

THE SACRAMENTS IN SCRIPTURE: BAPTISM

“All the invisible realities of our redemption become visible in the sacraments.”

–Pope Leo the Great

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs, which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power.

In baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in the sacrament.

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness.

The waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of baptism, that make an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery, to be an image of God’s holy people, set free from sin by baptism.

In the waters of the Jordan your Spirit was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit.

Your Son willed that water and blood should flow from his side as he hung upon the cross.

After his resurrection he told his disciples: “Go out and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Father, look now with love upon your Church, and unseal for her the fountain of baptism.

By the power of the Spirit give to the water of this font the grace of your Son.

You created man in your own likeness: cleanse him from sin in a new birth to innocence by water and the Spirit.

The celebrant touches the water with his right hand continues:

We ask you, Father, with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the water of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Scripture Passages

1. Genesis 1:1-3. *In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.*

- Light overcomes the darkness after (or while) “a mighty wind [sweeps] over the waters”

2. Genesis 7:17,23. *The flood continued upon the earth for forty days. As the waters increased, they lifted the ark, so that it rose above the earth... The LORD wiped out every living thing on earth: man and cattle, the creeping things and the birds of the air; all were wiped out from the earth. Only Noah and those with him in the ark were left.*

- Noah and his family are saved through the waters

3. Exodus 14:21-22. *Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD swept the sea with a strong east wind throughout the night and so turned it into dry land. When the water was thus divided, the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land, with the water like a wall to their right and to their left.*

- Moses ("to draw out" – recall that he was drawn from the water by Pharaoh's daughter) stretches out his hand, and God delivers Israel
- A mighty east wind swept across the sea
- The Israelites are saved through the waters while their enemies are destroyed

4. Matthew 3:13-17. *Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

- Cf. Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:26-34
- St. John the Baptist's admission: "I need to be baptized by you"
- "To fulfill all righteousness"
- Trinitarian – all three Persons in the Holy Trinity are present

5. John 3:5-8. *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 from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

- Baptism is Jesus' model for salvation, not ours

6. John 19:33-35. *But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may [come to] believe.*

- Connection of baptism to the Cross and to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away our sins

7. Mt 28:19-20. *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."*

- Jesus' last words to his disciples before his ascension into heaven