



# WELCOME TO BAPTISM

—the sacrament that opens  
the door of faith  
to your child!

God reaches out to us in all kinds of ways. The desire in your heart to baptize your child is one of them. The promises you make for your child on this day will begin to form your child into a faith-filled and faithful follower of Christ. But the day of baptism is only the beginning of your role. Being baptized is literally a life-changing event—and not just for your child.

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## WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

When you called your parish to arrange your child's baptism, you may have been surprised to find out how much emphasis your pastor (or his delegate) placed on your own practice of the faith. The Church very reasonably wants to know what kind of a faith example you are going to set for your child, as you become his or her first teachers in faith. Whatever your level of faith commitment at this point, the baptism of your child offers a great opportunity to deepen your appreciation for and experience of the faith.

We Catholics do not worship or witness our faith in a vacuum. As a community, all of us by virtue of our own baptism are called to proclaim the faith and teach it to our little ones. Community—from the smallest domestic church (i.e., your immediate family) to your child's wider world encompassing the godparents, grandparents, relatives, and friends, to the whole parish, and, yes, to the universal Church as the body of Christ—is what we're all about, and what we're eager to share with you.



## A little history

*In the earliest days of the Church, it wasn't easy to be a Christian. People made the commitment as adults and courageously faced the very real possibility that embracing the faith might mean defending it with their lives, because Christianity was an illegal religion. The elements they used—water, oil, a white garment, and a candle—are the same as we use today.*

### **WATER**

In early times, “passing through” the water was a clear sign of dying to one's old life and being reborn as a follower of Christ. Today some parishes celebrate baptism by immersing the baby into the water. Don't worry though if your baby is, instead, dipped into the water three times (in honor of the Trinity). It's the same sacrament.

### **OIL**

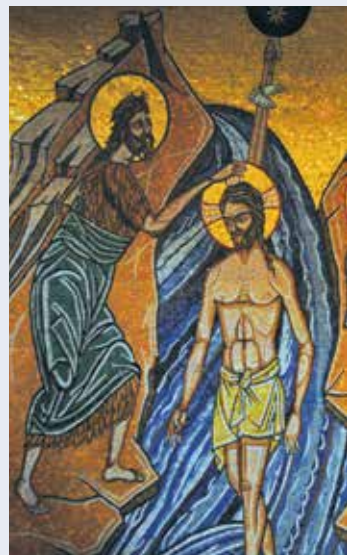
Anointing with oil was a common practice for the early Christians and all ancient people. Ancient athletes rubbed themselves with oil to prepare their muscles for competition. In baptism, perfumed oil was rubbed into the skin and hair. For days the newly baptized could be identified by the way they smelled.

### **WHITE GARMENT**

The earliest Christians wore a white garment for eight days after baptism as an outward sign to show the world that they were following a different path. White, of course, is a sign of purity.

### **CANDLE**

Early Christians took the symbol of the light of Christ very seriously. Those awaiting baptism stood facing the darkest part of the night sky (right before dawn) and renounced their past lives and all that had to do with darkness—sin, the glamour of evil, and Satan himself. Then they would turn to face the east as the sun rose on Easter Sunday morning and would make their professions of belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When the candle was lit from the paschal candle, which had just been lit for the first time, it was clear that the newly baptized now possessed the light of Christ, which would light their paths from then on.





## **You are your child's first teachers in the faith**

, the first witnesses of the faith they will see. The pastor (or his delegate) wants to do everything possible to ensure that you understand the faith that we are, as the baptismal rite says, “proud to profess.” The words used in the sacrament are significant and full of meaning:

Celebrant: *“The Church of God receives you with great joy. In her name I sign you with the Sign of the Cross of Christ our Savior.”*

The Church receives your child with great joy—what a strong and action-filled statement!

What a responsibility for the parents to ask this for their child!

### **ASK YOURSELF:**

- What do I like about being a Catholic?
- What would I like to better understand about my faith?
- How often does my family pray together?