

Signs and Symbols of Baptism

The Oils

The first anointing, on the child's breast, is with the oil of salvation. It is also known as the oil of baptism or the oil of catechumens. This rite is sometimes omitted. It recalls the importance of oil in the life of the early church when blessed oil was used for all manner of things: cooking, cleaning, healing and as an instrument of light and heat. It is used in the first part of the baptism rite as a sign of healing and a sign that the child will be open to the life of the church – the Good News.

There is a second anointing during the baptismal ceremony after the water rite. This time the anointing is done with chrism, the same blessed oil that is used in confirmation and in the ordination of bishops, priest, and deacons.

The Candle

The candle is a sign of the flame of faith and the light of Christ. It is lighted from the church's Easter candle by a parent or godparent and given to the child. It is then suggested that the child burn this candle briefly each year on the anniversary of his/her baptism. It can also be displayed prominently when the child completes the process of Christian initiation at the time of first communion and confirmation.

The White Garment

Most children presented for baptism come dressed in a white gown or other garment. In some cases, the gown is an heirloom or is destined to become one. The white color traditionally recognizes the sinlessness of the child and his/her new life in Christ. As part of the ceremony we provide a white bib like garment that is made by some of the women of the parish for our newest members.

The Water

Clean and clear, the waters of baptism recall the purification bath of the early Christians and their Judaic predecessors. It also memorializes the traditional role water had in the history of our faith, both in the New Testament and in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). It cleanses and purifies our bodies and our souls.

The Sign of the Cross

This sign is traced on the forehead of the child as a symbol of the salvation brought about by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. It also symbolizes the Christian faith that we share and into which the child is being welcomed and initiated.

Effects of Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism is the gateway to the Church and the reception of the other sacraments. It has many effects, including:

1. Baptism forgives both original and personal sin and remits all punishment due to sin. However, some consequences of sin remain, for example suffering, weakness of character, inclination to sin and death.
2. Baptism gives us birth into a new life in Christ. It makes us a child of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit.
3. Baptism confers sanctifying grace, the grace of justification. This enables us to believe, hope and love. Baptism also brings the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gifts that enable us to grow in holiness and goodness.
4. Baptism initiates and incorporates us into Christ's Body, the Church. It empowers us to share in Christ's priestly ministry of worship and service. Baptism joins us to all Christians, even to those who are not yet fully united to the Catholic Church.
5. Baptism seals a Christian with an indelible spiritual character that marks us as belonging to Christ. This is why Baptism can be received only once and should never be given to someone who has already been baptized. This baptismal character consecrates us for Christian worship and binds us to the Lord. If we live our baptismal promises, Christ has promised a resurrected body and a life of happiness with God and all his people forever.

From "*Our Catholic Faith, Living What We Believe*"

by Michael Pennock

Here is a “handy” way to pray with your child

The 5 Finger Prayer

Thumb: Those closest to you, your family.

Pointer: Those that point you in the right direction (teachers, doctors, priests) ask for wisdom & support.

Index: (tallest) Those that lead us, (Government) ask for guidance & wisdom.

Ring: (weakest) Those that are weak, in trouble, or in pain. We cannot pray too much for them.

Pinkie: (smallest) Our prayers for ourselves & our own needs.

