

Holy Baptism

About the Sacrament

Holy Baptism is the full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble. (*Book of Common Prayer, page 298*)

In this sacrament, "God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the church, and inheritors of the Kingdom of God." In baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection, born into God's family, the Church, forgiven our sins, and given new life in the Holy Spirit. At Baptism "it is required that we renounce Satan, repent of our sins and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior." (*Book of Common Prayer, page 858*)

Readings for Reflection

In the Book of Common Prayer:
Holy Baptism, pages 298-309
The Catechism, Holy Baptism,
pages 858-859

In the Bible:
Ezekiel 36:24-38, John 3:1-6
Romans 8:14-17, Mark 10:13-16
Romans 6:3-5,
2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Occasions for Holy Baptism

Holy Baptism is usually administered four times a year on the feasts recommended by the Book of Common Prayer, in the context of the Holy Eucharist and in the presence of the faith community. The four occasions are: Easter, (March or April); the Day of Pentecost (May or June); All Saints' Day or the Sunday after All Saints' Day (November); and upon the feast of the Baptism of our Lord (January). It may also be administered when a bishop is present. (*Book of Common Prayer, page 312*)

Baptism of Adults

If the candidate for Baptism is an adult, he or she is expected to have attended the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and major Holy Days for at least six months prior to Baptism, be prepared through instruction, and have developed a Rule of Life.

The same standard applies to a child old enough to receive instruction and make a commitment. When possible, adults and older children receiving the sacrament of Baptism will receive the Laying on of Hands by the Bishop at the same time.

For adults and children old enough to receive instruction, a plan of preparation will be worked out with the priest. The plan will include participa-

Tion in parish worship, a period of instruction in Christian Faith and Practice, and discussion with the priest about long term patterns of prayer, study and service. Sponsors will be asked to take part in the preparation of the candidate they sponsor.

Sponsors of adults and older children present their candidates and thereby signify their endorsement of the candidates and their intention to support them by prayer and example in their Christian life. All sponsors must be baptized Christians who regularly participate in the life of a congregation. At least one should be a member of this congregation, if possible. Sponsors will be expected to take part in the preparation of the candidate they sponsor.

Infant Baptism

Since the first century, the church has baptized infants under certain conditions; that is, when their certain conditions; that is, when parents are active members of the church and thus the child will be raised in the "household of faith", sharing in the repentance, and the ongoing faith and practice of the community.

Therefore the baptism of an infant should take place in a setting of Christian commitment such as:

1. When one or both parents are active, worshipping, canonical members of the congregation.
2. When a previously inactive family has demonstrated a Christian commitment by sharing in the worship and life of the congregation for at least six months.
3. When, in the case of a family not otherwise actively connected with the Church, one or more of the godparents are active, worshipping members who are serious in their responsibility to see that the child will be nurtured in the community of Christian faith, and who have the active support of parents to do so. The godparent(s) should be prepared to bring the child for worship, instruction and fellowship.

If an infant is not in such a setting, it is best to wait until the family is ready to fulfill the promises of sponsors or until the child can, in some way, make his or her own affirmations.

Before the Baptism

Parents and godparents (sponsors) meet with the priest or catechist for a period of instruction on the meaning of the sacrament, their duties to help the new Christian grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in their responsibilities as a member of his Church.

Sponsors of infants, commonly called godparents, present their candidates, make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates. Parents should be included among the godparents of their own children. Sponsors accept responsibility to support the candidate by prayer and example in the Christian life, to see that the child will be brought up within the Church to know Christ and to follow him.

Conformed to Christ: Structures and Standards in Parish Development. Gallagher, Mann, Mann and Broadhead, Ascension Press, 1983.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism



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