

CHAPTER 16

Celebrating Baptism at a Eucharist

Baptism is now normally administered in the context of the principal Sunday Eucharist. The celebration of baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil (and also other Sundays of the Easter Season), the Day of Pentecost, All Saints' Day (November 1 or the first Sunday in November), on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Sunday between 7 and 13 January), and when the bishop is present. Many recommend that, as far as possible, baptisms be reserved for these occasions. If for pastoral reasons baptism is celebrated between Pentecost and All Saints', the Transfiguration of the Beloved Son (August 6 - or the Sunday following) could also be a suitable festival.

The Liturgical Colour for baptism is the colour of the day.

The Paschal Candle is lit and stands by the font except during the Easter Season when it is burning in the sanctuary or near the lectern.

An Order for baptism

The Gathering of the Community

The Proclamation

God's Call (page 383)

The Presentation for Baptism (pages 384-385)

The Baptism (pages 385-387)

The Affirmation (pages 387-389)

The Celebration of Faith (page 394)

The Ministry of the Sacrament

1. The Gathering of the Community

The objective of the Gathering of the Community is the same as at every

Eucharist: to gather those assembled into a community and prepare them to hear what the Spirit is saying in the Proclamation. Particularly on this occasion the structure needs to be kept very simple. The presider greets the congregation, a hymn may be sung and the Collect of the Day is prayed.

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost this greeting is appropriate:

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

This is the day which the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Renunciation of evil occurs in the liturgy of baptism, hence using a confession and absolution during the Gathering is not usually appropriate. It can confuse the reconciliation that is effected through baptism.

2. The Proclamation

This is the same as at every Eucharist. When there is a baptism, the Collect, readings, and Variation to the Great Thanksgiving are normally those proper to the day. If the Collect or a reading is inappropriate, alternatives are provided on pages 398-399. In such a case the Variation to the Great Thanksgiving for Easter (pages 432, 441, 475, 492) or Pentecost (pages 433, 441, 475, 493) and/or the Addition to the Great Thanksgiving for Holy Baptism (page 435) may be used.

The rubrics on page 383 seem to give the impression that even at a Eucharist the Liturgy of Baptism could be placed immediately after the New Testament Lesson. This, however, would interrupt the flow of the service. The Prayer Book instruction applies to baptism celebrated in a service other than a Eucharist. It was not anticipated that baptism would be inserted into the middle of the Proclamation.

3. God's Call and The Presentation for Baptism

In which location of the church the Call and Presentation occur will depend on the architecture of the building. If the font is at the back of the church the Call and Presentation might be at the sanctuary (or chancel) steps. In this case sponsors, candidates, parents, godparents, and the presider might move to the font for the Baptism in a simple procession. During this some verses of a baptismal hymn may be sung. During the Easter Season, when the Paschal Candle would normally be burning in its stand in the sanctuary or near the lectern, this procession to the font may be led by someone carrying the Paschal Candle.

For the Call and Presentation the congregation could remain seated.

4. The Baptism

Others, particularly children, might be invited to gather around the font. If baptism is by immersion the font will already be filled. Otherwise, where practicable, water is poured into the font immediately before the thanksgiving prayer.

The structure of the thanksgiving over the water is similar to the Great Thanksgiving and the presider uses gestures in a similar manner. The hands are extended in greeting for example, at "Praise God who made heaven and earth," raised for the thanksgiving parts of the prayer, and may be extended over the water for "Through your Holy Spirit ..." Similarly, just as for the Great Thanksgiving, the congregation appropriately stands for this prayer of thanksgiving.

Baptism is by "immersion in the water, or by pouring water" (page 386) emphasising that a significant amount of water is to be used, enough so that the congregation can see and hear it.

At this point everyone will want to be watching the baptism not their Prayer Books. The congregation can proclaim "Amen" after the baptism and then the presider can use the following or similar words to cue the welcome:

Let us welcome this new Christian.
**God receives you by baptism
into the Church....** (page 386).

The presider makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each of the baptised, using oil if desired (page 382). This use of chrism restores one of the most ancient baptismal practices. It echoes the scriptural anointing of kings (1 Samuel 16:13), our royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), and the seal of the saints (Revelation 7). Christ is the anointed one into whom we are baptised. The association of oil with the Holy Spirit proclaims that baptism is the new birth by water and the Spirit (John 3:5). This oil is traditionally blessed by the bishop on Maundy Thursday (page 382).

A representative of the congregation may present a candle to each of the newly baptised with the words "Walk in the faith of Christ crucified and risen. Shine with the light of Christ" (page 387). This candle is usually lit from the Paschal Candle.

As well as the anointing and presentation of the candle there may be other post-baptismal practices which further explain what has occurred in baptism: robing in an alb or christening gown, presentation of a Prayer Book (or Children's Communion Book) as a sign that baptism is admission to communion, presentation of the certificate of baptism (the liturgy would suggest these certificates need to be the same for adults and infants).

These post-baptismal practices can occur at the font, with the anointing and presentation of the candle proceeding immediately after each baptism. Alternatively the baptism party might return to the front and the newly baptised can all be anointed, then all have a candle presented, and so on. This will depend upon local architecture and the need to have as much as possible occur in the full sight of the congregation.

Some more verses of the same hymn used to move to the font can be used during the return to the front. Care needs to be taken that such a division does not harm the integrity of the hymn, and more importantly that it does not conflict with what is happening in the service at this point. Using an appropriate chant from Taizé at these points would also be suitable.

If it is customary to sprinkle the congregation at baptisms, water may be taken from the font and the presider sprinkles the people with a sprig of evergreen as the procession returns to the front after the Baptism and before the Affirmation.

5. The Affirmation and The Celebration of faith

All are instructed to stand (page 387). As well as the newly baptised, parents and godparents, all the baptised are invited to renew renunciation of evil, commitment to Christ, and to celebrate the faith into which we are baptised. The Apostle's Creed, first composed for this purpose, symbolises this faith (page 394).

6. The Ministry of the Sacrament

The service continues naturally with the Peace. The Nicene Creed is not used at this service, and the Prayers of the People may be omitted. With the newly baptised, parents, sponsors, and godparents still at the front of the church, the presider spreads wide the hands in greeting and says, "The peace of Christ be always with you." After the response, people exchange a sign of peace and those up front return to their places. The rubric to return to their places earlier (page 389) is more appropriate when the service includes Confirmation.

The service continues with the Preparation of the Gifts.

The baptism candle

The candle presented at baptism can be an important part of being reminded of one's baptism. People can be encouraged to light these on the anniversary of the baptism, on birthdays, and on the great baptismal festivals of Easter, Pentecost, All Saints', and the Baptism of the Lord. The candle can be simply inscribed including the name of the one baptised and the date of the baptism. The representative of the congregation who presents the candle can become another link in sharing with the baptised our Christian life and faith. As well as certificates

for the baptised and for godparents and sponsors a certificate and explanation might be given to the person who presents the candle. The following is an example of such a certificate for the case of the baptism of an infant:

_____ was baptised at

_____ on _____

_____ represented the congregation and gave a lighted candle with the words:

**Walk in the faith of Christ
crucified and risen.
Shine with the light of Christ.**

_____ was born on _____
to _____

_____ address: _____

_____ Phone: _____

At baptism parents and godparents make promises. The community of faith, the congregation, also makes promises to share our delight in prayer, our love for the word of God, our desire to follow the way of Christ, and food for the journey.

Our parish tries to fulfil this promise in many ways: through baptism preparation, through visits by the parish priest and by parishioners, and through our worship.

The baptism candle helps to fulfil this promise. By lighting it on birthdays, on Christian feast days, and on the anniversary of baptism, it reminds the child "I have been baptised."

You are not a godparent, and you have not made the promises of a godparent. But you gave the candle, and you can be another part of sharing our faith with the child we have baptised.

Giving the candle, and keeping an occasional contact is another part of showing that we care about children in our parish. We care about families and we care about baptism.

How you make this contact is up to you:

* You could ring the family on the anniversary of the baptism (and possibly also on the child's birthday).

* You could visit before or after the baptism.

God bless you in your ministry.

Some communities may need to add - Note: The one who gives the candle represents the congregation, not the Anglican Church, and therefore those of other denominations are welcome to present the candle.

Some Questions

Review the normal practice within your congregation related to baptisms.

How does this compare with the description offered here?

In the light of your own particular context are there changes that would be helpful and what beliefs would such changes in practice reflect.