

Analysis of Pre-Baptismal Seminar Catechesis at San Pedro Calungsod Parish in Tacurong City

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Abstract— *The researcher's examination of the resources and techniques used to teach the sacrament of baptism in the Parish of San Pedro Calungsod served as the foundation for this investigation. The researcher specifically examined the extent to which catechists relied on their own experiences as opposed to theological justifications available in church documents. This study sought to ascertain if the catechists were delivering effective catechesis on the sacrament of baptism or not. The study design used by the researcher was mixed-methods. The participants were the five most active catechists from throughout the parish's chapels, one of whom was male and the other four females. The surveys were developed by experts, who also verified their form and substance. Face-to-face interviews were done by the researcher, who recorded responses on cell phones. Scales ranging from 1 to 5 and 1 to 7 were used to rate and understand quantitative data, showing the frequency and extent of various behaviors or comments. The mean and theme analysis were used to record, evaluate, and interpret the data produced by the study instrument. In brief, this study showed that participants' comprehension of church beliefs on baptism varied widely. Two catechists had poor comprehension, while three had a deep understanding. While some catechists did not regularly include church doctrines in catechism, one did regularly. The beneficial effects of an instructional module on baptism catechesis were emphasized by the study. The study's conclusions lead to the formulation of the following recommendations: to improve comprehension, catechists are encouraged to discuss theological content and carefully review church policies regarding baptism. Dioceses should also give priority to training new catechists, especially in sacramental themes like baptism. For future studies, researchers are urged to increase the number of participants to increase the reliability of the findings.*

Keywords— *Baptism: catechists: church teaching: sacrament.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Pre-baptismal catechesis is an essential process within the Catholic Church, aiming to prepare individuals for the sacrament of baptism by imparting knowledge of the faith and its significance. Pre-baptismal catechesis, rooted in the Church's teachings, entails instructing catechumens (those preparing for baptism) and their sponsors about the beliefs, rituals, and responsibilities associated with becoming a member of the Christian community. This period of formation typically includes learning about the creed, the sacraments, moral teachings, and the life of discipleship. Catechesis guides candidates in understanding the transformative nature of baptism, marking their initiation into the church and their commitment to live out their faith. This process not only equips individuals with theological understanding but also

fosters spiritual growth and prepares them for active participation in the life of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1231).

The sacrament of baptism is one of the most fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. It is a rite of initiation into the church, as well as a symbol of spiritual rebirth and renewal. However, to fully appreciate and understand the significance of baptism, proper catechesis is essential. In this essay, the researcher explores the history, importance, and benefits of catechesis on the sacrament of baptism.

Early Christianity regarded the sacrament of baptism as a ritual of initiation into the faith. The symbolism and spiritual significance of baptism evolved as the church grew and developed. Today, people view baptism as a symbol of spiritual rebirth, the washing away of sin, and a public declaration of their faith in Christ. Furthermore, baptism is believed to be necessary for the soul's salvation, as it is through baptism that one becomes a member of the Church and receives God's grace.

Understanding and appreciating the significance of the baptism sacrament requires proper catechesis. Catechesis is the process of teaching and learning about the church's faith and sacraments. Through catechesis, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the key elements and rituals of baptism, as well as the theological foundations and implications of the sacrament. This knowledge can help individuals fully participate in the sacrament and live out their baptismal promises as Christians.

Receiving proper catechesis on the baptism sacrament can have numerous benefits for individuals. It can deepen one's understanding and appreciation of the sacrament, allowing them to fully participate in the ritual and experience God's grace. In addition, catechesis can strengthen one's relationship with God and the Church, as well as equip individuals to live out their baptismal promises and mission as Christians. Understanding the significance of baptism allows individuals to better understand their place in the church and their role in spreading the gospel message.

We cannot overstate the importance of catechesis in the sacrament of baptism. Through proper catechesis, individuals can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the significance of baptism, as well as the role it plays in the Christian faith. By living out their baptismal promises and mission, individuals can help spread the gospel message and build up the church. Therefore, it is essential that we continue

to prioritize and invest in catechesis on the sacrament of baptism (Catechism of the Catholic Church).

The parish of San Pedro Calungsod served as the researcher's pastoral exposure site, where they conducted research on the sacrament of baptism. Part of the researcher's pastoral exposure was also to observe how catechists conduct seminars regarding the sacrament of baptism. The researcher's motivation for this study stemmed from the underutilization of church documents by catechists during pre-baptism seminars, which are crucial for imparting knowledgeable catechesis to baptized individuals.

The problem that the researcher found is that there are only a limited number of catechists in the parish, and they have a big role in helping the believers understand the meaning and importance of the sacrament, especially the sacrament of baptism. The researcher also discovered that the catechists primarily base their teachings on their personal experiences, as they believe that "the shared experience is the best." Yes, the point is good, but is it anchored in the true teaching of the Church? Is it based on documents that have a theological explanation? The researcher focused on this aspect because it allows them to implement their teachings more effectively by deepening their understanding of the catechesis they provide.

The present situation in the area where the researcher conducted the study is that many citizens of San Pedro Calungsod Parish are being baptized. The seminar is conducted every third Saturday of the month, so many participants come to the church, including parents of children and their godparents, as well as adults who need to be baptized. The schedule also includes a requested seminar. The parish priest will first approve the date and location of any pre-baptism seminar request, after which the catechist will handle it.

1.1 Research Questions (RQ)

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent do you understand the sacrament of baptism based on the teachings of the church?
- 2) How often are church documents used in the teaching of the sacrament of baptism?
- 3) What effect does the module have on the way that people understand and carry out the catechesis of the sacrament of baptism?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study described how the catechists understood the sacrament of baptism in the parish of San Pedro Calungsod, Tacurong City. The researcher employed a mixed-methods study design. The study's participants consisted of the only five (1 male and 4 female) most active catechists in the parish from different chapels. The researcher created the survey questionnaires, and experts validated their faces and content. The researcher used a cell phone to record responses during a face-to-face interview. The results of the quantitative data regarding frequency were rated and interpreted as follows:

5 - Always: This means that the behavior or statement described in the scale is consistently or nearly always true or applicable.

4 - Often: This indicates that the behavior or statement described in the scale occurs frequently or regularly, but not necessarily all the time.

3 - Sometimes: This suggests that the behavior or statement described in the scale occurs occasionally or intermittently, but not as frequently as "often."

2 - Rarely: This implies that the behavior or statement described in the scale rarely happens or is hardly ever true or applicable.

1 - Never: This means that the behavior or statement described in the scale never occurs or is never true or applicable.

The results of the quantitative data regarding the extent of understanding were rated and interpreted as follows:

7 - To an Extremely Large Extent: This is the highest level on the scale, suggesting an exceptionally significant degree or amount. It indicates an overwhelming presence or impact, far beyond what is typical or expected.

6 - To a Very Large Extent: Even more significant than "large extent." It denotes a substantial amount or degree, with a noticeable impact that is more pronounced than the previous level.

5 - To a Large Extent: Indicates a significant degree or amount. It's substantial and noticeable, with a considerable impact or influence.

4 - To a Moderate Extent: Signifies a medium level or amount. It's neither small nor large but somewhere in between. The impact or degree is notable and considerable but not extreme.

3 - To a Small Extent: Indicates a modest degree or amount. It's noticeable but not significant or substantial. The impact or influence is minor.

2 - To a Very Small Extent: Slightly more than "extremely small," but still notably minimal. There's a slight presence or impact, but it's very limited.

1 - To an Extremely Small Extent: This indicates that something occurs or exists in a very minuscule or almost negligible amount. It's barely noticeable or significant.

The data generated by the research instrument were recorded, analyzed, and interpreted using thematic analysis and the mean.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study presents the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the data collected from the research survey.

R.Q #1: To what extent do you understand the sacrament of baptism based on the teachings of the church?

TABLE 1: Extent of understanding of the Church's teaching about the Sacrament of Baptism

EXTENT	To an Extremely Large Extent	To a Very Large Extent	To a Large Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Small Extent	To a Very Small Extent	To an Extremely Small Extent	Total
Catechists	3				2			5

Table 1: Presents the extent of understanding of the participants of what the Church teaches about the Sacrament of Baptism. The 3 catechists claimed that they had an Extremely Large Extent of understanding of the church's teachings on the sacrament of baptism, and the other two

Catechists reported a Small Extent of understanding of the teachings.

Baptism is understood as a sacrament instituted by Christ, and it is also something that he experienced. Through baptism, everyone receives sanctifying grace, a grace necessary for our salvation and the developing virtues of faith, hope, and charity. As a baptized person, we become members of the mystic body of Christ, who unites all baptized believers in a communion of faith and love. The Church emphasizes the importance of baptism as the common means of salvation established by Christ (CCC, 2000). According to the teachings of the Church, baptism cleanses individuals from the original sin that they inherited from the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. It is also mentioned here that when the person being baptized is of proper age and has committed such sins through baptism, s/he is forgiven for his/her sins (Martignoni, 2005). Baptism shows our regeneration, or rebirth, where those who are baptized become new creations who share in Christ's resurrection. And everyone is spiritually reborn and becomes the child of God (Hardon, 1962). In the celebration of baptism, it is awarded using the trinitarian formula that recites the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The important thing in the sacrament of baptism is the water that is used in various methods, such as immersion, pouring, or sprinkling, which symbolizes the cleansing of our sins and new life in Christ (Buice, 2017). The church practices infant baptism: this is proof that they can receive the sacrament as initiation into the Christian faith. So, parents and godparents have an important role to play, especially in celebrating baptism, in that they promise to raise the child in the Catholic faith and increase their spiritual development (Guest, 2021). There are also adults seeking baptism who undergo a period of catechesis, or instruction in the faith before they receive the sacrament. As adults, they are allowed to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith and to faithfully follow Christ (CCC, 2000). The understanding of the sacrament of baptism based on the teachings of the church shows its main role in the life of the believer; it is very important for our salvation.

R.Q #2: How often are church documents used in the teaching of the sacrament of baptism?

Table 2: The frequency of usage of the teachings of the Church in giving the Catechism about the sacrament of baptism such as Catechism of the Catholic Church, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), Bible, Rite of Baptism for Children, Documents of the Second Vatican Council such as Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) and the Module from Diocese

Frequency	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Catechists	1	4				5

Table 2 shows the frequency of using the teaching of the Church in giving Catechism. 1 catechist says she always uses the teachings of the Church, while the 4 catechists say they use them often.

The use of church documents in the catechesis of the sacrament of baptism provides a rich source of substance and content for teaching and understanding this sacrament. Church documents, including official teachings, catechisms, encyclicals, and documents from ecumenical councils, offer authoritative guidance and theological depth on the sacrament of baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) is a comprehensive resource that provides a systematic presentation of Catholic doctrine. It devotes a significant section (verses 1210–1284) to the sacrament of baptism, covering its importance, effects, celebration, and pastoral care. Catechists can use the CCC to provide a thorough understanding of the theological foundations and practical aspects of baptism. The Bible is the foundation of the teachings of the Church, including the sacrament of baptism. Catechesis is often drawn from the Old Testament, emphasizing the themes of purification, rebirth, and communion with the body of Christ, which are central to understanding Baptism (Brom, 2004). Such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA, 1985) and the Rite of Baptism for Children, provide detailed instructions for the celebration of baptism. Catechists can refer to these documents to explain the ritual actions, prayers, and symbols used in the sacrament ceremony, helping participants understand the significance of each element. By using Church documents in catechesis, catechists can ensure that the teaching of the sacrament of baptism is firmly based on the authoritative teachings of the Church, rooted in Scripture and tradition, and related to the lived experience of believers. This approach helps provide a comprehensive and coherent understanding of Baptism's theological significance, pastoral implications, and liturgical practice.

R.Q #3: What effect does the module have on the way that people understand and carry out the catechesis of the sacrament of baptism?

TABLE 3: Effects of the module on the understanding and carrying out of the catechesis of the sacrament of baptism

Respondents	Code	Theme
Respondent 1	“by applying what I learned on a daily basis”	Practice everyday
Respondent 2	“seeing this in my daily life”	witnessing
Respondent 3	“through my practice”	Practice everyday
Respondent 4	“others see it, through my work”	witnessing
Respondent 5	“this is consistent with my experience, and I have also proven it myself”	proved

Table 3 presents the importance of catechesis from the module that they should understand and grasp, respondents 1 and 3, said that they practiced every day, while respondents 2 and 4 said that they witnessed and respondent 5 said she proved it.

The module used to teach and understand the sacrament of baptism within the church community has several implications. Exploring relevant passages from the Old and New Testaments helps catechists deepen the catechesis they provide to participants in baptism as an appreciation of a sacrament rooted in God's saving plan for us (Sloun, 2017). Through the module, catechists are encouraged to provide a

practical and liturgical context for the celebration of baptism. The module also emphasizes the importance of continuous formation for catechists and parents involved in baptismal catechesis. By providing resources, training, and support for those involved in the preparation and celebration of baptism, the church can ensure that catechesis is effective, engaging, and spiritually enriching for all involved (National Directory for Catechesis, 2005). The catechesis on baptism is carried out with pastoral sensitivity, knowing first the different backgrounds, experiences, and needs of the participants. The module emphasizes here the importance of pastoral care in catechesis—that each individual and family receive the support and guidance they need as they prepare and celebrate the sacrament (Simanullang, 2011). Baptismal catechesis should be combined with the catechesis of the other sacraments, particularly confirmation and eucharist, as part of the Christian initiation process. Understanding the connection between these sacraments helps participants understand the totality of Christian initiation and their integration into the life of the church (CCC, 2000). The module for the catechesis of the sacrament of baptism provides a framework for effective and holistic catechesis, ensuring that participants have a deep understanding and appreciation of baptism as a door to the Christian life and as a source of grace, identity, and mission within the church.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in the study led to these recommendations to the catechists and assigned priests in the parish. The catechists should carefully study the guidelines regarding the sacraments of baptism from the church when they give catechesis to those who will be baptized. Also, catechists should be open to receiving and sharing documents that contain theological understandings and explanations regarding the sacrament, especially the sacrament of baptism. This will enable them to impart more comprehensive catechesis to seminar participants.

The diocese should prioritize training in the teachings of the sacraments, particularly baptism, and play a significant role in expanding the formation of catechists. This initiative would help to deepen their understanding of baptism, which is rooted in theological insight offered through modules specifically designed for educational purposes.

Future researchers should consider increasing the number of participants in their study.

V. CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that participants' comprehension of the Church's teachings on the sacrament of baptism varied widely. While the other two catechists indicated a limited comprehension of the church's teachings on the rite of baptism, the researchers claimed to have an extraordinarily extensive understanding.

With regards frequency of the use of catechetical materials, catechists frequently used church documents in catechism.

Respondents underscored the use of anecdotes from their own lives in teaching the sacrament of baptism.

Overall, these findings highlight the significance of comprehending the church's teachings in their entirety and the potential benefits of using structured educational modules to enhance catechetical processes around baptism.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide Questions

Name: _____ Sex: _____

- 1) Gaano kalawak ang iyong Pagka-unawa sa mga itinuturo ng Simbahan patungkol sa Sakramento ng Binyag?
- 2) Gaano ninyo kadalas ginagamit ang mga turo ng Simbahan sa pagbibigay ng Katesismo?
- 3) Nakikita mo ba ang kanilang Participation sa Simbahan?

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