

Sacraments

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1131 The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.

Beginning of the Protestant Revolt Against the Catholic Church



The Catholic teaching that the sacraments are means of grace and are necessary for salvation was gradually rejected by the Protestants beginning with the “reformation” in the 16th century and in the following centuries this rejection became widespread.

If one is saved by faith alone, as the Protestants taught, then sacraments are not necessary.

Five of the seven sacraments were rejected with two being retained, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but these were considered to be “ordinances” that is something that Christians are commanded by Jesus to observe but they are merely symbolic.

Catechism 1129 The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are *necessary for salvation*. “Sacramental grace” is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive him by conforming them to the Son of God. The fruit of the sacramental life is that the Spirit of adoption makes the faithful partakers in the divine nature by uniting them in a living union with the only Son, the Savior.

The first sacrament we will study from scripture is Baptism

Born Again in Baptism



“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ **John: 3:1-7**

As a teacher of Israel Nicodemus should have made the connection to the scriptures as Peter did:

1 Peter 3:2-21 “In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you.**”

In John 1:32 Jesus is baptized in water and John the Baptist says “the spirit descended as a dove from heaven”.

Once again we have baptism with water and Spirit. Nicodemus should have understood. Did Jesus need to be baptized? No, but He was baptized with water and Spirit as an example for us.

In Acts 22:16 Paul is asked, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on his name”

Paul tells the Corinthians “But you were **washed**, you were **sanctified**, you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. 6:9-11

In Mark 16:16 Jesus says, “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved”

Peter tells the Jews, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of sins**, and you shall receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God shall call”. Acts 2:38

1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one spirit we were all baptized into one body. “

As we can see baptism is extremely important. We are sanctified and justified our sins are forgiven we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, become members of His body, the Church and as Peter tells us: “baptism now saves you.” According to Jesus it is through Baptism that we are “born again.” How could anyone object?



Martin Luther

As we noted earlier, the rejection of the Sacraments was a gradual process. Even though Martin Luther believed Christians are saved by faith “alone” he wrote this in his Catechism:

“Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that **we must be baptized or we cannot be saved**, lest anyone regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, **because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing**, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing here stand **God's Word and command** which institute, establish, and **confirm Baptism**”

As we can see from the above quote, already in Luther's time Protestantism was in disagreement over the necessity of Baptism. Different denominations were already being formed each interpreting scripture based on their own opinions.

Born separated from God

As a consequence of the Original Sin of mankind's parents, Adam and Eve, we are born without grace on our soul and are therefore separated from God. To be reunited with God we must be baptized where sanctifying grace is infused into our soul.

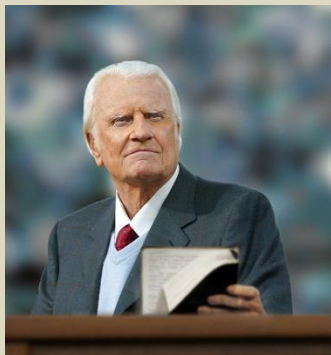
What is grace? There are two kinds of Grace. There is Actual Grace and Sanctifying Grace. Actual Grace means "an act of Grace", like God nudging your heart to accept Him. Actual Grace isn't "in us", but is "done to us", by the Holy Spirit and it can occur at any time.

Sanctifying Grace is acquired with Baptism. Sanctifying Grace is also “habitual” grace which means a persistent state of Grace where God's own holiness and Divine nature is indwelling in our soul. When we commit mortal sin we cut ourselves off from His indwelling, but He can still act on us to bring us back to Him. For this reason Christ established the sacrament of Reconciliation where our sins are absolved and we are once again infused with sanctifying grace.

Catechism 1996: ...Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

Catechism 1257: The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." *God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.*

Catechism 1263: By Baptism *all sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.



In his book *How To Be Born Again*, Billy Graham articulated the viewpoint espoused by many Christians: "All you have to do to be born again is to repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior."

The idea of the "altar call" and the "sinner's prayer" further propagated the idea that baptism is simply a symbol. To read the history of the "sinners prayer" please link to this site [HERE](#)

Next topic: An apologetic topic on infant baptism and the **Protestant objections** to the Catholic Dogma on baptism