

Holy Baptism in the Spanish Episcopal Church

The Spanish Episcopal Church baptizes both infants and adults to receive them into the family of God.

What is baptism?

Baptism (also called christening) is the sign of new life in Christ and unites Christ with his people. The Anglican Church believes baptism is the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he had risen from the dead, he commanded his followers to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is a community event, welcoming new members of Christ's flock and providing an opportunity for all the baptised to renew their vows. The baptism is simply the beginning of our life of faith, we join God's family.

The word 'baptism' means to "*plunge*" or "*immerse*". Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan by John. In 'drowning' in the water of baptism, we die to sin and are raised to new life, united to Christ's dying and rising. Water is a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Holy Spirit. In baptism, the promises of God are visibly signed and sealed for us. We are joined to Christ, and made members of his body, the Church universal ('catholic').

When we become baptized we make a commitment to follow Jesus Christ. We let go of our old ways of seeing others and ourselves. We learn to see one another through the eyes of Christ. We make a conscious decision to respect others and ourselves, to grow in our ability to live in harmony with others, and to forgive. We have a responsibility to resist evil in our own lives and to work to transform our society into a caring family centred on Christ's passionate love for the world.

What is infant baptism?

In the Anglican Church, children may be baptized with parents and sponsors making these commitments for them. The parents and sponsors and the parish community also commit on their own to bring these children up in the church to understand God's purpose for the world.

If parents are not ready to make baptismal promises or wish to defer baptism for a while, the church offers a service of thanksgiving for the gift of a child. In this service the family gives thanks for the birth and prays for God's help in the child's care and nurture.

Who may be baptized?

Any adult who believes God is calling her or him into the Christian way of life is invited to be baptized. Any baptized adult may present a child for baptism. Usually the person bringing the child forward is a baptized parent.

Who are sponsors?

Sponsors are baptized adult members of a Christian community. They are witnesses to the baptism and accept responsibility for supporting the person's spiritual development (their growth in Christ).

Both children and adults have sponsors. Traditionally, children have had three sponsors (often called godparents) – two relatives or family friends of the child's own sex, and one of the opposite sex. Today however parents are often the sponsors of their children. When a child cannot answer for themselves, the sponsors make the promises on their behalf. In due time, they should make their own response to God and be prepared for confirmation.

Is there a fee for baptism?

There is no fee. Once a person becomes a member of the Spanish Episcopal Church, that person supports a church with their time, talent, and treasures (financial resources).

What is the service of baptism in the Spanish Episcopal Church?

The service includes the reading of scripture and preaching of a sermon, the presentation of the candidates, and the affirmation of beliefs by the candidates, or in the case of children, their parents, and sponsors. The sign of the cross is then traced with a special oil on the candidate's forehead to mark that they belong to Christ.

Baptism can be in the form of immersion, or by the pouring of water on the head of the candidate for baptism. The priest or deacon says, "*(N.,) I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*" The candidate is given a candle to represent the light of Christ and is received into the church community. Normally the service continues with the celebration of Holy Communion (the Eucharist).

What if I wish to become an Anglican but am already baptized?

Baptism in any Christian church or denomination in the name of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is accepted by the Spanish Episcopal Church. Anglicans do not re-baptize. Any baptized person may become a member of our church by regularly attending an Anglican parish and contributing to its life and ministry.