

We Are Born Again through Baptism

Featured story from the *Catholic Children's Bible*; John 3:4-6

Parent Activity Guide for use with children in grades 1-5 and their families – January home lesson

Gather

Gather your family members around a central table or activity space. Make sure everyone can see *The Catholic Children's Bible* or another Bible of your choosing.

Quiet yourselves and take a moment to enter into God's presence. Choose someone to lead the opening prayer.

Begin with the sign of the cross and then the reader should pray aloud the following:

Heavenly Father, you sent your Son, Jesus, to live among us and form a community of believers. Let your Holy Spirit open our hearts to hear what You want to say to us through the Bible passage today. Give us a mind like Jesus to understand your message to each of us. Amen.

Share in God's Word

Ask your child to read aloud the feature story from the children's Bible, **John 3:4-6** (found on page 1658 in *The Catholic Children's Bible* revised edition, copyright 2017). Provide support as needed.

The leader should explain the vocabulary from the passage:

- Womb: Where a baby stays in its mother before birth
- Physically: In a form that can be seen and felt
- Spiritually: In a form that affects our soul

Check to see if your child has any other questions about the passage and address them as needed.

Understand it

Leader: Let's review the main ideas of this passage. This story emphasizes that we become part of God's family through baptism.

Refer to your *Catholic Children's Bible* "Understand it!" section or read aloud the following:

In this Bible story from John, Jesus said that in order to enter God's Kingdom, a person must be born again. Nicodemus was puzzled by this. Maybe you are too! Jesus was talking about Baptism as another birth. In Baptism we do not receive physical life. We receive spiritual life, which is even more important. Spiritual life is life with God. We cannot see it, but it is real.

Through Baptism we become children of God and members of his family, the Church. This happens through the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is the key to the Kingdom of God. It saves us from sin. It marks us forever as God's holy people. It makes us Christians who will one day live with God forever in heaven.

Live it *

Items needed: pencil/pen, paper

Leader: Water helps us both physically and spiritually. On one side of your paper, draw a picture that shows how water helps us physically. [Give examples as needed: cool drink of water on a hot day, playing in the water in a pool, etc.] On the other side of the paper, draw a picture of someone being baptized. This is a way water helps us spiritually. Thank God for the wonderful gift of water.

Tell it

Using the pictures in the “Tell it!” section of the featured story spread, check your child(ren)’s comprehension by asking him/her to retell the story in his/her own words.

* Adaptation: If you do not have *The Catholic Children’s Bible*, ask your child to create a comic strip with three pictures to depict three main ideas from the passage and explain them to you.

Closing Prayer

Leader: We quiet ourselves now and ask God to be present with us as we pray. After hearing this Bible passage, who or what we should pray for today?

[Give everyone time to list anyone or any situation in need of prayers.]

Leader invites everyone to join in the Sign of the Cross, and then prays aloud the following prayer or adapts it to fit your family’s needs:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of our lives and the chance to share this prayer time together. We offer all of the prayer requests spoken here into Your care, trusting in Your great love for us and that You will take care of everything.

We especially remember everyone in the world who has not been baptized and does not know your love for them. Send down your Holy Spirit and let them know your love. We thank you for the gift of our baptism and we ask you to help us grow to be more like Jesus every day. In your most Holy Trinity we pray, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

* See optional additional activities on the next page.

Additional Activities (Optional)

These interactive family activities could be used as an extra activity in the above family lesson or used at another time in the month to reinforce the main theme of the sacramental life for January.

Brother Francis video on FORMED.org

Items Needed: internet-capable device; once you are registered, you may download the app to use with your smart tv and other devices

Take time to reinforce the teaching on Baptism by viewing the animated Brother Francis video on FORMED.org, a free digital library available to all STM parishioners. Go to <https://watch.formed.org/brother-francis-1> and select the video "Born into the Kingdom: The Miracle of Baptism" (episode 1; 26 minutes).

In this happy presentation, Brother Francis invites us to share in the realities of the Sacrament of Baptism and the union it provides us with God's big family! Filled with instruction and inspiration, "Born into the Kingdom" is a great reminder of God's wonderful grace!

How to register for a FORMED account:

1. Go to formed.org/signup
2. Select your parish by entering name, city and/or zip code (it is listed as **St. Thomas More Catholic Community**)
3. Register with your name and email address
4. Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED

The following activities have been adapted from <https://d6family.com/splink/>.

We're All Thirsty

Items Needed: Salty snack (crackers, pretzels, popcorn, chips, etc.); ice cold water

Share the salty snack with your children. After they're quite thirsty and asking for something to drink, give them the ice cold water.

Ask:

- Why did the water taste so good? (We were so thirsty.)
We need water to satisfy our thirst. We need Jesus to satisfy us, too.
- Why do we need Jesus? (We need Him to forgive our sins; We need His help to do what is right; We need Him in order to live!)

Jesus compared the satisfying, eternal life He gives to water. We are all "thirsty" without Jesus. He gives us what we need to live a great life here on earth and in Heaven after we die.

Remind your children of the Bible passage you read together about baptism in John 3:4-6 and that water has both physical (quenches thirst etc.) and spiritual (baptism) significance in our lives. Water is a great gift God gives to us for both our physical and spiritual health.

Being Born

Items Needed: photos of when your child was born/adopted and photos of your child's baptism

Show your child baby pictures and talk about the day they were born into your family. Show pictures and talk about how happy you were. If they were adopted, talk about the happy day they became part of your family.

Ask: How do you become part of God's family? How are you born again?

Read John 3:1-16 to review Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

Simple truths about being "born" into God's family:

- God loves you and wants you to be in His family (John 3:16).
- We have all sinned and gone our own way (Romans 3:23).
- Jesus came to earth and died on the cross for our sins (John 3:16).
- We have to believe He died for our sins and came alive again (Romans 10:9).

We became members of God's family the day we were baptized. We continue to stay close to him by choosing to love God and follow Him every day.

Say thank you to Him for the gift of your baptism. Mark the dates on your calendar to remember each family member's baptism day. Celebrate!

Take time to share photos and stories of your child's baptism day. This is an important day to remember. No matter what happens to us in life, nothing can take away our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. This is where our hope and our strength lies.

Virtual Field Trip

Items Needed: electronic device with internet access

This month's theme is the sacramental life. We have 7 Sacraments in the Catholic Church, but there is also the sacramental life with a small "s," or the experience of every moment that God makes as a gift for us. God communicates with us all the time! This is amazing. We live in a God-soaked world, and we can grow more in tune with this spiritual reality the more we look with intention and ask what this moment is teaching us and how God is calling us to respond.

Practice this new way of "seeing" with spiritual eyes. When the weather is warmer, you may want to explore a local zoo, park, etc to enjoy God's creation. For now, many zoos offer virtual tours. Check out a few free options below or select one of your own and have fun with this! While you are exploring and observing, talk with your child about the uniqueness of each animal. Remind your child that God made every animal to survive in his or her habitat and fit into the food chain. Talk together about why the different animals are interesting. All of creation points toward its Creator and brings glory to God. In the same way, our lives as followers of Jesus should point toward our Creator and bring Him honor and glory.

Virtual Zoos and Aquariums:

- Cincinnati Zoo – [Home Safari recorded videos](#) on Facebook
- Houston Zoo – [List of webcams](#), including elephants, flamingoes, and more
- Georgia Aquarium – ["Ocean Voyager" webcam](#) and more options on their site
- Monterey Bay Aquarium – [Live Shark Cam](#) and many more options on their [webcam page](#)