always included reading from the Word, acceptance of the Gospel, proclaiming Baptism, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and Eucharistic Communion. Even when baptism of infants became common, it was important that they be educated in the “catechumenate,” or an intense training in the teachings of the faith. - CCC 1213-1222

In the Old Testament, Baptism was seen in water, a source of life and death. It was in the story of Noah’s ark, floating above death and sin in water, the Israelites passing through the water of the Red Sea, and finally crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. - *John 3:3, 5*

Jesus tells us in John’s Gospel that a man must be born “again” and “from above” with both “water and spirit” in order to gain the Kingdom of heaven. The Greek word John uses, *anōthen*, carries the dual meaning of being born “again” and born “from above.”

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus instructs the apostles, the first bishops of the Church, to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Also, when Peter was converting the Jews, he asked all of those who had come to believe the truth of Christ to “repent, and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” - *Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19*

The water of Baptism literally washes away all of our sin, especially our original sin — that mark left on our souls, inherited from our first parents when they decided to turn their hearts away from God’s will. Baptism also washes away all of our personal sins — the sins we have committed by our own free will. The water represents both the washing away of the death of sin and the nourishment of the new life in Christ — the new life from above. - CCC 1214, 1263

Through the power and grace of the Sacrament, the divine presence dwelling within us, we are united with Christ’s actions on the cross as well, which Jesus called His own baptism. His death on the cross is our death to sin. His Resurrection is our resurrection, our new life in Christ, as St. Paul explains, “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.” - CCC 1225; *Mark 10:38; Romans 6:3-4*

This union with Christ, the Son of God, also unites us with the Father as His adopted children. Just after Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River, we hear of the Father’s voice from heaven proclaiming, “You are



my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” So too are we the Father’s beloved. So too are we pleasing in the eyes of our heavenly Father in our union with Christ through our baptism.

Council of Trent, VI, iv; CCC 1213, 1265-1266; Luke 3:22

United with Christ, we are not alone — we simply cannot be. Union with Christ means union with the entire Body of Christ, the Church. Saint Paul tells us, “we are members one of another” because of our baptism. It is what incorporates us into the Church, the Bride of Christ. This new life means that we no longer live for ourselves, but live for the one who gave us this new life. This is what makes us all members of the same Church. - *CCC 1269; Ephesians 4:25*

Baptism leaves an “indelible mark” on the soul. This means that through Baptism, a permanent change of the very essence of the individual takes place. Forever, in this life and in the next, the baptized soul is sealed with the mark of belonging to Christ. Sin cannot erase this mark, even if sin prevents the soul’s salvation. It also means that Baptism is only to be given once because of the nature of the Sacrament. It lasts forever so it never needs to be repeated. - *CCC 1272-1274*

In our baptism and membership in the Church community, we are called to live a new life with Christ. The Holy Spirit bestows new gifts to us through our baptism, which are later perfected through another sacrament, Confirmation. This grace allows us to follow our Lord more closely in discipleship and to have hope for our resurrection on the last day. - *CCC 1274*

Christ affirms the necessity of Baptism. He tells us in John’s Gospel that “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” The Church teaches, as we say in the Nicene Creed, that we, as Christians, believe in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. It is also a gateway to a life in the Spirit. - *CCC 1213, 1257-1261; John 3:3, 3:5*

How It Is Done

Since the time of the apostles, the Church has traditionally held that the Rite of Baptism should include the proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel by the catechumen (signifying conversion), a profession of faith, and finally the actual baptism by which the Holy Spirit washes clean the stain of original sin from the soul of the new Christian. In the early Church, there was a lengthy practice of initiation into the Church whereby a catechumen was taught the truth of the Gospel and educated in the faith. This process was concluded with the Rite of Baptism and the admission into full communion with the entire Church. This meant that the newly baptized was immediately eligible to receive Communion, as they had been redeemed in Christ and a member of the Church. - *CCC 1229-1230*

Today, the order of this practice has been somewhat altered. Only when one is baptized as an adult can they immediately receive the body and blood of our Lord in the Eucharist. Infants who are baptized still must go through catechesis in order that they may come to know and believe the faith into which they have been baptized. The Eastern Church baptizes, confirms, and administers Communion to infants in the same liturgical ceremony. However, there is still the same need for further catechesis for these spiritual graces to develop to their full potential within the life of the individual. - *CCC 1231, 1242*



For an adult to be baptized, he or she must first take the proper steps of the catechumen (one who is preparing for Baptism). Through this process of being educated in the faith, the future Christian will be able to take complete responsibility and ownership of their beliefs. This is why they make their professions of faith during their baptism; it signifies their conscious beliefs and, therefore, justifies their action. For children and infants, the catechesis is deferred until the age at which the child is able to learn about their faith. At the time of the liturgical ceremony, the child's parents and godparents make a pledge to teach the child about the faith and how to live according to the Gospel. For a person to be baptized, they must not have been previously baptized. Because of the indelible mark left on the soul, there is only need for one baptism in a person's life. This is true in all forms of Christianity who baptize Christians specifically in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. - CCC 1247-1254

All sacraments use real, tangible elements in order to signify the true aspect of the mystery of the sacrament that we may be unable to see. In Baptism, there must be the use of ordinary water. The water does not need to be blessed, though it almost always is when the baptism is performed in the Church. There also must be someone who desires to be baptized (or, in the case of of infants, whose parent's desire for them to be baptized) who has not yet been baptized. - CCC 1238

The pouring of the water over the head of the one being baptized, or the immersion of the one being baptized depending on the particular liturgy, along with the formal words of the Sacrament — "(name of the one being baptized), I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit" — constitute a valid baptism. By this very act, sins are literally "washed away" and the new Christian is able to receive the Kingdom of heaven by their union with Christ. -CCC 1239-1240

During the Rite of Baptism, the ordinary minister of the Sacrament, the priest or deacon, administers holy chrism. This oil is the oil of catechumens and is only used during the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. At this time, the minister also lays hands upon the catechumen and explicitly renounces Satan. Oil has been used since ancient times to anoint important people. During Baptism, the priest anoints the baptized with the chrism to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit, which represents their new life in Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king. By our baptism, we too share in this inheritance as we share in Christ's new life. To show this new life in Christ, a new white garment is traditionally worn by the person who is being baptized. It symbolizes that they have "put on Christ" through their baptism. CCC 1237, 1241-1243, 1256

In danger of death, one can be baptized by any person if one so chooses to be. All the Church requires is that the (extraordinary) minister of the Sacrament use ordinary water and intend to do what the Church does in Baptism by their own act. The minister must then pour the water upon the one being baptized and use the formal words of the Sacrament in order for the baptism to be valid. This is only to be done in the most extreme of circumstances. - CCC 1256

How It Is Lived

Baptism clearly is not just a splash on the head and a new white outfit — it means so much more. As baptized Christians, we are members of the Church. We compose the Body of Christ, partakers of the New Covenant of Jesus. As members of the Church, we are given the chance at eternal life. This is a precious gift that should be understood. - CCC 1267, 1269



We are baptized into Christ's life, death, and Resurrection. Part of Christ's life into which we are baptized is the life of priest, prophet, and king. Not only is there priesthood in the way we normally think of priests, but there is also a common priesthood of believers. In this role, the Christian lives out their baptism through their priestly service in their community, as St. Peter's letter instructs us to "be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." - CCC 1268; 1 Peter 2:5

As a Christian, we stand as a witness to the truth — a light in the darkness in the world. As one who is united to Christ, we are called to do what is right. This means following directions and being subordinate to our authorities; to live not only as an upstanding citizen but as a good and moral follower of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the light. It is through Christ that we have life, and through our baptism that we are brought to new life by His death and Resurrection. CCC 1269

In our Christian life, we encounter many "reminders" of our promise to live in accordance with the truth in the way Christ teaches. Whenever we enter a Catholic church, we dip our fingers into the holy water and bless ourselves almost routinely. Do we ever stop and think why we have been taught to do so? It is supposed to remind us of our baptismal vows and renew our commitment to Christ. In fact, every time we make the Sign of the Cross, we acknowledge and affirm our baptismal commitment and new life in Christ.

For every Christian, the Easter Vigil is almost like the highlight reel of baptismal reminders. From the baptism of catechumens to the sprinkling of holy water, Christians renew their baptismal promises and vow to live their life according to the teachings of Christ. This renewal is part of the ongoing conversion that each Christian is called to live. Baptism is merely the beginning of their new life. The various "reminders" give us new strength to grow closer to our Lord and lead a holier life.

Discussion (15 min)

Divide the teens into their Confirmation small groups. Begin in prayer and then use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

- Do you remember anything about your baptism?
- Why did your parents have you baptized?
- What does it mean to be marked by Christ as an adopted son/daughter of God? Does your life reflect the reality of what happened to you at your baptism? Why or why not?
- What are some areas in your life that need to be "made new"?
- What are some practical ways you can live out your baptismal vows at school, home, or work? Are there other places you can better live out your baptismal vows?



Renewal of Baptismal Promises

At your baptism, your parents and godparents stood around you and not only renewed their own personal baptismal vows, but also spoke on your behalf. At your confirmation, you will speak on your accord, renounce the devil, and profess your beliefs.

Below is what you will say at your Confirmation. Take this time to read and pray through each promise.

Leader/Bishop: Do you renounce Satan, and all his works and empty promises?

Candidates: I do.

Leader/Bishop: Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and Earth?

Candidates: I do.

Leader/Bishop: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

Candidates: I do.

Leader/Bishop: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who today through the Sacrament of Confirmation is given to you in a special way just as he was given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost?

Candidates: I do.

Leader/Bishop: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

Candidates: I do.

Leader/Bishop: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

All: Amen.

