

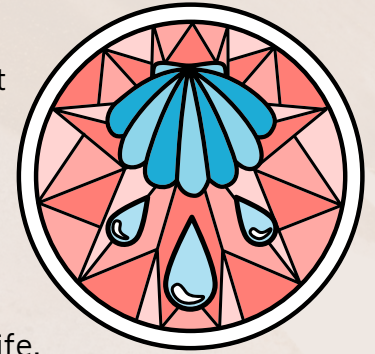
# Baptism

## CHRISTIAN FAITH

Baptism is the sacrament which marks the beginning of our Christian life.

At a baptism service in the Episcopal Church, the priest begins by telling us that baptism means:

- being washed;
- 'dying' and 'rising';
- being clothed with Christ;
- receiving a new dignity.



All of these are important parts of what it means to begin to live the Christian life.

**Being washed** Forgiveness of sins was won for us by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. God offers us this forgiveness at our baptism. In the case of adults baptism washes away the burden of past sin and guilt, and gives a new start. In the case of children baptism begins a new relationship with God within his Church where they will know forgiveness throughout their lives.

**'Dying' and 'rising'** At baptism, we die to sin so that we may live Christ's risen life. Adults – or godparents and parents on behalf of children for whom they're acting – are asked if they will turn away from whatever separates them from God and other people, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. This is not just a once and for all thing, because throughout our lives we need to make new starts, to renew what happened at our baptism. One of the wonderful things about God is that he allows us to do this.

**Being clothed with Christ** To be 'clothed with someone' is an expression going back to biblical times. It means to take on someone's character and principles, and to live like them. So when we say that God 'clothes us with Christ', it means that, through the Holy Spirit, God gives us the gifts that are Christ's so that we can begin to live like Jesus.

*'Baptism is about making a start.'*

**A new dignity** In baptism, we are 'born again' of water and the Holy Spirit to become Jesus' adopted brothers and sisters. This is an amazing gift, since it means becoming part of God's 'family life'. It also means that we become the brothers and sisters of all the other people who have been baptized and are members of the Church. All this gives us a new dignity.

**Who can be baptized?** Anyone can. If you want your baby or child to make a start on the Christian path, then baptism is the way for them to do it. Or if you place your faith in Jesus and want to accept God's offer to forgive your sins and to strengthen you to live the Christian life, then baptism is right for you, too. Since baptism is the beginning of the Christian journey, you can only be baptized once in your life. If you have already been baptized and feel you want to make a renewed commitment to living the life of Christ, it is possible to renew your baptismal vows. Or if you are not already confirmed, that may be the next step for you to take.

**Do I need to have been coming regularly to Church in order to be baptized?** No. Baptism is about making a start. So the important thing is what you intend to do in the future. Is baptism right for me, or for my child? The most important question is whether you are ready to place your faith in Jesus and to make a new start in your life with Jesus and his Church – or whether you are ready to help your child to make that new start.

**Further Reading:** John 3:3-5 | Acts 2:37-42 | Romans 6:1-5 | 1 Corinthians 12:12-18 | Galatians 3:27-28