

“Amen, amen, I say to you.  
Unless one is born of water  
and the Spirit, he cannot  
enter the Kingdom of God.” -  
Jn 3:5

# BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

## Prayer before Study

O ineffable Creator, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all things, be pleased to cast a beam of your radiance upon the darkness of my mind.

Take from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance in which I was born. Give me quickness of understanding, a retentive memory, the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally, and abundant grace of expression.

Order the beginning, direct the progress and perfect the achievement of my work. You who are true God and true Man and who live and reign forever and ever.  
Amen.

## Sacraments of Christian Initiation

- Of the seven sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are referred to as the “sacraments of Christian initiation”
- It is by reception of these three sacraments that a person is fully received into communion with the Church and is made a partaker in the divine life of Christ.

## Sacraments of Christian Initiation

- Baptism and Confirmation are unrepeatable and give the recipient an indelible mark.
  - Even if one commits grave sin, apostatizes and 'leaves' the Church, upon his return, he does not need to be re-baptized.
  - The baptism of most non-Catholic denominations is considered valid by the Church, as the correct form and matter are typically used in other Christian congregations.

## Baptism - Etymology

- The word “baptize” comes from the Greek word ‘baptizein’ and means to plunge or immerse
  - the “plunge” into the water symbolizes the person’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up with him as a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Baptism was prefigured or foreshadowed in several places in the Old Testament. The Church Fathers saw it symbolized:
  - In creation, where the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2)

## Baptism Prefigured

- In the Flood of Noah, where he and his family “were saved through water” (1 Pet 3:20)
  - “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.”
- In the crossing of the Israelites through the Red Sea, where the people were set free from slavery and the Egyptians were washed away (Ex 14)
- In the crossing of the Jordan River by the Israelites, where the People of God entered into the Promised Land, an image of eternal life (Jos 3)

## Baptism Prefigured

- The cleansing of Naaman the Syrian in the River Jordan (2 Kgs 5:14)
  - “It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being washed in the Jordan, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes (St. Irenaeus, 190AD)
- The baptism of John the Baptist, which symbolized repentance of sins and a desire for a new life of holiness

## The Baptism of Christ

- Jesus himself submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist, an event described in all four Gospels
- There are several reasons why Jesus consented to a baptism that, as John the Baptist noted, he did not need:
  - It is a manifestation of His self-emptying and identification with humanity, which stands in need of God's grace and forgiveness (CCC 1224).
  - Not only does God identify with humanity through his Incarnation, uniting himself intimately and permanently with us, but also, he further identifies with humanity's fallen state in its sinfulness, even though he himself is the sinless and eternal Son of God

## The Baptism of Christ

- It inaugurates His messianic mission, wherein he is anointed by the Spirit for his ministry (Lk 4:16-20). See also: CCC 536
- In his baptism, Christ sacramentally sanctifies the waters for us, prefiguring the baptism he was to later inaugurate
- His baptism reveals what occurs spiritually every time a Christian is baptized. When we come to the Holy Font, the heavens are opened, the Spirit descends, and the Father pronounces, “You are my beloved son.”
- The baptism of Jesus begins his public ministry. Immediately after this, he goes into the wilderness to face the temptations of the devil.

## The Rite of Baptism in the Church

- Baptism is often called the “door to the other sacraments” and is the first sacrament a Catholic receives
  - One cannot receive any other Sacrament until he is baptized. It is the first question we ask.
  - One’s baptismal record is kept in perpetuity in the parish/place of baptism
- As formulated in the *Didache*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> century “Writings of the Apostles,” and as practiced since the beginning of Church history:
  - The *matter* of baptism is water
  - The *form* of baptism is the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19)

## The Rite of Baptism in the Church

- For a valid baptism, the water must come in contact with the head.
  - Immersion
  - Aspersions (sprinkling)
  - Affusion (pouring)
- Remember what we said about the Sacraments:
  - They are visible signs and actions, instituted by Christ, through which God imparts invisible grace for our salvation.
  - Baptism, and the other Sacraments, are means that Christ gave his Church through which we share in the salvific benefits of his death and resurrection.

# Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- It is through the sacrament of baptism that the initial grace of justification (the sanctifying grace of salvation) is given to us.
- Baptism effects the remission of all sin, original and actual.
  - “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38)
  - In those who are reborn in baptism, nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God (CCC 1263)
- Baptism also remits all of the temporal punishments due to sin
  - This refers to the purification of Purgatory, a point to which we will return
- For these reasons, in early centuries, there was the practice of postponing baptism until just before death.

# Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- Certain temporal consequences of fallen humanity remain in the baptized
  - Suffering, illness, bodily death, weakness of character and inclination to sin (concupiscence)
  - “...which is left for us to wrestle with, though it cannot spiritually harm those who do not consent but rather manfully resist it by the grace of Jesus Christ.” (CCC 1264)

## Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the person reborn as a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5:17):
  - An adopted child of God
  - A partaker in the divine nature
  - A member of Christ's body and a co-heir with Christ the Son of God
  - A temple of the Holy Spirit, in which the Spirit is pleased to dwell

# Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- Baptism also infuses the person with the supernatural, theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.
  - Faith is the virtue in which we believe in God and all he has revealed to us through the Church
  - Hope is the desire for the Kingdom of God and eternal happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises
  - Charity is love for God above all things for his own sake and love of neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.
  - These virtues are not human, but supernatural, equipping us to become partakers in the divine nature itself.

## Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- Baptism incorporates one into the Church, the Body of Christ, and gives him a spiritual bond with all of the other baptized, whether they be on earth, in heaven, or in a state of purification. He is now a part of the 'Communion of Saints.'
  - There is a true bond, though imperfect, between Catholics and the baptized members of other denominations
  - All 'ecumenical' discussions with other Christians denominations begin with the fact of our shared baptism.

# Spiritual Effects of Baptism

- Through the sanctifying grace imparted in baptism, the Holy Trinity gives the baptized
  - The power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the Spirit's gifts
  - Allows the baptized to grow in goodness through the moral virtues
- Finally, baptism confers a special character, an indelible mark by which the baptized is conformed to Christ.

## From Saint Paul...

- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life....Consequently, you must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:3)

## From Saint Paul...

- “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Gal 3:27)
- “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Cor 5:17)
- “You should put away the old self of your former way of life...and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness...” (Eph 4:23-4)

## Is Baptism necessary?

- The Lord himself affirmed that baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commanded his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them.
- The Church does not know of any means other than baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude... (CCC 1257)
- “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...” (Mark 16:16)

## Is Baptism necessary?

- Can God save those who have not been baptized, who have – through no fault of their own – never heard the Gospel?
  - Of course he can. God is not bound by his Sacraments and can do as it pleaseth him to do.
  - But salvation is always attained through the free gift of God and the merits of Jesus Christ
  - That is to say, all who reach heaven are saved through Jesus Christ

## Is Baptism necessary?

- The Church knows of only two other means, both extensions of baptism, wherein people can receive the grace of justification
- Baptism of Blood
  - The Church has always held that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ.
  - This teaching comes from Christ, who said, “Everyone therefore who confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32)

# Is Baptism necessary?

- Baptism of Desire
  - For catechumens who die before their baptism, their explicit desire to receive it, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament.
  - According to Scripture, perfect love possesses justifying power: “Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much” (Luke 7:47); “He that loves me shall be loved by my Father” (John 14:21)

## Who can baptize?

- The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, priest or deacon, although in case of necessity, any person can baptize.
- Even a non-believer or a heretic can baptize, provided he adheres to the form of the Church, and has the intention of doing what the Church does.
- The reason for this wide application of baptism is God's will to save all people and the necessity of baptism for salvation.

## Baptism of Infants

- For all of these reasons, it has been the constant tradition of the Church from the beginning to baptize infants and not to delay the graces offered by God through his Sacraments
- “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.” (CCC 1250)

## The Church Fathers on Infant Baptism

- "Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them" (St. Hippolytus, 215AD).
- "Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal of baptism because of the weakness of nature? Oh, what a faint-hearted mother and of how little faith!" (St. Gregory of Nazianzen, 388AD).
- "The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic" (St. Augustine, 408AD).

## The Sacrament of Confirmation

- From that time on the apostles, in fulfillment of Christ's will, imparted to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands the gift of the Spirit that completes the grace of Baptism. (CCC 1288)
- In addition to the laying on of hands, sacred oil (chrism) was very early on added to the rite in order to better highlight the name "Christian," which means "anointed."
- The form of Confirmation is the words: "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- The matter of the Sacrament is the bishop (or priest) anointing the forehead with Sacred Chrism oil and the laying on of hands.

## Effects of Confirmation

- Confirmation grants to us an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a special way, bringing us an increase and deepening of baptismal grace
  - It roots us more deeply in the Divine Sonship. That is, the grace by which we became adopted children of God through baptism is increased
  - It unites us more firmly to Christ, for it is the gift of his own Spirit
  - It increases the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit in us. The Church has discerned seven gifts and twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, as discussed below.
  - It renders our bond with the Church more perfect. Our 'membership' or bond with the Church, the Body of Christ, is completed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is shared among all members of the Church

## Effects of Confirmation

- It gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the Faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the cross.
- Like Baptism, it confers an indelible spiritual mark, the “character,” or sign that a person is marked with the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ.
- It perfects the common priesthood of the faithful, by which all the members of the Church offer, according to their state in life, prayers and sacrifices to God.

## Who Can Receive Confirmation?

- Any baptized person who has not already been confirmed can receive Confirmation.
  - Though Baptism and Eucharist are still certainly valid without Confirmation, Christian initiation would remain incomplete.
- One must be in a state of grace to receive Confirmation and should have first made a sacramental confession.
  - Intense prayer should prepare one to receive the strength and graces of the Holy Spirit with docility and readiness to act.
  - Heads up! All RCIA people, except catechumens, will make their confession before receiving confirmation next Easter.

## The Minister of the Sacrament

- The ordinary minister of the sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop. This has been the practice since the earliest days of the Church.
- The main reason that this sacrament is reserved to the bishop is that as Confirmation exemplifies the fullness of Christian life, it is proper that it be administered by those who have the fullness of priestly power: the bishops, the successors of the Apostles.
- Special permission may be granted to parish priests to administer the sacrament within certain parameters and always under the authority of their bishop.

# The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

## ■ Gifts

- Wisdom, by which we rightly direct all our actions in accordance with God's will and seek God above all things
- Understanding, by which we comprehend the divine mysteries and detach our thoughts from those things that will lead us astray
- Counsel, right judgment about what is helpful for our spiritual advancement and about the tricks and snares of the tempter of souls
- Fortitude, courage boldly to do what is right and bravely to overcome temptations that threaten our salvation

# The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

- Knowledge, by which we know the things of God and walk, without deviation, along the path of eternal life
- Piety, by which we worship God with reverence, and observe his holy laws with greater fidelity
- Fear of the Lord, a holy wonder and awe before the marvels of God and a desire never to offend him
- **Fruits**
  - Charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, chastity and self-control

# The First Confirmation

- “When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” Acts 2:1-4
  - The Apostles received the Holy Spirit (we could say they were confirmed) on Pentecost Sunday, 50 days after the Resurrection of Christ, as Jesus himself had promised.

# The First Confirmation

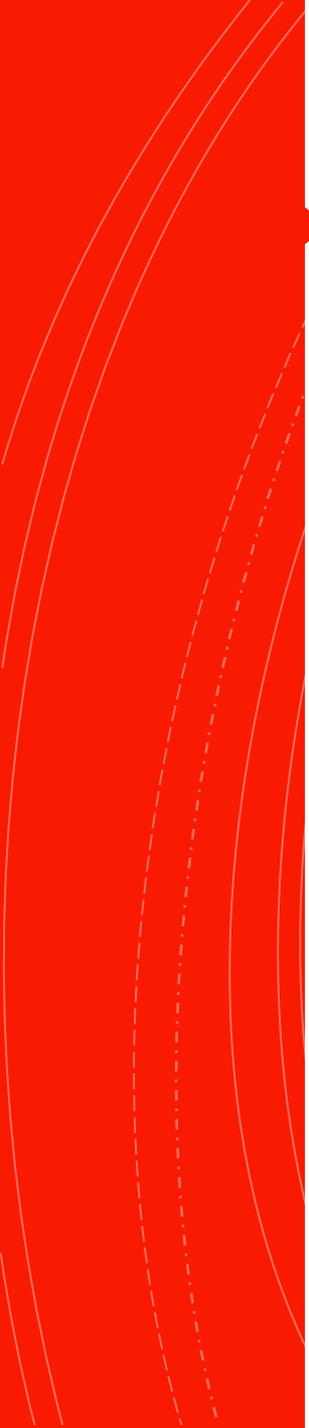
- On Pentecost:
  - The Holy Spirit inspired and empowered the apostles for their ministry
  - The same Peter who denied he knew Jesus before the crucifixion now preached him openly and boldly
  - Three thousand people were brought to repentance and were baptized through Peter's preaching
  - The Holy Spirit was likewise given to the baptized through prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-17)

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

- Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you will renew the face of the earth.
- O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Next class in three weeks on January 4...

- The Most Holy Eucharist – the Source and Summit of our Catholic Faith
- That week also begins our three-part video series on the Holy Eucharist, *Presence*, to take place on Thursday evenings
  - Jan 7, 14, 21
- Merry Christmas!!!
- Sources: NABRE, Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), *Catholic Christianity* by Peter J. Kreeft, [unamsanctamcatholicam.org](http://unamsanctamcatholicam.org)

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