

The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation

Outline Composed by Jim Gontis

BAPTISM

The word *Baptism* is from the Greek, “to immerse” or “to plunge.”

Minister of the Sacrament of Baptism: The ordinary minister of Baptism is a Bishop, Priest, or Deacon.

In a emergency, i.e. danger of death, anyone can baptize someone provided:

- 1) He uses water
- 2) He uses the Trinitarian formula (“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”)
- 3) He has the intention of doing what the Church does.

Sign of the Sacrament of Baptism: Pouring of water over, or immersion in, water of the one being baptized, while the minister of the sacrament says “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Matter – Water

Form – Pronunciation of the Trinitarian Formula

Ordinary Minister of the Sacrament – Bishop, Priest, or Deacon

Effects of Baptism

- Makes the baptized person an adopted son or daughter of God the Father, a member of Christ and His Church, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- The baptized person becomes a partaker in the divine nature and receives sanctifying grace, which is necessary for entrance into heaven.
- Baptized person receives the three theological / supernatural (God given) virtues of faith, hope, and charity (love).
- Removes original sin and also wipes out all personal sins committed up to the point of Baptism.
- The baptized person receives the Holy Spirit and His gifts of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord.
- Baptism carries with it a permanent spiritual character which is “imprinted” on the soul of the baptized person. Therefore, it cannot be repeated. This permanent spiritual character lasts forever. We sometimes refer to this permanent character as “the indelible mark of Baptism.” The other two

sacraments that have a permanent spiritual character are Confirmation and Holy Orders.

From Scripture

Institution of Baptism by Christ

Matthew 28: 19 – “The Great Commission” - ***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...***

John 3:5 - *Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God...*

Quote from the Church Fathers

From St. Justin Martyr (2nd Century, approximately A.D. 150) *This bath is called enlightenment, because those who receive this catechetical instruction are enlightened in their understanding.*”

Quote from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.

– Paragraph 1213

Old Testament Prefigurations of Baptism

- 1) Old Testament Flood – God purifying the world from sin.
- 2) Crossing of the Red Sea – Israelites passing from slavery to freedom.
- 3) Crossing of the River Jordan – Israelites, led by Joshua, enter into promised inheritance, i.e. the Promised Land.

Common Question

Q. Why baptize infants if they don't know what is going on?

A. Because it is spiritual sustenance for their souls and is the gateway to the rest of the spiritual and sacramental life. We don't ask babies if they're ready for milk before we give them milk. By analogy, Baptism is spiritual milk and the graces that are received by the baby already change his/her relationship with God (the baby just doesn't realize it....yet! See above the effects of Baptism.

Words to Know Regarding Baptism

Baptism – The first of the seven sacraments that gives access to the other sacraments; first and chief Sacrament of forgiveness of sins because the baptized Christian receives the remission of both personal and Original Sin. It incorporates the one being baptized into Christ and thus into His Mystical Body, the Church.

Infant Baptism – CCC 1252 – *The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the 2nd century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole “households” received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.*

Baptism of Blood – One who dies for the sake of the Faith, without having been baptized, is “baptized” by his or her death for and with Christ.

Baptism of Desire – For those who strive to serve God as best they are able but who die before having been baptized, their implicit desire to receive Baptism – together with repentance for their sins and charity – makes possible the salvation that they were not able to receive sacramentally.

Conditional Baptism – Administered when there is a doubt that Baptism was validly conferred and so it is done “conditionally,” that is, on the condition that the sacrament was not previously received.

Catechumen – From the Greek for “one being instructed.” This person is being instructed in the Christian Faith before Baptism.

Catechuminate – The instruction and formation of catechumens, those being prepared for Baptism.

Easter Vigil – The great celebration that takes place after sundown on Holy Saturday night, just prior to Easter Sunday. In this Mass, the wonders of our salvation are celebrated. Those wishing to become Christians through Baptism as well as those already baptized who desire full communion with the Catholic Church are welcomed into God’s family.

Sponsor / “Godparent” – A baptized, confirmed, and practicing Catholic who presents a child or adult for Baptism or Confirmation (and professes the Faith in the case of an infant). This person prays for the one being sponsored, is to be a credible witness to the Christian life, is to be a true spiritual friend helping the person he / she has sponsored along the path to Heaven, and, when necessary, helps with his / her religious instruction.

Baptism by Affusion (also known as infusion) – This is the practice of baptizing by means of pouring water over the head of the baptized. The Catholic Rite of Baptism provides for Baptism by immersion or affusion / infusion.

Immersion – A method of baptizing whereby the whole person is submerged in water. The Catholic rite of Baptism provides for Baptism by affusion (infusion)...pouring of water over the head of the person being baptized, or by immersion.

CONFIRMATION

Minister of Confirmation: Bishops are the ordinary ministers of this sacrament, but they can delegate the authority to confirm to Priests. No one other than a Bishop or Priest can confirm.

Sign of Confirmation: Anointing of the forehead of the person being confirmed with chrism together with the laying on of hands by the minister of the sacrament while he says, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Effects of Confirmation:

- An increase and deepening of Baptismal graces.
- 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 His Name, and never to be ashamed of the Cross.
- Like Baptism, it gives to the soul of the one being confirmed a permanent spiritual character.

From Scripture

Acts 2: 2-4

Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

From the Church Fathers

You have received the spiritual sign, the sign of wisdom; God the Father has sealed you, Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has given you the gift of the Spirit in your heart. – St. Ambrose , De Mysteriis, (4th century)

A custom of the Roman Church facilitated the development of the Western practice: a double anointing with sacred chrism after Baptism. The first anointing of the neophyte on coming out of the baptismal bath was performed by the priest; it was completed by a second anointing on the forehead of the newly baptized by the bishop.

– cf. St. Hippolytus (2nd Century)

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Confirmation is the sacrament by which the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. The reception of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace (cf. CCC 1285).

...Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn. "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. For this reason in the Letter to the Hebrews the doctrine concerning Baptism and the laying on of hands is listed among the first elements of Christian instruction. The imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church. (Catechism of the Catholic Church - Paragraphs 1287-1288).

Note: The word *Confirmation* means *strengthening* or *to make firm*.

Old Testament Prefigurements/Types of Confirmation

1 Kings 19: 11-14 (I suggest that you read all of 1 Kings, Chapter 19 to get the full sense of this passage). *And he said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but he Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there cam a voice to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Ezekiel 37: 5-6

Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.

