

What do the Baptism Symbols Mean?

Water

Water is a symbol of both life and death. Its use in baptism is central to the sacrament representing taking on a new life in Christ. During the baptism, the baptismal water is poured over the forehead three times, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptismal Candle

The baptismal candle is a symbol of the light of Christ which is coming into the child's life.

The Paschal [Easter] Candle is always lit and present near the altar during Mass and baptism ceremonies. The Paschal Candle represents the light of Christ.

The baptismal candle is lit from the Paschal candle after the water baptism. The lit candle is presented to the baptized, held by the father or a godparent during the remainder of the ceremony. The presentation of light represents how the newly baptized will become a son or daughter of "the light."

We encourage the use of the baptismal candle at family birthday celebrations to celebrate the anniversary of being baptized into the Christian family.

Baptismal garment

This garment is provided by the family. You may use something new, or something that has been used by your family for generations. It is usually white in color. White is a symbol of transition and change; purity and cleansing. Its use in the baptism is a visible sign of putting on Christ, of taking on a new way of life.

Oil

Oil is a symbol used in many sacraments representing power, healing and strength which comes from the Lord. Chrism means "to anoint." This baptismal oil, chrism, is olive oil with special perfume which is blessed by the bishop in a special ceremony once a year. In the baptismal ceremony it is used to anoint forehead of the newly baptized. This oil is also used to anoint a baptized Christian in the sacraments of Confirmation and Ordination.