

HOLY BAPTISM

Baptism is the primary rite of Christian initiation. It is at the command of Christ that we baptise. The theology of baptism is primarily associated with immersion into the dying and rising of Jesus and thus becoming heirs of the new life that God gives us in Jesus.

Who should be baptised: It has long been the tradition of our Church that we baptise adults children and infants. A priest licensed in this Diocese may not refuse or discourage infant baptism.

Preparation: It is essential that candidates for baptism be appropriately prepared. In the case of those old enough to answer for themselves the preparation should be designed in such a way that it feeds the candidate's journey of discovery.

The parents and/or sponsors of infants should be encouraged to share faith with them. There has been a growing tendency to put parents through a course that has all the hallmarks of a mini examination in the Christian Faith. This has its place, it is far more important however to develop a preparation process which majors on a relationship between the family of the infant and the community of faith. I believe the atmosphere created for the preparation process should be more that of the hospitality of meal than the study of a class room. Above all we must avoid the impression that we are bartering a deal. Baptism is not a reward to be offered when certain hurdles have been jumped. It is an expression of the reckless generosity of God who in Jesus described the Kingdom of God as a feast to which all were invited. May all the people who approach you, part from their contact overwhelmed by love and not judgement.

The Administration of the Sacrament: It has been the custom of our Church for baptism to occur in Public Worship. I encourage this to continue. However it is not always appropriate for **infant** baptism to occur in this setting. You can end up with the worst of both worlds, i.e. a congregation that is sick of regular baptisms at their main service, and a group of people who are left bewildered by worship they did not understand.

When appropriate I encourage you to conduct infant baptism on Sunday but outside main service times. Members of the congregation should be encouraged to be present. The service should be as inclusive of the family(ies) as possible.

A number of people now ask for full immersion. This should be accommodated if possible. There is a growing tendency for infants to be baptised in a font large enough for them to be bathed in. The whole family participate in the drying and clothing. The signing of the cross is often done by everyone.