

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

- 1. Jesus commands the church to baptize all nations.**
 - Matthew 28:19 “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.”
- 2. Baptism is the initiation of salvation.**
 - Mark 16:16 “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”
 - I Peter 3:21 “...baptism does now also save you.”
 - See the example of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:35-38). This is the apostolic pattern of conversion.
 - See the example of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33).
- 3. Salvation involves three characteristics:**
 - Past: “I was saved, at conversion, by belief and baptism”
 - Present: “I am being saved by abiding in Christ through faith and effort.”
 - Future: “I will be saved, by God’s grace, and receive the promised inheritance of eternal life.”
- 4. The word “baptism” comes from the Greek word *baptizo*, meaning “to immerse” or “put into,” and is performed through immersion.**
 - Baptism takes what is created (human beings), and using water, another creation, the Word of God, and the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit, transports a person into the spiritual realm (the Kingdom of God).
 - John 3:3, 5 “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Verily I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God...’ Jesus answered, ‘Verily, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.’”
- 5. Baptism is the pathway or means of entry into our life in Christ.**
 - Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
 - Colossians 2:12 “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (see also Romans 6:3-4).
 - Baptism imparts the forgiveness of sins. “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2: 38). “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16). “According to his mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5). Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation!
 - In baptism we experience a dynamic and real life in Christ, not some symbolic profession of faith, or figurative action. We are united with Christ!
 - In the Church the baptized receive a new name—a baptismal name. This affirms the reality that they are a new creation in Christ.

- In baptism we enter the Church. The font represents the womb by which sons and daughters are born “from above” and given “new birth.” It is also a tomb, where we become “dead to sin.” “But to all who received Him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1: 12, 13).
- In baptism we become the adopted sons and daughters of God. “In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.” (Ephesians 1:5,7).

6. Why do we also baptize infants?

- Baptizing infants is an expression of God’s great love for us. God loves us before we ever know Him or love Him. Baptism is pure grace (God’s unmerited love for us). Baptism is God’s action to transform and adopt us as His own! We, therefore, sometimes call baptism a sacrament and a “means of grace.”
- We bring infants to be baptized not because they believe, but in order that they may believe. In baptism the Holy Spirit plants a seed of faith that we pray will result in a mature Christian.
- Infants can believe. In Matthew 19:13 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” One cannot belong to the kingdom of heaven without faith! “And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck.” (Mark 9:42).
- St. John Chrysostom: “For this reason we baptize children, although they have no sins....in order to confer upon them sanctification, adoption, inheritance...that they may become members of Christ and become the abode of the Holy Spirit.” Of course, children, by virtue of being born into our fallen world, have original sin (where the image of God is distorted and sickness and death have a hold on mankind).
- When Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize “all nations,” he left no one out of the fullness of his grace.
- In Acts 2: 38,39, St. Peter proclaims that the promise of baptism is for all people. “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2: 39).
- There are several examples of “household” baptisms. See Acts 16.