

## 4.0 HOLY BAPTISM

Baptism is the first of the two *Great Sacraments* of the Church. The other Great Sacrament is Holy Communion. They are outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace given to us and ordained by Jesus Christ himself. The outward and visible sign of Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is a death to sin and a new birth in righteousness. There are other sacramental rites that have evolved in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These include confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent and anointing for healing (referred to as 'last rites' for the dying or gravely ill).

It is significant that the Canons of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) list among the duties and responsibilities of every lay person the duty to present their children, and those they have led to the Lord, for Baptism and Confirmation. Congregations should be reminded of this responsibility, and taught that Baptism and Confirmation are two actions that signify salvation and ongoing sanctification; Baptism should be followed up by appropriate instruction in the Faith and then Confirmation.

Furthermore, the ACNA canons relate membership to baptism:

*Membership in the Church requires that a person has received the Sacrament of Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and that such a person be accepted as a member of the Church by a congregation of this Church in compliance with the Constitution of the Church. Such a person is a baptized member of the Church. [ACNA Title I, Canon 10.3]*

Having the foregoing in mind, and subject to the Book of Common Prayer, these are the guidelines concerning Baptisms in this Diocese:

### **Adults**

Adults must be appropriately catechized, normally involving nine to twelve sessions of instruction. Appropriate instruction would include the contents of "*To Be a Christian*," An ACNA Catechism.

There must be one or more sponsors. A sponsor must be a committed Christian and although it is preferred that the sponsor be an Anglican, it is not required. It is common for a husband and wife to be sponsors.

Baptism is a 'faith community event' in which a new member is ushered into the Body of Christ; therefore Baptisms should normally take place in the worship building during the main Sunday service due to the community's responsibility to uphold the candidate. On

occasion, at the discretion of the priest, baptism may be performed elsewhere, as in a river, swimming pool, hospital or home, for example.

It is important that the candidate is integrated into the local church community in order for the community to be able to rightly take its vows. Baptisms are especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil (or if no vigil, then at the main second Sunday of Easter service), Pentecost, All Saint's Day, or on the Sunday after All Saint's Day and on the first Sunday after the Epiphany. Baptisms should be reserved for these days or when the Bishop is present, if possible.

Baptism by immersion, though preferable, is not always possible in the worship building. In all cases, water should be *poured*, three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The validity of Trinitarian Baptism is sacrosanct and beyond alteration. Therefore Baptism is a *once only* sacrament. Persons who have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, *must not be re-Baptized*. In the case of adults who were Baptized before the age of discretion, their instruction in the Faith for Confirmation or Baptismal Reaffirmation, and their spiritual preparation offers the opportunity to realize and appropriate for themselves the fullness of Baptism.

In case of extreme emergency Baptism may be privately administered; and the person, if surviving, should thereafter be brought to the priest and the congregation for a celebratory Baptism service modified as provided in the BCP. In case of imminent death, if a Priest or Deacon cannot be present, then any Baptized person may administer the sacrament using the words, "*I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*" In such a case, the person administering emergency Baptism shall inform the priest of the appropriate local church so that the fact can be registered.

If you are unsure if Baptism has been previously administered, Conditional Baptism may be administered: "*If you are not already baptized, then I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*" [See BCP2019 for complete rite]

## Infants and Children

The following additional instructions apply in the case of Baptism of infants or of children before the age of understanding (normally age six or seven):

Preceding Baptism there should be at least four sessions of instruction for the parents and Godparents (and the child, too, if of the age of understanding), to include the responsibilities of the parents and Godparents as stated in the BCP2019.

Godparents must be committed Christians. Persons who do not have family or friends who are committed Christians may ask members of the congregation to serve as Godparents. Traditionally, there are two Godparents for children. Ideally, these may be the same couple who would be willing to raise the children in the event that the parents died unexpectedly. One or more of the Godparents *must* be committed Christians with an enduring relationship with Christ.

*1 “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, 2 that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. 3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. Deuteronomy 6:1-7*

