

A Customary for Holy Baptism

What is Holy Baptism?

"*Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.*" (The Book of Common Prayer 298.) Full initiation means that nothing else will be required for a person to have full membership in the Church. Baptism is the sacramental rite that admits the believer to the Holy Eucharist and to participate in the life of the congregation.

The Prayer Book also says that the union established between the person baptized and God is permanent. Those who are baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity are united to Christ and other baptized people forever. God remains faithful to the covenant that he made with us in Baptism even when we are unfaithful.

Why do we baptize?

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3ff). Baptism symbolizes our being washed clean of all sin and being reborn to new life in the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 5:17-21). Finally, baptism symbolizes our incorporation into the mystical Body of Christ, the Church.

Who may be baptized?

Anyone who desires baptism for the reasons stated may be baptized. *Each candidate for Holy Baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons (BCP).* Any infant or child may be baptized provided the parents or Godparents (sponsors) are willing to insure that the child will be brought up in the "knowledge and love of the Lord." Holy Baptism is full incorporation into the church. All baptized persons are welcome at the Lord's Supper in the Episcopal Church.

What are the responsibilities of those baptized?

People baptized into Christ's one holy catholic and apostolic church are expected to grow in the faith into which they have been incorporated by this sacrament. This means that they will resist and renounce evil in their lives and wherever it is encountered, follow Christ as their Lord and Savior, and put their whole trust in the love of God as revealed in Christ Jesus. As Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

How is someone prepared for Baptism?

Adults entering the church through Baptism are expected to experience a program of instruction and initiation into the Christian religion. We use the Alpha Course and the Confirmation class for this purpose. The Rector will be most happy to discuss the classes with any adult who is interested in being baptized.

Parents and Godparents are also required to attend a baptismal rehearsal, typically the day before the Baptism with the Rector (or someone he designates) for pre-baptismal instructions. We strive to insure that everyone involved in the baptism and upbringing of a child in the Christian faith may have adequate instruction relative to the responsibilities and joys of church membership and life in Christ.

What are the roles of sponsors, parents, and godparents in the life of the Baptized?

Adults

Adults will normally have a sponsor who is a mature adult Christian willing to act as companion and mentor to the candidate. A sponsor provides encouragement and instruction and acts as a prayer-partner with and for the person to be baptized. In other words, a baptismal sponsor is a fellow pilgrim in Christ with the candidate.

Children

The role of parents and godparents in infant baptism is enormous. These persons make the vows of the baptismal covenant in the name of and for the sake of a candidate who is not mature enough to speak for himself or herself. It is a great responsibility, as well as a great joy, to nurture a child in the Christian faith.

When is an appropriate time for Baptism?

"Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast." (BCP 298). In addition, there are special occasions during the liturgical year when Baptism is particularly appropriate. Those times include the day of Pentecost, All Saints' Day, or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, on the feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after Epiphany) and on Transfiguration Sunday.

Any time that the Bishop visits is an appropriate time for baptism. The baptismal days are spaced throughout the year in such a way that it should not be inconvenient to wait until an appropriate time to administer this sacrament.

Baptism is so important that the community gathers to be part of this special day and we do not schedule private baptism except under special circumstances (family, military service, illness, etc.). Private baptism is not the usual practice in the Episcopal Church. Talk with the Rector if circumstances make public baptism difficult. When private baptism is administered, the baptized person should be received into the congregation as a new brother or sister in Christ as soon as the person is able to attend worship. The heart of the baptismal service is found in the statement: *“We welcome you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection and share with us in his eternal priesthood.”* (BCP 308)

The Day of Baptism

You are welcome to take pictures but no flash photography is permitted.
Please don't interrupt the flow of the service.

Godparent responsibility / A Godparent's Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, you embrace children with the arms of your mercy, and make them living members of your Church. Give grace, I pray you, to my Godchild to stand fast in your faith, to obey your word, and to abide in your love; that, being made strong by your Holy Spirit, he may resist temptation, and may rejoice in the life to come; through your merits, O merciful Savior, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever, Amen.

When presenting the candidate for Baptism, remember to speak loudly and in unison.

When the priest says, "The candidates for holy baptism will now be presented", please remember to stand, speak in unison and speak loudly.

"I present (name) to receive the sacrament of Baptism."

When speaking, please use "I" rather than "we".

Additional notes on the logistics of Holy Baptism.

The Rector (and/or someone he designates) will meet with all baptismal candidates in a rehearsal session prior to the time of the service, so that all persons involved

will be familiar and comfortable with the rite. It is also expected that all sponsors, parents, and godparents be present for this rehearsal.

- The Rector (or his assistant) will officiate at baptisms in the parish except with a Bishop is present. When a Bishop is present, he is the officiant. At such times the Bishop may delegate the baptism to the Rector.
- The taking of flash photographs is not allowed during a worship service. You may take photos but please don't disrupt the service.
- It is appropriate that all present at the baptism be able to see and hear what is happening. We invite you and your children to move to a better location if your vision or hearing is obstructed. Children are especially invited to come forward so that they may see and hear.
- The parish by custom provides a reception following the service. We cordially invite all present to join us in welcoming our new sister or brother into the community of the faithful.
- If you wish another Episcopal priest from outside of the parish to participate in the baptism, please speak privately with the Rector before you speak with the other clergy person. If the Rector approves the request he will coordinate logistics with the guest clergy well ahead of time. Also, it is expected that any visiting and assisting clergy be present for the rehearsal session.

Application for Holy Baptism

Date of Application for Holy Baptism _____ Proposed Date for the Baptism _____

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO THE PARISH OFFICE

Full name of candidate _____

Gender _____ Date of birth _____ Place of birth _____

Father's full name _____ Baptized? _____

Mother's full name _____ Baptized? _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (H) _____ (W) _____ e-mail _____

Baptized Sponsors

1. Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

2. Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

3. Name: _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____