

## LIVING OUR BAPTISMAL VOCATION

'God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed **Priest, Prophet, and King**, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.'

Anointing with Sacred Chrism from the Rite of Baptism

'When Christ our Saviour came into the world, He assumed these three characteristics of **Prophet, Priest and King**, and was therefore called Christ, having been anointed for these functions by the power of the Father, and with a spiritual oil; for the plenitude of the Holy Spirit and a more copious effusion of all gifts than any other created being is capable of receiving were poured onto his soul.'

Catechism of the Council of Trent (1566)

Through Baptism we die and rise with Christ—we are attached to Christ, living with Him. We are called to have a baptismal mindset—that sees the day as opportunities, both large and small to live in Christ's threefold mission as **priest, prophet and king**. Here are some ideas for you and your family to do this:

**as Priest** - making sacrifices (choosing to do what is good for another) and regularly raising our hearts and minds to God in both personal prayer and communal worship (the Mass)

- Establish family prayer rituals or habits to recognize the presence of God in our lives and to turn to him in thanksgiving for his blessings and in times of need.
- Help family members to see their sacrifices, large and small, done in love for another as ways of being Christ-like and can be 'offered up', joined with his offering at Sunday Mass.

**as Prophet** - joyfully proclaiming the message of Christ given to us through Holy Scripture and exemplified by the heroic lives of the saints

- Create a prayer table or sacred space to give the Bible a place of prominence in your home. Put a crucifix and sacred art where you and your children can see them regularly.
- Regularly choose to read a picture book to highlight the life a saint or a Bible story. Read and discuss the Readings before going to Mass each week.
- Simply acknowledging that God has given us a beautiful day to walk in the park;
- Create a family culture that includes faith-related family traditions (decorating a Jesse Tree, making one Christmas gift faith-related—a book about the heroic lives of saints or Our Lady, include a book recounting the reason for the celebration of Easter in a child's Easter basket).
- Use outings and holidays to seek out local shrines and/or beautiful churches

**as King** - governing our words and actions that we may live in imitation of Christ; leading our families in the task of building our domestic church and extending God's kingdom in this world by helping others to see his presence by our word and works of charity.

- Create a family mission or vision statement and give it pride of place in your home (e.g. 'We are a family that prays together' or 'We are a family that serves the Lord and others').
- Cultivate the virtues to form a conscience that judges one's own actions in light of Christ's character.
- Acknowledge those acts of gratitude and generosity within the family and beyond (e.g. talk about the day's good things and thank God!)
- Gradually involve children in acts of charity undertaken as a family (e.g. making treats to gift a housebound neighbour). Make a family decision to purchase a gift for a family in need each Christmas. More often, walk to the local supermarket and purchase a 'meal deal' and give to a person living on the street.
- Begin each Sunday by joyfully preparing to go to Mass to thank God for the families many blessings over the past week.

Suggestions taken from the Baptism Collaborative

If you would like any more information about Baptism please contact the Pastoral Development Team: [c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:c.higgins@rcaol.org.uk)



# Baptism

Holy Baptism is the foundational sacrament of Christian initiation, because we can't receive any of the other sacraments without first having been baptised, and we can't enter heaven without baptism:

**'Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Unless you are born again of water and the Spirit, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God"' John 3:5**

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made **sharers in her mission**: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word."

Council of Florence: DS 1314

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1213

Baptism is God's most **beautiful and magnificent gift**...We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called gift because it is conferred on those who bring **nothing of their own**; grace since it is given even to the guilty; Baptism because **sin is buried in the water**; anointing for it is **priestly and royal** as are those who are anointed; enlightenment because it radiates light; clothing since it veils our shame; bath because it washes; and seal as it is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship. **St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 40, 3-4**

"Dear friends, at your baptism you are called, 'the beloved of the Lord'. Ponder this title and rejoice in it. Listen deeply to this title and know how much you are loved by God. Your names are written in letters of love on the heart of Jesus. By Baptism we are members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Baptism is a call to love and the service of others as we heard in the gospel passage. Jesus says, 'This is my commandment, that you love another as I have loved you.' You are called to live out this love in your daily life. It is a call to a vocation in Christ which is led and strengthened by the Holy Spirit."

Archbishop John, Rite of Election 2026



Welcome to those of you who become full members of Church this Easter, washed by baptism from sin, anointed by Christ through the Sacred Chrism and filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be servants of his Kingdom. Stay close to Christ who is always close to you. May God bless you.

+ John Sheer  
Archbishop of Liverpool

## BAPTISM AND SCRIPTURE: THE EASTER VIGIL— FORESHADOWING OF BAPTISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the **liturgy of the Easter Vigil**, during the blessing of the baptismal water, the Church solemnly commemorates the great events in salvation history that already prefigured the mystery of Baptism:

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power. In Baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water.





Since the beginning of the world, water, so humble and wonderful a creature, has been the source of life and fruitfulness. Sacred Scripture sees it as "overshadowed" by the Spirit of God:

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness. *Roman Missal, Easter*

The Church has seen in Noah's ark a prefiguring of salvation by Baptism, for by it "a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water":

The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of Baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness. *Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water.*



If water springing up from the earth symbolizes life, the water of the sea is a symbol of death and so can represent the mystery of the cross. By this symbolism Baptism signifies communion with Christ's death.

But above all, the crossing of the Red Sea, literally the liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, announces the liberation wrought by Baptism:

You freed the children of Abraham from the slavery of Pharaoh, bringing them dry-shod through the waters of the Red Sea, to be an image of the people set free in Baptism. *Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 42: Blessing of Water.*

Finally, Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the People of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. **The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Covenant.**

**Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1217-1222**



## THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Christ's baptism, however, was preceded by the baptism of St John the Baptist. John's baptism was only a **baptism of repentance**: that is, it was a sign of repentance, preceded by a confession of sins (Mk 1:5). John's baptism was a baptism of water, but Jesus' baptism is a **baptism of the Holy Spirit** (Matt 3:11; Mk 1:8). The sign of this difference between the two baptisms is that when Jesus let Himself be baptised by John, 'in order to fulfil all righteousness' (Matt 3:15), the Holy Spirit visibly descended on Jesus in the form of a dove. The dove was a sign of **the reconciliation of mankind with God**, just as the dove was a sign of peace to Noah as the flood receded. The Holy Spirit rested on the One whom the Baptist pointed out as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29, 32). The sin of the world is original sin, which Christ took away by letting himself be sacrificed as a Passover Lamb.

**Fr Francis Selman: The Sacraments and the Mystery of Christ p.84**

### Baptism as Participation in Christ

Baptism inserts a person into the **saving events of Christ**, not just into a community.

Baptism is not just symbolic—it actually unites a person to Christ through His own baptism:

"Jesus loaded the burden of all mankind's guilt upon his shoulders," plunging them into "the depths of the Jordan." When Jesus was baptised, he rose from the water bearing our sins with him, and carried them to the Cross. "Just as Jesus' public life and mission began in the waters of the Jordan, our lives begin through repentance and baptism as well. We should never forget that Jesus lived his life, not as some unattainable goal, but as a template of how we are called to live." *Mueller 2017*

The baptised person **shares in Christ's death and resurrection**, dying to sin and rising to new life. This makes Baptism the **beginning of the Christian life**.

### Incorporation into Christ and the Church

Baptism makes someone:

- a **member of Christ, and therefore**
- a **member of the Church (Christ's Body)**
- It establishes a **new relationship with God and others** within the Church.

In other words, baptism is always **personal and ecclesial** (individual + community).

### In Summary:

Baptism has profound spiritual effects:

**Removes sin**— Original sin and all personal sins (if any)

**Gives new life in Christ**—The person becomes a child of God

**Incorporates into the Church**—Makes the person a member of the Body of Christ

**Imprints an indelible spiritual mark**—A permanent "seal" that cannot be erased

**Opens access to other sacraments**—Baptism is the "gateway" sacrament



## SYMBOLISM IN BAPTISM

Every element of a baptism has a purpose, even the material objects used during the Sacrament are symbols pointing to a deeper meaning.

**Water** is the essential matter of Baptism because it signifies Jesus as the living water who cleanses and gives new life. Through its use in the sacrament, we are welcomed into the Church and into the promise of eternal life. Water also symbolizes divine life, grace, rebirth, growth, deliverance, power, and the enduring covenant God first established with his people.

The **baptismal font** is the 'bowl' of holy water where baptisms are celebrated, echoing the original practice of immersing believers in natural bodies of water. Early indoor fonts appeared in the Roman catacombs, and by the fourth century they were placed in churches—usually near the entrance—to symbolize Baptism as the "door to the Church."

The **baptismal candle**, lit during the ceremony and also used as the Easter candle, represents the flame of faith that is meant to burn throughout the life of the baptised. It symbolizes the risen Christ, the light of the world, and its connection to Easter reminds us that Christ's passion and resurrection make the gifts of Baptism possible—our cleansing from original sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life.

Two of the three holy oils are used in Baptism: the **oil of catechumens**, which is applied beforehand to strengthen and prepare the candidate for the sacrament, and the **Sacred Chrism**, the most important of the oils, also used in confirmation, holy orders, and the consecration of churches. Early Christian communities used olive oil for many practical purposes—including hospitality, healing, cooking, and burial. The Church's use of these oils traces back to Jesus' instruction to the apostles to anoint the sick (Mark 6:13), a practice they continued (James 5:14-15) and handed on to the Church.

The Church Fathers emphasized the importance of anointing the newly baptised. The oils are stored in vessels called **stocks** and kept in an **ambry** until needed. Chrism sets a person apart for God, the oil of catechumens strengthens those preparing for Baptism, and the oil of the infirm is used to anoint the sick or dying.

A **baptismal gown** is the outfit worn by the one receiving baptism. Traditionally, the gown is white. This is to signify Christian dignity, and the act of becoming a new creature through the sacrament. The colour white is also to symbolise being clothed with Christ, as we are cleansed from sin.

