

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism

What We Found

- Baptism stands in the foundation of Christian unity: *one Lord, one faith, one baptism* (Ephesians 4:5): a shared birth, not a shared opinion: which is why the baptized of every Christian community are truly our brothers and sisters, and why the Church never repeats a valid Baptism: one conferred with water, in the threefold Name, with the intention of doing what the Church does.
- Baptism seals an indelible character that no sin, desertion, or decade can erase (CCC 1272): the deserter still carries the King's mark, and the way home is confession, never a second font. The seal is not maintained by the quality of our grip; the grace it calls us to live is restored, when lost, in confession.
- The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) is the Jordan scene become the Church's errand: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the theophany now the Name spoken over every font, for all nations.
- God has bound salvation to Baptism and is not bound himself (CCC 1257): the baptism of blood, the baptism of desire, salvation possible for the sincere seeker who never knew Christ, and real hope for children who die without the sacrament, entrusted to the mercy of God and the tenderness of Jesus (CCC 1258–1261). The exceptions orbit the sacrament; they do not replace it: the font remains the one means that assures.
- The baptized share Christ's threefold anointing: priest, prophet, and king (CCC 1268): worship to offer, truth to speak, service to order: a life lived in a white garment, under an open heaven.
- We ended as the Church always renews the baptized: standing, promising, believing: I do.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory Nazianzen • *Oration 40, On Holy Baptism*

St. Gregory the Theologian, in the ancient Church's greatest sermon on Baptism, teaches in substance that the gift has as many names as it has splendors: we call it gift, grace, baptism, anointing, illumination, garment of immortality, bath of regeneration, seal: gift, because conferred on those who bring nothing; grace, because given even to debtors; bath, because it washes; seal, because it guards us and marks God's ownership.

St. Augustine • *his writings against the Donatists*

St. Augustine, defending the unrepeatable seal across his anti-Donatist works, teaches in substance that Baptism marks the soul as the military brand of his age marked the emperor's soldier: the deserter who flees the ranks still bears the mark; it convicts him while he wanders and identifies him when he returns; and no one re-brands a returning soldier. So the Church receives back the lapsed with penance, never with a second font: the seal outlasts every desertion, waiting.

The Creed of the Church • *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*

"I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins."

Sixteen centuries of Sundays, and the whole of this study, in nine words: one (Ephesians' unity, the unrepeatable seal), Baptism (the water God chose), for the forgiveness of sins (Peter's Pentecost promise, effected, not merely pictured). The group has been professing the conclusion of this study aloud since before it began.

Live It This Week

- Celebrate your baptismal anniversary this year as a real feast: the date is in your calendar since Session 9; plan the meal, light your baptismal candle if you have it, tell the story.
- Exercise each office once this month: offer one intentional act of worship beyond Sunday (priest), have one honest conversation about the faith (prophet), take up one hidden act of service (king).
- Bless yourself with holy water at every entrance and exit of the church from now on, deliberately: you now know the water's whole biography, from Genesis 1:2 to the opened side to your own forehead.
- Pass it on: pray about leading, hosting, or inviting someone into the next study: baptizing and teaching belong together, and formation is how the baptized keep walking.

Memory Verse

one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:5–6 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: The study ends; the baptized life does not. This week, reread John 3:1–21 with fourteen weeks of eyes, keep your baptismal date on the calendar as a feast, and consider whom you might invite when this study runs again. The promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off (Acts 2:39).

Catechism references: 1257–1261, 1268, 1271–1274