

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord • Year B • January 10, 2021



*Everlasting God,
by special signs and wonders
at the Jordan River,
you revealed Jesus
to be your own beloved Son.
Keep us, your adopted children,
faithful to our calling
as brothers and sisters of the
Lord Jesus,
as we continue his mission
in the world.*

Sunday Word

Isaiah 55:1-11
Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6
1 John 5:1-9
Mark 1:7-11

Seek the Lord

Now is the time to answer God's call to come to the water of life. Many things satisfy for a time, but the Lord alone fulfills the desires of one's heart.

Love God

Honoring God's commands is an expression of one's love for God and for others. Today is a good day to recall those commands by reading the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:2-3, 7-17) and the Great Commandment (see Matthew 22:37, 39).

Celebrate Your Identity

In today's Gospel we hear God's voice from the heavens say, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." All who are baptized in the waters of Baptism become adopted daughters and sons of God.

Catholic Teaching: Baptism and Mission

Entrance into Mystery

The Sacrament of Baptism incorporates a person into the mystery of Jesus Christ. Each of us goes into the baptismal waters marked by sin. We rise from those waters reborn, made new, given an identity as "Christian." The three-fold invocation of God's name is declared during the corresponding three-fold pouring of or immersing in waters. By these sacred signs and sacramental actions, we are joined to the family of God, the Church. We are given a unique status as followers of Christ, and are joined to his holy mission in the world.

With this in mind, the ecumenical Council of Florence, held in the fifteenth century, proclaimed that Baptism is the gateway to life in the Spirit. Because Baptism marks a new beginning, a whole new life, by which the person is regenerated—made whole by this Sacrament—the baptized is propelled into a new way, a new life to be lived in the Holy Spirit.

Baptism: Gift and Treasure

The term “baptism” comes from the Greek word for “plunge” or “immerse.” This refers to the use of water, the main symbolic element, which conveys the Sacrament, along with the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” That triple plunging or immersing, where the body of the baptized is overwhelmed by water, symbolizes dying to the old self. Coming up out of the water corresponds symbolically to being born again as a new person into Christ and into Christ’s way, truth, and life.

Baptism is God’s most beautiful treasure offered to us. Like a jewel, its beauty radiates from many different facets. It is a gift, grace, anointing, and enlightenment. Baptism is sheer *gift* because it is conferred on those who on their own do nothing to merit it. Baptism lavishes God’s *grace* on those who are guilty, marked by sin. Baptism represents an *anointing* into the priestly, prophetic, and royal identity of Christ himself. Baptism offers *enlightenment* because of the avenue of faith laid before the newly adopted son or daughter of God, who is made a member of the Body of Christ, his Church.

Our Response

Those who are baptized are thus responsible for witnessing to the faith. They are to show by what they say and do that faith has taken deep root in their persons and makes a difference in who they are. In every venue, whether that is for family, work or the neighborhood, one who is baptized plunges into the mission of Christ—bringing the light of Christ everywhere. From their union with Christ in Baptism, believers are charged with the high calling of witnessing to Jesus’ Good News in their words and their actions. The baptized are to bring to the world Christ’s justice, healing, peace, and love.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Sacrament of Baptism is imparted in a particular moment and by discernible sacramental signs. It is also understood that Baptism is meant to be lived and celebrated throughout a believer’s life. Those who rise out of the baptismal waters are clothed with a special responsibility, that is, to lend themselves personally and communally to the mission of Jesus, participating in the apostolate. Baptism and mission thus go hand in hand.

Key Terms

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

Worldwide or universal (hence, “ecumenical”) gathering of bishops called by the Pope, who exercise their authority in union with the Holy Father, to issue teachings or give direction to the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 884).

BAPTISM

First of the Seven Sacraments, it provides access to the others. In it we are joined to Christ, becoming members of the Church, and are reborn as God’s children. In Baptism, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and Original Sin and personal sins are forgiven (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 977).

APOSTOLATE

Christian activity through word or deed that participates in the apostolic character of the Church whereby the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed everywhere (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 863).

Voices of Faith

Today . . . do honor to Christ’s baptism and celebrate this feast in holiness. Be cleansed entirely and continue to be cleansed . . . [God] wants you to become a living force for all . . . You are to be radiant lights as you stand beside Christ, the great light, bathed in the glory of him who is the light of heaven.

—Saint Gregory Nazianzus

The Church is holy and all her members are called to holiness . . . personal holiness does not depend on the position secured in society or in the Church . . . A lay person who generously welcomes divine charity in his heart and in his life is holier than a priest or Bishop who accepts it half-heartedly . . .

—Saint John Paul II

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1234 (Baptismal rite), 1265 (newness in Baptism), 1267 (Church member)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter Fifteen (Baptism: Becoming a Christian), especially the section entitled “Baptism is a Call to Holiness,” pages 195-197

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

188 (vocation of laity), 189 (participating in priestly office), 190 (participation in prophetic office)