

# Baptism | sign symbol sacrament



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Michael Reid 18 June, 2012

As a ritual baptism predates Christianity  
purification • commitment • conversion  
Christianity gave new meaning to baptism



## A CLEAR DEFINITION

Baptism is the ordinary rite of initiation by which most Christian Churches welcome new members into their faith community.



## A CLEAR DEFINITION

Not all Churches baptise

Not all Churches do it the same way

Not all Churches share the same beliefs



At its heart Christianity believes in a God of revelation who invites us to participate in a loving relationship with him individually and communally.

Baptism is an expression of faith in this one God.

It is an expression of faith in this relationship.

It is an expression of faith in this community.





## DIFFERENCE 1 - FAITH

Some Churches require that the candidate is able to make a conscious faith response. The practice is therefore restricted to Adult/Believer Baptism.

Others believe that faith develops in relationship with God. Baptism is therefore practised for adults, infants and children.



## DIFFERENCE 1 - FAITH

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the faith required for baptism is not perfect or mature.

‘it is a beginning that is called to develop’  
(CCC1253)

As an initiation Baptism marks the beginning of a new ‘life in Christ.’



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## DIFFERENCE 2 - EFFECT

In Scripture water is a common motif for new beginnings.

In the waters of  
Creation (Genesis 1)

The flight from Egypt  
(Exodus 14)

In the Great Flood  
(Genesis 6 – 9)

Into Canaan  
(Joshua 1)





## DIFFERENCE 2 - EFFECT

St. Augustine emphasised relationship and renewal in his reflection on Baptism (4<sup>th</sup> century).

As the individual accepts God's invitation to relationship they receive the Grace of God.

Baptism effects salvation (Augustine).



## DIFFERENCE 2 - EFFECT

Augustine concluded that there are two elements that effect Baptism

Water • Faith



## DIFFERENCE 2 - EFFECT

The Oriental and Latin Churches believe that  
Baptism does effect salvation – SACRAMENT

I believe in one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins (Nicene Creed)



## DIFFERENCE 2 - EFFECT

During the reformation some Christians rejected the notion that any human action/co-operation was required to effect salvation.

These Churches believe the the ritual of Baptism is a symbolic expression of the salvation effected by God.

The term **ORDINANCE** is sometimes used instead of Sacrament.





## SIGNIFICANCE - INDIVIDUAL

Having been initiated into a Christian Church implies a commitment to the teachings, practices and life of the community.

The individual should continue to learn about and participate in the culture of the Church.

In the case of the Baptism of children their parents commit to raise/form them in the Church.



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## SIGNIFICANCE - INDIVIDUAL

‘baptised in Christ you have  
clothed yourself in Christ’

(Galatians 3)

The individual now shares in the life and the  
ministry of Christ.



## SIGNIFICANCE - INDIVIDUAL

‘If anyone would follow me  
let them take up their cross  
each day and follow me’

(Luke 9)

The baptised should live a life in imitation of Christ.



## SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNITY

The community that initiates individuals also takes on a significant responsibility.

Having welcomed the individual the community nurtures and supports them by its example.





## SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNITY

The Christian life is often counter-cultural and remaining faithful to one's individual commitment is not easy.

The support of the community strengthens the individual. It's example reassures the individual that it can be done.



## SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNITY

The community is greater than the local Church; it is the universal communion of the faithful who have shared, suffered and stood together for two-thousand years.



## SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNITY

The community also benefits from receiving the newly baptised.

The community is enriched by the faith of the individual. Their commitment to the life of the community encourages those whose own commitment may have waned.



## ONE BAPTISM – WHAT MAKES IT VALID?

With the variety of belief and practice evident among Christian Churches the question arises, 'what constitutes a valid baptism?'

The Oriental and Latin Churches and the various Churches of the reformation accept as valid any baptism that makes use of water and the Trinitarian formula.





## ONE BAPTISM – WHAT MAKES IT VALID?

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

**Matthew 28:16-20**



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## ONE BAPTISM – WHAT MAKES IT VALID?

Among a number of evangelical Churches the practice is to baptise only in the name of Jesus.

In this case the validity of the rite may still be accepted if the phrase 'I baptise you' is used.

