

# Baptism

## Core Activity

### The Symbol Water

1. Ask the students to take out paper or their journals, and a pen.

2. Have a bowl of water in the classroom and direct the students' attention to it. Ask the students to reflect, in writing, on the following questions:

- What is your earliest memory of swimming?
- Have you ever been afraid of the water, or afraid in the water?
- Why, do you think, are many people afraid of the water?

When you have given students a chance to write, designate someone to read Gen. 7:17–23. After the reading ask the students to reflect on the following questions and to record their reflections:

- Why, do you think, did God destroy everything in the Flood?
- How do you think Noah felt, after seeing all the destruction, when the dove returned with a fresh olive leaf in its beak?

3. Encourage the students to recall a time they were glad to take a bath or a shower. Ask them to reflect, in writing, on the following questions:

- What did you do to get so dirty?
- How did it feel to be clean after needing a bath so badly?

Once you have given the students a chance to write, designate someone to read Ezek. 36:25–27. After the reading ask the students to reflect on the following question and to record their reflections:

- People commonly wish they could go back and “undo” something. How do you think this passage from Scripture can address that desire?

4. Instruct the students to choose from the following list the group they most identify with:

- the family
- a sports team
- friends
- a club
- a band or another other music group
- a church group

Ask them to write their reflections on the following question:

- What makes you feel a part of this group?

When you have given the students a chance to write, designate someone to read Rom. 12:4–8. After the reading ask the students to reflect on the following question and to record their reflections:

- Has there ever been a time that you really felt you were a member of the Church? Please explain your answer.

5. Encourage the students to recall a time they had something difficult in front of them—for example, a move from one place to another, a lot of school-work, or a tough competition. Invite the students to write their reflections on the following question:

- What do you think got you through that time? Please explain your answer.

Once you have given the students a chance to write, designate someone to read 1 Tim. 1:6–8. After the reading ask the students to reflect on the following question and to record their reflections:

- Standing firm in your beliefs can be difficult. In what specific situations do you need the Holy Spirit's help in order to remain true to your faith?

6. Make connections between the students' reflections on the help of the Holy Spirit, and the effects of Baptism found on pages 196–200 in *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, Third Edition (CFH)*. Also lead a discussion with questions like the ones that follow:

- Why, do you think, is water the essential symbol for Baptism?
- How is the destruction of the world by water connected with Baptism?
- How does water lead to new life in Baptism?

7. To conclude the class, hold the bowl of water, and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the Sacrament of Baptism and petition God for all baptized persons to live faithfully to their Baptisms.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Liturgy and the Sacraments* manual.)

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## Core Activity Extension

### Exploring Our Own Baptisms

Assign the students the task of making visual displays of their own Baptisms. They could do something as simple as a poster or something as elaborate as a scrapbook, depending on your desire. The display should include pictures of their Baptisms (if available), of their godparents, of their parents, and of other family members. It should also include images or symbols of how they feel called to live out their baptismal calls in the present. If any of your students have not received the Sacrament of Baptism, ask them to do a visual display that focuses on a time they felt a strong connection with their faith communities or families.

## Additional Activities

### Original Sin

1. Begin by reading Gen. 2:4–9, 15–17 (the second story of the Creation) and Genesis 3:1–7 (the first sin). Then highlight the teaching about Original Sin on pages 197–201 of the *CFH*.

2. Ask the students to share their responses to the following questions. Look for responses that illustrate self-centeredness.

- Considering what you heard from Scripture and from the words on Original Sin, why, do you think, is darkness an appropriate symbol for sin, especially Original Sin?
- Pride, selfishness, and laziness are the three failings most often referred to as the root, or source, of Original Sin. Which of those do you think actually is the source? Please explain your answer.

3. After the discussion play the song “There Is a Light,” written and performed by Cyprian Consiglio, found on the *Spirit & Song* CD, vol. 4, disc H (OCP Publications, 1999), or another song that illumines the theme of light out of darkness. Or, if you prefer, read the poem “Phos Hilaron” (“Hilarious Light”), a joyful hymn in praise of Christ the light that dates to the late third century:

- “O gracious light,  
pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven,  
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!
- Now as we come to the setting of the sun,  
and our eyes behold the vesper light,  
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,  
O Son of God, O Giver of Life,  
and to be glorified through all the worlds.”

4. When the song concludes or after the poem is read, invite the students to gather in small groups of three to five and share their responses to the following questions:

- The words we have heard describe the light of the Trinity that is everywhere. What darkness do we face as a country that needs the light of God? Explain.
- As baptized members of the Church, we are called by the Holy Spirit to be people of prayer, to respect and obey our leaders, and to serve others—to share Christ’s mission by being living signs of the Reign of God. How do you think God is calling you to be a light?

5. Invite the small groups to share their responses with the large group. Conclude with your own observations and comments.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Liturgy and the Sacraments* manual.)

## Renewal of Baptismal Promises

1. Explain to the students that they will now take part in a prayer service. Invite the students to stand and to begin the experience with the Sign of the Cross. Then proceed with the following prayer:

- As a people reborn as adopted children of God the Father, living in Jesus the Christ, and sealed with the Holy Spirit, we come together to declare our desire to continue our baptismal promise to live as members of the Body of Christ, the Church.

2. Ask the students to be seated. Once they have settled, read the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith from the Rite of Baptism for Children. This is the familiar “Do you reject Satan?” profession. After each question of belief, urge the students to respond with a strong “I do.” Ask each question of faith slowly and allow a moment of silence after each question.

3. Ask the students to call to mind concerns that are weighing on them right now or sins they are struggling with. Ask them to imagine themselves placing those concerns or struggles in their hands. Then invite them to stand and come forward in a procession toward a bowl of water. When they come to the bowl, ask them to dip their hands as a symbol of their giving their concerns or struggles over to God. Allow them to dry their hands and return to their seats once they have participated in the ritual.

4. Conclude with the following prayer:
- Go forth to praise and serve the God who called us and marked us as his own at our Baptism. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(This activity is adapted from the *TC: Liturgy and the Sacraments* manual.)

## A Neophyte Interview

Instruct the students to interview someone who was baptized in the past year. Suggest that they talk with that person about the new experience of Baptism and Confirmation. Ask the students to identify the similarities and differences between their interviewees’ experiences of preparation and the Sacraments themselves. (This activity is adapted from the *TC: Liturgy and the Sacraments* manual.)

(The material labeled *TC: Liturgy and the Sacraments* is adapted from *Total Catechesis: Catechetical Sessions on Liturgy and the Sacraments*, by Therese Brown, Laurie Delgatto, Mary Shrader, and Christine Schmertz Navarro, in the Total Catechesis series [Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2004]. Copyright © 2004 by Saint Mary’s Press. All rights reserved.)