

From the Question Box

**Questions:** What is the Sacrament of Baptism? Why does the Catholic church baptize?

**Answer:** Because our Lord commanded it.

In Matthew 28, before His ascension, Christ told the Apostles, "Go, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is the first and most necessary of the Seven Sacraments. We are born separated from God and without His divine life, grace. We come into this world as sons and daughters of fallen Adam and Eve, original sin. Christ died on Calvary, he shed His blood to redeem us from sin, and to offer salvation. Through the Church, we come to share the grace of God especially through the life-creating sacraments.

In John 3, Jesus said "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." In Holy Baptism we die with Christ in the tomb of the water and rise, born again, a new creation. We are washed clean of sin, and become temples of the Holy Spirit. Baptism unites us to Christ's church, and makes us dear children of our Heavenly Father. We are sanctified, and made holy in baptism and become heirs of eternal life.

Infants should be brought to baptism, by faithful, Catholic parents, as soon as possible after birth. The gift of grace is more important than anything else. Bring the little ones to the saving font of baptism without delay. In case of emergency, anyone can, and should baptize, even non-Christians, if they intend to do what the Church does. Take ordinary water, and pour it on the forehead or head of the child saying as the water flows, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." That is a valid baptism.

Baptism is a great gift from God by which we become His children. The other sacraments flow from baptism. Penance or Reconciliation (Confession) is the sacrament, given by Christ, to forgive sins committed after baptism, and to restore baptismal grace. We should use it often. We frequently partake in the Eucharistic banquet given to God's children. We share in the divine life of grace by receiving Him, who is grace, in Holy Communion. We, the baptized, eat the true flesh and drink the true blood of Jesus Christ. We, the branches, feed on the vine who is Christ. The hope, given by baptism, is to someday behold Christ himself in glory. Everlasting life begins in baptism and, for those who die in His grace, reaches its fulfillment in that place which, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard; what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor. 2)

For this we live, for this we die, to gain the eternal crown of everlasting glory in Heaven, to behold the face of God forever. All this begins at the font of Holy Baptism.