



# FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME

## UNIT 5



# My Baptism

### AIMS

1. To understand what happens at Baptism.
2. To reflect on the signs and symbols used in Baptism and their significance for us as Christians.

### KEY WORDS

- BAPTISM
- NAME
- GARMENT
- OIL
- EASTER CANDLE

### INTRODUCTION

Introduce the session by talking about babies and ask if any of the children have had the experience of a new baby in the family. Invite them to talk about this and to share their experience. Refer to the passage from the scripture about us being God's children: 1 John 3:1 (see worksheet 5 side B). Show on a big poster/whiteboard with some missing words for the children to fill in. Help them to reflect on the fact that they are God's children. Ask questions about how do we know that God loves us. He gives us many GIFTS (as discussed in previous sessions) and calls us his CHILDREN. When did we become God's children? We became **God's children** in **BAPTISM**. (Show picture/poster of Baptism). Explain that in today's session we will be looking at this first Sacrament - talk about what happens in baptism and try to understand its Signs and Symbols.

### RESOURCES

- Pictures of various saints.
- Poster showing quote 1 John 3:1
- Objects/Symbols used in baptism: Water, baptismal candle (and an Easter candle if possible), white garment and oil.
- Worksheet 5.

### MAIN

- Explain that Baptism is a sacrament that we receive only ONCE. It leaves a mark in us for our whole life. We become Christians; we become children of God; we become members of the Church; we receive the Holy Spirit within us. Following a brief discussion on each of these points talk about the different signs and symbols used:
- **NAME:** The priest asks parents, "What name do you give your child?" At Baptism we are given a Christian name to show that we belong to God's family - the Catholic Church. Briefly explain that this family is made up of so many different people in many different parishes in countries around the world. It is led by HH the Pope, Bishops and Priests who together with all of us form one big community. As we are members of this family we share names — often saints' names. (give examples using some names of children in group)
- **GARMENT/CLOTHES:** A symbol of the new life we receive in baptism. It also means that we are now free from our original sin. We have received the gift of new life - God's grace. As the priest gives the white garment he says "You have become a new person. You have put on Jesus." Our challenge is to keep this garment 'unstained' by doing good and not spoil it by committing sins.
- **OIL:** This is a sign of the strength a Christian needs to struggle against all that is wrong/evil.
- **WATER:** Ask children to say what water is used for? Elicit the fact that water gives life and water cleans. In Baptism water is the main symbol. The priest pours water on the person/baby being baptised as he says 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. The use of water shows us that through baptism we start a NEW LIFE with God and within the Church Community. Baptism also washes away our Original Sin (and any other sin).
- **LIGHT/CANDLE:** When a person is baptised a candle (show image or real baptism candle) is lit from the Paschal (Easter) candle that stands for CHRIST. The priest gives it to the baby's parent to hold on behalf of the child. On the big Easter Candle there are the Greek letters A and Ω (Alpha and Omega) which refer to "Christ" as Beginning and End. The baptismal candle means that Jesus is now our light. We must see what Jesus did and always try to be like him. Invite children to suggest examples of how can we be light for others. Discuss their responses ex. helping someone; forgiving etc (see second quote on Worksheet 5 side B)

### CONCLUDING PRAYER

Create an atmosphere of prayer. Use an Easter candle from the church if available. Light a smaller candle from it and pass around to each child in the group. Explain that this is what happened at Baptism. Together say a prayer thanking God for welcoming us in his big family, the Catholic Church and making us his special children.

### NOTES

### ACTIVITY

**DRAMA:** Ask for a few children to volunteer to take part in a short re enactment of the Baptism Ceremony: 1 priest; 2 parents; 2 God parents. Another child or a doll to be the 'baby'. Provide water in a bowl, white garment and small baptism candle too. Help them to say words as accurately as possible. Hand out Worksheet 5 and briefly talk about the different parts to be completed at home.