

## **Holy Baptism : Pastoral Introduction**

*This may be read by those present before the service begins.*

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved, particularly the candidates but also parents, godparents and sponsors, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith. The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising support and prayer for the future. Hearing and doing these things provides an opportunity to remember our own baptism and reflect on the progress made on that journey, which is now to be shared with this new member of the Church.

The service paints many vivid pictures of what happens on the Christian way. There is the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Our 'drowning' in the water of baptism, where we believe we die to sin and are raised to new life, unites us to Christ's dying and rising, a picture that can be brought home vividly by the way the baptism is administered. Water is also a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Spirit, as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:5). And as a sign of that new life, there may be a lighted candle, a picture of the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil. Everyone who is baptized walks in that light for the rest of their lives.

As you pray for the candidates, picture them with yourself and the whole Church throughout the ages, journeying into the fullness of God's love.

*Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'*

*John 10.10*

## **Prayers of Thanksgiving** *for personal use before or after the service*

Heavenly Father,  
by the power of your Holy Spirit  
you give to your faithful people  
new life in the water of baptism.  
Guide and strengthen us by that same Spirit,  
that we who are born again  
may serve you in faith and love,  
and grow into the full stature of your Son Jesus Christ;  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*from 'Common Worship'*

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we thank you for all the benefits you have won for us,  
for all the pain and insults you have borne for us.  
Most merciful redeemer,  
friend and brother,  
may we know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly,  
day by day. Amen.

*attributed to St Richard of Chichester (circa 1197–1253)*

Eternal God,  
our beginning and our end,  
preserve in your people the new life of baptism;  
as Christ receives us on earth,  
so may he guide us through the trials of this world,  
and enfold us in the joy of heaven,  
where you live and reign,  
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

*from 'Common Worship'*