

Preparation for Baptism for Parents and Godparents

1. Opening Prayer

BCP pg. 819 (#15, For those about to be Baptized), pg. 829 (#46, For the Care of Children), pg. 841 (#10, For the Gift of a Child).

2. Getting to know each other (do by family group)

Name of baptismal candidate, your relationship to him/her, why you said “yes” when parents asked you to be a godparent.

We usually choose names for our children to honor someone in our family or because we like a particular name or even for a person we don’t know but admire. Parents tend to give considerable thought to the naming of their children because they know at some basic level that the name is an extension of a child’s personhood. When the church joins forces with the nuclear family in naming the new Christian, it is saluting that person’s individuality at the moment of his or her second birth.

Exercise: *“I have called you by Name, you are mine”* (Isaiah 43:1c).
How did you get your name - Is there a story or special significance attached to your name?

How did you choose your child’s (children’s) name(s) – Is there a story of any special significance attached to those names?

“N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever” (BCP: 308).

3. Theology of Baptism

Sin or the conviction of sin is presupposed in baptism. The outward sign of baptism is cleaning or bathing the candidate with water. In its inward content, Christian baptism includes the baptism of John as a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Repentance is to turn away from sin and a turning towards Christ. It is also a turning with Christ or in Christ. In union with Christ we turn in the direction which He chose in His own baptism – doing the will of God. For us this means that the baptized person is incorporated into Christ, made a member of the body of Christ, lifted out of the fallen society into which he or she was born, and given a new start in the new humanity.

This sharing in Christ’s own baptism, being buried and rising with Him, is also a kind of ordination for us, a call to lay ministry, to a share in the general priesthood of the church. It is also a sharing in the Holy Spirit who rested in fullness upon Jesus (dove).

Conviction of sin, repentance, awareness of forgiveness, being embraced in the new community, being called to service or ministry, receiving the Holy Spirit – these are the gift that is held out in baptism.

(Macquarrie, pgs. 60, 68-69)

a. Scriptural References to Baptism (what is baptism, what does it do?)

Baptism transforms us:

“It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Baptism frees us from sin through our incorporation into the death and resurrection of Jesus:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

Baptism is an expression of our unity in Christ:

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Ephesians 4:4-5).

Baptism expresses the fundamental equality of all:

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith” (Galatians 3:26).

b. Anglican Sacraments

What are the sacraments?

The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.

What is Grace?

Grace is God’s favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills.

What are the two great sacraments of the Gospel?

The two great sacraments given by Christ to His Church are Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

What is Holy Baptism?

Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as His children and makes us members of Christ’s Body.

What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?

The outward and visible sign in Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

What is the inward and spiritual grace in Baptism?

The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with Christ in His death and resurrection, birth into God’s family the Church, forgiveness of sins, and new life in the Holy Spirit.

(Book of Common Prayer, pgs. 857-58)

- c. You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. What does that mean to you?
- d. Relation to Confirmation (BCP pg. 412)

4. **Baptismal Covenant** (BCP pgs. 304-05)

5. Promises - those you will make them for yourself (BCP: top of pg. 302) and those you will make on behalf of the child you are presenting (6 questions on pgs. 302-03).

6. **Duties of Godparents**

When we begin our journey into Christian parenting and god-parenting, we must first look at the Christians we have become and how that happened. We were molded by our upbringing, including all the positive influences as well as the negative ones. In this way our family relationships affected our identities. "Almost all of us who claim a living faith came to it through being reared in the church . . . Even those who had no early associations with a congregation . . . nevertheless received the Gospel through the community" (Stookey, pg. 33).

Exercise: What is the history of your Christian upbringing?
 How has it affected your beliefs and the Christian you are today?
 How do you plan to use that experience in helping to raise the
 child you are sponsoring?

Godparents are "witnesses to the rite of baptism who make the baptismal promises in the name of the child and assume responsibility for insuring that the child is brought up in the faith of the church" (Wall, pg. 58).

After baptism, "the parents, godparents and congregation have the responsibility of carrying out the child's formation in salvation history, prayer, worship, and social ministry. Childhood and adolescence will be a time of formation and exploration of the mysteries of the faith, moving towards the goal of reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant at a mature age [Confirmation]" (Book of Occasional Services, pg. 161).

How can you reinforce your relationship as **godparent**?

- Write in your calendar your godchild's baptismal date, birthday, Easter and Christmas – and honor those days with a special card, telephone call, etc.
- Be aware of the dates for your godchild's First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage – those sacramental occasions in his/her life – and acknowledge them (hopefully with your presence).
- Pray for your godchild at least on a weekly if not daily basis.

- Be on the look-out for age-appropriate gifts for your godchild that reinforce the Christian journey – cradle cross, soft Nativity set s/he can play with, Bible, Prayer Book, Bible story book, etc.
- Periodically write your godchild a letter telling him/her what you were thinking about theologically at the same age – share your own spiritual journey in an age-appropriate way.

7. Practical Matters

Who? How many? Time for photographs?

8. Practice Liturgy in Church

Macquarrie, John, A Guide to the Sacraments. New York: Continuum, 1998.

Stookey, Laurence Hull, Baptism, Christ's Act in the Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982.

Wall, John N., A Dictionary for Episcopalians. Cambridge/Boston: Cowley Publications, 2000.