

Baptism n. 1213-1284

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Jesus' Baptism: Mark 1:9-11 n. 1223-1224

n. 1214 Greek **baptizein** = 'to be plunged into' 'overwhelmed by'

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was **baptized** by John in the Jordan
And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the **heavens torn apart**



Perugino

I. Overwhelmed by love

The Father breaks the silence.

Jesus is his Word in response to our longing

'O that you would **tear open the heavens and come down** ... We sinned. Because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away ... Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand ... will you restrain yourself, O Lord? Will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?' (Isaiah 64:1-12).

Jesus' Baptism: Mark 1:9-11

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan

and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

‘ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, and the **spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters**’ (Genesis 1:1-2).

‘The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag ... My beloved speaks and says to me: Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my **dove**, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely’ (Song of Songs 2:8-14).

Jesus' Baptism: Mark 1:9-11

Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan

Intimate Communion + Mission

And a voice came
from heaven,
“You are my Son,
the Beloved;
with you I am
well pleased.”

‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching ... I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness’ (Isaiah 42:1-7).

Catechism 11.20 Sacrament of Baptism



‘I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!’

(Luke 12:50).

‘Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’(Mark 10:38).

n. 1225 Water from Jesus’
pierced side

Through baptism we are taken into the intimate communion of Jesus and the Father

**‘I will take you to myself,
so that where I am, there you may be also’(John 14:3).**

‘The Spirit dwells with you and is in you’(John 14:17).

‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’(John 14:18-20).

‘I pray, Father, that even as you are in me and I am in you, they also will be in us’(John 17:21).

‘You who live according to the Spirit set your minds on the things of the Spirit ... If Christ is in you your spirits are alive’(Romans 8:5, 10)

n. 1216 ‘You have been **enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come’(Hebrews 6:4-5).**

n. 1267

**‘In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body ...
and we were all made to drink of one Spirit’(1Corinthians 12:13).**

**‘God has anointed us, by putting his seal on us
and giving us his Spirit in our hearts’(2Corinthians 1:21-22).**

**‘The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of
sin and of death. You are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if
Christ is in you, your spirit is alive’(Romans 8:2, 9-10).**

**n. 1227 ‘All of you who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourselves with Christ’(Galatians 3:27).**

n. 1272

- This gift of God, once given, is given for ever. Baptism is never repeated.**

One with Christ we are one with each other

- n. 1213** ‘In baptism we are ... reborn as “sons” of God; we become “members” of Christ; we are incorporated into the Church, and made sharers in Jesus’ mission.’
- n. 1267** ‘We are members of one another’(Ephesians 4:25).
- n. 1271** ‘Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. “For those who believe in Christ and have been properly baptised are put in communion with the Catholic Church, however imperfectly ... Incorporated into Christ, they are rightly called Christians and are accepted as brothers and sisters by the children of the Catholic Church”(Vatican II UR 3).

We are empowered by God's Spirit
to live with Jesus a life of holiness

n. 1265 'We constantly give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you for salvation through the gift of his Spirit who makes you holy' (2Thessalonians 2:13).

n. 1227 'You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God ... your bodies are members of Christ ... your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God. You are not your own' (1Corinthians 6:11, 15, 19).

'My little children, I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you' (Galatians 4:19).

n. 1270

We share in Jesus' Mission

n. 1213 'In baptism we are ... reborn as "sons" of God; we become "members" of Christ; we are incorporated into the Church, and made sharers in Jesus' mission.'

'You belong to Christ to bear fruit for God in the new life of the Spirit.'

(Romans 7:4-6)

'We are the aroma of Christ to God'(2Corinthians 2:15).

n. 1241 Anointed with Chrism

- Living the life of Jesus the priest: mediators of grace **n. 784**
- Living the life of Jesus the prophet: revealing God's word **n. 785**
- Living the life of Jesus the king: contributing to the reign of God **n. 786**

n. 1268 ‘Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1Peter 2:5, 9).

Greek *baptizein* = ‘to be plunged into’ ‘**overwhelmed by**’

2. Overwhelmed by dying

n. 1214 ‘The “plunge” into the water symbolises the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he/she rises up by resurrection with Christ, as a “new creature”(2Corinthians 5:17).

Giotto



Luke 12:49-50

‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!’

There is a **baptism** I must still receive, and how great is my distress until it is over!’

Cleansed from sin

n. 1219 Noah's Ark

n. 1221 Crossing the Red Sea

n. 1222 Crossing the Jordan to enter the Promised Land

'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh' (Ezekiel 36:25-26).

‘Peter said to them: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’(Acts 2:38).

n. 1226 ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me.’
(Galatians 2:19-20).

‘You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God’(1Corinthians 6:11).

‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word’(Ephesians 5:25-26).

Dying to a way of “living” dominated by sin
and rising to share in Jesus’ life.

- Freed from “Original Sin” - the sin of our origins. We are given a choice, not locked into hereditary and environmental “sin”.

n. 1227

‘Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life’ (Romans 6:3-4).

‘My friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit’ (Romans 7:4, 6).

n. 1215

‘When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour’ (Titus 3:4-6).

In baptism, in response to God's overwhelming love (God's Spirit), we "die" to a way of living that is self-centred, dysfunctional and destructive. Tradition speaks of "seven" sources from which all sin is said to spring.

- pride – thinking, judging and acting in a self-reliant, self-focused way, disdainful of others and inattentive to God and to God's will.**
- covetousness – never satisfied with who we are or what we have but grasping for possessions, prestige, reputation, and whatever gratifies our self-centred desires.**
- lust – using our sexual energy either for our own self-gratification or to exercise power over others without regard to their true happiness.**
- anger – not the anger which is an appropriate protection of self against unjust aggression, but the anger that resents anyone who crosses our ideas, our preferences, our comfort zones, even when they are right and we are wrong.**
- gluttony – living so superficial a life that bodily gratification is more important to us than the aspirations of our spirit, or the needs of others.**

- **envy** – when we see someone doing well, instead of experiencing joy we feel ourselves devalued and in overt or subtle ways we find ourselves putting others down, feeling miserable that we do not have their beauty or their possessions or their success.

- **sloth** – unwilling to commit ourselves and our energy to the noble tasks of life, preferring to hang around waiting for life to deal out fortune to us.

Life experience teaches us that ways of behaving that have their source in such poisoned springs are decidedly dysfunctional and destructive. In baptism we die to these false values, even if they are the values of our mother or father or the social group with which we have been identifying. We have found something, or rather someone, in whom we experience God, and we have discovered a love which is true and liberating. In Jesus we have found a meaning that awakens the energy of our soul. To follow him we have to embrace him on the cross, but we choose to do that and we go down into the tomb with him to renounce behaviour that does not lead to life.

Faith and the Baptism of Infants

- n. 1257** ‘The one who believes and is baptized will be saved’(Mark 16:16).
- n. 1250** ‘The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child a priceless grace were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.’
- n. 1261** ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs’(Mark 10:14).

Necessity of “Baptism” for Salvation

‘God our Saviour desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’(1Timothy 2:4).

Firstly, the Church recognizes that a person who explicitly desires baptism but who dies without actually being baptised is considered to have ‘baptism of desire’(Catechism n. 1259).

- One example of this is a Catechumen: a person who is journeying towards baptism but who dies prior to receiving it (see Catechism n. 1249): ‘Catechumens are already joined to the Church ... and frequently living a life of faith, hope and love’(Vatican II AG 14). ‘With loving care mother Church already embraces them as her own’(Vatican II LG 14).

- Another example is a person who is martyred for the faith but has not yet been actually baptised (see Catechism n. 1258). They are considered to have received ‘Baptism of blood’.

What about those who have never heard of Jesus, or for whom their understanding of Jesus is so distorted that they could never think of being baptized into a Christian community?

- There was a time when it was assumed that everyone in the world had heard about Jesus and that anyone who failed to embrace Christianity was in bad will. The discovery of the New World by European explorers demanded a rethink of such assumptions, as did a deeper penetration into the psychology of conversion.
- We now know that people can fail to be baptized, and even reject baptism, without willfully rejecting God's offer of love inviting them to be in communion with his Son through baptism into the 'Body of Christ'. It is now assumed that openness to God and sincerely wanting to do God's will implies a desire for baptism, even though this is not at all obvious to those who have these qualities.

If they knew who it is who is loving them, and if they knew what he, the risen Jesus, is calling them into, they would embrace it. It is their ignorance, and perhaps also the failure of Christians to communicate clearly and in an attractive way that is the barrier.

n. 1281 All those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the
(n. 1260) inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to do God's will, are saved even if they have not been baptised.

In other words, baptism is not an option we are free to take up or reject. If – and this is the important word – *if* a person knows that he or she is being attracted by grace to baptism, then he or she is not free to reject it.

However, for many people in this world, the choices that they make imply that if they had known of Jesus and of the grace of entering into the Church through baptism, they would have done so. Perhaps they never heard of Jesus. Perhaps the ‘Jesus’ presented to them was so distorted that though they thought they were rejecting Christianity, they were in fact rejecting only a pseudo-Christianity and a distorted Jesus.

God sees the heart. Jesus is drawing everyone to himself and to communion with God. This overrides everything.

As regards children who die without receiving the sacrament, the same overwhelming consideration applies.

n. 1261 ‘The great mercy of God and the compassion of Jesus allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without baptism.’

Jesus promised: 'When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to myself' (John 12:32).

Our faith is that God has always been drawing people to himself, for we are all made for love. God was doing this through his Word prior to the Incarnation of his Word in Jesus.

With the Incarnation, God is now drawing everyone to the fullness of life through communion with Jesus, a communion enjoyed to the full by those who are welcomed through baptism into the community of Jesus' disciples.

Those of us who are privileged to know Jesus and to belong to his Body have a mission to reach out to everyone and to welcome them to join us in love, contributing to the Body of Christ the gift of their lives, and receiving through the church the wonderful gifts of grace that are found there.

It would be wonderful if everyone belonged to the Church and lived its life to the full. While Christians are not living the life of the Church to the full, God's grace continues to draw us to the fullness of truth and love. While people continue not to be members of the Church, God's Word is still reaching out to them and drawing them to salvation.

In a mysterious way the grace of God drawing everyone to salvation comes through Jesus, God's Incarnate Word.

In a mysterious way this grace relates people to the Church, Christ's Body , the sacrament of salvation for all.

The Baptismal liturgy

n. 1235 • Sign of the Cross - we welcome the embrace of him who gave his life in love for us. We belong to him and he to us.

n. 1236 • Proclamation of the Word

n. 1237 • Renounce sin and proclaim our faith

n. 1238 • Welcome God's Spirit on the water

n. 1239 • Threefold immersion or pouring of water

‘Jesus said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

n. 1241 • Anointing with Chrism - priest, prophet, king

n. 1243 • White garment - ‘Clothe yourself in Christ’

n. 1243 • Candle - ‘I am the light of the world’ (John 9:5; Matthew 5:14)

n. 1243-4 • ‘Our Father’ - invitation to the altar and communion



You are Mine (video)

words and music David Haas
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