

CATECHESIS SERIES

(An Education in the Catholic Faith)

FEATURING CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,
THE HOLY BIBLE AND DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

One way of coming to the living stone, Jesus Christ, is through the sacraments. The sacraments are simply channels through which the grace of God, flowing from the cross of Jesus, comes to us. We must participate in the sacraments not merely externally, but with real faith and expectancy that God himself is present there and wishes to act in our lives through them. The grace of Christ is not limited to the sacraments, but the sacraments make it available to us in a unique and reliable way. The sacraments, then, are an abundant source of God's grace for all those who come to them with faith, desiring to grow closer to God through Jesus Christ. Catholic Christians believe that the grace of Jesus Christ is present in the sacraments because the Bible, the activity of the apostles, and the tradition of the early Church all testify to this belief.

Baptism - Catechism of the Catholic Church

1278 – *“The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

1279 – *“The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.”*

In paragraphs 1262 through 1267, the *Catechism* explains the effects of baptism. They include regeneration (the rebirth in the Spirit) of the soul and the eradication of original sin as well as of actual sin and all its effects upon the soul. Through baptism we become members of the Body of Christ and are, as St. Paul says, “a new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), adopted sons and daughters of God. We become partakers of the divine nature, co-heirs with Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). Baptism serves as the sacrament doorway into the Church (Matthew 28:19).

Who is eligible for baptism? The first converts to Christianity were adults. The New Testament also speaks of the baptism of “whole households” (See 1 Cor. 1:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:31, 33), which in the normal Greek usage would include children. Paul drew a parallel between baptism and circumcision, which was normally administered to children (Col. 2:11-12). The Catholic Church also teaches that the parents of the baptized child must commit themselves to providing an environment for the child to grow in faith. This will prepare the child to make a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ upon reaching maturity. This personal faith commitment is absolutely necessary for the mature Christian. One

way that the Catholic Church stresses the necessity of this personal commitment to the Lord is by calling upon each person to renew their baptismal covenant each year at the Easter liturgy.

Sacred Tradition - Catechism of the Catholic Church

74 – *“God graciously arranged that the things he had once revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations.”*

78 - *“This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. The Church transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes. The sayings of the holy Fathers are a witness to the life-giving presence of this Tradition.”*

The Apostle Paul exhorted the church in Thessalonica to “Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours” (2 Thess. 2:15, NAB).

Baptism in Sacred Tradition

Theophilus of Antioch, A.D. 181 – *“Moreover, those things which were created from the waters were blessed by God, so that this might also be a sign that men would at a future time receive repentance and remission of sins through water and*

the bath of regeneration all who proceed to the truth and are born again and receive a blessing from God" (To Autolyclus 12:16).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, A.D. 190 – *"And [Naaman] dipped himself ... seven times in the Jordan.' It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared."* (Fragment 34).

St. Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 191 – *"When we are baptized, we are enlightened. Being enlightened, we are adopted as sons. Adopted as sons, we are made perfect. Made perfect, we become immortal ... 'and sons of the Most High' [Psa. 82:6]. This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. It is a washing by which we are cleansed of sins, a gift of grace by which the punishments due our sins are remitted, an illumination by which we behold that holy light of salvation"* (The Instructor of Children 1:6:26:1).

Tertullian, A.D. 203 – *"Happy is our sacrament of water, in that , by washing away sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life ..."* (On Baptism 1).

Origen, A.D. 248 – *"The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. For the apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of divine mysteries, knew that there is in*

everyone the innate stains of sin, which are washed away through water and the Spirit” (Commentaries on Romans 5:9).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 350 – *“Bearing your sins, you go down into the water; but the calling down of grace seals your soul and does not permit that you afterwards be swallowed up by the fearsome dragon. You go down dead in your sins, and you come up made alive in righteousness” (Catechetical Lectures 3:10, 12).*

The First Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381 – *“We believe ... in one baptism for the remission of sins” (Nicene Creed).*

St. Augustine of Hippo, A.D. 421 – *“For whether it be a newborn infant or a decrepit old man – since no one should be barred from baptism – just so, there is no one who does not die to sin in baptism. Infants die to original sin only; adults, to all those sins which they have added, through their evil living, to the burden they brought with them at birth” (Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love 13).*

Baptism in the Sacred Scriptures

Acts 16:30-34 - ³⁰ *and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?"* ³¹ *And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* ³² *And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house.* ³³ *And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family.* ³⁴ *Then he*

brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God. (RSV).

Acts 2:36-41 - ³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (RSV).

Acts 22:16 - ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name. (RSV)

1 Peter 3:21 - ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (RSV).

Mark 16:15-16 - ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (RSV).

CATECHESIS QUESTIONS

1. **Read John 1:17.** The sacraments are channels through which the grace of God, flowing from the cross of Jesus, comes to us. True or False

¹⁷ *For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (Jn. 1:17)* (DOUAY-RHEIMS)

2. **Read CCC 1996.** Grace is *favor, the free and undeserved help* that God gives us. True or False

3. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. True or False

¹⁸ *And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.*

¹⁹ *Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

²⁰ *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. (Matt. 28:18-20)* (DOUAY-RHEIMS)

4. **Read Acts 22:16.** The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of sins. True or False

¹⁶ *And now why tarriest thou? Rise up, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, invoking his name. (Acts 22:16)* ^(DOUAY-RHEIMS)

5. **Read 1 Peter 3:21.** Through the sacrament of baptism one appeals to God by asking for a clear conscience. True or False

²¹ *This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,* ^(NEW AMERICAN BIBLE)

6. **Read Acts 2:38.** All true believers in Jesus Christ are to: a. say their prayers at night. b. fast each week. c. repent and be baptized.

³⁸ *Peter (said) to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)* ^(NEW AMERICAN BIBLE)

7. **Read Acts 2:38-41.** Those people who were entering the early Church: a. repented. b. were baptized. c. received the forgiveness of their sins. d. received the Holy Spirit. e. all of the above.

³⁸ *Peter (said) to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit.*

³⁹ *For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.”*

⁴⁰ *He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

⁴¹ *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day. (Acts 2:38-41)* (NEW AMERICAN BIBLE)

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