

PART II

The Rite of Baptism

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1124

The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays.

Easter Vigil liturgy

In Baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

Four Important Actions During the Rite of Baptism

Washing

Before Christianity, our spiritual ancestors, the Jews, practiced "ritual washing." Jesus transforms this ritual.

Dying and Rising

In Baptism, we are plunged beneath the water to symbolize our death with Christ and come forth from the water to symbolize our rising with him (see Romans 6:8).

Being Clothed in Christ

In Baptism, we are clothed in a new, spotless garment to symbolize being clothed with redemption in Christ (see Galatians 3:27).

Reception into the Community

The newly baptized are fully welcomed into the mystical body of Christ, the Church.

As We Pray, So We Believe

The baptismal rite reveals deep insights into the meaning of Baptism itself. There in an ancient Church saying lex orandi, lex credendi, which roughly translates "as we pray, so we believe." In other words, the prayers of the Church are instructive, most especially in the case of the sacraments. The words and physical signs that administer the sacraments are excellent teachers. To go deeper into this truth, let's consider some of the key words and signs of the rite of Baptism.

Water

Water is the most familiar sign of Baptism. Why is water so vital to this sacrament? First, water is a powerful force, essential to life, yet capable of destroying it. The element of water constitutes most of our planet and even our bodies. On a daily basis, water cleanses us, refreshes us in the heat, and nourishes the environment around us. While the waters of a flood or tidal wave can destroy, in many ways water also restores-think about a hot bath after a long day. Not only do our own experiences teach us this, but also the story of our salvation is full of water references.

Genesis 1:2

In the beginning the Spirit hovered over the waters in preparation for creation. Water + Spirit = Creation.

Genesis 7

The flood waters plunged creation into death, but when they subsided Noah and his family, brought safely through the ark, were given new life. Water is a sign of death and rebirth.

Exodus 14:29

God parted the sea and the Israelites passed through from slavery to freedom. We pass through water from slavery to freedom.

Joshua 3:14-17

The Jordan parted and the Israelites passed through the waters into the Promised Land. We pass through the waters to enter the promised land.

Acts 19:4

John (the Baptist's) baptism was a baptism of repentance. Baptism is a sign of the washing away of sin.



John baptized Jesus with the waters of the Jordan. Using the sign of water, Jesus takes on our sins and is revealed to be the Son of the Father.

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." Jesus calls for a new Baptism of water and spirit. He is specific.

Water is a sign of life, a sign of destruction, and a sign of rebirth. Through water and spirit, life emerged in the beginning of creation; in water and spirit, Jesus calls us to re-creation through Baptism. Three ways water has impacted your daily life:

Three ways water has spiritual symbolism:	

John 1:5

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Exsultet, Easter Vigil liturgy

This is the night that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin.

Exsultet, Easter Vigil liturgy

But now we know the praises of this pillar, which glowing fire ignites for God's honor, a fire into many flames divided, yet never dimmed by sharing of its light, for it is fed by melting wax, drawn out by mother bees to build a torch so precious.

Candle and Flame

The rite of Baptism also incorporates the signs of the paschal candle and the flame that comes from it.

The Easter Vigil liturgy begins with the church in darkness, and the Easter fire is kindled. This fire then lights a new paschal candle, which is processed into the church to light the candles of the whole congregation. Three times the priest or deacon processing the paschal candle sings out, "The light of Christ!" The congregation responds, "Thanks be to God!" Candle by candle, the darkness is defeated by the sharing of a single flame.

The paschal candle reminds us of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites from slavery to freedom in the Old Testament (see Exodus 13:21). More directly, though, the paschal candle signifies a new Passover, in which Christ leads us from death to life. The flame signifies the light of Christ passed on to the people of God.

This same paschal flame will be a part of your child's Baptism. Your child's godparents will receive a candle lit from the paschal candle to signify the light of faith that parents and godparents are entrusted to guard and fan.

What	are some moments of your life (fun, serious, romantic)
	that included the beauty of the candle's flame?
	How did your parents and godparents keep the
	faith "burning" as they passed it on to you?
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What are your hopes for your child's future faith life?

Acts 10:38

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1241

The anointing with sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one "anointed" by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.

Holy Oils

The sign of oil is important in the Church's sacramental life. Like water and flame, the sign of oil has roots in the story of our salvation. In the Old Testament, oil was used to anoint priests, prophets, and kings, as well as recognized as a sign of strengthening and healing. Now, each year during Holy Week, three oils are consecrated by the bishop of every diocese, and these blessed oils are sent to each parish to be used in the sacramental rites.

The rite of Baptism includes an anointing with two of these oils-the oil of catechumens and sacred chrism (which has the distinct fragrance of balsam). The priest or deacon anoints the child with the oil of catechumens before the actual pouring of holy water during the baptismal rite, saying:

May the strength of Christ the Savior protect you. As a sign of this we anoint you with the oil of salvation in the same Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns forever and ever.

This anointing follows a prayer of exorcism, and it is through anointing that your child is strengthened for future spiritual battles against sin and evil.

The second anointing, after the actual baptism, is with sacred chrism. As the priest or deacon anoints the child with chrism, he says:

Almighty God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, has freed you from sin, given you new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and joined you to his people. He now anoints you with the Chrism of salvation, so that you may remain as a member of Christ, Priest, Prophet, and King, unto eternal life.

Chrism is used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders because it signifies the anointed one's sharing in Christ's threefold ministry as priest, prophet, and king. (In fact, the Greek word Christos actually means "anointed one.")

The anointing we receive at Baptism leaves an imprint on us-an indelible mark of the Father, showing that we are his and part of God's family.

A priest, making an offering to God?
A prophet, listening for God's voice and
sharing his message with others?
snaring his message with others:

A king, leading through service and recognizing human dignity?



White Garment

At the conclusion of the baptismal rite, the newly baptized child receives a white garment. The words spoken as the garment is received show its significance:

You have become a new creation and have clothed yourself in Christ. May this white garment be a sign to you of your Christian dignity. With you family and friends to help you by word and example, bring it unstained into eternal life.

The white garment is a sign that the newly baptized child has put on Christ and, like him, is pure and unstained.

ls t	here a particular family history associated wit the gown that will be used for your child?

	What are some symbolic or meaningful garments that you have worn in your life so far (uniforms, wedding clothes, team apparel)?
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How does wearing a symbolic
garment relate to your identity?

Parts of the Rite

Reception of the Child

The priest (or deacon) asks the parents and godparents to present the child and invites them to undertake the task of Christian parenthood that follows Baptism. The child is then welcomed with great joy and claimed for Christ with the sign of the cross traced on the child's forehead by the minister as well as the parents and godparents.

Liturgy of the Word

The priest (or deacon) reads from the Gospel and gives a homily that further instructs the parents, godparents, and gathered community about the meaning of Baptism.

Intercessions

As in the Mass, prayers of intercession follow the Gospel and homily.

Invocation of the Saints

Saints, including the namesake of the child and any special patron saints requested by the family, are called upon for their help and intercession.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing

A prayer for the child to be set free from the power of original sin is followed by anointing with the oil of catechumens in order to strengthen the child in resisting sin and evil.

Blessing of the Water

The priest (or deacon) blesses the water with an instructive prayer about its meaning. He calls down the Holy Spirit over the font to transform its waters into holy water.

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Parents and godparents are invited to renew their baptismal promises and are reminded of the responsibilities they undertake by seeking Baptism.

Baptism

The priest (or deacon) pours water over the child's head, as he says, "[CHILD'S NAME], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Anointing with Sacred Chrism

Following the baptismal act, the child is anointed with chrism as a sharer in Christ's mission of priest, prophet, and king.

Clothing with the White Garment

The child is given a white garment symbolizing that he or she has been clothed with Christ.

Presentation of the Baptismal Candle

Parents are given a candle that has been lit from the pascal candle. This symbolizes the light of faith that parents hand on through Baptism and through the family life that will follow.

Ephphatha ("Be opened")

The priest (or deacon) gives a special blessing over the child's ears and mouth for openness to receive God's word and proclaim it.

Our Father

The gathered community prays as Jesus taught us with the Our Father.

Final Blessing

After a closing prayer, the minister blesses the gathered community and concludes the rite of Baptism.

Which parts of the rite strike you as especially meaningful or powerful?