COVID-19 Guidelines for Holy Baptism
September 9th, 2020

Holy Baptism is to be celebrated with the community of faith present, during a Sunday, holy day, or other public liturgy. While the pandemic means that certain guidelines are to be followed for the sake of our neighbor, Holy Baptism is still to be celebrated at a public liturgy. (As is always the case, in dire circumstances, Holy Baptism should be administered as quickly as possible.) If no in-person worship is being held in a congregation, then no baptisms shall take place until in-person worship resumes.

In my judgment, during this health emergency, should there be any concern about gathering for a baptism, the provisions for an Emergency Baptism (BCP, p. 313) apply. Pastorally, parents of a candidate, or an adult candidate, should be informed of the provision for an Emergency Baptism that may be administered by any baptized person. The rubrics should be explained in the course of the usual baptismal preparation.

If a congregation is having in-person worship, these guidelines are to be followed:

a. All current guidelines concerning in-person worship are to be followed.
b. A liturgy outdoors should be considered, which allows for more people to be present physically distanced, and for baptismal water to fall upon the earth.
c. Water is to be placed in a large cruet or pitcher.
d. At the Thanksgiving over the Water, the priest shall lay a hand on the pitcher rather than touch the water. This act is consistent with the practice of consecrating the Holy Eucharist where vessels containing hosts and wine are touched.
e. At the Baptism, water is poured from the pitcher on to the head of the candidate as the baptismal formula is said. A hand or shell being held is not to be used to pour the water. Neither is the water to be sprinkled on the candidate’s head, such as with a branch or flower.
f. Prior to the chrismation, the priest shall apply hand sanitizer. To mark the candidate with the sign of the cross using Chrism, a cotton ball or swab is to be dipped into the Chrism and used to trace the cross, as the head of the candidate is touched for a brief moment by the celebrant’s hand.
g. If a baptismal candle is to be given, it shall be done in a way consistent with the current general guidelines, mindful of the need to refrain from physical contact. Care must be given to how the candle is extinguished if it is lighted.