

Is baptism necessary for salvation

[Religion](#), [Jesus](#)



Essay Question In the Catholic tradition why is baptism considered necessary for salvation? (In this essay you will need to explain the doctrine of original sin and how baptism is the sole way of overcoming the effects of original sin.) Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door, which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: " Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition, 2009). Salvation is one of the promises of God to all believers: to be given the gift of eternal life. To be " saved" in the full sense of the word means to have received eternal life. The word salvation is also used to describe the process we go through before we can receive eternal life. Baptism restores us to holiness. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the " stain" of original sin is defined as " the privation of grace" (Summa I-II: 109: 7; Summa III: 87: 2, ad 3). Baptism is necessary to restore us to God's friendship and sanctifying grace, but the weakness of human nature remains, even after baptism. Through his Church, Christ, the divine Physician, has left us with his healing grace through the Sacraments and through prayer. (Lowell, M. 2010). The doctrine of original sin is the identification given to the concept of the entrance of sin into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. God had prepared a perfect place for man and then gave them the gift of volition (the act of practicing free will). Volition comes with responsibility and consequences. God had placed trees in the midst of the garden. Adam and Eve could freely eat the fruit from any tree except the tree of knowledge of

good and evil. But the Lord, God gave him this warning: 'You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die' (Genesis 2: 16-17).

Therefore, just as through 'one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came to all, inasmuch as all sinned'. (Romans 5: 12). It is interesting to note that Jesus did not baptise. "The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptising more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but His disciples" (John 4: 1-2). If water baptism were necessary for salvation, wouldn't Jesus have baptised? Jesus presented himself to the Jews as their Messiah with signs and Messianic miracles, but he did not baptise them, the Apostle Paul only baptised a few. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptise any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptised into my name. For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel -- not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1: 13-17). Those who teach that baptism is necessary for salvation overlook this statement of Paul's. If water baptism were necessary for salvation would not the Apostle Paul have made water baptism a central theme of his ministry? Rather, the Apostle Paul taught the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," which occurs when one is born again and it is a spiritual identification as the believer is placed in Christ. "For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free" (1 Corinthians 12: 13). The Holy Spirit baptises us or identifies us as a child of God and then seals us and sets us apart to the "day of redemption" or the

day when our redemption will be completed and we see him " face to face." "

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4: 30). The brokenness of mankind is apparent in the sin, universal sufferings and contradictions that are part of our daily lives. Yet there are those who would deny the Church's teaching on original sin in an attempt to further discredit the whole of Christ's teachings and his Church. The foundational importance of the doctrine of original sin is quite well understood by G. R. Bozarth: Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the Son of God. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing. (Dr. Duane T. Gish, 2010). By Baptism we get remission of original and actual sins and God forgets them. Through baptism, all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God. Baptism removes original sin and fills our souls with sanctifying grace. A newly baptised soul is holy and pleasing to God. Unfortunately, this perfect holiness may not last forever. Although Baptism removes original sin, it does not remove all the effects (results) of original sin and one of these effects is a strong inclination to sin. That means we fall into sin very easily. Sins that we ourselves commit are called " actual sins". Imagine

someone who has had a terrible disease. Finally, he is cured, but for the rest of his life he is not a very strong person, and he often catches cold. Original sin is like the disease. Baptism "cures" it, but our souls are left weak, and we often fall into actual sin. Jesus knew that even after Baptism, Christians would still sin. He wanted there to be a way for them to receive God's forgiveness again and again. He wanted his followers to have special help in overcoming sin in their daily lives. And so Jesus instituted the sacrament of Penance. He gave his apostles the power to forgive sins in his name: "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them." The apostles later passed on this power to forgive sins. When we receive the sacrament of Penance, the sanctifying grace we have lost through mortal sin is restored to our souls. Jesus said, "I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit" (John 3: 5). At the ascension, our Lord commanded the apostles, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptise them in the name 'of the father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28: 19-20). In another account of the ascension, Jesus added, "The man who believes in 'the good news' and accepts Baptism will be saved; the man who refuses to believe in it will be condemned" (Mark 16: 16). Given these teachings of our Lord, the Second Vatican Council in the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' stated, "Jesus, himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door. Hence, they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through

Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it. " Therefore, sacramental baptism is the only means given by our Lord that assures salvation. The Church must never neglect the duty to proclaim the Gospel, and by the grace of God, call people in faith to baptism. The Catechism, however, adds a caution: " God has bound salvation to the Sacrament of Baptism, but He Himself is not bound by his sacraments. " The baptism of desire is based on the belief that Christ desired all people to be saved. The saving action of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection eternally radiates touching even those people who may not explicitly ever have the benefit of missionary activity, come to know the gospel or receive the Lord through the Sacrament of Baptism. The Second Vatican Council stated, " Since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery" (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, No. 1260). In speaking of the " People of God," and affirming that the fullness of the means of salvation subsists within the confines of the Catholic Church, the Council clearly expressed that other Christians, who share with Catholics Baptism, the Sacred Scriptures, and perhaps even the other sacraments and apostolic succession (as with Orthodox), can also be saved (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, No. 15). The Council then addressed non-Christians: the Jews, the Muslims and those who " seek the unknown God": " Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do His will as they know it through the

dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation" (No. 16). In this sense, these people have a sincere desire for God and would have desired Baptism explicitly if they had the opportunity to receive it or if they had known its necessity (Catechism, No. 1260). Baptism is indeed a precious gift. In examining this question, we see the need to be vigilant in ensuring the baptism of our loved ones. Here grandparents should encourage their children, who may have become lax, to return to Church, to have their own children baptised, and to live the faith with them. Faithful members should do their best to share their faith with those children who are neglected spiritually by their own parents. Moreover, we also see the responsibility of bearing witness to the faith in word and action, so as to lead others to Baptism and to a full life in Christ. REFERENCES * Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition. 2009. The Sacrament of baptism. Viewed on the 19th May 2011. <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p2s2c1a1.htm> * Dr. Duane T. Gish, 2010. Importance of the doctrine of original sin. Viewed on the 19th May 2011. Last updated December 27th 2010. http://www.tldm.org/news3/original_sin.htm * FR. William Saunders. Is baptism necessary for salvation? Viewed on the 22nd May 2011. <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/religion/re0508.html> * Lowell, M. 2010. Original sin. Viewed on the 19th May 2011. Last updated December 27th 2010. http://www.tldm.org/news3/original_sin.htm Summa I-II: 109: 7; Summa III: 87: 2, ad 3
Genesis 2: 16-17 Romans 5: 12 John 4: 1-2 1 Corinthians 1: 13-17 Ephesians 4: 30 John 3: 5 Matt. 28: 19-20 Mark 16: 16