



**SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH**

**BAPTISM PREPARATION  
PROGRAM FOR PARENTS  
AND GODPARENTS**



# INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to this time of preparation for the Baptism. If this is the first time that you have attended a preparation session for Baptism; we welcome you in special and we hope these presentation will make your child's Baptism a meaningful event. Many of you, however, are professionals at this, and have attended Baptism preparation sessions in many different formats. We welcome you as well and we hope that you will share with us some of your wisdom and insights, ask engaging questions, and use this time to renew and refresh what may have been forgotten.

While this preparation session may seem academic at times, and even mirror a class room setting; it is important to see this time as a prayerful meditation on the significance of what you are about to participate in. The information should be received in a spirit of awe and reverence, letting the significance of what is being said transform your life and perspective. We should move beyond being passive participants in a "class we have to take," to an attitude of actively taking time apart from the affairs of the world to reflect with the presenters on the deeper meaning of Baptism. We should seek for a new appreciation and enthusiasm for this encounter with God's grace. We hope that you will be engaged by our presentations and we thank you in advance for your participation. May this preparation make your child's baptism a truly joyful and Spirit filled event.

St. Thomas the Apostle Baptism Preparation Team.

# SECTION 1: THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

## What is Baptism?

Baptism the sacrament- the outward, physical, sign manifesting a divine action; an inward grace- by which we both embrace and are embraced by the redemption won for us by Christ. Through Baptism we enter into "heavenly" life, that is, life with God.

The word baptism is Greek and means to "plunge" or "immerse" (CCC 1214). Baptism is the "door" or "gateway" to a spiritual life in Christ. Through Baptism one is: freed from Original sin and all past sins, reborn as an adopted child of God, initiated into the Church, and "bonded" to other Christians.



Baptistry of the Basilica of St. Vitalis, 6th cen.  
Sbeital, Tunisia

In Baptism the stain of Original sin, as well as all of the sins accumulated since birth, are washed away. Through sanctifying grace that comes from being baptized, one is strengthened against sin and protected from death.

All humanity is caught in a system of sin; our very life, every advantage and privilege is made forfeit by our sin and the heritage of sin that we inherit. Every good work, every offering to God is empty of meaning, can gain no access to God because it is covered by injustice. Thus we need justification, some satisfaction must be offered. However, we by our own merits, cannot obtain this satisfaction because what we have spurned is infinite in value and our works are finite. Therefore only one who was himself was greater than all created goods could make an offering suitable for satisfaction. By Baptism we all participate in this offering and make it our own. Our sins are washed away by a new free and unmerited grace.

The newly Baptized are reborn as a son or daughter of God, an ark for the Holy Spirit to dwell within. It is the way in which one enters into, embraces, our status as a children of God, and this relationship, as the relationship of any child to their parent, is established as a permanent reality. We speak of this permanent state of relationship with God, this divine adoption, as an "indelibly marked" which can never be destroyed even by sin.



Baptism Fresco; The **Catacombs of Marcellinus and Peter, Rome**

Baptism makes us members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. We become part of the "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises" 1 Peter 2:9. Baptism initiates a common bond with all Christians seeking to be in communion with the Trinitarian God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). A common group of people that have been saved by their faith in Jesus the Christ through the grace of Baptism.

## Who can be baptized and who can baptize?

Anyone who has not been baptized and has been instructed in preparation for receiving God into their life can be baptized. Infants and young children can be baptized if their parents and/or Godparents have received instructions and pledge to foster the child's Christian faith.

Anyone can baptize someone if they have the right intentions and follow the appropriate rite (CCC 1256). This is used solely for emergencies, when someone is about to die and a Catholic Priest or Deacon is not available. A right intention entails the desire to fulfill the purpose of Baptism as per the Catholic Church. The rite requires water and specific words and action to be valid.



### **When can you be Baptized?**

From the moment after birth until the moment before death. It is never too early or too late to be born again in the Holy Spirit and marked as a child of God. Before Baptism, one should be appropriately instructed in the meaning and purpose of this beautiful and life changing sacrament of initiation.

### **Where can you get Baptized?**

In ancient times, it was outside of a church since it was a "prerequisite" or "gateway" to entering into full communion with the Church. It might have even been at a river or lake. Now most Baptisms are performed within a church at a baptismal font, which could be located in the narthex, the back of the church, or near the altar. This format has been adopted because the vast majority of baptisms are for infants and those that are being baptized are no longer restricted from entering to the church sanctuary. Also, since Baptism is the sacrament by which we enter the Church, it is fitting that Baptism is done in a church, the place dedicated as the common home of the faithful and the house of God. This is also why Baptisms should be done by the priests or deacon, because they stand at the head of the household, the community. Thus, the most preferred time for Baptism is within the context of Sunday Mass, because it is in that context that the entire community welcomes the child into the fold (but for pastoral reasons this is not always possible).



### **Why do Catholics Christians get Baptized?**

Christians are baptized first and foremost because it is the sign that Christ established for becoming his disciple and participating in the victory over sin that he won for us: "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." Matthew 28:19 Christians are baptized in order to begin a permanent relationship with God. It is the first step in a journey towards the paradise that God our Father has prepared for us. It cleanses us from original sin that we received from Adam and Eve. It does not remove our tendency to sin, concupiscence, but through sanctifying grace we are strengthen against it.

Baptism is the prerequisite or gateway to all of the other sacraments. One cannot receive the other sacraments, or be in full communion with the Church, until they have been baptized.

It is the ordinary means by which we enter into the eternal life, by which we receive the redemption won by Christ outside of which there is no salvation. While this is the certain path established by Christ, it does not mean that redemption is impossible for those who are not baptized. While we are bound to enter into communion with God through the concrete means through which he promised to act; God's actions in the world are not limited to the sacraments, and each person will be judged according to their desire to seek God and participate in his plan.

This applies in a special way to those who pass from this life in infancy before Baptism. These we commend to the mercy of God who will not condemn the innocent. We should not, however, relativize or cheapen the Sacrament of Baptism because it is the sacrifice of Christ, by it we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. By the Baptism of our Child we recognize and affirm that there is no redemption outside of Christ.

## How are Christians Baptized?

They are either plunged into water three times or have water poured over them three times with the following being proclaimed:

<person's name>,  
I baptize you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

This assumes the person doing the Baptism is doing it with "right" intention.

## Further Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1213-1284

<http://www.wordonfire.org/WoF-Blog/WoF-Blog/November-2013/Sacraments--Baptism.aspx>

Biblical Text:

*Gen 7:1-8:19*, The Flood

*Ex 14:10-30*, The parting of the Red Sea

*Mt 13:17*, The Baptism of Jesus

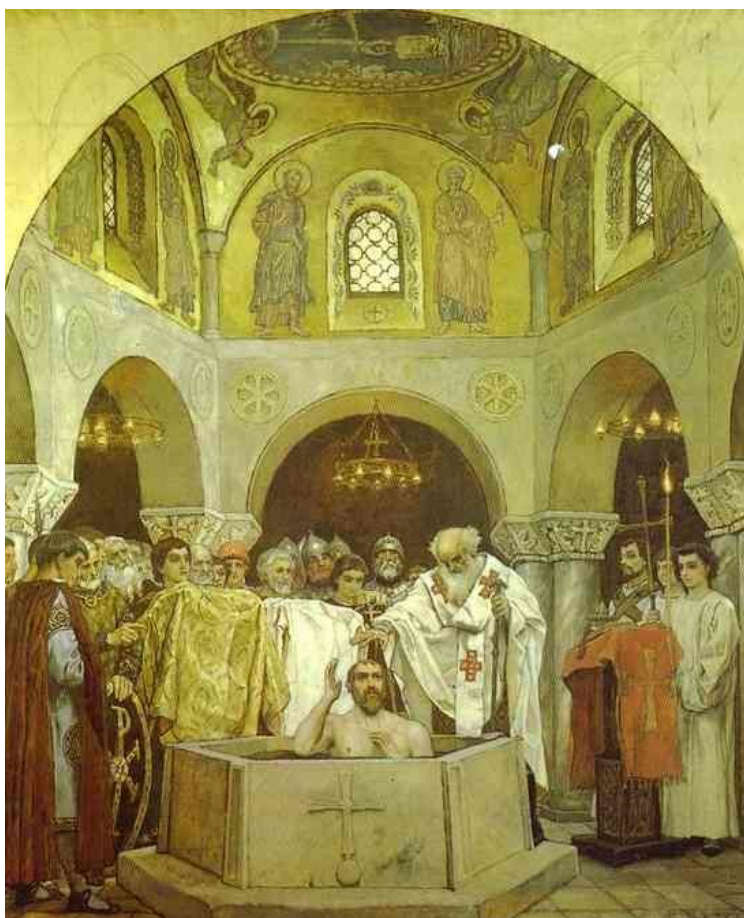
*Mt 28:18-19*, The Commissioning of the Apostles to Baptize

*John 3:1-18*, The necessity to be born again of water and the Holy Spirit

*Rom 6:3-11*, We are baptized into Christ's death

*Eph 4:4-6*, One Body, one faith, one baptism

*Col 2:12*, New Life through Baptism



# SECTION 2:

## A WALK THROUGH THE RITE OF BAPTISM

In our daily life we use many different signs and symbols to express many different things. We use flags to express patriotism, stop signs to regulate traffic, even the words and letters on this page are signs and indicators of “something else.” Some signs, like street lights, only point to immediate, temporal realities. Other signs and symbols point to realities that are greater than any particular sign. They indicate transcendent realities, spiritual realities, human realities such as love, patriotism, the value of the human person. At the same time, signs can be classed as extrinsic or integrated. An extrinsic symbol can be something like the name of a person or the painting of a person. They stand in the place of the person, but they are not immediately connected to that person. An integrated sign, on the other hand, can be seen in the extension of my hand in friendship. My hand is integrated with my person, through it I express myself and my love in the most direct way, even though my hand is not me nor does it fully express my love. In the same way, sacraments are signs, symbols through which God has promised to act directly. He has integrated them into his work of grace; they are the most direct way in which he manifests his love and mercy, his very presence. Thus, Sacraments are outward signs of inward grace.

While the sacramental sign of Baptism is the washing with water and the Trinitarian proclamation; other symbols, what we call sacramentals, have been added in order to give expression to the central mystery, event, that is taking place. There is the symbol of oil, a lighted candle, the white garment, and many others which come together to form what we know as the “Rite of Baptism.”

In the next section we will walk through the Rite of Baptism. The complete text for the Rite will be given with accompanying commentary and discussion questions. The red text, or “Rubrics,” are instructive text that indicate how the rite is to be administered. The Rite has an order and structure to it that can only be understood in light of its history and development. The commentary will attempt to show how all the parts are related to each other and come together in an organic whole. The instructions will be divided into the following sections:

- Reception of the Child
- The Liturgy of the Word
- Invocation of the Saints
- Prayer of Exorcism
- Anointing Before Baptism
- Prayer of Blessing over the Water
- Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
- Reception of Baptism
- Anointing with Chrism
- Clothing with the white garment
- Reception of the Candle
- Ephphetha rite
- The Lord’s prayer and final Blessing



## RITE OF BAPTISM FOR ONE CHILD

### Reception of The Child

*Celebrant: What name do you give your child?*

*Parents: N.*

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

*In the second response the parents may use other words, such as, "faith," or "the grace of Christ," or "entrance into the Church," or "eternal life."*

*The celebrant speaks to the parents in these or similar words:*

*You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) 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 neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking? Parents: We do.*

*Then the celebrant turns to the godparents and addresses them in these or similar words:*

*Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?*

*Godparents: We are.*

*The Celebrant continues:*

*79. N., the Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our Savior 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 (if it seems appropriate) the godparents to do the same.*

*80. The celebrant invites the parents, godparents, and the others to take part in the liturgy of the word. If circumstances permit, there is a procession to the place where this will be celebrated, during which a song is sung e.g., Psalm 85: 7, 8, 9ab.*



The Rite of Baptism has a structure filled with meaning and rooted in the tradition of the Church. In order to understand and appreciate what is happening in the rite of Baptism it is best to see how it is all interrelated; how there is a flow to it. The first part is called the Reception of the Child,



Figure 1 Eastern Rite; Receiving those to be baptized at the door of the Church

This part of the rite has traditionally been held at the door of the Church or the entrance way. It is meant to be the place where the priest meets those seeking to enter into the Church community (symbolized by the church building itself) and questions them concerning their intentions for entering. Thus, it is interrogative in nature. In the early Church adult requesting Baptism had to have the sincerity of their intention and their capacity to live the Christian life validated by a sponsor, also known as a Godparent. In the case of infant Baptism it is the intention of the parents and godparents which are reviewed. Once the review is completed the child is welcomed and all confirm their intention through the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.

Traditionally, once their intentions were affirmed; the party was allowed into the Church and there was a procession to the place of instruction, the ambo (lectern)



## RITE OF BAPTISM FOR ONE CHILD CONT. .

### The Celebration of God's Word

*Gospel Reading and Homily*

*Intercessions*

Before one can receive Baptism it is necessary to receive instruction concerning the faith. In the early Church that could be a 3 years process for an adult seeking Baptism. In infant Baptism the process is reversed; the child receives Baptism and the implications and meaning of that sacrament is unpacked with and for the child as they grow up. It is thus the parents who need the preparation and instruction. In the early Church the part of the Mass we refer to as the liturgy of the Word (the part of the Mass where the scriptures are read, a sermon is given, and prayer intentions are offered) was called the liturgy of the Catechumen and was the only part of the Mass that those who were unbaptized could attend. Here in the Baptism Rite we have a shortened form of that part of the Mass.

It is also important to note that it is possible to be pro active in the Baptism Rite. One of those places where this is possible is in the choosing of the reading, reflecting on it, offering it to the minister with your reasons for choosing it, points what you might want him to express to your family and friends through the homily. While the minister has the pastoral discretion to decline these suggestions (especially if there are multiple Baptisms), it is always a great sign of active participation.

Here are 4 Gospel options that are recommended

John 3: 1-6: The meeting with Nicodemus.

Matthew 28: 18-20: The apostles are sent to preach the gospel and to baptize.

Mark 1: 9-11: The baptism of Jesus.

Mark 10: 13-16: Let the little children come to me.



Instructing the Catechumen



Reading the Scriptures; early Church



## INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS

85. The celebrant next invites all present to invoke the saints:

Holy Mary, Mother of God.

All: Pray for us.

Saint John the Baptist.

All: Pray for us.

Saint Joseph.

All: Pray for us.

Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

All: Pray for us.

The names of other saints may be added, especially the patrons of the child to be baptized, and of the church or locality. The litany concludes:

All holy men and women.

All: Pray for us.



Having prayed for the help of the saints; we now make a statement against evil and its influence in our life; casting it out through a prayer of exorcism. We are about to do a holy thing, go to a holy place (the Baptism font) and in preparation we proclaim our Lord's power over evil and cast it out from this place.



Having completed the period of inquiry and instruction; we now move to the remote preparation for the sacrament. We begin first by asking the entire Christian community to pray for us in the litany of the Saints. In this prayer we acknowledge the presence and our communion with all those who have passed before us who enjoy the fruits of their Baptism in Paradise. They are present with us as we prepare to approach the Baptism font and we ask for their prayers and support as we prepare to take on this very challenging undertaking of being faithful to our Christian commitments. This Litany of the Saints is prayed before the reception of several of the sacraments, in particular Confirmation, Holy Orders, and funeral rites. This is also a place where one can be proactive by proposing your favorite saints to be added to the litany (perhaps the patrons of your family members).

## PRAYER OF EXORCISM

After the invocation, the celebrant says:

Almighty and ever-living God,  
you sent your only Son into the world  
to cast out the power of Satan, spirit of evil,  
to rescue man from the kingdom of darkness,  
and bring him into the splendor of your kingdom of light.

We pray for this child:

set him (her) free from original sin,  
make him (her) a temple of your glory,  
and send your Holy Spirit to dwell with him (her).

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Or

Almighty God,  
you sent your only Son  
to rescue us from slavery of sin,  
and to give us the freedom  
only your sons and daughters enjoy.

We now pray for this child  
who will have to face the world with its temptations,  
and fight the devil in all his cunning.

Your Son died and rose again to save us.  
By his victory over sin and death,  
cleansing this child 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

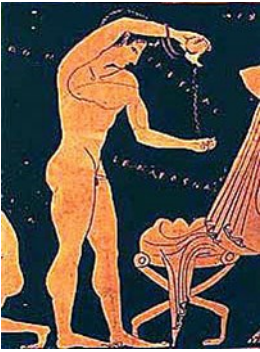
## ANOINTING BEFORE BAPTISM

The celebrant continues:

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

All: Amen.

He anoints the child on the breast with the oil of  
catechumens.



In the Baptism there is a double anointing, which is a tradition that goes back to the earliest Christian Baptisms. It is possible that this tradition sprung forth from the habit of the mediteranean culture to anoint themselves with oil before and after they bathed. Christians took this action and made it a sign by which the one who is to be Baptized is claimed for Christ. The child is to become “another Christ” who was both Priest, Prophet, and King. Since being anointed with oil was often the way that Kings, prophets, and priests were designated, it is only proper that one to be Baptized be anointed with oil. The oil used for the first anointing is simply olive oil that has been blessed by the Bishop of the Diocese. It is called the oil of Catechumens because it is for those who are about to receive Baptism. All oils for the Diocese are usually consecrated at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week (traditionally occuring on Holy Thursday). In this remote preparation for Baptism the Child is anointed with oil on the chest; and it is a good ideal to keep this in mind when choosing a garment for the Child.



### Discussion Questions:

- How do you hope to give your children the spiritual strength that they will need to face life’s challenges?”
- What are some of the signs or gestures we use today to show that a child is special?
- What is the significance of your child being anointed?

## BLESSING AND INVOCATION OF GOD OVER BAPTISMAL WATER

### Form A

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs,  
which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In baptism we use your gift of water,  
which you have made a rich symbol of the grace  
you give us in this sacrament.

At the very dawn of creation  
your Spirit breathed on the waters,  
making them the wellspring of all holiness.

The waters of the great flood  
you made a sign of the waters of baptism,  
that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

Through the waters of the Red Sea  
you led Israel out of slavery,  
to be an image of God's holy people,  
set free from sin by baptism.

In the waters of the Jordan  
your Son was baptized by John  
and anointed with the Spirit.  
Your Son willed that water and blood  
should flow from his side as he hung upon the cross.

After his resurrection he told his disciples:  
“Go out and teach all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Father,  
look now with love upon your Church,  
and unseal for her the fountain of baptism.  
By the power of the Spirit  
give to the water of this font the grace of your Son  
so that in the sacrament of baptism  
all those whom you have created in your likeness  
may be cleansed from sin  
and rise to a new birth of innocence by water and the Holy  
Spirit.

**The celebrant touches the water with his right hand and  
continues:**

We ask you, Father, with your Son  
to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font.  
May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism  
rise also with him to newness of life.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.



In the Baptismal rite there is an intended movement (not always possible due to circumstances). First, the family was met at the door of the church and questioned about their intention for entering the Church (both literally and figuratively). Then you enter the Church and go to the place of instruction and remote preparation, the ambo where the scriptures are read. Now we are leaving the ambo and going to the place of Baptism. In ancient churches this was often a place completely separate from the main church, sometime even down to the river or spring. Even now churches will have a place that is separate or off to the side from the sanctuary. Having reached the water we offer a prayer of blessing over it; consecrating it and setting it aside for the purpose of the sacrament. In this extensive prayer of blessing we are reminded of the rich symbolism of water and the meaning it has had throughout our heritage of Faith, throughout Sacred Scriptures. Although there is only one form given here, there are three optional forms for this blessing, and it is completely proper for the the parents to suggest the option that they prefer.



## RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

83. The celebrant speaks to the parents and godparents in these words:

Dear parents and godparents: You have come here to present this child for baptism. By water and the Holy Spirit he (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 this child is about to be baptized.

94. The celebrant questions the parents and godparents:

**A.**

**Celebrant:** Do you reject Satan?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

**Celebrant:** And all his works?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

**Celebrant:** And all his empty promises?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

**Or B.**

**Celebrant:** Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

**Celebrant:** Do you reject the glamor of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

**Celebrant:** Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.



Easter Vigil, Adult Baptism, profession of Faith

## RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH CONT...

**Celebrant:** Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

**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?

**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 the life everlasting?

**Parents and Godparents:** I do.

The celebrant and the congregation give their assent to this profession of faith:

**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.

Now we are ready for Baptism, but just before we consecrate this child forever to God and the following of Christ, the parents and Godparents make this most profound profession of Faith. Baptism is always an expression of the Faith which is professed. It is not a magic rite which acts upon us without reference to our profession of Faith. In the case of infant Baptism it is by the Faith of the parents that the child is Baptized, and the Church only agrees to this baptism in reference to that Faith and their real intention to raise the child in the Faith of the Church. If they were adults the Church would have taken on the responsibility of preparing them for the sacrament in advance. In infant Baptism the Church foregoes the preparation trusting that the parents will complete it after the event.

## **BAPTISM**

97. The celebrant invites the family to the font and questions the parents and godparents:

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

**Parents and Godparents:** It is.

He baptizes the child, saying:

**N., I baptize you in the name of the Father,**

He immerses the child or pours water upon it.

**and of the Son,**

He immerses the child or pours water upon it a second time.

**and of the Holy Spirit.**

He immerses the child or pours water upon it a third time.



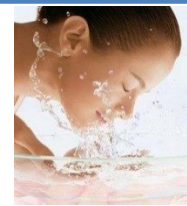
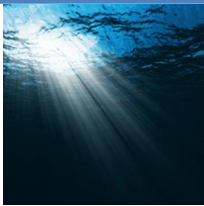
Eastern Rite Baptism by Immersion

Having made our profession of Faith we bring the child to be Baptized. First, it is important to note that there are two ways for this rite to be done. The minister can either pour the water on the child or immerse the child in water. While Baptism through the pouring of water is easier and thus more common; immersion is full of symbolism and part of a rich tradition. Some churches and ministers are more open to immersion than others and the parents are always able to ask if Baptism by immersion would be possible. From a merely logistical stand point, Baptism by immersion needs more foresight and planning. Somethings to consider for immersion is the process of removing the infants cloths, having a suitable Baptism font for the event, addressing the reality that infants may loose control of their bladder in the water, drying the infant off, etc. . . However, all of these realities can be addressed in various ways. What ever way your child is baptized, it always good to bring an extra towel.

## Discussion Questions

- In what ways is water a powerful symbol for you?
- Discuss water as a source of life and death. How does Scripture portray water?
- What does the use of water symbolize in this sacrament?

Water is so rich with symbolism, no wonder it is the instrument that Our Lord chose to be the symbol of our consecration and redemption. It is a life giving fluid; life cannot come by any other way. In the womb the baby was immersed in water and there is a certain “baptism” by water at the moment of natural birth. This is why the Baptismal font has sometimes been spoken of as a womb from which supernatural life comes from. Water is also a destructive force, the cause of death for many. The symbolism of water in Baptism is the dying to one’s former life. Putting to death sin in one’s life and rising with Christ to new life. In the case of infant Baptism it is the parents who are renewing their Baptismal commitment to put to death sin in their life. Water is also a cleaning agent, wiping away all evil and sin. It also reinvigorates us on a hot day, renewing our strength. Water is also a symbol of mystery as expressed by the depths of the ocean, by the way that it is so undefined in its shape and parameters (where the water begins and the earth begins is never easily defined). This then speaks to us of the mystery of God and the mysterious actions of the Holy Spirit which are not always easy to define.



## ANOINTING AFTER BAPTISM

98. **Then the celebrant says:**

The God of power and 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 the celebrant anoints the child on the crown of the head with the sacred chrism, in silence.**

The Baptism is finished, now the child is all wet, and if we have immersed him/her, they are also all naked. So, following the tradition, we first anoint him with oil; or in this case, oil mixed with a perfume. This perfume is called Balsam and comes in a multitude of flavors from various plants. It is oily or resinous in texture, having a sent similar to cinnamin, and often comes from plants related to the pine tree. It is the same oil, perfume mixture that is used in Confirmation. This second oil is called Chrism and is a prefiguration of the time when the child will be confirmed by the Bishop later on in life.



Eastern Rite; Godmother assists in the Anointing of the Baby's entire body





Clothing of the Baby after baptism of Immersion

## CLOTHING WITH THE WHITE GARMENT

99. **The celebrant says:**

**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. A different  
color is not permitted unless demanded by local  
custom. It is desirable that the family provide the  
garment.



After having been bathed and anointed with oil we need to get dressed. If the child has been immersed this part of the rite has greater significance. It has often been the tradition that people come to baptism in their ordinary cloths, took their cloths off, were baptized, and then put on a white garment. This rich symbolism can be expressed by the parents in many ways. The child can be swaddled in a grey or brown blanket before the baptism and then swaddled in a white blanket that can be saved as their baptismal garment. It is very popular to buy a special white dress that the child can change into after the Baptism (although many people forego the “changing” part and simply have their child dressed in it from the beginning). Often the Church will supply a white garment which you can keep as an additional memorial.

White is the absense of stain, the absense of color, and is, of course, the representation of purity, sinlessness. In it’s purest form it is very rare in nature, and thus is a sign of the Divine. In the Transfiguration, Christ’s vestments were revealed to be “whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them.” Thus, through this white garment we symbolize our transformation into Christ, sharing in his glory.

## LIGHTED CANDLE

100. **The celebrant takes the Easter candle and says:**

Receive the light of Christ.

Someone from the family (such as the father or godfather) lights the child's candle from the Easter candle.

**The celebrant then says:**

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.



The essential Baptism rite is complete, now the Church is sending us on our way. A candle is given as reminder of the Faith that the Church is entrusting to the parents and godparents to be handed on to the child. It is lit from the Easter/Paschal candle. The Paschal candle is first lit at the Easter Vigil, the greatest liturgy of the Church calendar. The Easter Vigil has traditionally been the event during which all catechumens were baptised. The Easter candle is lit from a large fire at the entrance of the church and carried in procession into the church. It represents the continuation of the Faith, the light of Christ, from year to year. In having the child's candle lit from the Easter Candle there is a connection made between the Easter Vigil (the traditional and formal time for Baptism) and this particular liturgy of Baptism. One should also remember that you are not limited to using the small candle that the Church provides. One can provide one's own candle, and these can come in many sizes and decorations. If the candle is sufficient, a pious practice could be to light it at the anniversary of your child's Baptism. Yet another way one could be proactive in the child's Baptism rite.

### **EPHPHETHA OR PRAYER OVER EARS AND MOUTH**

The Ephphatha (be open) refers to the event related by Mark (7:31-37) where Jesus took a deaf and mute man aside; placed his fingers on his ears and tongue and they were opened. The symbolism expresses a desire that the Lord will open the child to a life conformed by Faith, the Faith that the parents are called to impart to him/her. This rite is optional, so if the minister desires, he can omit it. Once again, if you would like this rich symbol to be part of the rite you can express your preference to the minister.

101. *If the conference of bishops decides to preserve the practice, the rite of Ephphetha follows. The celebrant touches the ears and mouth of the child with his thumb, saying:*

The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father.

**All:** Amen.

102. Next there is a procession to the altar, unless the baptism was performed in the sanctuary. The lighted candle is carried for the child. A baptismal song is appropriate at this time,

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

103. The celebrant stands in front of the altar and addresses the parents, godparents, and the whole assembly in these or similar words:

Dearly beloved, this child has been reborn in baptism.

He (she) is now called the 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 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:

104. All present join the celebrant in singing or saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

### **BLESSING**

105. The celebrant first blesses the mother, who holds the child in her arms, then the father, and lastly the entire assembly:

A.

**Celebrant:**

God the Father, through his Son, the Virgin Mary's child,  
has brought joy to all Christian mothers,  
as they see the hope of eternal life shine on their children.

May he bless the mother of this child.

She now thanks God for the gift of her child.

May she be one with him (her)  
in thanking him for ever in heaven,  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Celebrant:**

God is the giver of all life, human and divine.  
May he bless the father of this child.

He and his wife will be the first teachers of their child  
in the ways of faith.

May they be also the best of teachers,  
bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do,  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Celebrant:**

By God's gift, through water and the Holy Spirit,  
we are reborn to everlasting life.

In his goodness,  
may he continue to pour out his blessings upon these  
sons and daughters of his.

May he make them always, wherever they may be,  
faithful members of his holy people.

May he send his peace upon all who are gathered here,  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Celebrant:**

May almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,  
bless you.

**All:** Amen.





Eastern Rite Post Baptism Procession

Now at the conclusion of the Rite of Baptism we process to the Altar. Why all these movements back and forth? While many Baptisms are done in one place for pastoral reasons, understanding the different movements that are intended for the rite helps one understand how all these parts of the rite fit together. So, a simple recap to get the big picture. First, you showed up at the door and there was an inquiry of your intentions for entering the Church. Then you were led to the place of instruction, the ambo, and the significance of the sacrament you were about to receive was expounded upon. Then there was a preparation for the sacrament before going to the place of Baptism. You arrive to the place of Baptism (remember, it was often outside of the Church) and you were baptized, anointed, and vested. Now, you are outside, maybe on the bank of a river, so you were given a candle to light your way, because the Easter Vigil (the traditional time for Baptism) was done at night. You return to the church, where you are going to participate in Holy Communion for the first time. Remember, in the early Church, those to be Baptized did not participate in the Mass after the Homily. This time, the time of the Eucharist, was a time called the “mystery” and only the Baptized could partake in this part of the Mass. So, for the first time, to complete their initiation into the fellowship of the Church, the newly Baptized receive Communion. To this day, in the Eastern Rite Churches, even the infants receive Confirmation and Holy Communion right after they have been baptized. In the Roman Catholic Rite, infants do not receive Holy Communion and Confirmation after Baptism. However, as a sign of the anticipated completion of this rite of initiation which began with your child’s Baptism, we return to the Altar. Instead of celebrating the Mass and receiving Communion we say together the Our Father, and offer final blessings (just as in Mass). Thus, the gathering is dismissed, sent forth, to continue what was done here, to prepare the child for Confirmation and First Holy Communion, which will be a completion of what was begun in Baptism.



Early Christian Baptism; Divested, Baptized, Vested, Anointed, receiving the lighted candle

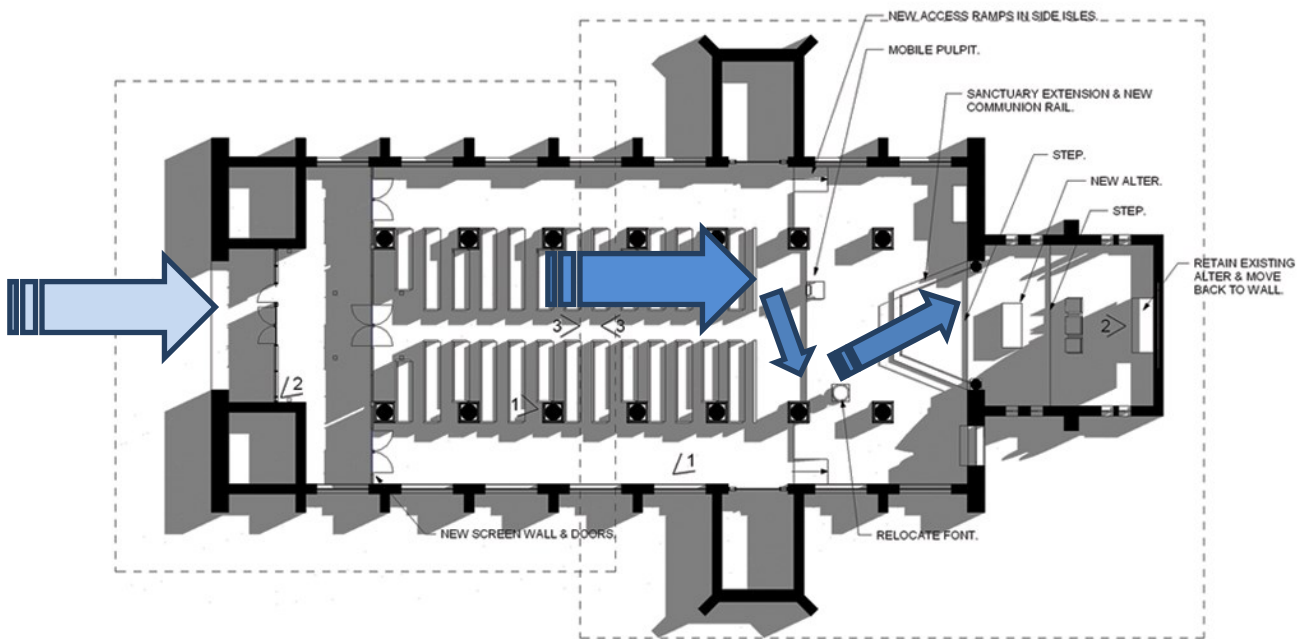


Figure 3 Intended movement of the Baptism Rite; Entrance, Amble, Baptistry, Altar

## SECTION 3:

# LIVING OUT THE PROMISES OF BAPTISM

Having seen an overview of the nature and rite of Baptism; we want to end this program by taking time to reflect and pray over what we are being called to do and become in light of this child's Baptism. In order to facilitate this we will divide up into small groups. We'll start with a few minutes of prayer and reflective silence to allow for individual meditation on the significance and personal response to the text and questions presented below. Then, after a few minutes we will have group discussions about the questions before we come back together to share our reflections.

*Celebrant:* What name do you give your child? *Parents:* N.

*Celebrant:* What do you ask of God's Church for N.? *Parents:* Baptism. (the Rite of Baptism)

**In general, what do you desire for your Child?**

**Why do you desire Baptism for your Child?**

*"You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) 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 neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?*

*Parents:* We do." (the Rite of Baptism)

*"the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the Ecclesia domestica. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are 'by word and example...the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.'" --paragraph 1656, Catechism of the Catholic Church*

**What are some concrete ways that you can honor and fulfill this responsibility? Sacramental Life, prayer, education, community, charity, example . . .**

**How can you make your home a "Domestic Church?"**

*"Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?"*

*Godparents:* We are." (the Rite of Baptism)

**Godparent; what has motivated you to take on this responsibility?**

**Parents, what are some ways that you would like your godparents to assist you in fulfilling your duty?**

**Godparents, what are some concrete ways that you can give this assistance?**

*"Dear parents and godparents: You have come here to present this child for baptism. By water and the Holy Spirit he (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." (the Rite of Baptism)*

**What are some ways that we can manifest this "constant care?" How would it look like for you?**

**What are some ways that we can keep our children from the corruption of sin?**

**What are some ways that you can help your children celebrate their Baptism; to know it as the most important day of their lives that needs to be renewed constantly?**

**What are some ways that you can prayerfully prepare for your Child's Baptism?**

## Concluding prayer time

To Close our meeting we put ourselves in a place of prayer. For this closing prayer we have three passages of scripture. We will first prayerfully read each passage to ourselves and then close our eyes and listen as three volunteers read them out loud while pausing between each reading. Then, we will invite those who are willing to share a word or a phrase that spoke to you from the readings

### **MARK 1:9-11**

During that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. Immediately on coming up out of the water he saw the sky rent in two and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Then a voice came from the heavens: "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests."

### **ROMANS 6:1-4**

What, then, are we to say? "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound?" Certainly not! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life.

### **1 THESSALONIANS 5:4-6**

You are not in the dark, brothers, that the day should catch you off guard, like a thief. No, all of you are children of light and of the day. We belong neither to darkness nor to night; therefore let us not be asleep like the rest, but awake and sober!

### **Alternative readings**

#### **LUKE 4:16-22**

He came to Nazareth where he had been reared, and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath as he was in the habit of doing, he stood up to do the reading. When the book of prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

"The spirit of the lord is upon me;  
therefore, he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to captives,  
Recovery of sight to the blind  
and release to prisoners,  
To announce a year of favor from the Lord."

#### **REVELATIONS 7:9-12**

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb." All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, and exclaimed: "Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

To conclude our time of prayer we take a moment to reflect on what new resolutions and acts of renewal God is calling us to make in light of this preparation for the sacrament of Baptism.

In conclusion we pray; Our Father. . .

As we all leave, let us bless ourselves with Holy Water as a sign of a renewal of our Baptism.