

## Baptism & Confirmation

### Information Sheet

**What is baptism?** Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Body of Christ. It is the tangible act of obedience to Jesus who called His disciples to be baptized *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism is rebirth into the household of God, entrance into the New Creation. It is the movement from “bios” (merely biological) life to “zoe” (God’s) life. It is being joined to Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6)... having our individual life mysteriously incorporated into His corporate bodily life.

Baptism for adults **follows** the emergence of faith in Christ and requires personal commitment to the Lordship of Jesus and the fruit of a life of repentance and faithfulness. Sponsors / godparents vouch for the candidate’s faith and vow to support and pray for their maturity in Christ.

Baptism for children or babies **prefigures** their personal faith and requires the commitment of parents or guardians and godparents / sponsors who vow to nurture the child’s personal faith from **within** the Body of Christ. Similar to circumcision for Biblical Judaism (on the 8<sup>th</sup> day), Christian identity is bestowed on the child, not by natural birth or by simply living in a Christian home, but by the child’s rebirth into Christ via baptism. It’s up to the child when he/she grows up into adulthood to nurture this identity into maturity through confirmation and the weekly renewal of the baptismal vow in receiving the Eucharist.

**Preparation:** Formation | Catechesis is an essential part of baptism. For adults, catechism and spiritual formation should continue in preparation for baptism until the candidate can confidently proclaim that *Jesus is Lord*, embody this commitment in practice (orthopraxy), and articulate the essentials of the Christian faith (orthodoxy). Ongoing maturity of these basic foundational pieces will continue for the rest of the believer’s life (supported by “Mystagogy” – ongoing catechesis and formation for the baptized).

For children, the parents are the primary catechists of their children. Thus, the formation of the child is the primary responsibility of the parents who must be thoroughly equipped to shape the faith of the child. For this reason, we require all parents of children, at a minimum, to commit to our “Christian Foundations” catechesis module (offered 6 Sundays during Lent or by special arrangement) before we baptize their child(ren). Parents should be baptized (and hopefully confirmed), committed Christians who are willing to promise to raise their child as a Christian and bring their child to worship and Formation | Catechesis.

#### Adult Baptismal Preparation Process

- 1) Attend an information meeting and/or have an exploratory conversation with a pastor.
- 2) Formally request to be admitted as a “catechumen” in preparation for baptism (conversation with a pastor). – You will be formally presented to the congregation as a “catechumen” at a worship service. Continue attending Formation | Catechesis (if not already doing so), ask questions, practice a life of faith, attend worship faithfully.
- 3) Choose sponsors | godparents (to be decided in conversation with clergy). These are people who will vouch for your faith/life and stand in support of your baptismal commitment for the rest of their lives.
- 4) Continue in conversation with the pastor in order to determine appropriateness, timing, and preparation needed for baptism. Set the date for baptism; finalize details for the actual day.
- 5) Invite lots of friends and family, plan a celebration, fast & pray, get baptized in a public worship service where you will also receive Holy Communion for the first time!
- 6) Continue in mystagogy (Formation | Catechesis), regular worship & Holy Communion, mentorship, etc.
- 7) Plan to be confirmed when the Bishop is in town doing confirmations. Baptism and confirmation belong together as part of a theological whole (see below about confirmation).

**Child Baptismal Process** – similar to the above with parents as substitutes for conversations and preparation. Confirmation should wait until the child is old enough to make this choice on his/her own.

**What is Confirmation?** Confirmation is a sacrament in which the Bishop formally acknowledges your baptism and tangibly receives you into the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church by anointing and the laying on of hands. Confirmation is simultaneously a public reaffirmation of one's baptism, a commissioning for ministry as the priestly people of God, and the opportunity to receive the full measure of the Holy Spirit for life and ministry from a person who is in direct, historic, embodied succession to the Apostles of Jesus. Confirmation is evident in Scripture: the Apostles prayed for, and laid their hands on those who had already been baptized (2 Timothy 1:6-7; Acts 8:14-17; 19:6).

The meaning of confirmation is closely connected to the ministry and role of the bishop. Many people fail to understand the significance and role of the bishop. Historically in the Great Tradition, it is only the bishop who can celebrate and/or authorize the Eucharist to be celebrated by properly ordained presbyters (priests) on his behalf. All celebrations of the Eucharist are extensions of the bishop's authority. Furthermore, he is the historical embodiment of Christ's authority given to the Apostles (John 20:19-23) who through his role brings unity to a geographical region under his authority (all the churches in his diocese) and through his presence in the college of bishops brings catholicity to the local church. Only the bishop can ordain (deacons and priests). A bishop can only be ordained a bishop in the presence of at least two other bishops and must be received into the college of bishops. He is the instrument of unity and the protector of theological orthodoxy.

In individualistic 21<sup>st</sup> century America, in the midst of a fragmented Christian landscape, we may have a hard time swallowing this, but the truth is that nobody actually has the right to call himself/herself a Christian on his/her own authority. The authority to grant this title belongs to the Church. You could imagine that it was historically important to protect who could use the term "Christian" – similar to companies who want to protect their public reputation with a registered trademark.

Confirmation is the formal recognition by the bishop (as representative of the *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church*) acknowledging that a person is, in fact, a Christian as a result of his/her baptism and the commendation of their pastor who can vouch for his/her faith and lifestyle. This is sealed in a special public worship service including laying on of hands and anointing with oil. "Christ" is the Greek word for "anointed." To anoint in this way is to say you are part of the "anointed ones" (Christians) ... a little Christ.

In the Anglican Church in North America, confirmation is the means of being recognized as a member of the ACNA / Global Anglican Communion. It's not the same as local parish membership, which is often a separate additional process. Confirmation is especially important for anyone who is in congregational leadership (ministry director role, congregational council, etc.), considering candidacy for ordination, and/or serving any diocesan role representing the congregation at diocesan or provincial meetings.

#### **Process for confirmation:**

- 1) Attend the Formation | Catechesis module: Christian Foundations
- 2) Have a conversation with a pastor about your interest in being confirmed
  - a. Baptized? Understand what you're asking for?
  - b. Discern appropriate sponsors (if you do not already have godparents / baptismal sponsors) who can vouch for your life and present you to the bishop
  - c. Determine that your life conforms to the faith / practice of orthodox Christianity
- 3) Attend worship regularly with a commitment to continue growing in faith (mystagogy)
- 4) Be committed to serve in ministry
- 5) Prepare with others who will be confirmed for actual liturgical service when the bishop will be present

#### **Upcoming opportunities for Baptism / Confirmation**

- Baptism: Great Easter Vigil (April 15); Pentecost (June 4)
- Confirmation: Saturday, June 3 (with our local deanery)