



Holy Baptism

Did you hear the Good News?

As each of us are created and are born into this world we come with a deep desire:

- *to be loved,
- *to belong,
- *to be cared for,
- *to be understood,
- *to have meaning,
- *and to know God.



Since God created us, God knows this. So he has given us his son, Jesus, to help us find the way. Through the giving of his Spirit, Jesus has enabled individuals to be united with other individuals in a community of faith - the Church. As a part of this community, the Church, one can experience love, acceptance, care, understanding, and meaning in life. Through baptism, an individual becomes a part of this family.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is:

- *Participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection (Rebirth/Easter)
Matthew 3.15; Mark 10.38-40, 45; Romans 6.3-11; Ephesians 2.5-6
- *Conversion, Pardoning and Cleansing (Washing/Baptism of the Lord)
Mark 1.4; Colossians 2.13,3.1; Hebrews 10.22; 1 Peter 3.21; Acts 22.16
- *The Gift of the Spirit (Empowering/Pentecost)
Matthew 3.11; Mark 1.10-11; Acts 2.2; 2 Corinthians 1.21-22
- *Incorporation into the Body of Christ (Common Discipleship/All Saints)
Ephesians 4.4-6; Hebrews 12.10-11; Colossians 1.11-14

Through the waters of baptism, we become children of God (members of his Church) and commit ourselves to allowing his Holy Spirit to work in our lives. We become workers in making real the Kingdom of God on earth. Baptism is a sign of initiation into Christ's church. In baptism we are "incorporated into the Body of Christ." We are made members of the worldwide Christian Church. The Baptismal Service celebrates the loving imitative voice of God, calling and claiming us, and the faithful response of the people, both as individuals and as a community.

Welcome

What Baptism is not:

1. To give the child a name.

A child can receive his/her name by registration with civil authorities. Baptism can be a time when you give your child a name, but this is not its function.

2. To give God thanks for the birth of our child.

In the Church, we have a rite called, "Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child." If this is your only concern, this rite may be all you are looking for.

3. Baptism will provide the same opportunities we had to decide about religion.

As we have discussed, baptism is an outward sign of something that has occurred inside. Baptism presupposes that a decision has already been made.

4. Our child can go to Sunday School.

Baptism is not a condition for attending Sunday School in our church. All children are welcome.

5. Baptism will protect our child from going to hell.

This is an idea that started long after New Testament times. It developed around the concept of 'original sin' in the Middle Ages. The God we know and worship would not condemn a child for not being baptized.

6. If he/she is not baptized he/she will be embarrassed later in life.

The child later in life should not be embarrassed. In the early church, adult baptism was by far in the majority. It was seen as a time of celebration and something to strive for.

7. We believe in God.

Many people other than Christians, such as Jews and Muslims, believe in God. However, only those who are in fellowship with Christ's Church will be baptized.

8. It is a tradition in our family.

Baptism is a big step and involves a life change and new commitment. It is not just a tradition.

9. Our grandparents want us to baptize our child.

As parents, it is your decision if your child is going to be baptized or not. Nobody else can make that decision for you.

10. To give our child a good start.

Baptism is a good start in a new life. However, it does require a good deal of follow-through. It is not a ceremony on its own.

Who has responsibility?

Symbolically, Baptism is like a door—a special door that takes you into a Family home. The Family is our Christian Family, God's Family - the Church. Baptism is the entrance rite into this family. But the door is big and your child cannot come alone, as he must be lifted up and helped by others. Those others are the parents and sponsors, especially, but also the whole Church Family.

Parents:

Your responsibility as parents is not just to take your child to and through the door, but also to accompany him through the many years that lie ahead as a member of the Church. Your child's Baptism is therefore a "Family Affair". You, as a family, promise to trust in God and commit yourself to God's Church. A promise to God is a thing that should **not be taken lightly**. You, as a family, come together through this special door into the Spiritual Household—**Welcome in!**

The church is here to help and support you all the way. However, when parents do not follow on their promises to foster a child's Christian growth, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, for the congregation to uphold the promise they made before God at the child's baptism.

Sponsors:

Sponsors are 2 or 3 persons chosen by the parents to support them in the spiritual growth of their child. Sponsors should be adults who have a deep caring for the child and who are active members of the Christian church themselves. It is the duty of the Sponsors to share in the promises made by the parents on behalf of the child. Sponsors should themselves be baptized members of the church.

Parish Family:

Sunday Worship - through Sacraments, prayer and preaching, God's people are brought together and are renewed in the reality that humankind does not live by things alone, but by the energy and love of God.

Sunday School Program - during Sunday School classes, your child will have the opportunity to learn at her own level what it means to be a child of God and a member of the Christian family.

The Life in the Eucharist Program - in this program, young people have an opportunity to explore more fully the mystery of the Holy Communion. This program helps young people to prepare to receive their First Communion.

Clergy - as "priest and counselor" - never forget that your parish clergy are available and willing to help you personally or as a family!

All Church members - as a part of each Baptismal service, the church membership promises to support all persons who are baptized.

Other programs— your church has many other programs and supports that are offered to young people and their families, especially in times of need. Please contact your parish priest to learn more about these programs.

What happens in Baptism?

The water in baptism is an outward and visible sign of the initiation into the Christian family and a life which comes to us through Christ. It is the initiation into a life-style for those who "intend to lead the new life," following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in God's ways. It is a life where others come first, a life of service, a life where God is taken seriously!

A) It starts with a Birthday celebration. It is a celebration in that God's Family celebrates the adoption of a new child into the Church.

B) The Birthday gifts: A new identity - God wants your child to be a "somebody," a person with an identity and a name, and so in baptism, God claims him as God's child. Since it is impossible for your child to understand this gift right now, there are careful instructions written on the wrapping: "To be unwrapped and assembled by my parents/guardians/sponsors over the next few years!" God wants your child to come to know God, but this cannot happen by itself. So much depends on a willingness to "unwrap" the gift and share it with your child. This gift belongs to your child.... **Will you unwrap it for her?**

C) A new "Family" - God's second gift for your child is the gift of "belonging" to a new family. One of our very basic human needs is the need to "belong." But this gift, too, is wrapped and can be experienced by the child only when others ensure that she takes part in Family activities such as Family Worship and Sunday School. It is equally important for the Parish Family to welcome and accept your child, and try to give him a sense of belonging.

D) A new "future" - God wants your child to have a life that goes somewhere! God has a plan for your child's life - a plan of purpose, meaning, faith and hope. God wants this for your son or daughter, but God must have the cooperation of parents, your priest, and the members of your church in order to make it happen. Finally, the gift must be assembled by your child herself, when she reaches the age when she can make a mature commitment to Jesus Christ, promising to follow Him and serve Him. This is done at Confirmation.

The Day of Baptism

Following careful thought and preparation, you bring your baby to the church to ask for baptism. It is a public sign of your own faith and trust in God's love. The ceremonies of baptism speak powerfully of this love, and as you follow the service by joining in the prayers and responses, you are drawn deeper into God's love. Normally, your baby will be baptized solemnly in church. Usually, the priest will suggest that the baptism take place during the main Sunday worship, usually during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Some major feast days that are ideal for baptism are *The Epiphany, The Baptism of our Lord, The Great Easter Vigil, Pentecost Sunday, and All Saints.*

A) The Decision: "Do you turn to Jesus Christ?" The priest begins the service by outlining the duties of parents and godparents, and with a section entitled, "Presentation and Examination of the Candidates." Here, parents and godparents are asked to respond to the questions on behalf of the baby: "Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?" "Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?" Parents and godparents will then be asked the following questions: "Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?" "Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?" "Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?" Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Saviour?" "Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?" "Do you promise to obey him as your Lord?" After this, the Church Family will have an opportunity to offer prayers for all the candidates for baptism.

B) Water: Thanksgiving over the Water. The priest will invite candidates, parents, godparents and others to the stand around the font. References will be made to the history of God's saving plan for his people, and the water will be blessed.

C) I believe: The Baptismal Covenant. At this time in the congregation will be given the opportunity to join with those who are committing themselves to Christ in baptism to renew their own Baptismal vows.

D) Washing: the Baptism. The priest will take your baby in his arms and may ask you to name the child. He will baptize your child in the three-fold Name of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Water is the symbol of life; without water there would be no life. Water also makes us clean. Baptism signifies new life and the cleansing from sin, won for us when Jesus rose from the dead. At this time, the priest will make a sign on your baby's forehead in the shape of a cross, saying, "I sign you with the cross, and mark you as Christ's own forever."

In some churches, oil will be used to make the sign of the cross. The holy oil is called the 'oil of chrism.' This word means 'anoint.' 'Christ' means 'anointed one', and so those who become followers of Christ through baptism are sometimes anointed, too.

E) Witnessing: Your baby has been given the spirit of Christ and so can reveal this life in the world. The priest may light a candle from the Paschal (Easter) Candle and hand it to the parent or godparent, while saying to the child, "Receive the light of Christ, to show that you have passed from darkness to light." The congregation will say, "**Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.**" The newly-baptized is then welcomed into the Christian family. The priest will say, "Let us welcome the newly baptized." Everyone will say, "**We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.**" With this we now share the Peace of Christ. The priest will say, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." And everyone will say, "**And also with you.**" We then greet each other with a sign of the peace. The baptism part of the ceremony is now over. At the end of the service the congregation will be sent forth with these or similar words: "Go in peace to love and to serve the Lord." And the people will respond, "**Thanks be to God.**" The power of the Spirit given to your child in baptism is given to all of us as we receive the sacrament of Holy Communion; and we pray that it be truly effective in us each time we receive it.

Growing Together In Christ

"When the party's over ..."

Just as a marriage is more than a wedding, so is the spiritual life of your child more than his/her baptism. Baptism is the beginning of a life of growing up in Christ. Just as your child develops through the different physical stages of creeping, crawling, walking and running, so her spiritual development moves through the early years, stimulated by those closest to her: parents, home, family and the whole community!

Family times for growing:

Mealtimes - around the family table is a good time to say "Thank-you" to God.

*Bedtime - a quiet time for parents to take time with each child and to guide him in ways to talk with God.

*Church holidays - Easter, Christmas, Good Friday and Thanksgiving are opportunities for a family to share in the deeper religious meaning of the event.

*"Anytime" occasions - a spring or summer weekend is an opportunity to walk in God's great outdoors and speak to your children of the gracious God who made our world. A child will often ask questions about God when they occur to her, which may be when you are the busiest. Try not to put him/her off!

Be honest with your child and don't be afraid to admit you don't know the answers, or that you share the same questions, such as, "Who made God?" or "Where is heaven?"

Place the Baptismal Certificate on the wall of your child's room, and as he grows up, take the opportunity to say, "God loves you and always will."

Stages of Development

Infancy stage (0-3 years)

Infants depend upon adults for all the things they require to grow (food, warmth, human touch, etc.). As the infant's needs are met, she develops a sense of trust in the people and world around her. If her needs are not met, and if she does not develop a sense of love and trust, it will be difficult for her to understand in later years the trust our faith requires us to place in God. Parents are the most important people to develop this sense of trust.

The infant is developing in many areas:

*At age 6-8 months, he begins to move about and to master control over his muscles.

*He will understand words long before he begins to talk.

*His curiosity is overwhelming, and he now has a capacity to learn that will never again, in his lifetime, be as strong.

*His problem-solving skills are developing. Parents are the most important part of the child's world.

The parents provide opportunities and encouragement for their child to grow as God intended.

What can you, as a parent, provide for your child's Christian growth at this age?

Yourselves!

Yourselves... in touch with God, and growing with the power of God's Spirit...so that together you can meet the many demands of daily living and child-raising - so that your relationships with each other and with your child will reflect Christian caring.

Pre-school child (3-5 years)

The Pre-school child (3-5 years) does not understand abstract words such as God, love, or Spirit because he understands his world only in terms of his senses of seeing, touching, etc. Therefore, words such as these must be related to the child's daily and existing experiences that are familiar to her. It is impossible for a child to understand an explanation of God's love, but a child can experience this love through warm affection.

She will understand that God is someone very special when she sees and hears her parents talk to God often. She will understand that God's Family is very special because her parents meet with that Family often and share a meal together. The child will intuitively understand your attitude towards your faith, as he sees how you "live" your faith.

The child at this age believes you know everything and wants more than anything to be just like you. **Parents are important models. Your own Christian growth is vital!!**

The Signs and Symbolism of Baptism.

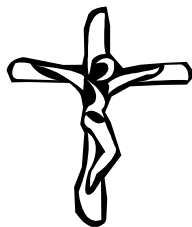
Water: Through the outward sign of water, God gives us the grace of new birth. The water of baptism has many symbolic meanings. It symbolizes womb water and birth to new life. It symbolizes forgiveness and the washing away of all sin. Immersion symbolizes death to an old way of life, and raising to a new life, following in Christ's way. As the Hebrew people were saved and led through the waters of the Red Sea, so are the new "Israel" and its people saved through baptismal water. Water is poured just before the baptism to show it as running or living water. Water is essential for life. It also symbolizes cleansing.

The White Robe: A change in clothing can be a symbol of important changes in our lives. Often, candidates for baptism wear special robes. The white robe symbolizes the putting on of the new life in Christ. It is the "white" of this baptismal clothing that is the origin of the name often given to the Feast of Pentecost (Whitsunday - White-Sunday).

The Giving of the Light: The Paschal (Easter) Candle is burning during a baptism, to link baptism with resurrection. The newly baptized (or the sponsors on their behalf) often receive a lighted candle, which symbolizes that there has been a passing from "darkness into light," and that now the baptized will shine with the light of Christ in the world - "Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven." (Matthew 5.16)

Oil: Oil, sometimes called "chrism", may be applied to the forehead of the newly baptized in the sign of the cross. This marks the baptized as belonging to Christ. Scripture refers to oil being used for anointing. "Christ" means "anointed one." Our baptism links us to Christ. The oil anoints us to our Christian ministry.

The Baptismal Register: Your baby's baptism will be recorded in the parish Baptismal Register and you will normally be given a baptismal card. In the years ahead, proof of baptism may be obtained in the form of a certificate issued on the basis of this registration.



Other Questions:

1. When is the best time for Baptism?

The foremost occasion for Christian baptism is Easter, traditionally Easter Eve. As the church celebrates the death and rising to life of her Lord, new members are initiated into that experience of death and resurrection. Other preferred occasions are Pentecost, All Saints, the Baptism of The Lord, at the time of Confirmation, but often another Sunday is chosen to focus exclusively on the celebration of baptism itself.

Although for many years it had been the practice to schedule Baptism “next Sunday,” this practice is being replaced by older, more careful approaches. You may find that one or more dates have already been set in the parish, with a view to making the most of these great occasions.

Ask the priest when the next baptism will be celebrated, and keep your ears open on Sundays for details of instruction sessions that precede it. Do not be surprised if you are expected to wait a few weeks or even months; something so important deserves careful, deliberate preparation and should not be rushed. You may have your own ideas about a date, and you should share these with the priest well ahead of time. But don’t expect her to always adjust the date to accommodate “Great-Aunt Bertha’s visit next month.”

2. What about Communion for my child?

After we are born into this world, we need food to nourish our bodies. The same applies to us when we are born a second time through the waters of baptism. We need food to nourish our spiritual bodies. The food we need is the bread and wine of the Eucharist, the body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, it is important for a person after baptism to regularly receive Communion. Following the ancient practice, there is no age limit in our church. If you are interested in having your child receive his or her First Communion after baptism, please notify your priest.

3. Can I have a private Baptism for my child?

Private baptism is really a contradiction in terms. Baptism is first and foremost the initiation into the body of Christ, the church. To be a Christian is to be in community with other believers. Therefore, it is the community you enter.

The exception is emergency baptism in the case of serious illness. After, when she recovers sufficiently, the child should be brought to the church and publicly received, at which time the Baptismal Promises will be made.

4. My child was adopted, can I have my child baptized?

If you are adopting your child, inquire whether he or she was baptized before coming to you. If so, your child can be publicly received; if not, baptism can be administered.

5. What about Adult Baptism?

While we generally think of Baptism as being for babies, all of the specific accounts of baptism in the New Testament are of adults. Adults who have not been baptized may receive that sacrament. They should contact the priest, who will arrange the necessary instructions.

6. I am from another denomination. Do I need to be baptized in the Anglican Church?

Baptism is a once in a life time event, and is not required of persons coming to membership in the Anglican Church from any other denomination of the church, unless they did not receive baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in that denomination. People from another denomination wishing to join the Anglican Church who have been already baptized can do so by being publicly received.

7. How much does baptism cost in the Anglican Church?

Nothing. There is no charge for baptism, but it is customary for a thanksgiving offering to be made to the church. You, the child's godparents and your other guests at the Baptism Service, may like to leave an offering in collection plate.

8. "My friend's baby was stillborn. What happen to the baby?"

Your friend's baby is entrusted to the mysterious but infinitely kind and powerful love of God. Baptism is a sign of God's love, not a condition, for His love. Jesus told us that "Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3.5) At times in the past, this has led some people to suggest that unbaptized infants pass into a state of "limbo"- where the baby is excluded from both heaven and hell. Such a suggestion, however, misses the whole point of God's love: for he loves us from the moment of conception. It is clear that very many who are unbaptized receive God's Spirit and so are welcomed into the kingdom of God. God shares his life with us in various ways - of which baptism is the most important sign.

9. "I'm an unmarried mother. I want my baby baptized, but am anxious about the kind of reception I'll get."

Don't worry at all. The priest will welcome you when you go to arrange for the baptism of your baby. The priest will simply want to be assured, as with any other parent, of your own commitment to your child's Christian upbringing.

10. "My partner isn't a Christian and feels self conscious and anxious about the ceremony and what we have to do as parents during the baptism. Will there be a problem?"

Your partner's anxiety is perfectly understandable. Even people who attend church services regularly can feel nervous and shy about taking a central part in an important ceremony such as their child's baptism. However, there is no need to be worried. The priest taking the service will guide you through it step by step.

