

BAPTISM

LIBBY We're talking about baptism today. Are you a godparent to anyone?

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KAI: (AS MARLON BRANDO FROM "THE GODFATHER") Are you asking me if I'm a godfather? Is that what you're asking me?

LIBBY No, not anymore.

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KAI: It's interesting when you think about it. There are a ton of baptisms in movies and TV shows.

LIBBY Yeah, you're right. Pretty much any character that falls into a lake or a river or the sea, they come back out with new purpose. The writer's using a symbolic baptism to show the character, "Coming back better than ever."

KAI: That's how I emerge from every shower I take.

LIBBY Wow, you take showers?

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KAI: Today we're going keep on baptism, a ritual that you probably know at least a little about and, most importantly, we're going to talk about what it means to be born again in the Spirit.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

LIBBY Hi, I'm Libby.

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KAI: And I'm Kai. Welcome to Catholic Central and our episode on baptism, the first of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church and the gateway to the spiritual life.

LIBBY As we've learned on our other episodes, a sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace instituted by Christ.

KAI: We'll find out why the sacrament is so important for Catholics, as well as all Christians.

LIBBY : We'll talk about immersion versus sprinkling, investigate the origin of baptism, and walk through the ritual itself.

KAI: We tend to think of John the Baptist as the first baptizer, but there was, in fact, a Jewish community called the Essenes who lived by very strict rules and immersed themselves in water to wash away transgressions.

LIBBY : The Jewish religion used water for purification rituals.

KAI: The idea of using water to wash away sins was not entirely new to the culture.

LIBBY : But John knew his ministry of baptizing to symbolize repentance was a precursor to a new baptism, which was an actual new covenant with God. This was a big change.

KAI: As John said, "I baptize with water but one is coming who will baptize you with fire."

LIBBY : Historically, this brings us to Jesus coming to John and asking to be baptized. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, and from that moment on He began His formal public ministry.

KAI: Even for Jesus, who would never have any sins to be washed away, this ritual was not just symbolic. It was the beginning of a new path.

LIBBY : Christ said, "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." Just like real birth is necessary for physical life, baptism is necessary for spiritual life.

KAI: After the resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to go out and baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

LIBBY : The Catholic Church calls this a Trinitarian baptism.

KAI: Let's talk about Catholic baptism and what's involved in the sacrament today.

LIBBY Water, washing, and words.

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KAI: Water is a powerful symbol. Water is the first sign of life. All life on earth had its beginnings in water, and in baptism, the spiritual life has its beginnings.

LIBBY The water of baptism cleanses the soul and quenches the thirst for
: God's love. But water also symbolizes death.

KAI: Death, you say?

LIBBY Catholics believe the person undergoing baptism-

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KAI: The baptizee.

LIBBY No, the person being baptized is baptized into Christ's death, dies to old
: self, and rises again just like Jesus did to newness of life.

KAI: The old self drowns and the new self emerges from the water, born
again in the Spirit.

LIBBY Immersion is where the person being baptized is completely dunked
: underwater. Sprinkling is where water is simply poured over the head
of the person being baptized.

KAI: Either way, it's the sacrament of baptism by water, cleansing you and
sealing you in Christ.

LIBBY The baptism is carried out either by triple immersion or by the
: sprinkling of water three times over the forehead. Ooh, fun fact. The
Catholic Church recognizes any Trinitarian baptism as valid.

KAI: That is super fun.

LIBBY So fun.

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KAI: But besides water, washing, and words, there are three additional
elements.

LIBBY : Chrism, clothing, and a candle. The first element, chrism, is olive oil scented with balsam. The oil is blessed by a bishop at a special Mass during Holy Week. Olive oil symbolizes new life because for thousands of years it's been used to add richness to food and to heal and strengthen. In Greek, the word "krizma" means "oil." "Christ" means "the Anointed One." "Christian" means "someone who's anointed like Christ."

KAI: In baptism, the presider takes the sacred chrism and anoints the person being baptized as priest, prophet, and king.

LIBBY : You might wonder how an ordinary person like you and me can be a priest, prophet, and king.

KAI: How can an ordinary person like you or me be priest, prophet, and king?

LIBBY : Good question. Just like a priest, the baptized person is a bridge between God and the world.

KAI: And prophet because they're called to study and to speak out the truth of the faith, and king because they are at times called to lead and gather others to God.

LIBBY : The second element is the white garment worn by those being baptized. White symbolizes the new life Christ has given them.

KAI: The third element is the baptismal candle, which indicates they have been enlightened by Christ, whose light burns within them and, in turn, enlightens the world.

LIBBY : All these physical elements and symbols point to God's actual activity in and through the sacrament.

KAI: Right. God uses baptism to wash away what the Church calls "original sin," humanity's inborn tendency towards disobedience and rebellion against God that leads to selfishness and chronic misuse of our free will that causes harm.

LIBBY If you are baptized as an adult, you are cleansed not only of original sin,
: but of every harmful act you have committed up until that moment.

KAI: I need to get baptized again.

LIBBY What have you done?
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KAI: I threatened the pizza guy last night.

LIBBY Not the Liam Neeson bit.
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KAI: (AS LIAM NEESON) I don't know who you are, but if my pizza's not here
in the next 30 minutes, I will find you, and you will regret the day you
were born.

LIBBY Wrong on so many levels, and not what baptism is for. When you
: stumble in your life as a Catholic after baptism, you have many
resources including the sacrament of reconciliation to get you back on a
new and clean path.

KAI: You're right. Baptism's gift is to graft you into the family, to mark you
for life as belonging to Christ. Conforming your free will to full unity
with Christ is a process.

LIBBY Maybe now you're asking, "What's up with baby baptism?"
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KAI: Why do Catholics baptize babies when they are way too cute and too
babyish to have committed sins that need to be washed away?

LIBBY Baptism is not just a testimony of faith, but faith publicly professed is
: necessary condition for baptism. You might wonder, in infant baptism,
who's faith is required.

KAI: Scripture tells us that the faith of the parents fully suffices for the
baptism of their children. Just like the Old Testament where Jewish
parents like Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple, parents
present the infant to God in baptism to be sealed as His throughout
their life.

LIBBY : Later, they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and complete their initiation in the sacrament of confirmation. It's a time when people make a personal testimony and commitment to Christ on their own behalf.

KAI: We've covered adult and infant baptism, but there are other forms.

LIBBY : Baptism of blood. That's when a person dies for Christ.

KAI: And baptism of desire, someone who wants to be baptized but dies before receiving the sacrament. The most important thing to remember is that God wants to gather all people into one family. The sacrament of baptism begins that lifelong journey.

LIBBY : To recap, baptism is the first of the seven sacraments. It washes the soul of sin and marks us forever as belonging to God.

KAI: Like all the sacraments, it was instituted by Christ.

LIBBY : Through God's grace, the baptized person grows holiness, which is a work of a lifetime.

KAI: Baptism is the beginning.

LIBBY : This, however, is the end of our episode. I'm Libby.

KAI: And I'm Kai.

LIBBY : Spread the knowledge.

KAI: And get more of it next time on Catholic Central.

KAI (AS LIAM NEESON) Libby, you were right. I was wrong. Liam will never do that again. It's a whole new life. I love pepperoni.

