


# JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

## UNIT ONE: THE WAY IS PREPARED

### Lessons 8

### Understanding Baptism [1]

#### CONTENT:

1.  Baptism is only the beginning of our journey of faith. The grace of Baptism is like a seed sown in the soil. It needs catechesis to grow and flower. Each of us needs to understand and 'live' our baptism. [Cf. CCC1231]
2. By following the rites of Baptism we can better understand the meaning and the graces received. [CfCCC1234] Thus we discover that:
  - The name given at Baptism is important, reminding us that we are loved in a personal way by God, who "calls us by name."
  - We are marked with a cross signifying we will soon belong to Christ, who saved us through his cross.
  - God's Word has the power to enlighten us and lead us to respond in faith.
  - It is through the Body of Christ, the Church, that we receive God's grace, especially the Sacraments.
  - In Baptism we are set free from original sin and from the power of Satan.

REFERENCES: CCC 1231,1234-1243. 'You' Bishop Fulton Sheen.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts

Example of Blackboard work:

#### I. STARTER:

[Divide the students into 4 groups and ask them to list all they have found out about baptism under 2 headings: i. physical things/places ii. words or actions. After 3-4 minutes, ask them read out their lists. Write them on the blackboard. Congratulate those who have a good number on their list.]

#### II. DEVELOPMENT:

You have managed to find out quite a lot about what happens at baptism! We saw that all the actions in Jesus' baptism meant something deeper.

In our baptism also, everything that we do or see has a deeper meaning. Here also God is doing something. But there has to be a 2-way action here also. It is only if we understand the signs and live out our Baptism that it becomes really effective.

The Church tells us that when we are baptised as babies, it is as if a seed has been sown in the soil. This seed has to be cared for by learning about God and trying to say 'yes' to him. Only then will it grow into a plant and give flowers and fruit. This means that baptism is only the beginning of our faith-journey. We have to keep going.

Let's start 'checking out' all that happens and see if we can figure out what each action means.

[Give out handouts. Read each step mentioned and let students suggest answers orally for each question. After this bring out the points not mentioned by them. They then write in their answers.]

THINGS/PLACES	ACTIONS/WORDS
Church	pouring of water
Font	
Water	new name given
Candle	
Oil	"I baptise you in
Priest	the name of the

## 1. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

- Is a name important? Why?

A name becomes part of who you are. If your name is written on the class blackboard for talking or misbehaving, you feel bad about it. If it is engraved on a trophy, you feel proud. God says in Isaiah 43, "I have called you by name. You are mine!" Your baptism is a celebration of God's personal love for you. *[Students write.]*

- Were you named after a saint/person from the Bible? Or for any other reason?

If you were named after a saint or holy person, it is because your parents hoped you would take that person as your model and help. *[Students write their baptismal names and who they were named after. If they do not know details, they could fill it in later. They could share this with their partners.]*

## 2. A CROSS ON YOUR HEAD.. What did this action mean?

The cross marked on your head is the mark of Jesus Christ. You were soon going to belong to him. It also showed that Jesus has saved you by his death on the cross.

## 3. GOD'S WORD What does it do to us?

God's Word helps us to know God and his actions. As we listen to it, it leads us to believe in him and to respond to him. In other words, God's Word gives us faith. Without faith (believing) we cannot have Baptism. As a baby, others believe and ask for baptism for you. As you grow up, you too need to hear God's Word and believe for yourself. At Confirmation, you have a chance to speak up for yourself.

## 4. THE CHURCH AND ME

Read what Bishop Fulton Sheen says about the people of God. *[Students read]* He compares the Church, or the Body of Christ, as a lake full of water with canals flowing out taking the water to the fields or cities. God wants to pour his love and grace into our lives. So he gives it to us through the Church. This is the way he has chosen.

- What 7 channels do you think he is talking about?

He is talking about the 7 sacraments. *[Ask the students to name them.]*

- Why do the people present and the saints pray for the child?

Because they are all part of God's Body or family which he/she is joining.

## 5. FREEDOM AND STRENGTH

- Why does an innocent baby need to be set free from sin?

Because after our first parents (Adam and Eve) sinned, all of us inherited the stain of sin, just as we inherit other traits like colour, certain diseases etc from our parents. This sin is called original sin. Even though the baby has not committed any sin personally, it still carries the sin of all human beings: original sin. By the power of Christ, the priest's prayer frees you from original sin and from the power of Satan.

- What oil did the priest anoint you with at this point?

The Oil of Catechumens. It is a sign that now you belong to God. The catechumen is a person who has experienced a call from God and is preparing for baptism. In the first 3 centuries after Christ, the catechumens were all baptised at the Easter Vigil service. The whole of Lent was like a retreat preparing for the big day.

## III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- At our next class we will look at the rest of the ceremony. Let us now look again at the steps we have just discussed and ask ourselves: **Do I live my baptism?** That means,

-Do I live up to the name given me?

-Do I remember that Jesus has died for me?

-Do I read his Word and try to grow in my faith?

-Do I take the help of the saints and other

Christians to grow spiritually?

-Do I reject Satan's temptations to sin?

- Prayerfully go through the question and write down in your handouts some practical things you can do. *[Students reflect and write in silence]*