# Baptism

## The Sacrament of Baptism

1. The outward signs established by Christ and necessary for the validity of the Sacrament of Baptism, consist in pouring water three times in the form of a cross on the head of the person to be baptized, saying at the same time: I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

2. The matter of Baptism is the pouring of water. Usually only water that was blessed on Holy Saturday or the vigil of Pentecost should be used. It is permitted to use Holy Water in case of private Baptism, if it is at hand; if not, then any natural unadulterated water may be used.

3. Christ appointed water for Baptism because:

1. Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, and water may be obtained everywhere.
2. Water denotes most distinctly the effects of Baptism; as water cleanses the body, so Baptism cleanses the soul from sin.
3. Water cools and refreshes the body, so Baptism cools the glow of evil desires and renews the inner man.

4. The form consists in the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father † and of the Son † and of the Holy † Ghost." These words must be pronounced entire and unchanged by the person baptizing while pouring the water. If there be a doubt as to whether the candidate for Baptism is still alive, or may not have been already baptized, then the words: "If you still live," or "if you have not already been baptized," "I baptize thee," etc., must be added.

5. The minister of Baptism is the priest, except in case of necessity, as before stated; when any person may baptize; but he must have the intention of doing what Christ ordained.

6. It is an old-established custom of the Church to have sponsors; they act, first, as witnesses, who can testify to the fact that the person has received the Sacrament of Baptism; secondly, as security that the candidate for Baptism will remain true to the faith. Therefore when the one to be baptized cannot speak, the sponsors must reply to the questions, and recite the baptismal vows. Sponsors should also provide for the Christian instruction of their god-children, if the parents should neglect this duty, or if they should be removed by death. Thus a spiritual affinity is contracted between the sponsors and god-child, as well as his natural parents, which the Church regards as an impediment to marriage; hence the number of godparents is limited to two. One sponsor is indispensably necessary.

7. In order to fulfill the duties of godparents the sponsors must have the following qualities:

a) The sponsor, if there be but one, must be of the same sex as the godchild.
b) He should be an adult and have been confirmed.
c) He should be well instructed in his faith, and lead a virtuous life.

On the other hand the following persons cannot be sponsors: the parents of the one to be baptized, non-Catholics, the excommunicated, persons of ill repute, or those ignorant of the truths of their religion, nor members of Religious Orders. These cannot fulfill the duties of sponsor. All sponsors should seriously consider their obligations and perform them conscientiously.

8. In the first Christian centuries when mostly adults were solemnly baptized, the vigils of Easter and Pentecost were set apart for the reception of Baptism, because man, through Baptism, rises to a new spiritual life and becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost. Nowadays as mostly infants are baptized, they should be baptized as soon as possible after birth, because the newly born hover between life and death. In remembrance of the early solemn Baptism at Easter and Pentecost, baptismal water is still blessed on the vigils of these feasts.

9. The Sacrament of Baptism is to be administered in the Church. In former times the so-called baptistries, or small chapels, were used for this purpose. Instead of these we have now the baptismal fonts. Only in case of necessity is it allowed to baptize in private houses. Nearly all the Sacraments are administered in the Church, therefore it is but proper that the first Sacrament should be administered there.

# Baptismal Rite

1. The Baptismal Rite consists of three parts:

a) The *ceremonies at the Church door*, which represent to us the liberation of the candidate from the slavery of sin and Satan.
b) The *ceremonies from the entrance into the church to the Baptism*, which form the approximate preparation and the Baptism itself.
c) The *ceremonies after Baptism;* these are to remind the baptized that he should faithfully preserve the graces bestowed in Baptism until death; these graces exert a sacred power, and enable the baptized to fulfill the duties involved.

2. The priest vested in violet stole meets the child at the church door, because it is still a child of wrath and has not yet the right to enter into the house of the children of God. Baptism is the door to the threefold sanctuary of grace, the Church and of heaven.

3. The name of a Saint is given to the child. This custom originated in the first Christian centuries and has a beautiful significance.

It indicates that the person baptized has been made a child of God, and incorporated into the company of the Saints. The Christian should recall his baptismal vow, as often as he hears his name. This name is also a mark of honor and of grace. In the Sacred Scripture the giving of a name was always a mark of special grace or gift, so also man, through Baptism, is raised to the dignity of a Christian—becomes a sacerdotal king.

By the baptismal name the child receives a special patron, a powerful intercessor in heaven, and a model for imitation. The Christian should daily implore the protection of his patron saint, and as often as he hears his name he should remember that he is in communion with the saints in heaven, where, one day, he will also be united with them forever.

4. The priest then addresses some questions to the one to be baptized, or to his sponsors, on faith, etc. This is in remembrance of the religious instruction which formerly preceded Baptism. He breathes upon him three times. God breathed the breath of life into Adam. Through Baptism sin is expelled from the soul and supernatural life is received. Christ imparted the Holy Ghost to His Disciples by breathing upon them. In like manner, by Baptism, man becomes the temple of God.

5. The priest then makes the sign of the Cross on the forehead and breast of the candidate, as a sign, that will, and understanding must first be blessed, and made subject to the doctrine of the Cross, if man would become and remain a temple of God. Do not be ashamed of the Cross which you have borne on your forehead since your Baptism.

6. The priest lays his hand upon the one baptized, to show that he is now placed under the powerful protection of the Holy Ghost.

7. Finally, salt is placed on his lips, to denote preservation from the temptation of sin. Salt preserves from corruption, gives a savory taste to food, and is a symbol of wisdom. In like manner, man is freed from the corruption of sin by Baptism, receives a relish for good works and is inspired with a desire for the wisdom of the Cross. The priest previously blesses the salt, imploring for the one to be baptized all the graces symbolized by the salt.

8. The priest now solemnly exorcises the child; this is a renunciation of Satan. According to Leo the Great, this exorcism was established by the Apostles. It is a powerful command in the name of God for Satan to depart, that the Holy Ghost may dwell in this soul. At the close of the exorcism, the priest makes the sign of the Cross on the forehead of the child, a shield, as it were, against the infernal powers.

9. Laying the stole upon the child he leads him into the temple of God. Priest and sponsors at the same time repeat aloud the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father. The stole is a sign of the power of the Church, by which the priest grants the child permission to enter the Church, after having been liberated from the kingdom of Satan. The Apostles' Creed and the Our Father are prayed here in commemoration of the Catechumens, who in early Christian times were permitted to learn the Apostles' Creed and the Our Father, only after they had been prepared for Baptism. As the Church is a house of prayer, we should always enter it with sentiments of faith and devotion.

10. The ceremonies at the baptismal font form the immediate preparation for Baptism; they begin with the second exorcism.

This exorcism is to free the person forever from the power of Satan. The priest, here, anoints the nostrils and ears with spittle. As Christ restored

sight to the blind, and made the dumb to speak, touching with spittle, so shall the external senses be withdrawn from the power of Satan, and opened for the service of God.

11. Then follows the abjuration, which in the first Christian centuries was very solemnly performed. By the ceremonies preceding this act of exorcism, the Church liberated the candidate from the slavery of Satan, but now he must solemnly renounce the Prince of Darkness himself, and therefore renounces Satan, all his works and all his pomps. By this abjuration thee person frees himself not only from the Spirit of Darkness, but also enters into a covenant that he will fight against him to guard himself from his wiles.

12. To make him a soldier of Christ, he is anointed on the breast and shoulders with the Oil of the Catechumens. Anointing on the breast denotes the interior combat, because the breast or heart is the seat of evil desires; between the shoulders denotes the outward combat.

13. The priest now exchanges the violet stole for a white one. So far, the object of all the ceremonies and prayers was the expulsion of Satan and the extermination of sin; therefore the penitential color was used. The ceremonies following and the prayers show the state of innocence, joy, and justice which are accomplished by Baptism; therefore white, the color of joy and innocence, is used.

14. The priest then addresses three questions on faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Faith and Baptism must, according to the words of Christ, be united, at least with an adult. Faith in the three Divine Persons must be confessed, because this mystery of the Holy Trinity includes the foundation and summary of Christian faith.

This confession of faith forms with the preceding abjuration the baptismal covenant, or vow. In this covenant the person renounces sin, and promises God to remain true to the living faith. On the other hand God grants him forgiveness of all sin, His grace upon earth and eternal happiness in heaven. The Christian should bear this covenant in mind, and often renew his baptismal vows.

15. As man is to receive Baptism of his own free will and not by compulsion, the priest asks: "Wilt thou be baptised?"

16. Then follows the Baptism itself, which is administered either by a triple immersion, pouring or sprinkling of water. In the early ages of the Church, Baptism was administered by immersion, in special chapels, or so-called baptistries. In the Western Church, the rule now is to baptize by pouring water three times in the form of a cross, while pronouncing the words: I baptize thee, "N," in the name of the Father † and of the Son † and of the Holy † Ghost. The sign of the Cross is used because Baptism has its efficacy from the death of Jesus on the Cross. Baptism by sprinkling is only permitted in case of necessity.

17. After Baptism the top of the head is anointed with chrism in the form of a cross, for the following reasons:

a) Anointing denotes strength, and here signifies the power of the Holy Ghost, who has imparted the baptismal graces.

b) Kings and priests are anointed. Therefore this anointing denotes the majesty of the name Christian and its divine calling, for the one baptized partakes of the royal and sacerdotal dignity of Christ; he should rule over all the inclinations of his heart, and daily offer sacrifice to God by prayer, mortification, etc.

c) Churches, altars, chalices, etc., are also anointed at their consecration. In like manner the Christian by baptism becomes the temple of God the Holy Ghost, and a vessel for the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The head is anointed to denote the consecration and coronation of the Christian. The priest then says: "Peace be with thee." Baptism brought peace into the heart, and it will remain there so long as the baptismal grace is preserved.

18. A white dress or cloth is placed on the baptized, to denote the innocence and purity which the Christian has received in Baptism; it is the wedding garment which he should bring unsullied to the judgment seat of God. Venial sin sullies this dress; mortal sin rends it asunder.

19. A burning candle is then placed in his hand or that of his sponsor, to signify that he is now free from the darkness of sin, and lives in the light of grace.

The burning candle is, furthermore, a symbol of the three Theological virtues which in Baptism are infused into the soul, for light is an emblem of faith;

the flame signifies hope, and the consuming fire, love. The candle is held, to signify that he should shine before men, by his virtues and good works.

Finally, the burning candle should remind us of the lighted lamp, with which the Christian, like the wise Virgins, should be prepared to meet the Divine Bridegroom.

Only when he has carefully preserved this light through life will he be prepared to die consoled, with the blessed candle in his hand.

20. The priest finally dismisses the one baptized with the words: "Go in peace and the Lord be with thee." This is the sacred wish of the Church, that the baptized may faithfully preserve that peace which he received in Baptism and remain in union with the Lord.

21. Most of these ceremonies are from the first centuries of Christianity, as the testimony of the Fathers go to show. Thank God daily for the priceless grace of Baptism, frequently renew your baptismal vows, every Sunday and especially on the anniversary of your baptism. Treasure your baptismal innocence as the most precious gift on earth.