

*Materials:*

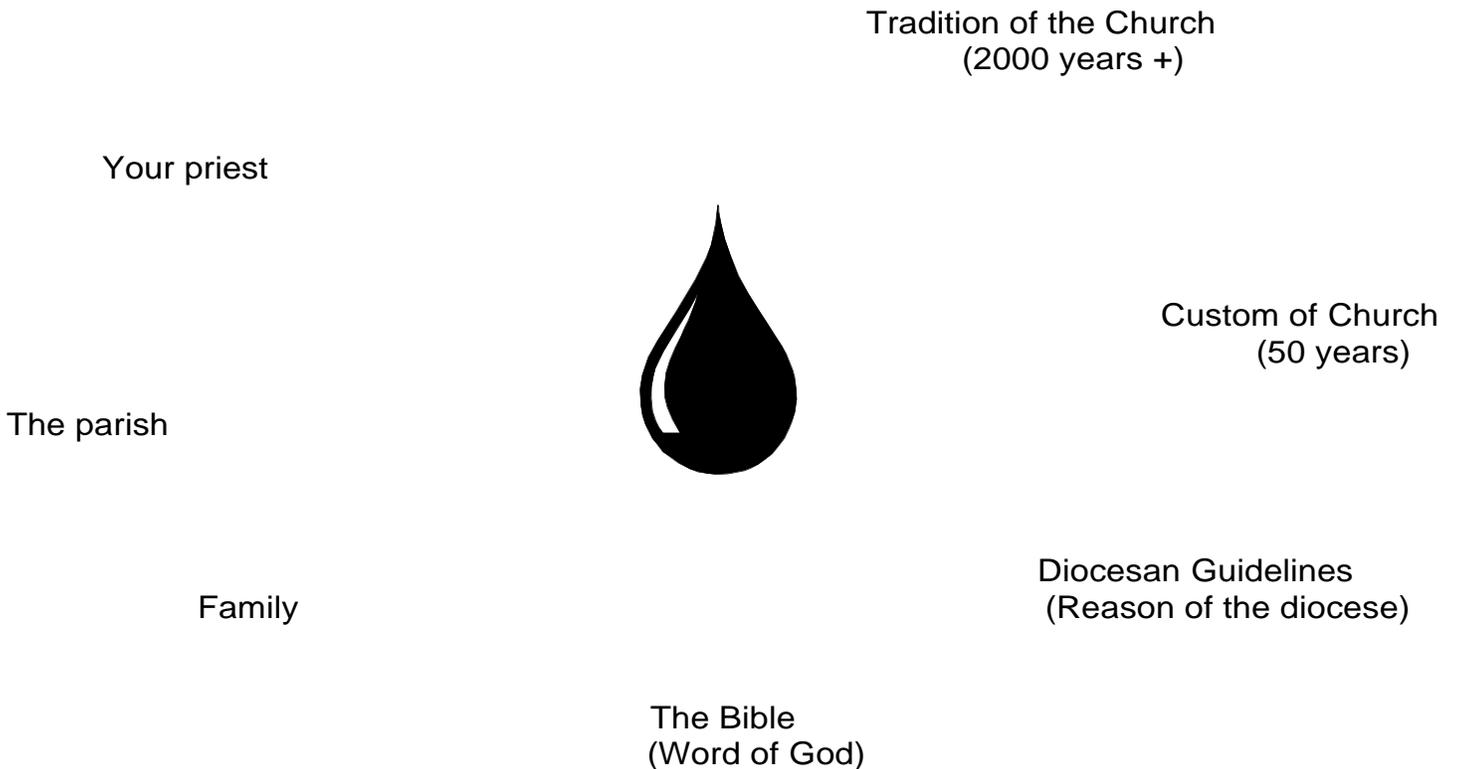
*BCP*

*Handout: Preparing for Baptism Intro*

*Handout: Holy Baptism*

*Other Resources: Thinking About Baptism (J. Hill)*

Why are we meeting to "prepare" for baptism? There are some serious promises which will be made before God and Christ's Church and all involved need to make an informed decision about sponsoring a candidate for Holy Baptism.



Which of the sources of information are the most important to you? Which are the most important to the practice of baptism?

Where you are on the diagram influences what you think or believe about baptism. What source are you depending on?

Your pastor's role is to assure that you have an understanding of baptism from other sources.

**EXERCISE:** What words, questions or ideas do you have about baptism? ie. What is baptism to you?

Baptism is: "Initiation" into the Body of Christ - the beginning of Christian life.

To initiate means ... (other organizations initiate by ceremony where rules are set out.)

In the "Anglican" Church, three of the above are always consulted in any matter of the faith. They are: Scripture, Reason and Tradition. If we haven't already, we need to see baptism through these three.

## THE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH

Anglicans uphold the tradition of the teaching and practice of the "sacraments." There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage, Confirmation, Unction, Ordination, Absolution.

DEFINITION: "A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace ... (B.C.P. p. 550 The Catechism)

The word "sacrament" comes from the Latin word '*sacramentum*' meaning solemn oath or obligation.

SYMBOL - something that is in itself one thing but makes us think of something else. (eg. a cross)

SIGN - something that points us to something else (eg. road sign)

The outward sign of baptism points to incorporation into the Body of Christ (participation in Christ) and regeneration (becoming a new creation).

The sacrament of baptism signifies that we have been "saved" and have become God's own.

Tradition assumes the following about the baptized:

- belief in Jesus Christ (faith)
- willingness to participate in the Christian life (the Church)
- regular prayer and the seeking of God's will
- the support of the work of the church and the building of God's kingdom

### Why INFANT BAPTISM?

\* It is important for us to recognize that God's grace to us and his acceptance of us is by God's initiative, not ours. Our "response" to that grace and love is up to us, but God makes the first move by granting us (even before a time of understanding) the privilege of being one of his children and members of Christ's church.

It is only under special circumstances that we baptize infants. The faithful and active Christian family wishes sincerely that all its members be full members in Christ. The reality is that it is by example and teaching that we become Christian - this happens in the home (when we grow up "in" the faith)

THEREFORE promises must be made on behalf of one unable to profess the faith required for baptism.

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- Homework: 1) Read Introduction of Preparing for Baptism.  
2) Read handout pamphlet Holy Baptism.  
3) Be ready to ask some questions that you might have thus far.

*Materials:*  
*The Godparent - A Job Description*  
*Bishop's Directive 2.1*

## REASON

What does our diocese instruct on the practice of the sacrament of baptism?  
(Bishop's Directive 2.1)

What are the RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARISH?

- The parish will provide instruction and preparation near the time of baptism, so that parents and other sponsors can make a sober and informed decision and commitment in good faith, and be better equipped to fulfil their responsibilities.
- The parish will normally ensure that there is a parish sponsor for each child brought to baptism.
  - The parish will try to make every baptism an occasion of great celebration.
  - Since baptism is the entrance to communicant life, the parish will assist parents in teaching their child the meaning of the gospel sacraments of baptism and the eucharist.
  - The parish will continue to provide opportunities for Christian education and celebration through all the ages and stages of life.

What are the RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPONSORS?

The special responsibility that falls on you, the parents and sponsors, arises from the fact that you are making a life decision for another human being, without his or her consent. Such presumption is justified only in the following circumstances:

- Those who bring a child to be baptized will themselves be baptized people and able to profess the Christian faith. They will be prepared to affirm their allegiance to Christ and his Church and their rejection of all that is evil.
- Parents will make a solemn commitment to give their child a Christian upbringing within the family of Christ's Church. This includes helping the child to be regular in public worship and personal prayer -- not only by their teaching but especially by their example and their prayers.
- They will accept the responsibility of bringing their child to take his or her place at the Table of the Lord.
- They will be prepared to cooperate with the community of the Church as it attempts to fulfil its responsibilities of nurture and support.
- Godparents and sponsors will encourage the family in fulfilling these commitments, and undertake to pray regularly for the child. From all this it will be clear that the baptism of children is really only appropriate when at least one parent is regularly a part of the worshipping life of the Church.

THE "OTHER REASONS" FOR BAPTISM

- **To give thanks for my child's birth.**

Baptism is much more than this. There is a service of "Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child"; if thanksgiving is your real concern, then this is what you should ask for.

- **So she can have the same opportunities we had to decide about religion.**

Baptism presupposes a decision already! And unless you have chosen the way of Christ for yourself, you can hardly choose it for your child.

- **So that he can go to Sunday School.**

Baptism is not a condition for attending Sunday School. No child is ever turned away because he is not baptized.

- **To protect her from going to hell if she dies.**

Any god who condemned children simply because they were not baptized would not be the God of Jesus Christ!

- **So he can be married in the Church.**

Whether he wishes to marry as a Christian or not will be his own decision when the time comes.

- **To save her from embarrassment of being baptized when she is grown.**

Adult baptism is not only the original form of Christian baptism; it is a profoundly significant experience for a person who decides on her own to enter the Christian life -- something she should not be deprived of.

- **Because we believe in God.**

So do Jews and Muslims. Baptism is only for those who will follow Christ in the fellowship of his Church.

- **Because it is a tradition in our family.**

Some families have a tradition of baptism without any active commitment to Christ and his Church. Such a tradition is a betrayal of baptism.

- **To give her a name.**

She will be named when her birth is registered with the civil authorities. This is not what baptism is for.

- **His grandparents would be upset if he were not baptized.**

It is *you*, his parents, and not his grandparents, who must give him a Christian upbringing if he is baptized. The decision must be yours, no matter what others think or feel.

- **Because the rest of our children are baptized, and we can't leave this one out.**

If the rest of the family is already part of the worshipping congregation, then indeed you cannot "leave this one out." But if this is not the case, then they have all been "left out"; and there is every reason to avoid one more desecration of baptism.

- **To give him a good start.**

If you follow through on the implications of baptism -- your own as well as the child's -- you will indeed give him "a good start." However, the ceremony on its own, without the "follow-through", would only be a "false start."

If you are at a loss for good reasons:

- don't give up; go talk to your priest, deacon or other pastor;
- plan to attend Church and get to know people, and discover whether this is a community to which you could belong.

Find out the good reasons for baptizing your child, and then you can make up your mind if this is what you really want.

Why is "going to church" essential?

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Homework:

- 1) Talk about your reasons for requesting the baptism of your child.
- 2) What does your baptism mean to you? How successfully are you living out the promises of baptism?
- 3) Do you desire for yourself what you are asking for this child? Is it possible to commit someone else to more than you are committed to yourself?

*Materials:*  
*Book of Alternative Services 1985*  
*Bible*

## SCRIPTURE

What does the Bible have to say about baptism?

### THE BIG PICTURE

- most people are willing to concede that there does seem to be something amiss in the world we live in.
- people are also willing to acknowledge that there is something wrong with them (sin).
- what does the Bible say?
- God made a good creation which experienced "The Fall."
- spiritual powers of good and evil.
- sin and death have been destroyed by Jesus Christ by the Cross and Resurrection.
- new life by "living in the light" if we accept what Jesus did for us and for the world. We must be willing to hate evil (Satan) and love the good (God). The discipline of Christian life helps us to experience being set free from the powers contrary to God and his purpose for us.

### BAPTISM IS:

- **Participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection** (rebirth / Easter)  
Matthew 3:15; Mark 10:38-40,45; Romans 6:3-11; Ephesians 2:5-6; John 3:1-10
- **Conversion, Pardoning and Cleansing** (washing / Baptism of the Lord)  
Mark 1:4; Colossians 2:13,3:1; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11
- **The Gift of the Spirit** (empowerment / Pentecost)  
Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:10-11; Acts 2; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14
- **Incorporation into the Body of Christ** (common discipleship / All Saints')  
Ephesians 4:4-6; Hebrews 12:1-2 Colossians 1:11-14

Through the waters of baptism we become a child of God (a member of his Church) and commit to allowing his Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world; a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. We become workers in making real the Kingdom of God on earth.

Baptism is a sign of initiation into Christ's church. In Baptism we are "incorporated into the Body of Christ"; we are made members of the worldwide Christian Church, not of a particular denomination or local congregation. The baptismal service celebrates the loving initiative of God calling and claiming us, and the faithful response of the people both as individuals and as a community.

### SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

#### The Symbol of Water

Through the outward sign of water, God gives us the grace of new birth. The water of Baptism has many symbolic meanings. It symbolizes womb water and birth to new life. It symbolizes forgiveness and the washing away of all sin. Immersion symbolizes death to an old way of life and rising to a new life following in Christ's way. As the Hebrew people were saved and lead through the waters of the Red Sea, so is the new "Israel" and its people saved through Baptismal water.

Water is poured just before the Baptism to show it as running or living water. Water is essential for life. It is also symbolizes cleansing.

#### The White Robe

A change in clothing can be a symbol of important changes in our lives. Often candidates for Baptism wear special robes. The white robe symbolizes the putting on of the new life in Christ. It is the "white" of this baptismal clothing that is the origin of the name often given to the feast of Pentecost (Whitsunday ie. white-sunday)

#### The Giving of the Light

The Paschal (Easter) candle is burning during a Baptism, to link Baptism with resurrection. The newly baptized (or the sponsors on their behalf) often receive a lighted candle which symbolizes that there has been a passing from "darkness into light" and that now the baptized will shine with the light of Christ in the world - "let your light shine before others that they will see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

#### Oil

Oil, sometimes called "chrism", may be applied to the forehead of the newly baptized, with the sign of the cross. This marks the baptized as belonging to Christ. Scripture refers to oil being used for anointing. "Christ" means "anointed one". Our baptism links us to Christ. The oil anoints us to our Christian ministry.

#### The Font

The font or fountain holds the water for Baptism. Usually it is placed centrally for Baptism, though in some Christian churches it is near the door of the church to symbolize entry into the family of the church, and as a weekly reminder as one enters worship. The font should at all times occupy a prominent position in the place of worship, as a constant reminder of God's grace.

#### The Examination (B.A.S. p. 153-155)

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#### Homework:

- 1) Look up the passages of Scripture referred to above with which you are not familiar.
- 2) Review the promises you will make and the obligations of those promises.