

**PREPARING FOR
YOUR CHILD'S
BAPTISM**

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Dear Parents and Godparents:

Thank you for coming forward to inquire about having your child Baptized into the Catholic Faith. We are especially grateful that you have done so here at Saint Patrick's Parish.

In order to facilitate a well-rounded preparation for this Sacrament, we are asking Parents and Godparents to go through the following process:


First Meeting with the Priest

You received this booklet and provided the information for you and your child.

Read through this package.

We ask that you go through the information in this package as it lays out the Church's understanding of the importance of Baptism and its liturgical celebration.

Watch the preparatory videos.

After reading through the booklet, we ask families to watch **Episodes 1 and 2** of "Reborn: You, Your Child, and The Heart of Baptism," available on the  streaming service.

Visit <http://StPatricksBR.archtoronto.org/Formed> for details on how to access the content for free.

Second Meeting with the Priest

After you have watched the two videos, contact the parish office to set a meeting with the Priest. At this meeting, the Priest will assess your understanding of the material presented in this booklet and the videos.

At the end of this meeting, the Priest will give you a date for an in-person session with other families who are also preparing for their child's Baptism.

Attend the in-person session for families

Parents (and Godparents, as much as they are able) are to attend and complete the in-person Session. These are usually held on the second Saturday of every month.

At the end of this Session, the Priest will discuss with you the date of the celebration of the Sacrament.

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 this presentation will make your child's Baptism a meaningful event. Many of you have attended Baptism preparation sessions before. 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 on the material and on the deep meaning of Baptism. We should seek for a new appreciation and enthusiasm for this encounter with God's grace.

Appreciation comes in part from understanding. The first presentation will entail an overview of the Theology of the Sacrament of Baptism. In order to help us to be proactive participants in the Baptismal Rite, the second presentation will entail a walkthrough of the Rite itself. In the final session, which is perhaps the most important part, there will be a time for prayer, reflection, and group discussion on the Sacrament and how we and our children can live the grace of the Sacrament in our lives.

We hope that you will be engaged by our presentations and we thank you in advance for your active participation. May this preparation make your child's Baptism a truly joyful and Spirit filled event.

THE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM

What is Baptism?

Baptism is the first of the seven Sacraments.



From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1131:

“The Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.”

Baptism the Sacrament 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.

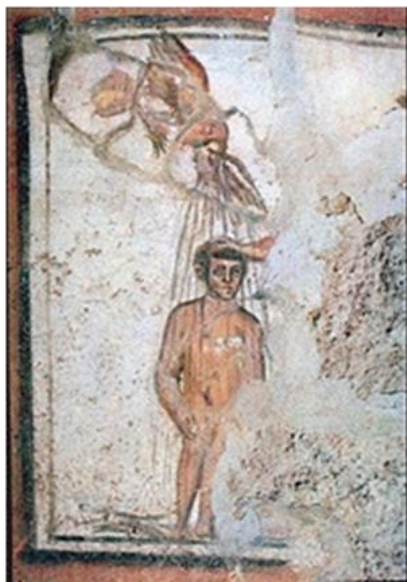
The word baptism is Greek and means to “plunge” or “immerse” (*Catechism*, 1214). Baptism is the “door” or “gateway” to a spiritual life in Christ. Through Baptism one is: freed from Original Sin and all past sins, reborn as an adopted child of God, initiated into the Church, and “bonded” to other Christians.

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 is 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, and embraces our status as children of God, and this relationship is established as a permanent reality. We speak of this permanent state of relationship with God, this divine adoption, as an “indelible mark” which can never be destroyed, not even by sin.



Baptism makes us members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. We become part of the “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises” (First Letter of 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 actions 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. Any person can only be baptized once.



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 a Priest 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. However, this is not always possible for pastoral reasons.

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” (Gospel according to 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 (called “concupiscence”), but through sanctifying grace we are strengthened 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.

Baptism 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 your 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:

***N.*, 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

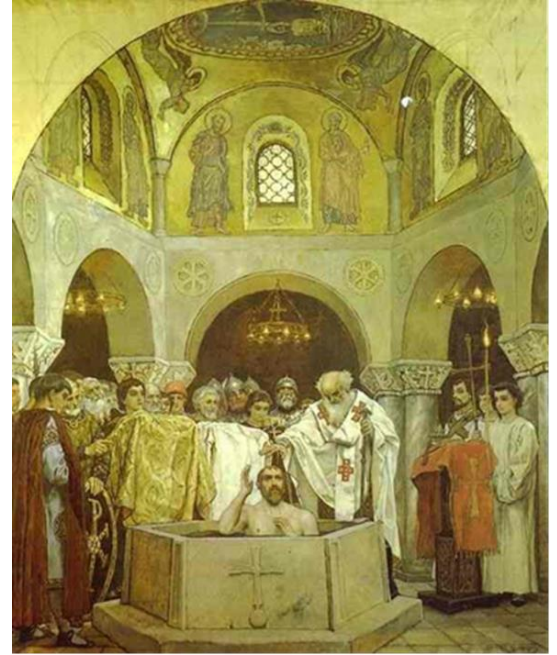
- Catechism of the Catholic Church 1213-1284
- <http://www.wordonfire.org/topics/baptism/>

Biblical Texts

- Book of Genesis 7: 1 – 8: 19 –
The Flood
- Book of Exodus 14: 10-30
The parting of the Red Sea
- Gospel according to Matthew 13: 17
The Baptism of Jesus
- Gospel according to Matthew 28: 18-19
The Great Commission
- Gospel according to John 3: 1-18
Being born again of water and the Holy Spirit
- Letter of Paul to the Romans 6: 3-11
We are baptized into Christ's death
- Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 4: 4-6
One Body, one faith, one baptism
- Letter of Paul to the Colossians 2: 12
New Life through Baptism

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 or 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 Rite of Baptism is divided into five sections. Our walk through will follow the outline of the Rite itself:

Reception of the Child

Liturgy of the Word

Invocation of the Saints

Prayer of Exorcism

Anointing Before Baptism

Liturgy of Baptism

Prayer of Blessing the Water

Renunciation of Sin

Profession of Faith

Reception of Baptism

Explanatory Rites

Anointing with Chrism

The White Garment

Reception of the Candle

Rite of *Ephphetha*

Lord’s Prayer and Final Blessing

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.”

CELEBRANT:

What name do you give (or: have you given) your child?

PARENTS:

N.

CELEBRANT:

What do you ask of God’s Church for *N.*?

PARENTS:

Baptism.

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.

CELEBRANT, to the Parents:

In asking for Baptism for your children, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising them in the faith, so that, keeping God’s commandments, they may love the Lord and their neighbor as Christ has taught us. Do you understand this responsibility?

PARENTS:

Yes. (We do.)

CELEBRANT, to the Godparents:

Are you ready to help the parents of these children in their duty?

GODPARENTS:

Yes. (We are.)



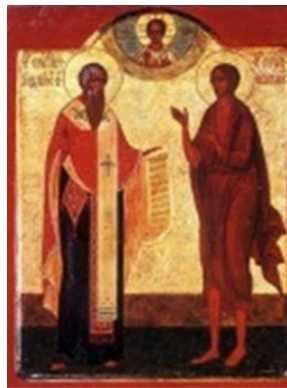
Once the review is completed, the child is welcomed and all confirm their intention through the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.



CELEBRANT, to the Child:

***N.*, the Church of God receives you with great joy. In her name I sign you with the Sign of the Cross of Christ our Savior; then, after me, your parents (and godparents) will do the same.**

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).



Before one can receive Baptism, it is necessary to receive instruction concerning the faith. In the early Church that could be a three-year process for an adult seeking Baptism. In infant Baptism the process in

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:

Gospel according to 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.

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).

CELEBRANT:

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Saint John the Baptist,
Saint Joseph,
Saint Peter and Saint Paul,
Saint Michael,
Saint Patrick,
All holy men and women, Saints of God,**

ALL:

**pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us.
pray for us
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 Lords power over evil and cast it out from this place and the one to be baptized.

CELEBRANT:

Almighty ever-living God, who sent your Son into the world to drive out from us the power of Satan, the spirit of evil, and bring the human race, rescued from darkness, into the marvelous Kingdom of your light: we humbly beseech you to free these children from Original Sin, to make them the temple of your glory, and to grant that your Holy Spirit may dwell in them. Through Christ our Lord.

ALL:

Amen.

In the celebration of 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 Mediterranean 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 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 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 occurring on Holy Thursday). In this remote preparation for baptism the child is anointed with oil on the chest, and it is a good idea to keep this in mind when choosing a garment for the child.

CELEBRANT:

May the strength of Christ the Savior protect you. As a sign of this we anoint you with the oil of salvation in the same Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

ALL:

Amen.

Some 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?

In the baptismal rite there is an intended movement (which is 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, sometimes even down to a nearby 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.

CELEBRANT:

O God, who by invisible power accomplish a wondrous effect through sacramental signs and who in many ways have prepared water, your creation, to show forth the grace of Baptism;

O God, whose Spirit in the first moments of the world's creation hovered over the waters, so that the very substance of water would even then take to itself the power to sanctify;

O God, who by the outpouring of the flood foreshadowed regeneration, so that from the mystery of one and the same element of water would come an end to vice and a beginning of virtue;

O God, who caused the children of Abraham to pass dry-shod through the Red Sea, so that the chosen people, set free from slavery to Pharaoh, would prefigure the people of the baptized;

O God, whose Son, baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan, was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and, as he hung upon the Cross, gave forth water from his side along with blood, and after his Resurrection, commanded his disciples: "Go forth, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," look now, we pray, upon the face of your Church and graciously unseal for her the fountain of Baptism.

May this water receive by the Holy Spirit the grace of your Only Begotten Son, so that human nature, created in your image and washed clean through the Sacrament of Baptism from all the squalor of the life of old, may be found worthy to rise to the life of newborn children through water and the Holy Spirit.

CELEBRANT, continues while touching the water:

May the power of the Holy Spirit, O Lord, we pray, come down through your Son into the fullness of this font, so that all who have been buried with Christ by Baptism into death may rise again to life with him. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

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 a 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.

CELEBRANT:

Dear parents and godparents: through the Sacrament of Baptism the child you have presented is about to receive from the love of God new life by water and the Holy Spirit. For your part, you must strive to bring him (her) up in the faith, so that this divine life may be preserved from the contagion of sin, and may grow in him (her) day by day. If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, then, mindful of your own

Baptism, renounce sin and profess faith in Christ Jesus, the faith of the Church, in which the child is baptized.

CELEBRANT, continues:

Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?

PARENTS AND GODPARENTS:

I do.

CELEBRANT:

Do you renounce the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?

PARENTS AND GODPARENTS:

I do.

CELEBRANT:

Do you renounce Satan, the author and prince of sin?

PARENTS AND GODPARENTS:

I do.

CELEBRANT, continues:

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, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead and is 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 life everlasting?

PARENTS AND GODPARENTS:

I do.

CELEBRANT, continues:

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

ALL:

Amen.

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. Some things to consider for immersion is the process of removing the infant's clothes, having a suitable baptismal font for the event, addressing the reality that infants may lose control of their bladder in the water, drying the infant off, etc. However, all of these realities can be addressed in various ways. Whatever way your child is baptized, it always good to bring an extra towel.

CELEBRANT, to the Parents and Godparents:

Is it your will, therefore, that N. should receive Baptism in the faith of the Church, which we have all professed with you?

PARENTS AND GODPARENTS:

It is. (Yes.)

CELEBRANT, Baptizing the Child by immersion or pouring three times:

**N., I BAPTIZE YOU IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER,
AND OF THE SON,
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Some 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 been spoken of as a womb from which supernatural life comes. 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 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.



The Baptism is done, and now the child is all wet. 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 scent similar to cinnamon, and often comes from plants related to the pine tree. It is the same oil 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.

CELEBRANT, to the Child:

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has freed you from sin, given you new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and joined you to his people. He now anoints you with the Chrism of salvation, so that you may remain members of Christ, Priest, Prophet and King, unto eternal life.

ALL:

Amen.



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 clothes 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).

CELEBRANT:

N., you have become a new creation and have clothed yourselves in Christ. May this white garment be a sign to you of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring it unstained into eternal life.

ALL:

Amen.

White is the absence of stain, the absence of color, and is, of course, the representation of purity, sinlessness. In its 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.



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.

The candle 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 Baptized. 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.

CELEBRANT, as he hands the lit candle to Parents and Godparents:

Receive the light of Christ.

CELEBRANT, continues:

Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly, so that your child, enlightened by Christ, may walk always as child of the light and, persevering in the faith, may run to meet the Lord when he comes with all the Saints in the heavenly court.

It is common practice today that the church provides this candle. If the candle is sufficient, a pious practice could be to light it at the anniversary of your child's Baptism.

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.

CELEBRANT:

May the Lord Jesus, who made the deaf to hear and the mute to speak, grant that you may soon receive his word with your ears and profess the faith with your lips, to the glory and praise of God the Father.

ALL:

Amen.

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.

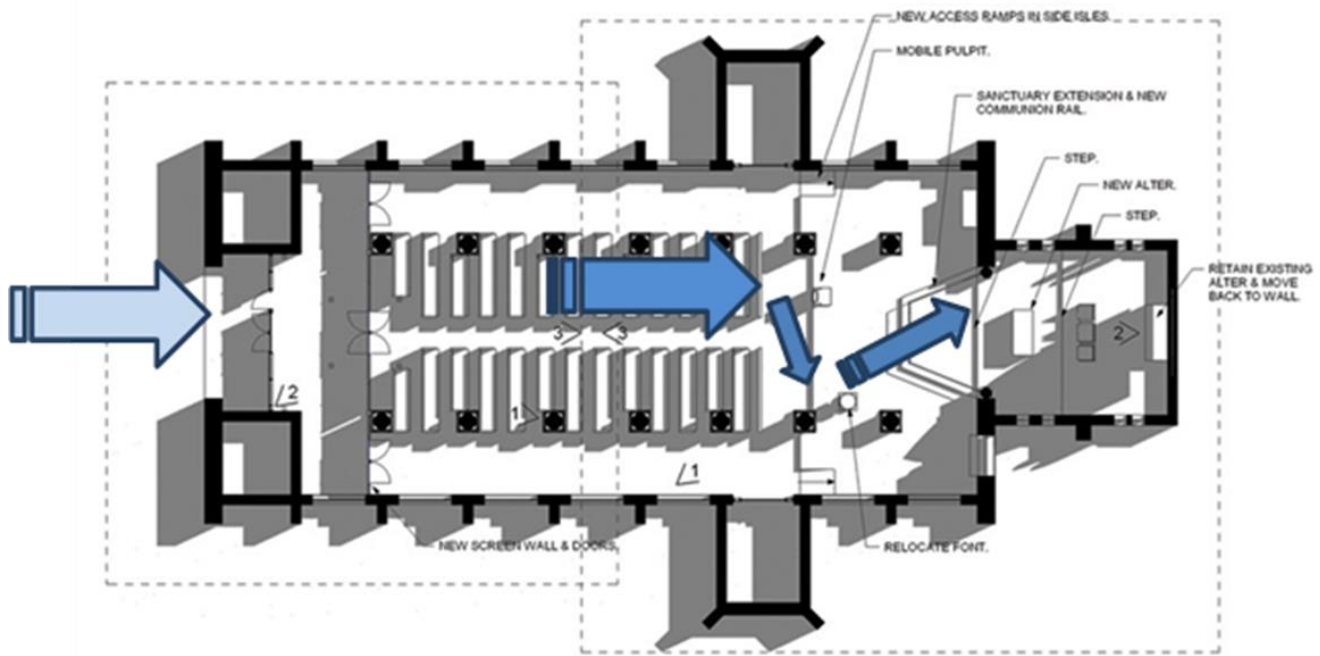
So, a simple recap to get the big picture. First, you showed up at the door and there was an inquiry of your intentions for entering the Church. Then you were led to the place of instruction, the ambo, and the significance of the sacrament you were about to receive was expounded upon.



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 immediately 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.

CELEBRANT:

Dear brothers and sisters: this child, reborn through Baptism, is now called a child of God, for so indeed he (she) is. Through Confirmation he (she) will receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit and, approaching the altar of the Lord, he (she) will share at the table of his Sacrifice, and will call upon God as Father in the midst of the Church. Now in his (her) name, and in the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters which we have all received, let us pray together as the Lord taught us.

ALL:

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.

Following the recitation of the Lord's Prayer, final blessings are given (similar to the way that Mass ends with a blessing and a dismissal).

CELEBRANT, to the Mothers:

The Lord God Almighty, through his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, brings joy to Christian mothers as the hope of eternal life shines forth upon their children. May he graciously bless the mother of this child, so that, as she now gives thanks for the gift of her child, she may always remain united with him (her) in thanksgiving, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ALL:

Amen.

CELEBRANT, to the Fathers:

May the Lord God Almighty, the giver of life both in heaven and on earth, bless the father of this child, so that, together with his wife, they may, by word and example, prove to be the first witness of the faith to their child, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ALL:

Amen.

CELEBRANT, to all:

May the Lord God Almighty, who by water and the Holy Spirit has given us new birth into eternal life, abundantly bless his faithful here present, that always and everywhere they may be active members of his people; and may he bestow his peace on all who are here, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ALL:

Amen.

CELEBRANT:

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

ALL:

Amen.

CELEBRANT:

Go in peace.

ALL:

Thanks be to God.

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.



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 your child's baptism. 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, come back together to share your reflections.

CELEBRANT:

What name do you give (or: have you given) your child?

PARENTS:

N.

CELEBRANT:

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

CELEBRANT:

Baptism.

- In general, what do you desire for your Child?
- Why do you desire Baptism for your Child?

CELEBRANT, to the Parents:

In asking for Baptism for your child, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising him (her) in the faith, so that, keeping God's commandments, he (she) may love the Lord and their neighbor as Christ has taught us. Do you understand this responsibility?

PARENTS:

Yes. (We do.)



From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 1656:

“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.’”

- What are some concrete ways that you can honor and fulfill this responsibility? Consider Sacramental life, prayer, education, community, charity, example and others.
- How can you make your home a “Domestic Church?”

CELEBRANT, to the Godparents:

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

GODPARENTS:

Yes. (We are.)

- Godparents: 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?

CELEBRANT:

Dear parents and godparents: through the Sacrament of Baptism the child you have presented is about to receive from the love of God new life by water and the Holy Spirit. For your part, you must strive to bring him (her) up in the faith, so that this divine life may be preserved from the contagion of sin, and may grow in him (her) day by day.

- What are some ways that you can manifest this “striving” to bring up your child in the faith? How would it look like for you?
- What are some ways that we can keep your children from the contagion 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 WITH PRAYER

Place yourself in a place of prayer. For this closing prayer we have passages of scripture. Prayerfully read each passage to yourself and then close your eyes and share a word or a phrase that spoke to you from the readings.

From the Gospel according to Mark (1: 9-11):

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

From the Letter of Paul to the Romans (6: 1-4):

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

From the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians (5: 4-6):

But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

From the Gospel according to Luke (4: 16-21):

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

From the Book of Revelation (7: 9-12):

After this I, John, looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, “Amen! Blessing and

glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

To conclude your time of prayer, take a moment to reflect on what new resolutions and acts of renewal God is calling you to make in light of this preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism. In conclusion, pray:

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. Amen.

Seek, too, the intercession of Our Blessed Mother:

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

And finally, invoke the blessings of our Triune God upon this time of preparation:

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.