

03 - Baptism in the Early Church

Baptism in the New Testament

Baptism in 1st Century Judaism?

Baptism of St John the Baptist

- Those who were baptized by John had to be baptized again...

Baptism of Christ

- The Lord was baptized before He started His ministry, pointing that baptism is the beginning of all blessings
- We, too, start our lives as Christians (children of God) with baptism
- "No Baptism was necessary for Christ, but He freely received the baptism of a servant [John] to draw us towards His baptism" (Tractate 5 on the Gospel of John - St Augustine)
- "The Lord was baptized, not to be cleansed himself, but to cleanse the waters, so that those waters, cleansed by the flesh of Christ which knew no sin, might have the power of baptism. Whoever comes, therefore, to the washing of Christ, lays aside his sins." (Commentary on Luke 2:83 - St Ambrose of Milan)
- St John Chrysostom - Homily 4 on Matthew
- St Gregory Nazianzen - Orat. 39
- St Augustine - Sermon on Epiphany
- St Ambrose - on Luke 3:21

Baptism in the Gospels

Baptism after Pentecost

Baptism in the Early Church

See "The Bible and the Liturgy" - Jean Danielou

Preparation, Examination, and Enrollment

Baptismal ceremonies began at the opening of the Great Fast (Lent). The candidates were enrolled and began their immediate preparation for the sacrament. Until this step, they had been simple catechumens (which could last a long time). Now they are called photizomenoi ("those who are coming into the light").

The Rite of Enrollment: "Whoever wishes to give in his name does so on the eve of Lent; and a priest notes down all the names. The next day, the opening of Lent, the day on which the eight weeks begin, in the middle of the principal church, that is, the church of the Martyrium, a seat is

placed for the bishop, and one by one the candidates are led up to him. If they are men, they come with their godfathers; if women, with their godmothers. Then the bishop questions the neighbors of each person who comes in, saying, "Does he lead a good life? Does he respect his parents: Is he given to drunkenness or lying?" If the candidate is pronounced beyond reproach by all those who are thus questioned in the presence of witnesses, with his own hand the bishop notes down the man's name. But if the candidate is accused of failing in any point, the bishop tells him to go out, saying: 'Let him amend his life and when he has amended it, let him come to Baptism.'" (Egeria)

- Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome (20)
- St Augustine (De cateh. 9)
- Theodore of Mopsuestia (Ho. Cat. XII, 1) - gives interpretation of these rites as a court case against Satan - see Jean Danielou Introduction "The Bible and the Liturgy" (p.20-21)

Lent Period

Come every day during Lent at Matins

Daily exorcism

Catechesis - explaining the Scripture from Genesis (Literal and Spiritual sense)

"Do not think that it consists of ordinary sermons. These are good, but if we neglect them today, we can still listen to them tomorrow. But the teaching that is to follow on the Baptism of rebirth, - if you neglect it now, when can you find it again? This is the time for planting the trees. If you neglect to spade and dig the earth, when can you plant properly a tree that has been badly planted? The catechesis is a building. If we neglect to dig its foundations, if we leave holes and the building is shaky, of what use will be any further work?" (XXXIII, 352, A-B).

Until the Sunday before Easter when they recite the Creed for the first time (redditio symboli)

Renounce Satan and Profess Christ

On Easter Vigil (Day of Baptism)

1. Renounce Satan facing West (St Cyril XXXIII, 1068-1069; also Theodore of Mopsuestia XIII, Introduction) - same wording we have today
2. Profession of Faith facing East

Baptism

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