

## Baptism – the Reality and the Sign

There are two elements that make a sacrament: the supernatural reality that is communicated to man when the sacrament is administered and received, and the “sign” that signifies that supernatural reality, which is done during the rite for that sacrament. For example, the supernatural reality of baptism is that it confers the grace of justification through the remission of sins and the infusion of sanctifying grace.

Another supernatural reality of baptism is the baptismal “character” or “seal” that is imprinted in the soul of the recipient. The baptismal “character” is an indelible spiritual mark which incorporates the baptized into the Mystical Body of Christ – the Church. It is an ontological change which changes not just the qualities of a person, but the very being and essence of that person. It makes a person a “new creature,” an adopted son or daughter of God and makes a person a temple of the Holy Spirit.



The concept of an ontological change in baptism was first articulated by St. Cyprian of Carthage in the 3rd century. About a century later, St. Augustine further developed the idea that it is not human effort, but grace from God, which effects this change. As a result, he supported the necessity of baptism for infants, even if they are unaware at the time of baptism. Infants should not be prevented from receiving the ontological changes effected by the sacrament. The Council of Trent in the mid-16th century established the ontological change of baptism as formal doctrine, thus making it a central teaching in the Catholic

Church. A parent or guardian not only has the right to decide for their child, but also the obligation to do what is best for their child, both physically and spiritually.

The supernatural reality of baptism fulfills the prophecy of Jeremiah: “I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33). In a profound and mysterious way, the “writing” of the law in men’s hearts mentioned by Jeremiah represents the ontological reality of the “character” or “seal” that is imprinted in the soul of the baptized.

How is the law of the Lord inscribed on the hearts of the baptized? Through internal transformation – the Holy Spirit removes the “heart of stone” and gives a “heart of flesh,” thereby creating a new inclination in the hearts and minds of the baptized; they no longer oppose God’s law, but desire to observe His commandments. Instead of following the law of the Lord out of obligation, they follow the law out of love for the Lord and their fellow men. Following the law of the Lord then becomes a delight, rather than a burden. Furthermore, as the baptized learn to discern right from wrong and act accordingly, they begin to experience true freedom in Christ.

The “sign” that signifies the supernatural reality of a sacrament is its “matter” and “form.” For example, the “matter” for the sacrament of baptism is plain water, not milk, juice, soda or any kind of liquid, but

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just plain water. The “form” for the sacrament of baptism are the words uttered by the minister during the rite; specifically, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

The earliest form of the rite of baptism is in Chapter 7 of the Didache, an early Christian text (late 1st to early 2nd century) which provides practical instructions for Christian life; it describes baptism as a core practice and emphasizes the “form” of baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## PARISH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Attention children and parents: We will have Sunday School class today!

January 18 is potluck Sunday! This is a great activity for everyone to foster fellowship in our church community. Lunch begins after the 10:30am Mass. Please bring your favorite dish to share. If you are celebrating your birthday in the month of January, we have ordered a birthday cake for you.

There are only a few copies remaining of the 2026 Chinese liturgical calendars. Get your copy today!

We will celebrate the Feast Day of the Holy Name of Jesus on Jan. 18, 2026 in lieu of 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time.

We will celebrate Chinese New Year on Feb. 15, 2026 in lieu of 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The 10th year anniversary of the dedication of our church will be on November 19, 2027. We would like all church members to have their picture taken for the 10th year anniversary commemorative parish book. Please sign up with Tommy Puk.



Prayer List: Xie Yannong, Bian Meiyi, Chen Kun, Chen Shupeng, Ni Yufang, Lydia Chen, David Wang, Chen Jianxin, Liang Chenjing and Xu Taicheng.

Mass Schedule	Confessions	Bible Study
Sundays 10:30 AM (Chinese)	Sundays 9:00-9:30 AM	Wednesdays 10:00 AM (Chinese)
Sundays 2:00 PM (English)	Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 PM	Mondays 6:00 PM (English)
	By Appointment	
Mondays 12:00 PM (English)		<b>Eucharistic Adoration</b>
Tuesdays 12:00 PM (English)	<b>Anointing of the Sick</b>	Sundays 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
Wednesdays 12:00 PM (Chinese)	First Sundays after 10:30 AM Mass	Tuesdays 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Fridays 12:00 PM (English)		
First Friday 7:00 PM (English)		
First Saturday 10:00 AM (Chinese)		