



“When did my journey begin?”

(Baptism, Your Initiation into God’s Family)



Opening Prayer

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

All: I do!

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

All: I do!

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: I do!

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All: Amen.

Dive In: Encountering the Mountain

For as long as he could remember, Zach had been fascinated with Mauna Kea, an iconic mountain of his Hawaiian ancestry. Mauna Kea is the largest mountain in the world. The now-dormant volcano punched its way out of the sea with volcanic explosions over the course of millions of years.

This volcanic mountain is even bigger than Mount Everest—if you measure the part that’s under the ocean. While Everest beats it in height above sea level, Mauna Kea’s base is at the bottom of the ocean floor, rising a total of 33,474 feet (13,803 feet above sea level). From top to bottom, it towers over Everest by 4,445 feet.

Even though it’s on the tropical island of Hawaii, you can ski or snowboard at the top. Mauna Kea’s name means “white mountain” because its peak is often snow-covered all winter. Traveling from the coast of the island to the top of Mauna Kea brings you through ten climate zones! Its environment is so unique that some plants and animals that thrive on Mauna Kea are found almost nowhere else on earth.

The clean, dry mountain air high above the Pacific makes it so ideal for astronomical observation

that it’s the home of thirteen telescopes funded by eleven countries.

Zach knew all this. He even wrote his college thesis on it. But he had never been to Hawaii. He had never actually *seen* Mauna Kea. Until now. As a graduation gift to himself, he climbed the great mountain. When he arrived at the summit, looking down at the clouds, his eyes filled with tears. “I knew all *about* this mountain.” He said. “Now I *know* this mountain.”

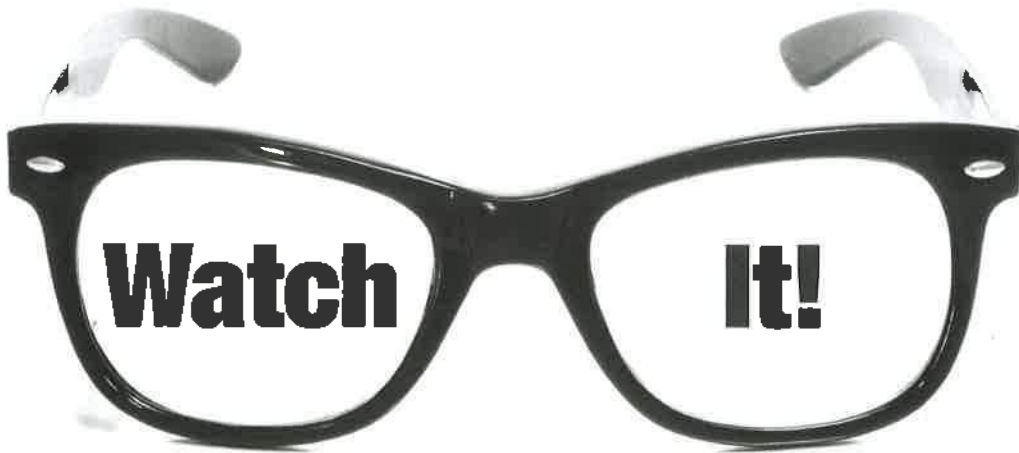
There’s a difference between knowing *about* something and actually *knowing* it. No matter how many facts you hear, you can’t really know something until you’ve encountered it firsthand!

That’s why God gave us sacraments. He didn’t want us merely to hear about salvation history and about his dying and rising. He left us sacraments, starting with Baptism and the other **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION**, so we could encounter all he did for us in a direct way, here and now.



“The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of Baptism.”

—St. Ambrose of Milan



Segment 1: Actions Have Consequences

1. Through the Fall of Adam and Eve, we have inherited Original _____.
2. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve lived in a graced state the Church calls _____.
 A) original peace C) original holiness
 B) original righteousness D) A, B, and C
3. God wants to restore you as his rightful heir so that you may have _____ with him forever.

Segment 2: What Is Baptism?

1. When you were baptized, the sacrament left a permanent, or _____, mark on your soul.
 A) indelible B) unifying C) biblical D) graced
2. **T or F?** Baptism is the necessary first step toward eternal life.

Segment 3: The Symbols of Baptism

1. At a Baptism, the white garment represents _____.
2. The oil used at both Baptism and Confirmation is _____.
 A) sacred chrism B) sacred myrrh C) holy frankincense



TO THE HEART with

The other day, my friend Heidi was looking through her scrapbooks from a mission trip to Senegal, West Africa. She came across a photograph of her much younger self spending Christmas at a resort town called Ziguinchor, seated on what looked like a surf board with two large sails attached. Oliver, a French college student, had invited Heidi to go sailing with him.

As we got onto the boat, I asked Oliver if he was sure he knew what he was doing. "Sure, no problem," he said, playing with the lines. A group of young men pushed us off the shoreline ... and we began sailing rapidly out into the ocean. I had to duck as the sail came swinging around.

The next thing I knew, we were both in the water. The boat had capsized, and the sails were too full of water to get the boat back upright. My ankle stung, and when I lifted my foot, I could see a gash in my ankle. "Better keep that

out of the water," Oliver shouted. "There could be sharks nearby." We made it back safely—but we never spoke again. He was too embarrassed!

Looking back, it was one of the highlights of the trip. But at the time, all I could think about was the sharks.

Some water encounters are more memorable than others. You may not remember the most important one of all ... your Baptism! If you take down your family scrapbooks and dust them off, you might come across a picture of your Baptism day—maybe a smiling photograph of your family and godparents or even an image of the priest pouring a dipper of water over your head. If you were a baby at the time, it's unlikely you remember it. Your parents will—I'll never forget seeing my children baptized. That day is precious to me; it marks the day they became citizens of heaven.

When we see our Baptism this way, as our birthday in the Church as a member of the Body of Christ, it's easier to grasp what Confirmation is all about. Confirmation is a continuation of the journey we began at Baptism.

Through the sacraments, we experience the living handing on of the faith. We see the power of God, not just locked in the past, but encountering us in the present. In Confirmation, you will receive the powerful gifts of grace you will need to continue

your journey of faith. And it all began at Baptism, when you became a new creation: a child of God, an heir to the kingdom.

“Confirmation is a continuation of the journey we began at Baptism.”

Sarah Swafford



Find It!

How is holy chrism (oil) made, and what gives it that wonderful smell?

Hero of the Week


Born:

circa 1869

Died:

February 8, 1947

Memorial:

February 8

Patron Saint of:

• Sudan

St. Josephine Bakhita

One moment, the young Sudanese girl was a beloved child of her family, playing with her brothers and sisters.

The next, she was kidnapped and sold as a slave. Humiliated, shackled, and suffering, she was forced to walk barefoot over 900 miles, away from her family and her homeland.

The shock of the kidnapping, forced march, and ill treatment caused her to forget her own name. She no longer knew who she was. But she was alive, so the slave traders called her *Bakhita*, an Arab word that means “lucky.” For ten years Bakhita, served various masters, until the day she found herself working for the Michieli family, whose father was an Italian diplomat. When political upheaval occurred, they returned to Italy and brought Bakhita with them. In time, the couple returned to Sudan, but, for safety’s sake, they left their daughter and Bakhita in a Canossian convent in Venice.

When the Michieli family returned for them, Bakhita refused to leave the convent. Within those walls she had discovered who she was, a child of God. Although the Michieli family tried to take her with them, the superior intervened on her behalf, pointing out changing laws regarding slavery, and that Bakhita was, in fact, a free woman and always had been.

Shortly after that, she was baptized and took the name Josephine. She couldn’t resist kissing the baptismal font when she entered a Church. “Here is where

I became a child of God,” she’d say. Soon after her Baptism, she entered the novitiate to become a Canossian sister. St. Josephine was known for her gentle smile, and it was often said of her, “*Her mind was always on God, and her heart in Africa.*” She spent the next years of her life working to prepare missionaries for Africa. Asked what she would say to her captors, if she were to return to Sudan, she replied that she would kiss their hands for leading her to a place where she discovered God.

Though her journey took her along a path filled with pain and loss, St. Josephine Bakhita did not allow her crosses to make her bitter. She found her true identity as a daughter of God and united her pain to the suffering of Jesus’ cross—and he empowered her to love everyone, even her enemies.

Despite all her suffering, she summed up her life with these words: “I am definitively loved and, whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.” Her life was not the story of some sad tragedy. She knew that her Baptism had inserted her into a story that began with the creation of the world and that will end in eternal glory!

St. Josephine Bakhita, pray for us. Just as you found freedom from slavery, lead us out of our own spiritual slavery.

Challenge of the Week

- What have you inherited?** Think of something you or someone in your family inherited. It could be an object, a photo, or property. Write about it below, and explain why it is considered valuable and what steps you would take to be sure it is passed on to future generations.
- Buy or create a bottle for storing holy water in your home,** and then stop in at your parish to fill it. Write about what you did with the bottle in the space below.
- Priest, prophet, king!** A priest intercedes and offers spiritual sacrifice. A prophet shares the word of God with people. A king is given power so he might serve and at the same time has a dignity he needs to uphold. Think of a specific way to live one of those roles this week and do it. Write about your experience below.

✝ Closing Prayer

“When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs ...”

—Romans 8:15-17

Heavenly Father, thank you for restoring our inheritance! We are beginning to understand the beauty and power of our Baptism. We know it's not only a treasured Catholic tradition, but a holy initiation into your royal family, and that it changes our souls forever. Help us to stand tall as children of God, anointed, sealed, and blessed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Taking It Home

For next week's "Review Game," be sure to read over the following ...

1. **Watch It!** questions (page 77)
2. **Wrap-Up**
3. **"What's That Word?"**
4. **Memory Verse**

Don't forget to do your **Challenge of the Week** (page 81)

Wrap-Up

In the Old Testament, God's people circumcised their baby boys as a sign that they belonged to God. When Jesus came, he allowed himself to be baptized by John the Baptist, and he commanded his apostles to baptize the entire world, thereby establishing Baptism as the sign of the new covenant.¹

Through his death and Resurrection, Jesus renews all things in himself. He said, "I have come that they

may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV). In Baptism, we are made new by entering his death² and receiving his resurrected life!

In Baptism, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and are made *children of God*.³ Baptism initiates a person into the Church—the Body of Christ. Baptism unites us to Jesus,⁴ infuses sanctifying grace (divine life) and removes Original and personal sins.⁵ Because Baptism is the ordinary means for our salvation,⁶ and because, like Confirmation, it is more about God's choice of us than our choice of him, Catholic parents are strongly urged to have their children baptized as infants.

The spiritual life is a journey, and we who were baptized as infants were "carried" by our parents for the first part of this journey. As we grow, we continue walking with God on our own, living out the truths we have learned from our parents and faith community. Confirmation is an important step along this journey because it completes and perfects the grace given to us in Baptism and deepens in us the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that we need to serve God and the Church as mature Christians. (See also **SPIRITUAL MATURITY**.)



“What’s That Word?”

BAPTISM

Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments. Its symbols of water and washing remind us of a kind of “birth.” Through Baptism, God adopts us as his children, sharing his life with us by the gift of sanctifying grace so that we can live supernaturally, now and forever, in heaven with him.⁷

The share in God’s life that we receive in Baptism frees us from **ORIGINAL SIN**, the absence of grace in us at birth that was a result of our first parents’ disobedience. Baptism is God’s “remedy” for both Original and **PERSONAL SIN**.⁸ The Trinitarian formula for Baptism, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” reminds us that this sacrament makes us members of God’s family, the Church.

“The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula” (CCC 1256).

CONVERSION

In its most fundamental sense, the word *conversion* means a radical reorientation of one’s entire life away from sin and evil and a turning toward God. This change of heart is a central element of Christ’s preaching, of the Church’s ministry of **EVANGELIZATION**, and of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.⁹ The word *conversion* can also refer to the ongoing process of growing in holiness and living a deeper Christian life, with the help of God’s grace. Conversion, like salvation, is not a “once-and-done” thing; it is a lifelong journey.



Memory Verse:

“I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming ... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

– Luke 3:16

ORIGINAL SIN

Original Sin was the sin of Adam and Eve's disobedience of God's command not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden.¹⁰ Original Sin also refers to the way in which we are born without the original justice and holiness that Adam and Eve lost through their sin. For us descendants of Adam and Eve, it is not a personal sin, but rather a sin of human nature that is transmitted to all the descendants of Adam by propagation. As a result of Jesus' saving work, God gives us a share in his life through Baptism, where Original Sin is "forgiven" or "washed away" and God's life is "poured in" to us.

Did You Know?

In the sixteenth century, Pope Clement VIII was urged to ban coffee as "the devil's drink," because it was beloved by Muslims. After tasting it, Clement found it delicious and blessed it, making it popular the world over.

Any questions?

What happens to those who die before they are baptized, either because their parents don't believe in infant Baptism or because they are part of another religion?

The short answer is: We trust in the mercy of God. Jesus is the only way into heaven, and he has made the sacraments (starting with Baptism as the foundation) the ordinary way that we receive the salvation he offers.

God can work outside of the ordinary way he established for us to be saved. The Church teaches that we should trust in the mercy of God for the salvation of infants who have died without being baptized,¹¹ and the *Catechism* refers to a **BAPTISM OF BLOOD** for those people martyred before Baptism.¹²

Finally, the Church acknowledges that people who are completely unaware of the Gospel and of Jesus, but who seek the truth and try to follow God's will as they understand it, have the possibility of being saved through Jesus in a way that only he knows.¹³

We base these teachings on the fact that Jesus made the necessity of Baptism clear, but he also made it clear that he is mercy and love itself, and that he wants our salvation more than we do. So, while we follow his commands and don't take his mercy for granted, we always have reason to trust.

