

MIKVAH: NOT JUST A JEWISH TRADITION

Excerpts from official Vatican policy on **Baptism**:

IN BRIEF

1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), 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."

1275 Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening; and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.

1276 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (*Mt 28:19-20*).

1277 Baptism is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself, which we enter by Baptism.

1278 The essential rite of Baptism consists in **immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head**, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

1279 The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ.

1280 Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character Baptism cannot be repeated (cf. DS 1609 and DS 1624).

1281 Those who die for the faith, those who are catechumens, and all those who, without knowing of the Church but acting under the inspiration of grace, seek God sincerely and strive to fulfill his will, can be saved even if they have not been baptized (cf. *LG 16*).

1282 Since the earliest times, Baptism has been administered to children, for it is a grace and a gift of God that does not presuppose any human merit; children are baptized in the faith of the Church. Entry into Christian life gives access to true freedom.

1284 In case of necessity, any person can baptize provided that he have the intention of doing that which the Church does and provided that he **pours water on the candidate's head** while saying: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Wudu (Ablution) from the Raleigh (NC) Masjid:

Before we perform Salah we must first prepare ourselves. This preparation includes making sure that we are clean from any physical impurities and performing Wudu.

Wudu (ablution) is required for performing Salah. We cannot offer our Salah without first making Wudu. Here are the steps to take:

1. First, make the Niyah (intention) in your heart that this act of Wudu is for the purpose of preparing for Salah, and say: "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah).
2. Wash both hands up to the wrists (starting with the right hand) three times, making sure that water has reached between the fingers.
3. Take water with your right hand, put it into your mouth and rinse thoroughly three times.
4. Take water with your right hand, splash it into your nose and blow it out three times. (Use the left hand if necessary to help blow it out).
5. Wash your whole face three times repeatedly. (The whole face includes: the right ear to the left ear, and the forehead to the bottom of the chin).
6. Wash the right arm thoroughly from wrist to elbow three times, and make sure that no part of the arm has been left unwashed. Repeat with the left arm.
7. Move the palms of the wet hands lightly over the head, starting from the top of the forehead to the back of the head, and passing both hands over the back of the head to the neck, and then bringing them back to the forehead.
8. With the same water, rub the grooves and holes of both ears with the wet index fingers, while also passing the wet thumbs behind the ears from the bottom upward.
9. Finally, wash both feet to the ankles three times, starting with the right foot. Make sure that water has reached between the toes and covered the rest of the foot.
10. At the end of the above steps recite: "Ashhadu alla ilaha illallahu, wa ash-hadu anna muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluhu."

أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له،
و أشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله

This means:

"I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah alone, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger."

The Telegraph

Millions of Hindus plunge into Ganges River in India to wash away their sins

9:31AM GMT 14 Jan 2013

The ceremony in the northern city of Allahabad took place on the most auspicious day of the Kumbh Mela, or Pitcher Festival, one of the world's largest religious gatherings that lasts 55 days. The festival continues until March 10. Top festival official Mani Prasad Mishra said nearly 3 million people had bathed by late morning and 11 million were expected to enter the frigid water by the day's end. Over 110 million people are expected to take a dip at the Sangam, the place where three rivers – the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati – come together at the edge of this North Indian city. There are six auspicious bathing days, decided by the alignment of stars, when the Hindu devout bathe to wash away their sins and free themselves from the cycle of death and rebirth. A sea of humanity assembled on the river bank as people waited patiently for their turn to step into the water. Men in underpants, women in saris and children – naked and clothed – chanted from Hindu scriptures as they walked into the icy-cold water.

The bathing process was initiated by religious heads of different Hindu monasteries who reached the bathing points, called ghats, riding silver chariots. Some were carried on silver palanquins, accompanied by marching bands. Applause rose from tens of thousands of pilgrims waiting behind barricades as the religious heads set off the ceremony.

The heads of the monasteries threw flowers on the devotees as they shouted "har har gangey," or Long Live Ganges. The biggest spectacle was that of the Naga sadhus, or ascetics, who raced to the river wearing only marigold garlands in a cacophony of religious chants. About 50,000 policemen have been deployed to keep order at the festival, fearing everything from terrorist attacks to the ever-present danger of stampedes of pilgrims. Several squads policemen on horseback regulated the flow of pilgrims to and from the bathing ghats.

According to Hindu mythology, the Kumbh Mela celebrates the victory of gods over demons in a furious battle over a nectar that would give them immortality. As one of the gods fled with a pitcher of the nectar across the skies, it spilled on four Indian towns – Allahabad, Nasik, Ujjain and Haridwar.



The Kumbh Mela is organised four times every 12 years in those towns. Hindus believe that sins accumulated in past and current lives require them to continue the cycle of death and rebirth until they are cleansed. If they bathe at Ganges on the most auspicious day of the festival, believers say they can rid themselves of their sins.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims slept the night on the vast festival grounds in more than 1 million tents – green, blue, and brown – erected all over, while many huddled together under trees. Some 20,000 makeshift lavatories have been have been

erected, while 10,000 sweepers have been deployed to keep this makeshift tent town clean.