

**Leader's Guide for**  
***ADULT BAPTISM: EXPLORING ITS MEANING***  
**A Catholic Update Video**

**Please note:** This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

**The Use of Video in Faith Formation**

Jesus used the “media” of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus' time, heavily dependent on *oral communication*—to the advent of *print communication*—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic media*—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects *what* we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners' hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners' experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium's strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level. As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the *emotional* content of our faith rather than the *intellectual* content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the “mix of

media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the viewing experience.

Catechists must realize that *they* control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction to the Series**

*Catholic Update Videos* are dynamic new media designed for use with today’s adult learners. Use them in RCIA, faith formation, liturgical and pastoral ministry, faith-sharing groups and sacramental preparation. *Catholic Update Video* offers catechists and pastoral ministers multimedia resources to enhance teaching, presentation and training efforts.

*Catholic Update Video*’s four segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection—are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through story (story segment), testimony (witness segment) and song (musical reflection segment) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (teaching segment) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life-experience to the faith-topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. *(This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.)*
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the *musical reflection segment*.

The program's host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence may wish to prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader's guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program.

It includes the following features:

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.
- **Questions for Sharing** for the story, witness and teaching segments; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the musical reflection segment provide a model for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- **Approximate times** are noted for where each segment begins. *(If the VCR is equipped with an "elapsed time" counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an "elapsed time" counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the "review" mode [while the VCR is in "play"] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.)*

## **ADULT BAPTISM: EXPLORING ITS MEANING**

### **Overview of the program**

*What does it mean to be baptized?* That's a crucial question for any Christian, whether one is about to be baptized as an adult, or has lived one's whole life as a baptized person. We must answer for ourselves what it means to be committed to Christ. In the case of parents preparing to have a child baptized, the question remains: What is my own faith commitment? What is the faith I will share with my child?

This *Catholic Update Video* program explores the images associated with the Sacrament of Baptism, from the perspective of story, theology, liturgy and personal witness. Underlying the approach is the nature of Baptism as an initiation into Christ, marked by conversion from sin to a life of love and service.

### **Audience**

The audience for this *Catholic Update Video* is primarily those about to be baptized as adults. It draws on the experience of recently baptized adults, and allows them to speak to all of us about the nature of the baptismal conversion and commitment to Christ. The focus of the teaching segment is on the adult response to Christ which the sacrament calls for.

However, there is much here that can be helpful to parents who are about to have their child baptized. To begin with, the conversion and commitment called for by the sacrament is one that parents and others in the community will share with and teach to the child as he or she grows up within the family and the Christian community. So, the questions explored here are crucial for parents and sponsors to ask *of themselves*. These questions are highlighted for viewers in the teaching segment, and reinforced in the story and musical reflection segments.

Secondly, the images surrounding Baptism, which are explored in both the story and witness segments of this program, will enrich parents' and sponsors' understanding of the sacrament they are sharing with their child. Knowing how the various images and symbols associated with the sacrament relate to the scriptural and theological meaning of what we do in Baptism, will deepen the experience of the sacrament for all concerned.

Teachers, group leaders and parish sacramental coordinators should explore how individual segments of this video program might be used fruitfully for infant Baptism programs. See the general suggestions above, as well as specific applications below, to help in this process.

## STORY SEGMENT

### “Called By Name”

*(Begins approximately 2:16 into program.)*

#### Summary

“Called by Name” is a Baptism film that, through story and symbol, explores the rich concepts of death and resurrection. The film weaves a tapestry of four contemporary vignettes that highlight the truths explained by the baptismal rites. Scenes from the stories are intercut with the baptismal ceremonies of the Easter Vigil. Beautiful nature scenes and sounds invite meditation on the symbols of light and water.

The musical score is based on water motifs. The music carries the viewer from life-giving raindrops to the vast ocean from which all life comes.

The four interwoven stories reveal the necessity of death to self in order to rise again:

1. **The Breath of Life:** The first story involves a youth alone on his sailboat, fishing. An accident knocks him, unconscious, into the lake. He is pulled ashore, where he is ultimately revived by paramedics, to the relief of his family and the witnessing community.
2. **New Birth:** The second story shows the burial of Agnes, beloved wife and mother. The scene in the rural cemetery focuses on the loss and grief expressed in her husband’s face, and his farewell. After the funeral he begins to move through his grief to the promise of new life that he sees in his daughter’s unborn child.
3. **Cleansing:** In the third story, a young child dressed in her frilly best prepares to go to church with her mother. On her way to the car, the girl stumbles into a puddle and is covered with mud. The loving mother embraces the child, mud and all, comforts her, and gently helps to bathe and change her.
4. **Conversion:** The fourth story reveals the conflict of a young couple who come to an abortion clinic being picketed by demonstrators. The girl and her boyfriend are obviously uncertain about destroying the life within her. A baby in a stroller, holding a balloon, catches their eyes and their resolve. They “choose life” as the balloon proclaims.

In each of these stories, the moment of crisis is reflected in harsher realities: the ice and icicles, the gust of wind and dark lake, the coffin lowered into the dark ground, the muddy puddle, the protestors. The conversion that brings new life or resurrection requires an act of faith.

In the baptismal rite, the celebrant questions the candidates by name. The act of faith—“I do believe”—reveals the sun shining through. It brings the thaw to nature, resuscitation to the drowning youth, consolation and hope to the grieving husband, cleansing to the child, and a pro-life commitment to the young couple.

Each story includes a “God-moment” of transformation, a presence of God symbolized in the characters and experiences portrayed. The Spirit breathes on the water, as it were: an onlooker rescues the boy; the mother embraces the child; the promise of a grandchild renews the grieving husband; and the concern of the community inspires the pregnant couple. In each case, a community of faith, family, neighbors or others witnesses the act of faith and rebirth to a new life. It is a community event, a celebration.

### **Suggestions for use**

In connection with viewing “Called by Name,” ask participants to explore the images used in the story, and consider which image most speaks to their own life experience at this point. (Note: The witness and teaching segments will pick up on and reinforce this exercise. Teachers or group leaders may want to show these segments before continuing the discussion.)

“Called by Name” also depicts a portion of the baptismal rite as celebrated at the Easter Vigil. If the group is as yet unfamiliar with the rite, leaders should be prepared to answer questions about it. See the “Resources” section in this guide for help in presenting the rite.

Prominent in the baptismal scenes is the question: “Do you believe?” as each candidate is “called by name.” In RCIA groups, invite the participants to relate their current sense of commitment to their upcoming Baptism. They may wish to write in a journal on this point, to share with their sponsor, spouse or spiritual director. Personal sharing should be done where it is most comfortable.

Parents who are having their children baptized should be reminded that in the ritual for infant Baptism, they will be asked to renew their own profession of faith. “Do you believe?” is implied in the commitment they will be making on behalf of their children.

### **Questions for sharing**

1. The traditional understanding of Baptism has involved the concepts of cleansing and initiation. Where are these elements reflected in the video? How does the story enrich these concepts?
2. The priest begins the rite of Baptism by inviting the congregation to pray for those who have been called to Baptism. Why is the community involved?
3. The baptismal font used for the submersions is shaped like a coffin. What is the difference between the lake drowning and the submersions? How is the water different? What are the implications of the font and “death to self”? What follows baptismal death?
4. Each of these stories relates a crisis experience. Explore who is involved, who was changed, and what effect those changes had on others.

5. In the video, the Paschal candle is submerged in the water. What does the candle represent? What is the significance of submerging it in the water? Why do the newly baptized receive a candle?
6. In the stories, God comes to each person in a different way. What is the “God moment” in each story? How does God come to you? How do you carry God to others?

## **WITNESS SEGMENT**

*(Begins approximately 14:12 into program.)*

### **Summary**

The witness segment consists of a “collage” of interview excerpts done with ordinary Catholics. The individuals are real people, not actors. All of them have been through the Church’s rite of initiation for adults (RCIA). The interviews are organized around three aspects of the baptismal experience:

1. What were your feelings as you approached Baptism?
2. What did you experience at the moment of Baptism or immediately after?
3. What did or did not change in your lives as a result of Baptism?

### **Suggestions for use**

The witness segment should be introduced as the experience of real-life Catholics. These experiences were chosen precisely because they come from the lives of ordinary people. The participants shared their own experiences, not answers scripted by the interviewers.

Personal witness is important in most, if not all, groups where faith topics are being discussed. It is especially important in the RCIA process. In any group, as participants share their stories, they can begin to shape a small faith community among themselves. They can support the personal journey of others, and understand better the questions others may have. They can reflect on their own journey as well.

Showing this witness segment to a group might be a way to stimulate individuals to reflect and share on their personal faith experience. The group leader should pick a time when group sharing seems appropriate. It is important to present sharing in a non-threatening way, respecting the privacy of all concerned and the possibility that not all participants may be comfortable talking in a group.

Encourage the participants to identify key quotes which speak to their faith experience, using the questions below as discussion-starters. An alternative for those who feel uncomfortable sharing would be to write a personal journal, for one’s private use.

### Questions for sharing

1. Looking forward to Baptism for yourself or your child, how do you understand the meaning of the sacrament? How do you understand the notion of conversion?
2. Which of the signs surrounding the sacrament (for example, water font, white garment, lit candle) have particular meaning for you?
3. What questions do you have about the ritual you are about to celebrate?
4. *Catechumens*: What in your life to this point has prepared you for Baptism? What changes do you anticipate in your life as a result of Baptism?
5. *Catechumens*: How does the upcoming celebration of the sacrament relate to the process of the RCIA? What has been the role of the community in your process of initiation?
6. *Catechumens*: How do you understand the significance of the Easter Vigil in the Church year?
7. *Parents*: What is the faith experience that you will share with your child?
8. *Parents*: What questions do you have about the ritual you will celebrate with your child?

### TEACHING SEGMENT

*(Begins approximately 18:47 into program.)*

#### Summary

Father Tom Richstatter, O.F.M., is the featured teacher for this segment. He asks the question, “So what is Baptism? What does it feel like to be baptized?” In his presentation, he goes on to explore the experience of Christians from the time of the apostles until the present day. The following outline summarizes Father Tom’s presentation:

#### A. **The Gospels and letters of Paul use metaphors to describe the experience of Baptism.**

1. Baptism is being cleansed (see Revelation 7:14).
2. Baptism is a birth (see John 3:3).
3. Baptism is dying (see Romans 6).
4. Baptism is seeing in a new way, illumination (see the story of the man born blind in John 9).
5. Baptism is putting on Christ (see Galatians 3:27).
6. Baptism is being adopted into a new family so that we can call God, “Abba” (Aramaic for “Daddy”); we become part of the family of the Church (see Romans 8:13-16, Ephesians 2:19-20).

B. **Baptism is not so much a “thing” as it is an event in our past.** Once we experience Baptism, its effects remain with us forever. Just as we die only once and are born only once, so we die only once with Christ in Baptism and are born with him in the realm of God.

**C. The ritual asks us to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.”**

1. What dies? We die to the evil in our lives.
2. What is born? What do we put on? In the Letter to the Colossians (3:5-17) we read that we have put on a new self, one which is being renewed in the image of its Creator.

**D. As adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil, the community prays that what happened to Christ might happen to them.** Their journey has become our journey. Each Easter, after the catechumens are baptized, the Church turns to us and asks us again: *Do you reject sin? Do you believe? Do you wish to renew your Baptism?* The answers to these questions are two simple words: “I do.” These two words shape the rest of our lives!

**Suggestions for use**

As noted above, this program is intended primarily for adults preparing for Baptism. Secondly, it will be useful for parents preparing to have their children baptized. For both groups, the exploration of imagery, and the emphasis on baptismal conversion will be helpful.

Other viewers—those already baptized or those seeking to deepen their Catholic faith—will profit from viewing this segment if the teacher or group leader places the teaching in the broader context of how all of us grow in faith throughout our lives. For example, even “cradle Catholics” may need to be challenged to move from a “head” faith based on information about God to a “heart” faith based on the kind of conversion Father Tom talks about.

Anticipate questions about the imagery of the Easter Vigil and the nature of the conversion associated with the sacrament. There may also be questions not immediately relevant to the process at this point. They should be noted for later consideration.

**Questions for sharing**

1. What does anticipating the celebration of Baptism mean to you?
2. Which of the images of Baptism most relate to you at this time?
3. How do you understand the notion of converting from “-isms” mentioned in the teaching (e.g., racism, sexism and so forth)?
4. How do you see Baptism continuing in peoples’ lives?

## MUSICAL REFLECTION SEGMENT

### “I Say, ‘Yes,’ Lord”

*(Begins approximately 26:49 into program.)*

#### Summary

“I Say, ‘Yes,’ Lord,” by Donna Peña is used for this musical reflection segment. The song is performed by Joe Comacho, Marty Haugen and Donna Peña along with an adult and children’s choir. The images illustrate both the ceremony of Baptism and scenes from life which express the concrete living-out of our baptismal commitment.

The “I do” we say to Christ in accepting Baptism shapes the rest of our lives. Catholics believe that they must “say yes” to what Baptism means each and every day. The “yes” is unique to each person. The Christian community, as the Body of Christ, can help: How others respond influences our response. Our own personal prayer gives us an opportunity to be led by God. Our encounter with life itself offers us many opportunities to “say yes.”

The images accompanying the music in this reflection emphasize the heart of life—with its joys and sorrows, its tough choices as well as its affirmations of God’s creative power. The adventure of Christianity comes as we continue to ask what Baptism means—and as we take the risk to “say yes” to what might follow.

#### Suggestions for use

The musical reflection can be used to open or to conclude a session. It could be shown alone or in conjunction with a prayer service. An outline for such a service follows:

1. Begin with a simple “water rite” modeled on that used at Sunday Mass. A bowl of water is placed in the midst of the group. The leader, in these or similar words, explains the use of water in our ritual:  
*Christians use water as a reminder of Baptism, where we are buried with Christ to rise with him. This water recalls the beginning of creation, when God’s Spirit moved over the waters; and the waters of the Red Sea through which God’s people passed from slavery to freedom; and the waters of the Jordan, where Jesus was baptized by John. As we sign ourselves with this water, we call to mind the mystery of Christ’s passage from death to life, which saves us as well.*
2. Play the musical reflection segment, inviting the participants to reflect on the commitment which we make in Baptism.
3. Allow for a time of silence.
4. Invite participants to voice prayers of praise or petition. (Be sure to model one or two for the group.)

5. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer.
6. Sing a closing song which relates to Baptism, or play the music reflection segment again.

## **RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

### **1. Scripture references:**

Washing/bath: Titus 3:5; John 3:5

Illumination/enlightenment: 1Thessalonians 5:5; Hebrews 10:32; Ephesians 5:8

Birth: John 3:5

Dying/rising: Romans 6:3-4

Putting on Christ: Colossians 2:12

### **2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:**

The *Catechism* treats Baptism in Part Two, Section Two: "The Seven Sacraments of the Church." In Chapter One, the Sacraments of Initiation are considered, with Baptism covered in Article 1, numbers 1214-1284. Number 1216 may be of particular interest to teachers using this video program. The *Catechism* offers a quote from St. Gregory of Nazianzus which summarizes beautifully the imagery surrounding Baptism.

### **3. Resources for further study from St. Anthony Messenger Press and Franciscan**

**Communications:** For a complete and updated listing of our resources, visit <http://catalog.AmericanCatholic.org>.

Leader's Guide written by: Greg Friedman, O.F.M. and Elizabeth Montes

© MCMXCV, St. Anthony Messenger Press. All rights reserved.

NOTE: This guide can be printed and cut down in size to be stored with the DVD version of this video program. Simply cut  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch from each side of the page for a guide that, when folded, can be placed inside of the DVD case or attached to the DVD or VHS case.

For use with:

*Adult Baptism: Exploring Its Meaning* on VHS (V2020) and DVD (D2020)

St. Anthony Messenger Press  
28 W. Liberty St.  
Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498  
800-488-048  
[www.AmericanCatholic.org](http://www.AmericanCatholic.org)