

Holy Baptism

At



Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon *these* your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised *them* to the new life of grace. Sustain *them*, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give *them* an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer, page 308

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Table of Contents

Welcome	page 2
Baptisms at Saint Mark's Church	page 2
Preparing for Baptism	page 2
What to Expect	page 3
Holy Baptism: A Sacrament of the Church	page 3
Baptism: Our Hope for Years to Come	page 3
Staff Directory	

A complete copy of this service from The Book of Common Prayer can be found at:

<http://www.bcponline.org/Baptism/holybaptism.html>

Welcome

The fact that you are reading these words means that you are considering the sacrament of Holy Baptism for your child or for yourself. Or, you may just want to know more about this sacrament of the Church, a rite of passage that goes back to the early disciples and into our Jewish heritage thousands of years before Christ.

Baptism is a time of joy and welcome into the community of faith. It is also a re-birth and the beginning of life as a follower of Jesus – and offers the opportunity to renew or deepen the spiritual journey for everyone involved.

Baptisms at Saint Mark's Church

This sacrament usually take place at the church during the main worship service on the following Holy Days: the **Great Vigil of Easter** (the evening before Easter Sunday); the **Day of Pentecost** (50 days after Easter); **All Saints Sunday** (November 1st or the following Sunday); and the First Sunday after the Epiphany (the 1st Sunday after January 6th) which is the **Feast of the Baptism of our Lord**. Baptisms may also take place on other Sundays during the year depending on pastoral needs and, while usually taking place at the 10:00am service, baptisms may also take place at the Sunday 8am or Wednesday Noon services.

Holy Baptism takes place in the context of public worship and along with the Holy Eucharist unless there are pressing pastoral reasons for having the sacrament take place in another venue.

Preparing for Baptism

- 1) Pray for the baptismal candidate and this new beginning along their spiritual journey.
- 2) Identify those people to be asked to serve as godparents. These are people who, in absence of the parents, can be entrusted to support the baptized in their Christian formation.
- 3) Review this booklet and call the parish office with any questions or concerns you may have.
- 4) Return the PDF form on this website or mail to the parish office
- 5) One of our clergy will be in touch with you to schedule the date of the Baptism.
- 6) The clergy will schedule a run-through of the service with the parents and godparents either on the Saturday before the baptism or at 9am on the day of the Baptism. If the run-through of the service takes place on Sunday, please arrive for the church service between 9:30 and 9:40am.
- 7) Explore the opportunities for fellowship, worship and spiritual nurture present within the parish community. This is now the parish home of the newly baptized – and we celebrate the gift of their presence!

What to Expect

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is an integral part of the worship life of Saint Mark's Church and of the Episcopal Church as a whole. The Baptismal Font is located in the Narthex at the entrance to the church. (If you walk by the church at night you can see the font through the glass doors because of the lights that shine down on it. This highlights the prominence of the sacrament as well as its public nature.

The service, begins as it usually does on a Sunday, with an opening hymn, followed by an acclamation (or greeting). Then follows the opening prayer ("collect") of the day and the four readings from Holy Scripture; the sermon follows the reading of the Gospel passage for the day.

After the sermon, the parents and godparents and the child(ren or adults) being baptized are invited to gather at the foot of the chancel steps facing the altar. Those being baptized are presented and then the rite begins with the promises to renounce the evils of this world and to follow Christ (p. 302), the Baptismal Covenant (p. 304) and Prayers for the Candidate(s) (p. 305).

After the Prayers for the Candidates, the clergy and the family move up the aisle to the Baptismal font as the congregation sings the hymn, **"Seek ye first the kingdom of God"** (# 711 in the blue hymnal). Everyone gathers around the font as the Celebrant blesses the water. Next to the font is the **"Paschal Candle"** which signifies the Light of Christ. This prayer of thanksgiving is worth reading in advance (see page 306) because it recounts God's saving acts in history using water as a metaphor. There is some powerful imagery here.

Following the Thanksgiving over the water, the candidates for baptism are baptized – one at a time. That baptism includes the pouring of water on the head of the candidate as well as the anointing of the head with oil. The newly baptized is then given a lit candle which represents the light of Christ, and the newly baptized is charged to carry that light of Christ into the world. Each newly baptized person is then introduced to the congregation and the congregation officially welcomes the newly baptized into the body of Christ.

Following the baptism, the congregation then passes the peace of Christ and gets ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. After the altar party and choir have received communion, the parents and godparents are invited to receive the sacrament as are the newly baptized!

Holy Baptism: A Sacrament of the Church

Baptism is the sacramental rite of full initiation by **water and the Holy Spirit** into membership in the Christian church. Pretty much all Christian denominations recognize the baptisms of other denominations despite their disagreements on other matters. Unlike other rites of the Church, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is performed only once, precisely because it is the rite that formally welcomes a person into the Body of Christ. But, before we are baptized, there are some promises made on our behalf by our parents, godparents and by the whole congregation.

There are six questions asked of or, in the case of infants and little children, on behalf of the candidates for Baptism In the first three of those questions we renounce the powers of evil and in the second three questions we commit ourselves to accepting Christ as our Savior and following him as Lord. (See Book of Common Prayer, pages 302-303).

At the heart of Holy Baptism is the **Baptismal Covenant**. (You can find the text of the Baptismal Covenant in Appendix 1 of this booklet) In the first part of that Covenant the entire congregation affirms its belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit using the ancient words of the Apostles' Creed (in question and answer format). Then we are asked 5 questions about how we are to live out our beliefs.

Baptism: Our Hope for Years to Come

Baptism is an affirmation that the future of humankind is rooted in God's love. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus tells the disciples to go out and baptize wherever they go, and promises that he will be with them - and all who seek a nearer relationship with God - "even until the end of time (Matthew 28). May God's grace bless us wherever we go and what ever may come.

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