
DIVINE MISSION

An Edge Night on the Sacrament of Baptism

LEADER OVERVIEW

Baptism is foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament and brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is our example and we are called to follow in His footsteps, to be baptized ourselves, and to share the great gift of Baptism with all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). This sacrament is the first Sacrament of Initiation and is rich in symbolism and filled with all the graces necessary to begin a Christian life.

The nature of all sacraments is that they are visible signs of invisible realities. All of the physical elements of Baptism point to something on the spiritual level. The Sign of the Cross represents the redemption won for us on the cross, the Proclamation of the Word represents our enlightenment in truth and faith, and all of the exorcism prayers and oils represent liberation from sin and renouncing Satan. The water and immersion into it represent death with Christ and rising to new life, the Sacred Chrism represents the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the white garment reveals the new life of the faithful after being raised with Christ in Baptism, and the candle represents our call to be lights in the world and to share and spread the light of Christ. (CCC 1229-1243)

Baptism can occur at any age and the normal ministers of the sacrament are the bishop and priest. Adults with proper formation in the teachings of the Catholic Church are brought into communion with the Church through Baptism. It is also common for infants to be baptized, in which case it is the duty and responsibility of the parents and godparents to nurture the child's faith and help him or her grow in understanding. (CCC 1246-1356)

Jesus Christ paved a way for us to attain eternal life through His own Baptism and by giving the Church the Sacrament of Baptism. Through our Baptism we participate in His Death and are brought to new life - "Baptism is necessary for salvation" (CCC 1257). God has given us the sacraments to bring us to salvation and these are the most sure ways to do that. However, this does not mean that God is not able to work outside of the sacraments. There are different circumstances by which salvation can still be attained through the great mercy of God outside of the official form of Baptism. Baptism of desire occurs when one has the desire and intention of being baptized but dies before being able to attain it. Baptism by blood occurs when one is killed for his or her faith but has not been baptized yet. There are also circumstances in which people have no knowledge whatsoever of Jesus Christ but lived good lives, in which one could assume if they had known about Baptism and Christ they would have desired it. Children who die before they are baptized are entrusted to the mercy and love of God who cherishes children and we have great hope for their salvation. (CCC 1257-1261)

In addition to the graces received for salvation, there are also other graces that are given through this sacrament. Original sin and all sins in one's life up to that point are forgiven, we are made new creations in Christ as sons and daughters of God and given the grace we need to live good and moral lives, and we become members of the family of the Church. During Baptism we also receive an indelible mark. We are sealed as belonging to Christ which is a seal for eternal life. Because of this indelible mark that cannot be forgotten or removed, Baptism can only occur once. (CCC 1262-1274)