

Baptism

Our Prayer Book describes baptism as “full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the church.” What does this mean?

Full Initiation: Through baptism, individuals become members of the Church — not just the Episcopal Church, but the universal Church extending throughout the world and over time to include Christians from every age.

By Water: Since the time of Jesus, Christians have used water as the sign of entry into Christian life. Water cleanses us from sin, from all that has marred our relationships with God, with others, and with creation. It plunges us into death, drowning our old life so that we can be raised to new life in Christ. From it we are born again, into a community where we are adopted daughters and sons of God. In the Episcopal Church, the candidate may be immersed or have water poured over him or her, while the minister proclaims, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

By the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is God’s active presence in the world, the power that enables our rebirth. The Spirit is active in the baptismal waters, in the laying on of hands that follows, and in the community gathered to celebrate the baptism.

Christ’s Body the Church: The Church is not a human institution or club, but a living body, the community of those who believe in and proclaim Jesus.

When are Baptisms done?

In keeping with the rubrics of our Prayer Book, Baptisms are done with the context of the main Sunday Eucharist. (BCP 298). The Prayer Book (BCP 312) also directs us that sacrament of Baptism be reserved for the following days: The Baptism of our Lord (January 10, 2016), Easter Day (March 27, 2016), Pentecost (May 15, 2016), All Saints Day (November 6, 2016). The rector has the discretion to choose another date in extenuating circumstances.

Does the Baptism have to be on a Sunday morning in the context of community worship?

Since Baptism is the rite of Christian initiation, it is a celebration of the church in which the newly baptized is warmly welcomes in the Christian Community. All baptisms take place in the presence of the congregation during corporate worship unless performed in situations of emergency.

Who can be baptized at St. John’s?

One does not have to be a member of St. John's to be baptized at St. John's. The expectation of the clergy is that before a Baptism one will be attending church regularly and attend the Baptismal preparation classes. In our outline of Faith or Catechism, We are reminded in our Book of Common Prayer that *The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spreading of the kingdom of God.* (BCP 856). The vows made at Baptism emphasize this continued commitment to a faith community. The Baptism of children whose parents live outside of this parish may only be scheduled at St. John's with the assurance that the promises and vows of Baptism will be fulfilled through active membership in another parish community. The Rector is happy to assist families who have some historic ties to St. John's and who now live in other communities to locate and to join their Episcopal Church.

Who should the Sponsors/Godparents be?

You should spend considerable time in selecting them. Because of the vows made at Baptism on the behalf of the children, sponsors or godparents should also be people who are actively living out their faith in prayer, church attendance and spreading the Gospel of Jesus. In an infant baptism, there are usually 2 or 3 Godparents. With adult baptism, it is usually only 1 or 2 sponsor.

Do I need to be baptized again?

If you have been baptized in another Christian denomination you do not need to be baptized. If you feel the need to reaffirm your faith, there are opportunities to do that in the sacramental rite of confirmation.