

# NOVENA IN PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

## **DAY 1: BEING BORN FROM ABOVE**

*‘Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?’ Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born again.’” ~John 3:4-7*

## READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and coheir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.

Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

Baptism makes the one who receives this sacrament a new creature in Christ, transforms a mere human child into an adopted child of God, one empowered to have faith in God, to hope in Him and to love Him. This new life that is given to the baptized person is a participation in God’s own life. When you bring your child to be baptized, you are choosing for your child to become a new creation, a child of God, endowed with eternal life, filled with the life and power and love of God through the Holy Spirit. As a baptized Christian, you have the same life of grace in you through your own baptism. As you prepare for your child’s baptism, ask and allow the Lord to renew in you your own life of grace, your own awareness that you are a new creature, that you are an adopted son or daughter of God.

**ACTION:** Find the date of your baptism and put it on your calendar so that you remember it this year (and every year). Give thanks to God for the gift of your baptism, the gift of this new life in you.

## **DAY 2: SHARING IN THE BAPTISM OF JESUS**

*‘After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” ~Luke 3:21-22*

## READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1224 Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to “fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus’ gesture is a manifestation of his self-emptying. The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his “beloved Son.”

1214 The sacrament is called *Baptism*, after the central rite by which it is carried out: to baptize (Greek *baptizein*) means to “plunge” or “immerse”; the “plunge:” into the water symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as “a new creature.”

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the heavens were opened. Three things immediately took place. First, Jesus heard the voice of the Father speaking to Him words of loving affirmation: “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Second, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him with such power and clarity that Jesus in His humanity, in His body, could perceive the presence of the Spirit. And third, Jesus was given the mission of His public life.

On the day of our baptism, the heavens are opened for us as well, and the Father adopts us as His children, speaking to our hearts the same words He spoke to Jesus: “You are my beloved son” or “You are my beloved daughter.” We receive in our baptism the Holy Spirit, signified by the anointing with the Sacred Chrism. And in our new identity as children of God, we are given a new mission. We participate in the Baptism of Jesus, and like Him, experience that we are beloved sons and daughters of the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, and sent out to proclaim the Good News.

**ACTION:** Bless yourself and your child with holy water. You can say the words the Father speaks to Jesus. When you bless yourself say, “I am your beloved son/daughter.” When you bless your child, say, “You are God’s beloved son/daughter.”

### **DAY 3: DEAD TO SIN**

*“What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin yet live in it? Or are you unaware that we who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life.” ~Romans 6:1-4*

## READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1263 By Baptism, *al sins* are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam’s sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

On the day of our baptism, our sins were washed away from our souls, were buried with Christ. The plunging into the waters of baptism symbolizes dying to sin, and coming up out of the waters of baptisms symbolizes rising again to new life. We come to the baptismal font as sinners, and we leave those waters free from all sin.

We are called to persevere in this grace, to continue to renounce evil and reject in, and to be restored in grace through confession when we do sin, so that we remain dead to sin, and so that we can live each day in newness of life.

**ACTION:** pray the renunciations of sin given in the rite of baptism.

Do you reject Satan? I do.

And all his works? I do.

And all his empty promises? I do.

Do you reject sin, so as to live in the freedom of God's children? I do.

Do you reject the glamor of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin? I do.

Do you reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness? I do.

#### **DAY 4: I AM A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

*"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy." ~1 Corinthians 3:16-17*

#### **READ FROM THE CATECHISM**

260 The ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God's creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity. But even now we are called to be a dwelling for the Most Holy Trinity: "If a man loves me", says the Lord, "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him."

"O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action." (Prayer by Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity)

When we are baptized, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, and the Holy Spirit's presence in us transforms us into living temples of God. We are temples of the Most High God, which means we have a dignity beyond compare, and should treat ourselves and one another as temples of God. This indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit now is a foretaste of the perfect union with God that we will experience in heaven. When your child is baptized, your child's soul will become in the moment a

dwelling-place of God, your child a temple of the Holy Spirit, to be treated and cared for with love and reverence, not just because he or she is your child, but because this child is now a holy dwelling-place of God.

ACTION: Place your hands on your child and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon your child.

#### **DAY 5: BAPTISM AS BECOMING ANOTHER CHRIST**

*“You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”*

*~Ephesians 4:22-24*

#### READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1243 The white garment symbolizes that the person baptized has “put on Christ,” has risen with Christ. The *candle*, lit from the Easter candle, signifies that Christ has enlightened the neophyte. In him the baptized are “the light of the world.”

The newly baptized is now, in the only Son, a child of God, entitled to say the prayer of the children of God: “Our Father.”

Our adoption in Baptism makes us children of God, “sons in the Son.” That is to say, we become another Christ, begin to live Christ’s own life, to love as He loves, think as He thinks, want what He wants. This Christification begins with Baptism and will be fulfilled in heaven, when we will be fully configured to Jesus Christ. We have put on Christ in Baptism, and that means the old self has died (or has begun to die), so that the life of Christ is now what we live, what we are called to live.

ACTION: In the first of the rites of RCIA, for adults entering the Catholic Church, the candidates and catechumens receive the sign of their cross on their various senses, so that they can begin to live as Christians. Do the same with your child, making the sign of the cross on your child’s forehead, eyes, ears, mouth, heart, hands, shoulders, and feet.

#### **DAY 6: BAPTISM AS ENLIGHTENMENT**

*“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed to the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: ‘Awake, o sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’” ~Ephesians 5:8-14*

#### READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1216 “This bath is called *enlightenment*, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding . . .” Having received in Baptism the Word, “the true light that enlightens every man,” the person baptized has been “enlightened,” he becomes a “son of light,” indeed, he becomes “light” himself:

“Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift . . . We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal, and most precious gift. It is called *gift* because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own; *grace* since it is given even to the guilty; *Baptism* because sin is buried in the water; *anointing* for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed; *enlightenment* because it radiates light; *clothing* since it veils our shame; *bath* because it washes; and *seal* as it is our guard and the sign of God’s Lordship.” (St. Gregory Nazianzus)

Baptism brings us out of the darkness of sin and distrust of God, out of the darkness of lies and deceit, and into the light of the truth. In Baptism, we receive the candle lighted with the light of Christ’s resurrection, the light that pierces all the darkness of sin and ignorance. Through the light of Christ, we can begin to think clearly, to see things for what they are, and thus to live in a way that befits our condition as adopted children of the Father, walking in the light of His love, in the truth of our dependence on Him, in the truth of the faith that we confess. And we begin to adhere more and more fully to the truth of the faith, setting aside the confusion and deceit of relativism, letting our minds be configured to the mind of Christ.

**ACTION:** Pray the Profession of Faith.

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth? 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? 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? I do.

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

### **DAY 7: BAPTISM AS INCORPORATION INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST**

*“As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many.” ~1 Corinthians 12:12-14*

READ FROM THE CATECHISM

1267 Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: “Therefore . . . we are members one of another.” Baptism incorporates us *into the Church*. From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

Our faith is not a “just me and God” kind of faith, but an incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church. We are members of the Church, members of one another, and what we do matters, because whatever happens to one member of the body affects all members. This membership in Christ heals in us the deep inner need to belong, and makes us part of something much greater than ourselves. And this membership in the Body of Christ isn’t just being a member of a particular local church, nor does it depend on what one feels on any particular day. It is a fact—you and I are, as your child soon will be, a cell in this body. We belong to the Body of Christ, which is not limited to one time or place, not limited even to this world. We belong to all of the living baptized, but also to all the Saints who are in heaven.

**ACTION:** Recite the Litany of the Saints, and after each saint pray for your child.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

St. John the Baptist pray for us

St. Joseph pray for us.

St. Peter and St. Paul pray for us.

St. Mary Magdalene pray for us.

*Add the names of other saints, including the patron saint of your child.*

All holy men and women pray for us.

### **DAY 8: BAPTISM AS ANOINTING FOR A MISSION**

*“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” ~Acts 10:38*

#### **READ FROM THE CATECHISM**

1241 The *anointing with sacred chrism*, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, who has become a Christian, that is, one “anointed” by the Holy Spirit, incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.

Each one of us has been created by God for some purpose, to carry out some mission in life. Your child also was created for a specific purpose, for a specific mission. It is in baptism that we are anointed by God for carrying out that mission, just as Christ was anointed in His baptism to carry out His mission. Whatever our particular mission may be, it is a participation in the mission of Jesus Christ, priest, prophet and king, a call to help bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, to, like

Jesus, go about doing good. In a time when there is a loss of a sense of purpose or meaning in life, remembering our baptism takes us back to the fact that we have a mission, and have been anointed, empowered, to carry out that mission.

**ACTION:** Write a card which you can save to give to your child on the day of his or her confirmation. Include in the card your reasons for choosing to have your child baptized, and an explanation, in your own words, about what this anointing in Christ means.

### **DAY 9: THE FAMILY AS THE DOMESTIC CHURCH**

*“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that over the land of Egypt there may be such intense darkness that one can feel it.’ So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was dense darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days. Men could not see one another, nor could they move from where they were, for three days. But all the Israelites had light where they dwelt.” ~Exodus 10:21-23*

#### **READ FROM THE CATECHISM**

1656 In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”

Just as the children of Israel had light where they dwelt while the culture and the world around them was in darkness, so too Christian homes are dwellings of light, where person enlightened by God in Baptism dwell together, where children learn to live in the light of the faith. In a world of darkness, Christian families shine as lights, attracting others to Christ by the love they have for one another. The family is the domestic church, the primary place where children learn how to live as children of God. It is in the family that we learn the meaning of our baptism, that we learn how to give and receive love, that we learn how to grow in faith, that we learn who we are and who we are called to be. As parents, your role is crucial for your child’s growth in the faith, just as it is essential for their physical and psychological well-being and growth. Family rituals and habits, such as prayer and Bible reading together or ways of celebrating special feasts, for example, form your children and train them in the faith. The more intentional you are about establishing ways of praying and growing in faith as a family, the more likely your children will grow up with a love for the Lord and a knowledge of the faith, as well as memories of the goodness of God manifested in your love for them.

**ACTION:** Together, write down some concrete habits or rituals of faith you can do as a family.