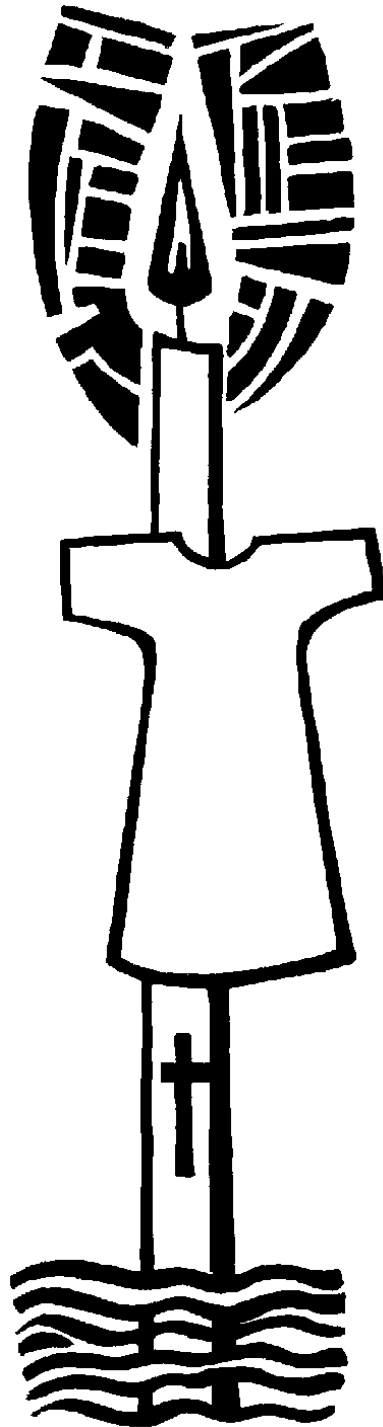


All you need to know about...
The Sacrament of Baptism



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What is it and what is the purpose of Baptism?

- Baptism is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church.
- It is the first of the three sacraments of initiation into the Church which are necessary for people to become full members of the Church. The other two Sacraments of initiation are the Sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation.
- It is a means by which you publically profess your faith or have it professed on your behalf (until you are able to do it yourself) and shows your commitment to becoming a member of the Church.
- Through Baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, freed from sin, given a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit and welcomed into the Church.
- Through Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit and the gifts of faith, hope and love which help us to be followers of Christ.

How did Baptism originate?

- Immersion in water as a purification rite predates Christianity. This type of ritualistic cleansing is still part of some world religions today.
- In Jesus' time ritualistic cleansing was a common practice. In the Gospels we learn that before Jesus began his ministry he is baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21, 22). This event marked the start of his public ministry. At the end of his earthly ministry, just before he ascended into Heaven, Jesus commanded the apostles to "Go, then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15). In this way he established the importance of Baptism as the means by which people will come to share in his new life. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and went out into Jerusalem where they began their ministry and carried out the first Baptisms of the new Church (Acts 2:41). Later, in the Acts of the Apostles, a key turning point in the story of the dramatic conversion of Paul from a persecutor of Christians to one of the key Christian leaders of that time, is that of his Baptism (Acts 9:1- 19, 22:6-16, 26:12-18).

When does Baptism take place?

- Traditionally, most Baptisms occur in the first few months of child's life. However, a person can be baptised at any point in their life.
- Baptisms are normally arranged with the parish priest. They may take place within the celebration of Mass so that the whole community can participate in the welcoming or in a separate service held at a prearranged time.

- Baptisms can be carried out for an individual or may be arranged so that a number of people are baptised at the same time.

Where does Baptism take place?

- Usually a baptism takes place in Church around the baptismal font. The font is traditionally located near the entrance of the church as a sign of welcome into the life of the Church through Baptism. It can, however, be located elsewhere, such as near the altar.

In an emergency a baptism can take place anywhere. For example, premature babies may be baptised in hospital if their life is believed to be in imminent danger.

Can anyone be baptised?

- Anyone who has not previously been baptised may receive Baptism.
- If a person has already been baptised in another Christian tradition which is recognised by the Church they are not baptised again. Instead they are received into full communion with the Catholic Church. Following this reception they normally receive the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist.

How many times can you be baptised?

- A person can only be baptised once.

Who can perform a Baptism?

- Usually only an ordained bishop, priest or deacon can perform a baptism. However, in an extreme life or death situation, any person can perform a baptism and would do so by saying
N: I baptise you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Who has to be present at a Baptism?

- An ordained bishop, priest or deacon must be there to administer the Sacrament.
- The child to be baptised.
- If the candidate is a child the parents are there to make a profession of faith on behalf of the child.
- The Godparents are there to publically declare their commitment to support the parents and also to make a profession of faith.
- Godparents must be baptised Catholics

Are any special clothes worn?

- The priest wears an alb, which is a long white tunic, and a stole which is a long, narrow strip of cloth worn around the neck. The stole is always white. Traditionally a

child being baptised wore a Christening robe or gown although nowadays children are dressed in a more contemporary white outfit.

- Part of the Rite of the Sacrament of Baptism includes the clothing of the person baptised with a white garment as a sign of their new Christian identity.

What happens at the Sacrament of Baptism?

Introduction:

- The parents present their child, announce its name and request that their child be Baptised.
- The celebrant responds by reminding them of their duty as parents to bring up the child and asking if they're prepared to do this.
- The celebrant then asks the Godparents if they are willing to support the parents in this.
- The celebrant, using the child's name welcomes them into the Christian Community. He then traces the sign of the cross on the child's forehead and invites the parents and godparents to do the same.

The tracing of the cross is a reminder of the Trinity (God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). The action, even without words, is a prayer in itself.

Liturgy of the Word:

- If the Baptism is taking place within the celebration of Mass they will be the readings of the day.
- If outside the celebration of Mass the readings and Gospel will relate specifically to Baptism: being called by name (Isaiah 43:1-3), being welcomed (Let the children come to me Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17), Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21,22)

Prayer of the Faithful

- Baptisms taking place within Mass will make reference to the child being baptised and asking for the prayers of the community for the child and its family alongside all the other prayer intentions.
- These prayers at Baptisms outside of the Mass will all be focused upon prayers for the child, the family past and present of the child and the community into which the child is being welcomed.

Litany of the Saints

- A litany (list) of various saints is said. These would include St. Mary and St. Joseph, Jesus' parents, St. Ann, the mother of Mary and other saints pertinent to the parish.

These prayers of intercession which form the Litany reminds of our link with the whole Communion of Saints: namely all members of God's family: all the members of the Church

who have died and gone to heaven, those in purgatory and those of us here on Earth at this moment.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism

- The celebrant says the prayer of Exorcism.

This prayer is one which asks for protection for the child from any force of evil which they may have to face.

- The celebrant anoints the child on the breast with the Oil of Catechumens.

Oils used in liturgy are usually made from olive oil. They are used as a symbol of protection and strength. The word catechumen come from the Greek word catechuminate meaning 'to instruct', 'to teach by word of mouth.' The catechumenate was a three part process through which adults were received into the early church. The oil used to anoint them became known as the Oil of Catechumens. Thus this action has been incorporated into Baptism as part of the process of induction into the Church.

Celebration of the Sacrament

Blessing & Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

- The celebrant calls upon God the Holy Spirit to bless the water and make it holy.

Water is a powerful symbol used in the Church. It sustains life and it also cleanses. Holy Water therefore reminds us of the eternal life that Jesus, through Baptism, is bringing us into. The water is being prepared for the Baptism which is about to take place.

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

- The celebrant once again addresses the parents and godparents and asks them to profess their faith by renewing their Baptismal promises.
- The child is then held over the font where the celebrant pours water over their head three times as he says the words of baptism.
- The child is then anointed with the Oil of Chrism on the crown of their head.

It is this part of the liturgy in which the Baptism itself takes place. The actual moment of the Sacrament being received is when the priest pours the water and says "N. I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptismal Promises take the form of a set series of questions and responses. Like The Creed, another form of professing our faith, the Baptismal Promises sum up what we, as members of the Church believe.

The water is poured over the child's head three times as a reminder of the Trinity.

In Jewish tradition only kings were anointed as it was believed they had been specially chosen by God. By anointing the child with the Oil of Chrism it is emphasising that they

too have been chosen by God. The act of anointing is seen as making a mark or a seal upon the child which is indelible. Because the mark is permanent there is no need for the Sacrament ever to be re-administered.

Chrism comes from the Greek word meaning 'oil of anointing'. The Oil of Chrism is olive oil perfumed with balsam. The richness of the fragrance serves to remind us of the importance of this anointing.

Both the Oil of Catechumen and the Oil of Chrism are blessed by the Archbishop at a special Mass during Holy Week at which all the clergy are present. Traditionally this is celebrated on Holy Thursday but, in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, for practical reasons it is celebrated on Holy Wednesday.

Clothing with the White Garment

- The celebrant says the prayer as the child is given a white garment to wear.

The white garment, traditionally a shawl, is a symbol that now that the child has been baptised they are clothed in Christ. The white of the garment reminds us of their purity now they have entered into this new life.

The Lighted Candle

- As the celebrant says the prayer one of the godparents lights the baptismal candle using the flame from the Easter (Paschal) Candle.
- The priest also says The Epheta over the ears and mouth of the child.
- If the baptism is taking place within Mass this would conclude the Baptism and the service would return to the order of Mass and into the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Easter candle is the large single candle which stands on the altar. It is a symbol of the Risen Jesus and is created each year at the Easter Vigil on the eve of Easter Sunday. The act of lighting the candle from the Easter candle reminds us that Jesus is present to guide the way through life and that now that the child is part of the God's family they too can be a light for others.

The Epheta is a prayer said over the ears and mouth of the child asking that they are always ready to receive the word of God and to proclaim it. This links to the story when Jesus used the Aramaic word "Ephphatha" to command the ears and mouth of the deaf and dumb man to "open up" (Mark 7:31-37).

Conclusion of the Rite

- The celebrant leads the congregation in prayer and together they proclaim the Our Father.
- The celebrant then blesses the parents before the final blessing upon all those present.

The Rite of Baptism

Introduction and Presentation of the Child

The celebrant greets all present and speaks to them of the special joy of this occasion. He then addresses the parents:

Celebrant: What name do you give your child?

Parents: [whatever]

Celebrant: What do you ask of God's Church for N.?

Parents: Baptism

The celebrant addresses the parents in these or similar words:

Celebrant: You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training this child in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbours. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

Parents: We do.

Then the celebrant turns to the godparents:

Celebrant: Are you ready to help the parents in their duty as Christian parents?

Godparents: We are.

Celebrant: N. the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross. I now trace the cross on your forehead, and invite your parents and godparents to do the same.

He signs the child on the forehead, in silence. Then he invites the parents and the godparents to do the same.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Responsorial Psalm

Gospel

Homily

The Prayer of the Faithful

Celebrant: My dear friends, let us ask our Lord Jesus Christ to look lovingly on N., who is to be baptised, on his/her parents godparents and on all the baptised.

Reader: By the mystery of your death and resurrection, bathe N. in light, give him/her a

new life of baptism and welcome him/her into your holy Church. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: Through baptism and confirmation, make N. your faithful follower and a witness to your gospel. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: Make the lives of his/her parents and godparents examples of faith to inspire N. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: Keep N.'s family always in your love. We remember in a special way his/her [whoever], who has died. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Reader: Renew the grace of our baptism in each one of us. Lord, in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

Litany of the Saints

The Celebrant next invites all present to invoke the saints:

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

Saint John the Baptist, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, pray for us.

Saint Matthew and St. James, pray for us.

Saint Anthony, pray for us.

Archangel Gabriel, pray for us.

Saint Ann, pray for us.

Saint Peter and St. Paul, pray for us.

All holy men and women, pray for us.

Prayer of Exorcism

After the invocation, the Celebrant says:

Celebrant: Almighty and ever-living God, you sent your only Son into the world to rescue us from the slavery of sin, and to give us the freedom only your sons and daughters enjoy. We pray now for N., who will have to face the world with its temptations and fight the devil with all his cunning. Your Son died and rose again to save us. By his victory over sin and death, cleanse N. from the stain of original sin. Strengthen him/her with the grace of Christ and watch over him/her at every step in life's journey. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Anointing before Baptism

The Celebrant anoints the child on the breast with the oil of catechumens (those preparing for Baptism) saying:

Celebrant: We anoint you with the oil of salvation in the name of Christ our Saviour; may he strengthen you with his power, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

Blessing & Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Celebrant: My dear friends, God uses the sacrament of water to give his divine life to those who believe in him. Let us turn to him, and ask him to pour his gift of life from this font on N., who he has chosen.

Father, God of mercy, through these waters of baptism you have filled us with new life as your very own children.

All: Blessed be God.

Celebrant: From all who are baptised in water and the Holy Spirit, you have formed one people, united in your Son Jesus Christ.

All: Blessed be God.

Celebrant: You have set us free and filled our hearts with the Spirit of your love, that we may live in your peace.

All: Blessed be God.

Celebrant: You call those who have been baptised to announce the Good News of Jesus Christ to people everywhere.

All: Blessed be God.

Celebrant: You have called your child to this cleansing water that he/she may share in the faith of your Church and have eternal life. By the mystery of this consecrated water lead him/her to a new and spiritual birth. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

The Celebrant speaks to the parents and to the godparents in these words:

Celebrant: You have come here to present N. for baptism. By water and the Holy Spirit she is to receive the gift of new life from God, who is love. On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring him/her up in the practice of the faith. See that the divine life which God gives him/her is kept safe from the poison of sin to grow always stronger in his/her heart. If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, renew now the vows of your own baptism. Reject sin; profess your faith in Christ Jesus. This is the faith of the

Church. This is the faith in which N. is to be baptised. And so I ask you:

Celebrant: Do you reject Satan?

The parents and godparents: I do.

Celebrant: And all his works?

The parents and godparents: I do.

Celebrant: And all his empty promises?

The parents and godparents: I do.

Celebrant: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

The parents and godparents: I do.

Celebrant: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

The parents and godparents: I do.

Celebrant: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

The parents and godparents: I do.

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

All: Amen.

Baptism

The Celebrant invites the parents and godparents to the font and questions them:

Celebrant: Is it your will that N. should be baptised in the faith of the Church, which we have all professed with you?

The parents and godparents: It is.

The Celebrant baptises the child, saying:

Celebrant: I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Anointing with Chrism

Then the Celebrant says:

Celebrant: God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints

you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Then Celebrant anoints the child on the crown of the head with the sacred chrism, in silence.

Clothing with the White Garment

Celebrant: N., You have become a new creation, and have clothed yourself in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.

All: Amen.

The white garment is put on the child.

The Lighted Candle

The Celebrant takes the Easter candle and says:

Celebrant: Receive the light of Christ

The godparent lights the child's candle from the Easter candle.

Celebrant: Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. N. 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.

The Ephpheta (*prayer over the ears and the mouth*) now follows. *The Celebrant will touch the child's ears and the mouth of with his thumb, saying:*

Celebrant: The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears, N., to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

All: Amen.

The Conclusion of the Rite

Celebrant: My dear friends, N. has been reborn in baptism. He/she is now called a child of God, for so indeed he/she is. In confirmation he/she will receive the fullness of God's Spirit. In holy communion, he/she will share in the banquet of Christ's sacrifice, calling God his/her Father in the midst of the Church. In the name of this child, in the Spirit of our common sonship let us pray together in the words our Lord has given us:

All: Our Father . . .

Celebrant: May God the almighty Father, who filled the world with joy by giving us his only Son, bless this newly-baptised child. May he/she grow to be more fully like Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Blessing of the Parents

Celebrant: May almighty God, who gives life on earth and in heaven, bless the parents. They thank God now for the gift he has given them. May they always show that gratitude in action by loving and caring for their child.

All: Amen.

Final Blessing

Celebrant: May almighty God, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, generously bless all of us who are his faithful children. May we always live as his people, and may God bless all here present with his peace.

All: Amen.

If you'd like to find out more about the Sacrament of Baptism you can ...

- watch a short film clip featuring Bishop Christopher Coyne on the Catholic TV Network from a series of talks 'Everything you wanted to know about Catholic Liturgy' www.catholictv.com/shows/everything-you-wanted-know-about-catholic-liturgy/who-can-be-godparent
- watch a short film clip on www.bustedhalo.com/video/baptism
- read more about it in 'Youcat' ('Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church') available from CTS
- read more about it in the 'Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church' available from CTS
- read more in 'The Catholic Source Book' Harcourt Religion Publishers