

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 14: Baptism

Rebirth and Gateway to Eternal Life



Jn 3:5

1. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

CCC 1213

2. Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door to the other sacraments. Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God. We become members of Christ and are incorporated into the Church.

CCC 1214

3. To baptize = to "plunge" or "immerse" - symbolizing the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him as a "new creature." Baptism is called "enlightenment" because the person baptized has been enlightened and become a "son of light."

Roman Missal,
Easter Vigil 42

Baptism in the Economy of Salvation

CCC 1217-18

4. "At the very dawn of creation Your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness." Since the beginning of the world, water has been the source of life and fruitfulness.

CCC 1219-20
1 Pet 3 :20

5. "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." Noah's ark is a prefiguring of salvation by baptism. Water springing up from the earth symbolizes life; water of the sea - death and the cross.

CCC 1221

6. "You freed the children of Abraham from the slavery of Pharaoh, bringing them dry-shod through the waters of the Red Sea, to be an image of the people set free in baptism."

CCC 1222

7. Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the People of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life fulfilled in the New Covenant.

Ezek 18 :21-24

8. In the Old Covenant, children were circumcised and adopted into God's people according to the faith of their parents. Inclusion into the covenant was both individual and collective. Circumcision did not guarantee justification before God; lifelong faithfulness was necessary.

CCC 1223-24
Mt 3 :13-17

9. Jesus begins his public life after being baptized in the Jordan to "fulfill all righteousness" - as a manifestation of his self-emptying. The Spirit descends on Jesus as a prelude of the new creation.

CCC 1215, 1992
Jn 3 :5

10. The "new birth" of water and the Spirit is baptism, without which no one can enter the kingdom of God. Justification is conferred in baptism. "Receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior" is not enough.

CCC 1225
Mt 28 :19,
Mk 16 :16

11. In his Passover Christ opened the fountain of baptism to all. After his resurrection he gave the mission to his apostles to go out and baptize people of all nations so that they may be saved.

Baptism in the Church

CCC 1226
Acts 2:38,
Acts 16:31-32

12. From the day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered holy baptism, which is always seen as connected with faith.

13. The believer enters through baptism into communion with Christ's

<p>CCC 1227 Rom 6:3-4 Tit 3:5-6</p> <p>1 Pet 3:20-21</p>	<p>death, is buried with him, and rises with him as a "new creature" who has "put on Christ." Baptism is <i>the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit</i> that purifies, justifies, and sanctifies.</p> <p>14. Baptism is not only an external symbol; it truly saves – though not an absolute guarantee of salvation but the <i>beginning</i> of the life-long <i>process</i> of salvation.</p>
<p>CCC 1234</p>	<p>15. The <i>sign of the cross</i> marks with the imprint of Christ the one who is going to belong to him and signifies the grace of redemption.</p>
<p>CCC 1236</p>	<p>16. The <i>proclamation of the Word of God</i> enlightens the candidates with the revealed truth and calls for their response of faith.</p>
<p>CCC 1237</p>	<p>17. <i>Exorcisms</i> are pronounced over the candidate who explicitly renounces Satan and is able to <i>confess the faith of the Church</i>.</p>
<p>CCC 1238</p>	<p>18. The <i>baptismal water</i> is consecrated by a prayer of epiclesis so that the power of the Holy Spirit may be sent upon the water.</p>
<p>CCC 1239-40</p>	<p>19. Baptism is performed by triple immersion in the water (or by pouring the water three times over the head) with the formula: "N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."</p>
<p>CCC 1241</p>	<p>20. The anointing with sacred chrism signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit. The <i>white garment</i> symbolizes that the person has "put on Christ." The <i>candle</i> signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte, who is then admitted to first communion - the marriage supper of the Lamb.</p>
<p>CCC 1246-49</p>	<p>21. Who can receive baptism? Any person not yet baptized. Baptism is received <i>once</i> in a lifetime only.</p>
<p>CCC 1250, 1231 Mt 19:14, Lk 18:15-16 Acts 2:38-39</p>	<p>22. Born with a fallen human nature, children also have need of the new birth to be freed from the power of darkness and to be made children of God. Infant baptism is an ancient tradition of the Church, where the parents as nurturers of life are required to teach the faith to their children.</p>
<p>CCC 1253-55</p>	<p>23. Baptism is the sacrament of faith, within the faith of the Church and the community of believers. The faith required for baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a beginning that is called to develop. For this, the help of the parents, of the godfather and godmother, and of the whole community is important.</p>
<p>Col 2:11-12</p>	<p>24. Baptism is the new circumcision. Infants are received into God's family through the faith of their parents. Receiving baptism does not signify a departure from Judaism. Jewish-Christian children may be both circumcised and baptized.</p>
<p>CCC 1256</p>	<p>25. Who can baptize? Normally: bishop, priest or deacon. In case of necessity, anyone with the required intention can baptize using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The Church accepts (Trinitarian) baptisms from other Christian confessions.</p>
<p>Jn 3:5 CCC 1257</p>	<p>26. Jesus affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. The Church does not know of any means other than baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude.</p>
<p>CCC 1258</p>	<p>27. What about those who die without baptism?</p> <p>a. Those who suffer death for the sake of faith are baptized by their death for and with Christ (baptism of blood).</p>

CCC 1259	b. Catechumens? their explicit desire to receive it, repentance for their sins and charity assures them their salvation (baptism of desire).
CCC 1260	c. Those ignorant of the Gospel? If they sincerely seek the truth and do the will of God as they understand it, they can be saved. They would have desired baptism if they had known about it.
CCC 1261	d. Children who have died without baptism? The Church entrusts them to the mercy of God.
The Effects of Baptism	
CCC 1263-64	28. The grace of baptism : All sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. But temporal consequences of sin remain: suffering, illness, death, weaknesses of character, and the inclination to sin (concupiscence).
CCC 1265	29. Baptism makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted child of God, partaker of the divine nature, member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.
CCC 1266	30. The Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, enabling him to believe in God, to hope in him and to love him, giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.
CCC 1267-68	31. Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ, the Church. The baptized share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission.
CCC 1269-71	32. The baptized person no longer belongs to himself but to Christ. He is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church and to submit to the Church's leaders. The baptized must profess the faith of the Church and participate in her apostolic and missionary activity. Baptism is the sacramental bond of unity of all Christians.
CCC 1273-74	33. Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible mark which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship and to the witness of a holy life and practical charity. The Holy Spirit has marked us with the seal of the Lord for the day of redemption, eternal life and hope of the resurrection.

Questions for Discussion

1. How is baptism similar to a birthday?
2. Why is it not enough to "receive Jesus as personal Savior" to be saved?
3. How do the physical aspects of Baptism (for example, the water) help us to focus on the eternal meaning of the sacrament?
4. What does baptism do to a person? Is it only an external symbol of his/her inner faith?
5. How do you think you will change as a person and disciple of Christ after you have received baptism?