

Infant Baptism



Writing around the year 215 Hippolytus wrote: "Baptize first the children and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them". *Apostolic Tradition*

Around the year 250 Origen wrote: "For this reason, moreover, the Church received from the apostles the tradition of baptizing infants." *Homily on Romans, V:9*

Christians have always baptized their infants. Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and others baptize infants. They find this practice clearly in scripture and in the correct understanding of God's covenant with His people.

From the time of Abraham, the spiritual father of Israel, circumcision was the way a Jewish male entered into God's covenant. A female entered the Covenant based on the faith of her parents.

The Church is the fulfillment of Judaism and it is through baptism, the fulfillment of circumcision that a person enters into God's new and everlasting covenant.

Abraham, Sarah and Isaac.



“And God said to Abraham....This is my covenant which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised....He that is eight days old...every male throughout your generations....shall be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant.”

Genesis 17:10-13

However, Israel broke God’s covenant and the prophet Jeremiah announced the coming of a new covenant:

“The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

Saint Paul calls the Church the “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16.

The Catechism affirms this traditional teaching:

"In fact, from the beginning of his ministry, the Lord Jesus instituted the Twelve as 'the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy.'" - (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 877)

In this new Covenant made with the new Israel, the Catholic Church, baptism replaced circumcision.

Saint Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ:

Colossians 2:11 “In him (Christ) you have been circumcised, with a circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of flesh in the **circumcision of Christ** buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who has raised him up from the dead.”



In Acts 2:38 Peter is speaking to Jews and he says:

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

Peter’s Jewish listeners would have clearly understood that baptism was also for their children just like circumcision was in the old Covenant.

Paul baptized whole households which would have included children.

1 Corinthians 1:16 “I baptized **the household** of Stephanas”

Acts 16:15 “And she was baptized, and her **household.**”

Objection: Peter says in Acts 2:38 that one must believe and repent to be baptized and infants can’t believe and are too young to understand repentance.

Catholic Answer: Because we are in a Covenant with God, a child enters into that Covenant on the faith of their parents just as in the old Covenant. Peter was speaking to Jews who understood Covenants.

Objection: The bible is silent on infant baptism.

Catholic Answer: The bible is also silent on women receiving the Lord’s Supper but it is safe to assume that women received the Eucharist. In scripture we see where whole households were baptized. If we understand Jewish customs of the first century when the father of the household was baptized his wife and his children, regardless of age, would also have been baptized to become children of God.

Objection: In John 3: 5 Jesus says, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” This verse has nothing to do with water baptism. It is saying that just as each person must have physical birth to live on earth a person must have a spiritual birth to live in heaven.

Catholic Answer: The context shows that Jesus is speaking about water baptism. Before speaking to Nicodemus Jesus was baptized and after speaking to him Jesus goes with His apostles and they baptized others. John went and baptized at Aenon “because there was much water there.” John 3:22-23

Some Protestants believe that the word “water” is referring to amniotic fluid. If that is the case then we must read the passage this way: “Unless one is born naturally in amniotic fluid and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Everyone is born naturally in amniotic fluid. But Jesus says, “Unless!”

If we take “water” to mean natural physical birth then “unless” implies that there are some that are not born by natural physical birth. The verse doesn’t make any sense if we interpret “water” to mean amniotic fluid.

We know from Apostolic Tradition that John 3: 5 is referring to water Baptism. The Church Fathers are unanimous in their interpretation, handed down from the apostles, that it is through water Baptism that Christians are “born again” and regenerated. This is how we know the Catholic interpretation is correct.

Objection: Water refers to the Gospel as we read in Ephesians 5:25-26: “.....Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word.”

Catholic Answer: That verse refers to water baptism, where as St. Paul tells us, we are “sanctified and justified.” The “word” refers to the formula given to us by Christ for a valid baptism, “Baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19) Christians are baptized into the Body of Christ, the Church and are sanctified by the waters of baptism.

Objection: Paul didn’t believe that baptism was important. In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul says, “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel.” It is the gospel that saves not baptism.

Catholic Answer: Scripture cannot contradict scripture. Peter says in 1 Peter 3:21 “Baptism now saves you.”

We can’t take Paul’s words out of context. The Corinthians were quarreling among themselves by saying: “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or I belong to Peter, “or “I belong to Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:11-13) Paul is not minimizing the importance of baptism rather he is objecting to the Corinthians emphasis on the ministers.

Objection: If baptism is so necessary for salvation, how did the thief on the cross get saved?

Catholic Answer: The thief was saved by baptism of desire. It was impossible for him to be baptized because he was hanging on a cross. God can make exceptions in extraordinary circumstances but the normal way is baptism.

Objection: All we need to be saved is faith alone.

Catholic Answer: Jesus said in Mark 16:16 “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”

Objection: We are born again when we accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.

Catholic Answer: That is not found in the bible. It comes from Protestant tradition. The bible says we are born again in baptism.(John 3:3-5) In Acts 2:37-38 the Jews where asking Peter what they must do to be saved. Peter did not say, “Accept Jesus as your personal Savior.” Peter said, “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Objection: Only full immersion is a valid baptism

Catholic Answer: Full immersion is not explicitly found in scripture. When Paul baptized entire households it is doubtful that full immersion would have been possible inside of a home. We know from one of the oldest documents in existence the Didache, written around the years 60-80, that pouring water was used to baptize.

Didache: Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

Chapter 7. Concerning Baptism. And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, **pour out water** three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Read the Didache [HERE](#)

Anabaptists

During Luther's time a group known as the Anabaptists emerged and they rejected infant baptism which all the early Protestants accepted as biblical. With the introduction of the Protestant idea that anyone could be guided by the Holy Spirit and correctly interpret scripture for themselves, the Anabaptists came to believe that infant baptism was invalid and therefore everyone baptized as an infant must be re-baptized. The first Protestants persecuted the Anabaptists for their rejection of infant baptism

Modern day Protestants, that reject infant baptism, follow the teaching of the Anabaptists insisting that anyone baptized as an infant must be re-baptized when they accept Christ as their Savior.

Protestant reformer John Calvin believed in infant baptism and here in his own words is a great defense of this scriptural truth. Most Protestants are unaware of his belief and this is a good link to send to anyone who thinks infant baptism is a Catholic invention

Institutes of the Christian Religion 4.16 On Infant Baptism Read [HERE](#)

Another good link is from Methodist minister Gregory Neal on infant baptism:

"Archeological discoveries in the Roman catacombs have long-ago proven that infant baptism was common in the primitive Roman Churches. Two clear examples, among dozens of similar inscriptions, are all that we really need to support this claim.

A man with the resounding Roman/Latin name of Murtius Verinus placed on the tomb of his children the inscription: "Verina received Baptism at the age of ten months, Florina at the age of twelve months." The date of this tomb has been firmly established by radio-carbon dating of the children's bones as being 105 AD +/- 4 years.

Another tomb, not far away from this one, has the inscription: "Here rests Achillia, a newly-baptized infant; she was one year and five months old, died February 23rd...." and then follows the year of the reigning emperor, which dates her death to 91 AD"

Read Minister Neal [HERE](#)

Additional Resources: *The Catholic Verses: 95 Bible Passages that Confound Protestants* by Dave Armstrong.

Next topic: [The Eucharist in scripture](#)