

Name _____ Date _____

Handout 3-A

Pope Francis on

Baptism

This is Pope Francis's teaching on Baptism at his Wednesday audience, January 8, 2014:

Today we begin a series of Catecheses on the Sacraments, starting with Baptism. By happy coincidence this coming Sunday is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

1. Baptism is the Sacrament on which our very faith is founded and which grafts us as a living member onto Christ and his Church. Together with the Eucharist and Confirmation it forms what is known as "Christian initiation," like one great sacramental event that configures us to the Lord and turns us into a living sign of his presence and of his love.

Yet a question may stir within us: is Baptism really necessary to live as Christians and follow Jesus? After all, isn't it merely a ritual, a formal act of the Church in order to give a name to the little boy or girl? This question can arise. And on this point what the Apostle Paul writes is illuminating: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4). Therefore, it is not a formality! It is an act that touches the depths of our existence. A baptized child and an unbaptized child are not the same. A person who is baptized and a person who is not baptized are not the same. We, by Baptism, are immersed in that inexhaustible source of life which is the death of Jesus, the greatest act of love in all of history; and thanks to this love we can live a new life, no longer at the mercy of evil, of sin and of death, but in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.

2. Many of us have no memory of the celebration of this Sacrament, and it is obvious why, if we were baptized soon after birth. I have asked this question two or three times already, here, in this square: who among you knows the date of your Baptism, raise your hands. It is important to know the day on which I was immersed in that current of Jesus' salvation. And I will allow myself to give you some advice . . . but, more than advice, a task for today. Today, at home, go look, ask about the date of your Baptism and that way you will keep in mind

that most beautiful day of Baptism. To know the date of our Baptism is to know a blessed day. The danger of not knowing is that we can lose awareness of what the Lord has done in us, the memory of the gift we have received. Thus, we end up considering it only as an event that took place in the past—and not by our own will but by that of our parents—and that it has no impact on the present. We must reawaken the memory of our Baptism. We are called to live out our Baptism every day as the present reality of our lives. If we manage to follow Jesus and to remain in the Church, despite our limitations and with our weaknesses and our sins, it is precisely in the Sacrament whereby we have become new creatures and have been clothed in Christ. It is by the power of Baptism, in fact, that, freed of original sin, we are inserted into Jesus' relation to God the Father; that we are bearers of a new hope, for Baptism gives us this new hope: the hope of going on the path of salvation our whole life long. And this hope nothing and no one can extinguish, for it is a hope that does not disappoint. Remember, hope in the Lord never disappoints. Thanks to Baptism, we are capable of forgiving and of loving even those who offend us and do evil to us. By our Baptism, we recognize in the least and in the poor the face of the Lord who visits us and makes himself close. Baptism helps us to recognize in the face of the needy, the suffering, and also of our neighbor, the face of Jesus. All this is possible thanks to the power of Baptism!

3. A last point, which is important. I ask you a question: can a person baptize him or herself? No one can be self-baptized! No one. We can ask for it, desire it, but we always need someone else to confer this Sacrament in the name of the Lord. For Baptism is a gift which is bestowed in a context of care and fraternal sharing. Throughout history, one baptizes another, another and another . . . it is a chain. A chain of Grace. I cannot baptize myself: I must ask another for Baptism. It is an act of brotherhood, an act of filiation to the Church. In the celebration of Baptism we can see the most genuine features of the Church, who like a mother continues to give birth to new children in Christ, in the fecundity of the Holy Spirit.

Let us, then, ask the Lord from our hearts that we may be able to experience ever more, in everyday life, this grace that we have received at Baptism. That in encountering us, our brothers and sisters may encounter true children of God, true brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, true members of the Church. And do not forget your homework today: find out, ask for the date of your Baptism. As I know my birthday, I should know my Baptism day, because it is a feast day.

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Handout 3-B

Journal Reflection: My Baptism

Answer these questions as honestly as possible.

1. (If you are baptized, answer this as if you have not been.) What would draw you to seek Baptism in the Church today?

2. Do you think it's better to be baptized as a baby or as an adult? Explain your answer.

3. What are possible advantages of baptizing, confirming, and giving First Eucharist to infants as the Eastern churches do? What are possible advantages of baptizing infants and waiting until later for Confirmation and First Eucharist?

Quotes from
The Gospel of Life, St. John Paul II

In 1995, St. John Paul II released the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*). In these excerpts, he speaks about the nature of the culture of death and the culture of life.

[The Church] feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this “Gospel,” the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history. The Gospel of God’s love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel. (no. 2)



Thirty years later, taking up the words of the Council and with the same forcefulness I repeat that condemnation in the name of the whole Church, certain that I am interpreting the genuine sentiment of every upright conscience: “Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practise them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).” (no. 3)



In seeking the deepest roots of the struggle between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death,” we cannot restrict ourselves to the perverse idea of freedom mentioned above. We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: the eclipse of the sense of God and of man, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism, which, with its ubiquitous tentacles, succeeds at times in putting Christian communities themselves to the test. (no. 21)



The eclipse of the sense of God and of man inevitably leads to a practical materialism, which breeds individualism, utilitarianism, and hedonism. (no. 23)

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Handout 3-D

Chapter 3 SAT Practice: Critical Reading

Read Section 1, "Understanding the Sacrament of Baptism" (pages 77–84). Then indicate the correct answer to each question.

_____ 1. What does the word *baptism* mean?

- A. "To wash"
- B. "To plunge"
- C. "To die and rise again"
- D. "To belong"

_____ 2. Which Old Testament event prefigures Baptism?

- A. The crossing of the Red Sea
- B. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian
- C. Jesus' baptism by John
- D. The Paschal Mystery of Christ

_____ 3. What do we call the first stage in Christian initiation?

- A. Catechumenate
- B. Mystagogia
- C. Purification
- D. Precatechumenate

_____ 4. In the early Church (and the RCIA today), which stage in Christian initiation usually occurs during Lent?

- A. Inquiry
- B. Mystagogia
- C. Purification
- D. Precatchumenate

_____ 5. What is the purpose of the scrutinies during the initiation process?

- A. To make people feel bad for their sins
- B. To remind people that Easter is coming
- C. To remind men and women that they are God's Chosen People
- D. To assist people in self-examination and repentance

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Handout 3-E

Scripture Study: The Baptism of Jesus

Read the four accounts of the Baptism of Jesus, found in the table below. Working alone or in a small group, write a short essay describing the similarities and differences in the Gospels. Speculate why you think each Gospel writer included or left out certain details. See the additional notes for the passages in your Bible for some additional insight.

Matthew 3:13-17	
Mark 1:9-11	
Luke 3:21-22	
John 1:29-34	

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Handout 3-F

Journal Reflection:
Helping Our Catechumens

The entire Christian assembly has a responsibility to help and guide the catechumens in their study and preparation. What are some ways you can assist the catechumens, either through your prayers, example, words, or actions?

Prayers:

Example:

Words:

Actions:

Write a note of support to parents of a newly baptized infant.

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Handout 3-G

Small-Group Discussion:

Precepts of the Church

Discuss these questions in your group and have each person write down his or her answers. Designate one person to share your group's insights with the rest of the class.

Precept 1. "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor."

1. What are the times of Sunday (and Saturday night) Masses in your parish? Which time do you prefer to celebrate Mass? Why?

2. What are the times of Masses (and vigil Masses) on holy days of obligation in your parish? Which of these times do you prefer to celebrate Mass? Why?

Precept 2. "You shall confess your sins at least once a year."

3. If the Church did not require you to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year, would you take part in this sacrament voluntarily? Explain.

4. When do you plan to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation next?

Precept 3. “You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.”

5. Using a Church calendar for this year, what are the dates when you can fulfill your Easter Duty?

6. When do you plan to receive the Eucharist next?

Precept 4. “You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.”

7. What does it mean to fast? To abstain?

8. What are guidelines for fasting and abstinence?

Precept 5. “You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.”

9. How much money do you tend to have/spend each week?

10. If it would be too difficult to give 10 percent to the Church, how much money could you give each week?