

The Symbols of Baptism

The symbols of Baptism are rich in meaning. They increase our understanding of Baptism's power to transform us and remind us of our rebirth in Christ.



Water

Water is Baptism's most familiar symbol. Its power to cleanse and refresh us reflects the grace of baptism that washes away sin and renews us in Christ. Water is essential to life: a glass of water refreshes us; rain brings life and growth to the land; the ocean abounds in life.

Baptism by immersion in flowing water most clearly signifies the immersion of the baptized into the death and life of Christ. The blessing of water at the Easter Vigil and in the baptismal rite emphasize this relationship, which is reflected throughout Scripture.



The Baptismal Font

The baptismal font or pool is a focal point in the church. It often stands near a main entrance, reminding us that Baptism is the gateway into the Church. A font with flowing water demonstrates water's refreshing and cleansing qualities. An immersion pool represents both the tomb from which Christ rose in glory and the waters from which we receive eternal life.



The Community

Baptism welcomes the child into the community of faith, the People of God. The godparents, who represent this community, promise to support the parents in forming the child in the faith. Belonging to the Church gives us opportunities for service and evangelization, the mission of all baptized Christians.



Oil

Oil heals, nourishes, energizes, and beautifies. In the baptismal ceremony, two different oils are used to signify that God will always be present to strengthen, heal, and renew us. In Old Testament times, Israelite leaders were anointed with precious oil to distinguish them as spiritual or political leaders. Anointing identifies the child with the Christ (meaning *anointed*), who was anointed with the Spirit at his baptism in the River Jordan.



The White Garment

The *white garment* or baptismal robe symbolizes the new dignity and purity of this new child of God. Like the candle, it is a symbol of the illumination of faith.



Candles and Light

God begins his word and creation with, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). We are born from our mother’s dark womb into the daily cycles of light and dark. Throughout our lives, we go through times of spiritual enlightenment and darkness. Fire and light bring us warmth, energy, and vision.

Christ is the Light of the World, freeing us from the darkness of sin and doubt. In the ceremony the priest or deacon presents a *lighted candle* to the family and godparents. Lit from the *Easter candle*, it creates a powerful reminder of the light of Christ and flame of the Spirit within the child. It also reminds all Christians of their duty to keep the light glowing.