

Washed Clean

The Sacrament of Baptism

Have you ever been really filthy and in need of a wash?

Perhaps you just finished a grueling race, or a long camping trip, or splashing around in mud. You are so caked with dirt, sweat, and grime that you can hardly recognize yourself in the mirror. But once you are finally washed clean, you feel like a completely new person. Even though it was just a bit of water on your body, this washing has made a tremendous difference, inside and out.

In Baptism, God washes us clean in body and soul.

We are each born with original sin: a lack of God's divine life within us and an inclination towards disobedience to God. Our sins, big and small, are like spiritual mud and grime that gradually accumulate on our souls. We cannot wash this off by ourselves; only God can wash us clean. Baptism is the way that God has chosen to give us this great gift. Though it looks like a mere washing with water, God is actually working a miracle in our souls.



When we are baptized, we are spiritually changed.

Jesus was referring to Baptism when he spoke of the need to be "born again by water and the Spirit." (John 3:5) He also said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16) When we are baptized, Jesus allows us to share in his death and Resurrection, giving us new life. (Rom 6:4) This is why Peter told the crowds at Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:37-38)

Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments.

The sacraments are special spiritual gifts given to us by Jesus. As he commanded, we wash a person in water with the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) When this happens, God bestows his divine life on us, restoring what was lost due to original sin. He washes our souls clean from all of our past sins. He makes us his adopted children, and we become members of his family of faith, the Church.

Even small children can receive this gift from God!

Since the earliest centuries, Catholics have baptized their children. Because of our understanding of Baptism, this makes perfect sense to us. Just as we gave our children physical life, we ask God to give our children spiritual life. We teach them to love Jesus and have faith in him. As they grow up, God calls them to make this faith their own, repenting of their sins and daily choosing to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Baptism is the beginning of our journey of faith.

For adults who did not grow up as Christians, the faith journey happens in a different order. They are introduced to Jesus and begin to have faith in him. Recognizing that only Jesus can save them from their sins, they ask the Lord to wash them clean and give them new life through Baptism. After a time of prayerful learning and spiritual preparation, adults are usually baptized at Easter with great joy and celebration, sharing in the glorious victory of our Lord over death.