

◆ Baptism Preparation – Session Two ◆

The Rite of Baptism

What the Church Does and What It Means

This session is intended to be used gradually over time.

Return to it slowly over the coming days and weeks:

- read one section at a time
- reflect quietly
- revisit the Scripture passages
- speak honestly together
- pray simply as a family

The rites and symbols of Baptism are not empty ceremonies.

Every word and action teaches us something about what God is doing through this sacrament.

Begin Together

Make the Sign of the Cross together.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You sanctified the waters of Baptism.

Help us to understand more deeply
the signs and words of this sacrament.

Draw our family closer to You
through faith, prayer, and reverence.

Amen.

Why the Rite Matters

The celebration of Baptism is not symbolic theatre or simply a family tradition.

Through visible signs, God acts invisibly within the soul.

The Church does not invent these signs randomly.

They come from:

- Sacred Scripture
- the teaching of Christ
- the life of the early Church

Understanding the rite helps us approach Baptism prayerfully and reverently.

Baptism Within Sunday Mass

In our parish, Baptism is normally celebrated within Sunday Mass whenever possible.

This is because Baptism welcomes a person not only into a family celebration, but into the worshipping life of the Church.

The newly baptised child is welcomed by the whole parish community and begins sharing in the life of the Church gathered around the Eucharist.

Baptism is the beginning of a lifelong journey within the Church.

The Structure of the Rite

The celebration follows a clear pattern:

- Reception of the child
- Liturgy of the Word
- Renunciation of sin
- Profession of faith
- Blessing of water
- Baptism with water
- Anointing with Sacred Chrism
- White garment
- Lighting of the candle

Each part reveals something about what God is doing through Baptism.

1. The Reception of the Child

At the beginning of the rite, the priest asks:

“What name do you give your child?”

A name is personal.

God calls each person by name.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.”
(Isaiah 43:1)

The priest then traces the Sign of the Cross on the child’s forehead.

Parents and godparents are invited to do the same.

The Cross marks belonging.

From the very beginning, the child is claimed for Christ.

2. The Liturgy of the Word

Sacred Scripture is proclaimed.

Why?

Because faith grows through hearing the Word of God.

“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
(Romans 10:17)

Even though a baby cannot yet understand the readings, the Church proclaims the Gospel to remind everyone present that Baptism is rooted in Jesus Christ and His teaching.

The Christian life is built upon hearing and following the Word of God.

3. Renunciation of Sin

Before the Baptism itself, parents and godparents are asked to renounce sin.

You will hear questions such as:

“Do you renounce Satan?”
“Do you renounce his works?”
“Do you renounce his empty promises?”

Christian faith is not simply a cultural identity or vague spirituality.

To follow Christ means gradually turning away from sin and learning to live differently.

This includes rejecting:

- selfishness
- dishonesty
- hatred
- cruelty
- indifference to God

Baptism is not only about what we receive.

It is also about what we leave behind.

The Christian life always involves conversion and beginning again.

4. Profession of Faith

After renouncing sin, parents and godparents profess the faith of the Church on behalf of the child.

You affirm belief in:

- God the Father
- Jesus Christ
- the Holy Spirit
- the Church
- forgiveness of sins
- the resurrection of the body
- eternal life

Faith is not vague spirituality.

Christian faith is specific belief rooted in Jesus Christ.

One day your child will be invited to profess this faith personally.

For now, the Church asks parents and godparents to speak in the child's name.

5. The Blessing of Water

Water has deep meaning throughout the Bible.

In Scripture, water is:

- a sign of life
- cleansing
- healing
- new beginning

The Church recalls:

- Creation

- Noah and the Flood
- the crossing of the Red Sea
- the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan

Water itself is not magic.

It becomes a sacramental sign because Christ commanded Baptism through water and the Holy Spirit.

6. The Moment of Baptism

This is the heart of the sacrament.

The priest pours water and says:

“I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

At that moment:

- original sin is removed
- sanctifying grace is given
- the Holy Spirit dwells within the soul
- the person becomes a child of God
- the person becomes a member of the Church
- the soul receives a permanent spiritual mark

“He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”
(*Titus 3:5*)

Baptism truly changes the soul.

The change is invisible, but real.

Its effects are lifelong.

7. The Anointing with Sacred Chrism

After Baptism, the child is anointed with holy oil called Sacred Chrism.

The word “Christ” means “Anointed One.”

Through this anointing, the child shares in the life and mission of Christ.

The Church speaks of Christ as:

- Priest
- Prophet
- King

This means Christians are called:

- to offer their lives to God
- to live in truth
- to grow in holiness and self-control

This anointing also points forward to Confirmation.

8. The White Garment

A white garment is placed upon the child.

The white garment symbolises:

- new life
- purity
- dignity
- being clothed in Christ

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

(Galatians 3:27)

The garment reminds us that the life of grace received in Baptism should be protected and nourished throughout life.

9. The Candle

A candle is lit from the Paschal Candle.

The Paschal Candle represents the risen Christ.

Jesus says:

“I am the light of the world.”

(John 8:12)

Parents and godparents are entrusted with helping the child walk in the light of faith.

Faith must be kept alive through:

- prayer
- Sunday Mass
- the sacraments
- Christian example
- life within the Church

Grace grows through faithful and consistent Christian living.

Why Understanding the Rite Matters

When we understand the rite more deeply:

- we approach Baptism with reverence
- we avoid reducing it to a social event
- we recognise that Christ is truly acting
- we understand the promises being made
- we begin to see how Baptism shapes everyday life

The signs of the rite are not empty ceremonies.

They teach us how to live as Christians.

Questions for Reflection

Return to these questions gradually over time.

- Which part of the rite stands out most to us?
- What does the Sign of the Cross mean in daily life?
- What does it mean to reject sin and follow Christ?
- Are we ready to profess the faith sincerely?
- How can we prepare spiritually before the day of Baptism?

Honest reflection matters more than perfect answers.

Questions & Answers

Is the water only symbolic?

No. Water is the sacramental sign through which God truly gives grace in Baptism.

Why must the Trinity be named?

Because Jesus commanded Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Why renounce sin publicly?

Because Christian life involves rejecting sin and choosing Christ.

Why can Baptism only happen once?

Because Baptism leaves a permanent spiritual mark upon the soul.

Living With This Session

You do not need to absorb everything immediately.

Over the coming days and weeks, return prayerfully to the signs of the rite:

- the Cross
- the water
- the candle
- the white garment
- the profession of faith

Ask quietly:

What do these signs reveal about what God is doing in Baptism?

How might they shape the life of our family?

The Church walks patiently with families as faith grows.

Simple Ways to Pray

Try one or two simple practices together:

- ✓ Make the Sign of the Cross together slowly
- ✓ Read one Gospel story together
- ✓ Light a candle and pray quietly for your child
- ✓ Visit church briefly during the week
- ✓ Attend Sunday Mass prayerfully
- ✓ Speak naturally about faith at home

Faith grows through small faithful habits.

Prayers to Keep Returning To

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Glory Be

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A Prayer Before Baptism

Lord Jesus Christ,

Prepare our hearts as we approach this sacrament.

Help us to live faithfully what we profess with our lips.

Keep our child close to You always.

Amen.

Scripture to Return To

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.”
(Isaiah 43:1)

“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”
(Romans 10:17)

“He saved us... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”
(Titus 3:5)

“I am the light of the world.”
(John 8:12)