

HOLY BAPTISM

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. Our Baptismal life is derived from the Resurrection life of Jesus Christ, symbolized by the Paschal Candle from which our individual Baptismal candles are lit. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble since God's promises are never broken. The sacrament of rebirth bestows upon us the forgiveness of sins and raises us to the new life of grace. In grace God adopts us as his own children, incorporates us into his holy Church, and makes us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Baptism involves the whole faith of the whole Church and takes place when the whole congregation is gathered for worship and can participate in this joyous occasion. The days specified for Baptism in the Book of Common Prayer are those which have a closely related theological significance.

Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saint's Day or prior to All Saint's Sunday, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the first Sunday after Epiphany). It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions or when a Bishop is present. (BCP, p. 312)

Baptism assumes an act of faith and commitment which, in the case of children, is made by the parents. At least one of the parents should be a communicant of Trinity. Godparents (usually three) are asked to serve as Sponsors of baptized children and take an active interest in their spiritual growth. Although it is desirable that at least one of the godparents be an Episcopalian, this is not required. It is important, however, that they are committed Christians who will fulfill their vows. Their lives serve as witnesses of their faith to their godchildren.

Baptism signifies a radical break with worldliness and should not be entered into casually but only after thought, study and prayer. All persons desiring Baptism for themselves or their children must contact the Rector. Preparations for this most important sacrament begin with the active participation in worship and the life of the parents. At least one meeting of the parents, godparents and clergy is required.

Baptism is clearly initiation into the family of God. The Sacrament cannot be expected to work by "magic" or in isolation from active participation in a congregation. The parents and godparents must honestly commit the candidate to exposure to Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture and the regular worship of the Church. This means the child should grow up experiencing Sunday at Church as a normal and expected part of family life. No other time can really be substituted for worshipping God in Church and all other family values are supported by it. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God (BCP p. 856). Questions and answers concerning Holy Baptism are found in the Catechism, BCP p. 858.

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