

Necessity of Baptism

***B**aptism, the gateway or door (as you will see below) to the sacraments, is necessary for salvation, either by actual reception or at least by desire. By it people are freed from sins, are born again as children of God and, made like to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by a washing in real water with the proper form of words. *(Taken from the Catholic Church Code of Canon Law on Baptism)*

The Sacrament of Baptism is often called “**The door of the Church,**” because it is the **first** of the sacraments not only in time (since most Catholics receive it as infants) but in priority, since the reception of the other sacraments depends on it. It is the first of the three Sacraments of Initiation, the other two being the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation. Once baptized, a person becomes a member of the Church. Traditionally, the rite (or ceremony) of baptism was held outside the doors of the main part of the church, (in the vestibule), to signify this fact.

According to the will of Christ, no one can be saved **without** the Sacrament of Baptism, (John 3-5). For un-baptized adults there are two substitutes that can **supply some** of the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism, **if through no fault of his own** an adult **does not** receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Infants and others who do not have the use of reason cannot, **without the Sacrament of Baptism,** receive sanctifying grace and, therefore, if they die, **cannot** enter heaven. Un-baptized infants who die, although they cannot enjoy the vision of God and will not be in heaven, are not condemned to the pains of hell. They will be in a state of natural happiness which is known as limbo, belief has been challenged by many and remains a mystery as to its veracity.

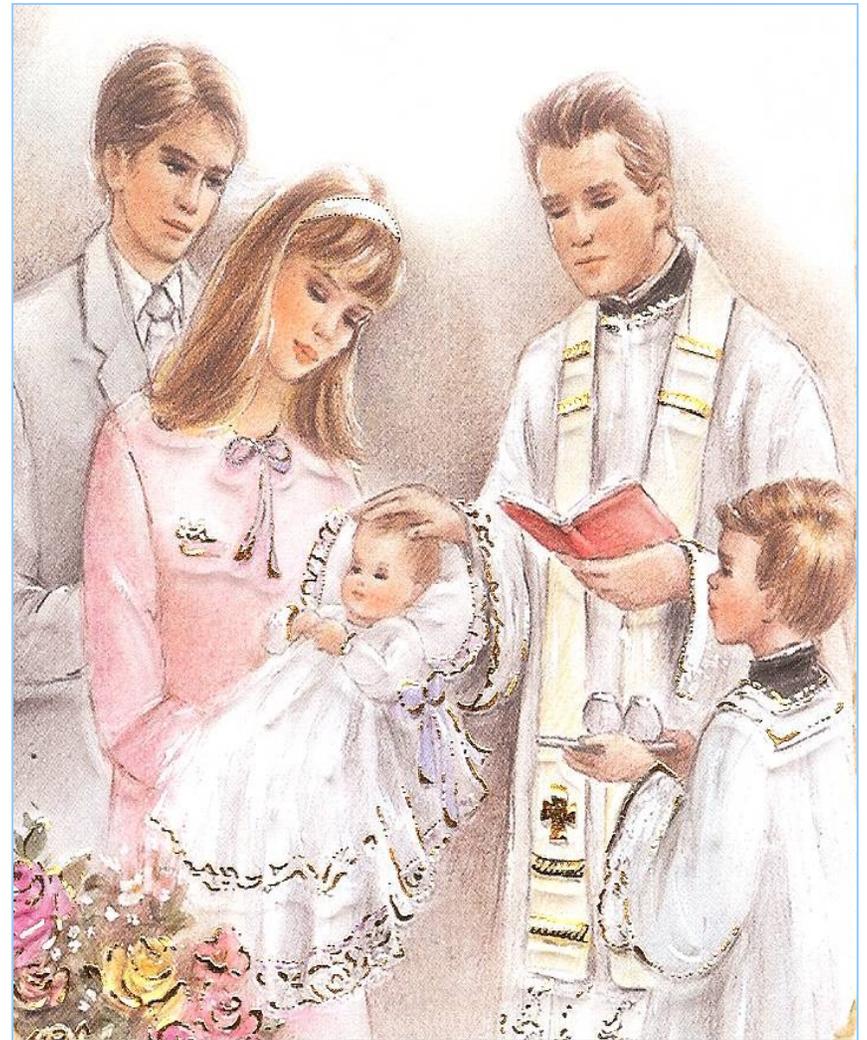
The chief effects of Baptism on the soul are the conferring of the sacramental character and the reception of grace (removing both original and actual sin). The character of Baptism conforms the soul to Christ by giving it a sharing in His priesthood; it designates the soul as that of a Christian and inserts it into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. The grace received in Baptism is as re-birth or regeneration of the soul (John 3:5) and is vividly described by Saint Paul in (Rom. 6:3-11).

Christ Himself ordered His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations and to baptize those who accept the message of the Gospel. In His encounter with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), Christ made it clear that baptism was necessary for salvation: **“Amen, Amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”** For Catholics, the sacrament is not a mere formality, it is the very mark of a Christian, because it brings us into new life in Christ.

*(excerpted from catholicism.about.com)

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Why is Baptism Necessary?



“I Baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The Sacrament of Baptism was instituted by Christ sometime before His Passion and Death, probably when He was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Immediately before His Ascension Christ commanded His Apostles **“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and, the Holy Ghost.”** (Matt. 28:19)



The Effects of the Sacrament of Baptism

***B**aptism has six primary effects, which are all supernatural graces:

1. The removal of the guilt of both Original Sin (the sin imparted to all mankind by the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden) and personal sin (the sins that we have committed ourselves)
2. The remission of all punishment that we owe because of sin, both temporal (in this world and in Purgatory) and eternal (the punishment that we would suffer in hell).
3. The infusion of grace in the form of sanctifying grace (the life of God within us); the ***seven gifts of the Holy Ghost**; and the ***three theological virtues**.
 - *Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost:**
*Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord.
 - *Three Theological Virtues:**
*Faith, Hope and Charity
4. Becoming a part of Christ.
5. Becoming a part of the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ on earth.
6. Enabling participation in the sacraments, the priesthood of all believers, and the growth in grace.

*(excerpted from Catholicism.about.com)

***T**he celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism is the **initial step** a family takes toward the richness of **God’s unconditional love** to walk with them as they journey to their ultimate goal of eternal life. It is, therefore, the **obligation** of the parents and godparents to assist the newly baptized in developing a **sound moral and spiritual conscience** that will strengthen said child in the weakest circumstances of life. The reality of the Sacrament **must be lived to the fullest** as the child becomes a new creation, **a child of God**, and accepts the call to build up the Kingdom of God on earth. To fulfill these obligations it is **imperative** that appropriate instructions be given to **both** the parents and godparents. By delving into the theology, signs and symbols of the Sacrament both parties are impacted with the grace to **live out their obligations more completely**.

*(excerpted from www.shrineofpadrepio.com)

****THE TECHNICALITIES**

- **A** Catholic parish priest is usually the minister of baptism.
- **S**ponsors must be chosen, be not less than sixteen years of age. Be a catholic who has been confirmed and has received the Holy Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith. A person who is not a Catholic may be a sponsor only in company with a catholic sponsor, and then simply as a Witness **not** a sponsor.
- **A** saint’s name is generally given . If the parents do not select a name, the right passes to the sponsors. If they do not select a saints name, it is the right of the celebrant to add the name of a saint to that chosen by the parents.
- **T**he parents of a child to be baptized, and those who are to undertake the office of sponsors, are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. They must call the parish to set an appointment.
- **A**part from a case of necessity, the proper place for baptism is a church.
- **W**ater to be used in conferring baptism and is to be blessed. Apart from a case of necessity, then any water is fine.

In the Catholic Church today, Baptism is most commonly administered to infants. Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks. As soon as possible after the birth. Since baptism removes both the guilt and the punishment due to Original Sin, delaying baptism until a child can understand the sacrament may put the child’s salvation in danger, should he die un-baptized.

***(taken from catholic church code of canon law on baptism)