

All About...

HOLY BAPTISM

Saint John's in the Village

Holy Baptism is a Sacrament, an outward and visible action signifying the interior action of the Holy Spirit of God. Together with the Holy Eucharist, it is one of two great Sacraments of the Gospel given to the Church by Jesus himself. It is full initiation into the Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ Jesus. In this great Sacrament, an indissoluble bond and relationship is established as God claims us as his children, and we acknowledge that we are his. Holy Baptism is not initiation into a club or civic organization, or a cultural tradition. It is a spiritual death and rebirth. Holy Baptism in the Church is initiation into a *life-long commitment to a life in holy community as a follower of Jesus of Nazareth*, ever growing in depth of spiritual maturity in mutual ministry with the other members of the Church.

Therefore, it is a pledge to:

- renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God.
- renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.
- renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God.
- turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Saviour.
- put your whole trust in his grace and love.
- follow and obey him as your Lord.
- continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself.
- strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

I. WHO MAY BE BAPTISED?

Anyone who is able to affirm the Apostle's Creed (see *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 53; or 96) and is willing to affirm in solemn vows the statements listed above may be baptized. Under certain circumstances, children who are not of age to speak for themselves, may be baptized when sponsored by an adult who vows to insure that the child will be brought up in the Christian Faith and life. Baptisms are recorded in the official register of the congregation and the person is thenceforth and forever a member of the Church. Record of membership may be transferred from parish to parish, but not out of the Church Catholic. Your membership remains in the parish of your Baptism, no

matter how long ago that was, unless you or a parent has asked for it to be moved to another parish.

II. THE BAPTISM OF ADULTS (or children 16 and over)

Adults who desire Holy Baptism should signify their desire to the Rector of the congregation. The priest and the candidate will meet to discuss preparation for the Sacrament. Before an adult is baptized, it is expected:

- that he or she will have been regular in attendance at the Holy Eucharist on Sundays and Principal Feasts for at least six months prior to baptism.
- that he or she will have been prepared through instruction in the Christian Faith and the meaning of the Sacrament by a priest or catechist.
- and that he or she will have developed a Rule of Life in consultation with the priest.

One or more Sponsors will be found from the congregation (and possibly other congregations) to take the role of mentor for the candidate, and will be involved in all aspects of the preparation of the candidate.

Preparation for Holy Baptism will always include participation in the life and worship of the congregation, a period of instruction in the Christian Faith and the Anglican spiritual tradition, and discussion of long-term patterns of prayer, study, and service.

Sponsors present their candidates and signify thereby their endorsement of the candidate, and their own intention to support them by prayer and example in the Christian life. All Sponsors must be baptized Christians who regularly participate in the life of a congregation. At least one will be a member of Saint John's Church.

III. THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN AND INFANTS

Adults who desire Holy Baptism for an infant or child should signify their desire to the Rector of the congregation. The priest and the adults will meet to discuss whether or not the conditions of the Church for the Holy Baptism of infants and children are met. Since the first century, the Church has been willing to baptize infants and children under certain conditions; that is, when the parents are active members of the Church and thus the child will be raised in the "household of faith", which is the Church, sharing in the on-going faith, practice, repentance and renewal of the community.

Therefore, the Holy Baptism of an infant or child should take place in a setting of Christian commitment:

- when one or both parents are *active, worshipping, canonical members of the congregation.*
- when a previously inactive family has demonstrated a Christian commitment *by sharing in the life and worship of the congregation for at least six months.*

- 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 Godparents should be prepared to bring the child to the Church for worship, instruction, and fellowship.

If an infant or child is not in such a setting, Holy Baptism should be postponed until the family and/or Godparents are willing and able to fulfil the promises of Sponsors, or until the child attains the maturity to make his or her own affirmations.

Before the Baptism-

Parents and Godparents will meet with the priest or catechist for a period of instruction reviewing the Christian Faith, the meaning of the Sacrament, their duties to help the new Christian grow in the knowledge and love of God, and their responsibilities as a member of his Church.

Sponsors of infants and children are known as Godparents. Parents are rightly included among the Godparents of their own children. Godparents make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates (see *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 301-302). Godparents accept the responsibility to support the candidate by prayer and example in the Christian life, to see that the child will be brought up in the Church to know Christ Jesus and to follow him.

All Godparents must be baptized Christians who regularly participate in the life of a congregation. At least one should be a member of Saint John's Church.

The Catechism of *The Book of Common Prayer* (page 856) gives this summary of the solemn vows of Holy Baptism: "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." What this means is explained in more detail in: [All About Membership](#).

IV. OCCASIONS FOR HOLY BAPTISM

Holy Baptism is usually administered at Easter (March or April), Whitsunday (May or June), All Saints' Day (November) and upon the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord (January). It may also be administered at the time of the Bishop's Visitation.

Membership in the Church is unlike membership in most organizations. Our goal is nothing less than the kingdom of God on earth. We do not belong to a group of people who look, think, and act alike, or even as we do, but who choose to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth in the multiplicity of ways he calls us and endows us with insight and grace. We are united in our faith in him and in the Baptismal Covenant we share. We sustain and renew our unity and covenant with him and each other in the Rite of Reconciliation,

in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood, in our common worship, and in our prayers for one another. Our mission is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

