



# A Customary for Holy Baptism

## WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body, the Church. Through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, God adopts us as God's children. This means they belong to Jesus and are part of his Church - not just the local congregation, but Christians everywhere. They also become heirs to God's kingdom. The celebration of Holy Baptism, then, is a celebration of, by, and for the Christian community.

Baptism is a joyful celebration that involves the whole Christian community. It's not like joining a social club or hobby group. And it's not "fire insurance" - a way to avoid punishment after death. Instead, it's about God's love welcoming us into a new life and a new family. This ceremony matters because it's not just something people do, it's something God does. Through baptism, God reaches out to us and changes our relationship with him forever.

## WHO CAN BE BAPTIZED?

Anyone. We believe that God's grace is not preconditioned on one's merit or understanding. It is a gift of God, and as such we baptize infants, children, youth, and adults.

## Baptizing Infants and Children

We baptize infants so that they can share in the citizenship of God's family through Jesus Christ with the explicit understanding that baptism is not a rite of passage or mere tradition. As such, parents and godparents are expected to be active in their walk with God and are committed to raising the baptized in the Christian faith. This doesn't mean that they're perfect or don't have questions or doubts. Rather, we hope and expect that parents and godparents are committed to walking this journey of faith with all of its highs and lows. In the baptism of infants and children, sponsors (parents and godparents) make promises on behalf of the children they present, and take on the responsibility of raising their children as active members of the Christ's universal Church.

- Parents promise to raise their children in a Christian household with a firm commitment to the Christian life, and that they find a worshipping community of which to be a part.
- At least one parent should be a baptized Christian.
- Typically, one or both parents will be active members of St. Paul's or were raised at St. Paul's and now worship at another community elsewhere.

## Baptizing Youth and Adults

We delight in welcoming youth and adults in the household of God. The earliest Christians were only baptized as adults, so it is never "too late" to be baptized. Like infants or children, adult candidates are presented by sponsors. These can be family members or "mentors" from the congregation. The priest will conduct a period of formation in preparation for baptism.

## **WHEN DO BAPTISMS TAKE PLACE?**

Holy Baptism is administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast. *The Book of Common Prayer* (page 298) recognizes that Baptism is an action of the entire Christian community as it is the incorporation of new members. In the baptismal liturgy, the community promises to support the candidates in their new life in Christ, so it is most fitting to celebrate Baptism at the time and place when the greatest cross-section of the community gathers: the Sunday. As such, we do not perform private baptisms. Emergency baptisms, however, are available at any time.

## **PREPARING FOR BAPTISM AT ST. PAUL'S**

- Candidates for baptism—or their parents and godparents if the candidate is an infant—enter into a time of holy preparation before the baptism. In the case of older children, teens, and adults, the Rector will initially meet with the interested parties to discuss their desire to be baptized at St. Paul's and how they intend to nurture their faith in community. This is not a test! It is an opportunity to explore one's faith journey in a safe setting and address any initial concerns and questions.
- Preparation can involve more extensive formation, depending on the candidate's age, background, and desire. We also encourage you to come to church regularly well in advance of a baptism. During this time, candidates reflect prayerfully on the five promises of the Baptismal Covenant (*Book of Common Prayer*, pp.304-305). These serve as a foundation for a commitment to the Christian faith and life. The Christian journey is a lifelong process, and baptism marks the beginning of a commitment to grow in faith.
- The Saturday before the service (or another mutually agreed upon date), the Rector will gather the parents, godparents, candidates, and other family in advance of the service. Attendance is mandatory.

## **SPONSORS**

Each person who is baptized must be presented by at least two sponsors. For children, the sponsors can include the child's parents. For adults, sponsors may be family members or other members of the congregation. Sponsors must themselves be baptized Christians (baptized by water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and with a clear conscience and sincere intent take all the promises of the Baptismal Covenant (BCP, 302-305). In other words, it is encouraged that a sponsor not be selected due to family expectation or relation, but out of a belief that the chosen person will model the Christian faith and life to the newly baptized. It is further recommended that a sponsor be committed to remain in a dependable relationship with the godchild.

## **Additional Guidelines**

- Families are expected to arrive 30 minutes on the day of baptism to rehearse the service.
- There is no required dress for those receiving the sacrament of baptism.
- Pews at the front of the church are reserved for every baptismal family.
- No flash photography is permitted during the service. Pictures taken without the use of a flash, while not encouraged, are permitted. Picture-taking is most appropriate after the service.

**BAPTISM INFORMATION & REGISTRATION FORM**

Please type or print as this information goes into the Church's historical records. Mail or email application to [office@stpaulswaldorf.org](mailto:office@stpaulswaldorf.org).

Requested Date of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Date (if preferred date is not available): \_\_\_\_\_

**Baptismal Candidate**

**Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth (Hospital, city & state) \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents/Guardians (Complete only if candidate is under the age of 18)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address (street, city, state, zip)

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized: Yes No Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Church (if not St. Paul's) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address (street, city, state, zip)

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized: Yes No Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Church (if not St. Paul's) \_\_\_\_\_

**Godparent/Sponsor 1**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

**Godparent/Sponsor 2**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*You may add additional names as needed.*