

SEEKING BAPTISM

The Rite of Baptism is offered to those seeking to profess the Christian Faith within the context of the fellowship of the Church.

In the Anglican Tradition, baptism is an indelible sacrament and can be received only once. At baptism, two things take place. First of all, a person is brought into the fellowship of the Church and into the sphere of influence of God's people. Second, God acts in baptism to open to each person the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the case of children, the influence of the community in witness and the working of the Holy Spirit in their life is intended to bring them to a time in their life when they publicly claim for themselves the faith that their sponsors and parents claimed for them and ask God for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This time has traditionally been at Confirmation, but asking for and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands can take place at any time in a person's life.

Because of this The Community takes Baptism very seriously and requires that those who seek this sacrament understand the promises and vows that are to be made before God either for themselves or on behalf of the child they bring to baptism.

Adult Baptism

Adult baptism is the norm within the Christian understanding. Those seeking baptism should already be members of a worshipping community or prepared to become members taking an active role in the life of the Church, demonstrating this to be a way of life to which they are called.

Baptism should not take place outside of a community context, for it is not a "personal rite", but a rite of the community which brings people into fellowship with others under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

A lengthy Baptismal preparation takes place before adult baptism. It may take one of a number of forms and can be developed in consultation with the pastor and other program leaders. Some of the programs that provide input to this preparation are "Journey in Faith" and "Living the Questions", although they are not the only components to preparing for baptism. An ongoing dialogue with the pastor is an essential part of this preparation.

Adult Baptisms ideally take place during the Easter Vigil, and as a result the preparation period runs from Advent Sunday to Holy Week.

Individuals should be prepared to commit themselves to the time required during this period.

Infant Baptism and the Baptism of Older Children

It is a biblical fact that in the apostolic time, whole families were baptised at the same time and often based on the faith of one member of the household. Some of the members of these households may have been infants or children and the faith witness of their parents and other family members was important to their growth in faith.

Infants and children today receive the sacrament of Baptism usually at the request of their parents who make the promises and vows that they themselves accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour and will witness this to their child. They also vow to make sure that the child is raised in the faith, brought to worship, taught to pray and involved in the life of the church.

At a later point in the child's life when s/he has come to be able to make an adult decision, and in response to the Spirit's call, individuals are urged to make a public profession of faith and claim the promises of baptism for him/herself, seeking an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (baptism of the Holy Spirit) through prayer and the laying on of hands (at Confirmation or some other time).

The Community expects that these promises will be kept and stands not only as a witness, but as a support for parents and sponsors in fulfilling their commitment to the newly baptized. The role of the sponsor is in fact to support the parents and see that the promises are kept.

Parents and Sponsors are expected to enter into appropriate preparation for the baptism and must demonstrate an understanding of the commitment that they are making. This preparation will vary from family to family depending on a number of factors. Regular members of the community, who have taken the preparation program before and who are active members of the community, and seeking baptism for a second or third child will be asked to take a short "refresher" course. Those coming for the baptism of their first child will be expected to take a program developed in consultation with the pastor and in keeping with their needs. Some of the programs that provide input to this preparation are "Journey in Faith" and "Living the Questions".

Coming "Home" for Baptism

From time to time people seek baptism who are not currently members of the Community at Bishop Cronyn. This happens because the grandparents are still members of the parish, or for some other pastoral reason.

In these cases it must be remembered that baptism does not take place outside the context of the "community of faith" and as such we here at Bishop Cronyn need to know that the support and nurture of the Church is available to those who make such requests.

When such a request is made the parents (or individual) is asked to speak to the pastor of the church where they are currently worshipping. They should request that s/he undertake the preparation course as if the baptism were going to take place there. Once completed, their pastor should forward a letter supporting the baptism, indicating that preparation has taken place and asking that the community here at St. Mary the Virgin celebrate the baptism on their behalf.