

# Celebrations of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism

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at the Chapel of the Resurrection  
Valparaiso University

## **Why do Christians baptize?**

Jesus commands his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19). This is not a polite suggestion: it is a command from Jesus which he gives as his "last words" before his ascension into heaven.

## **What is baptism?**

"Baptism is water used according to God's command and connected with God's Word. Baptism brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the Word and promise of God declare." In baptism, we are crucified with Christ, buried in the water that we might be raised with Christ to live a new life – now and forever.

## **How did the first Christians baptize in response to this command of Jesus?**

The Book of Acts tells nine stories of baptism as practiced by the early Christian church:

- 2:14-42 3,000 people in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost
- 8:12-13 Simon and the men and women of Samaria
- 8:35-40 Ethiopian eunuch
- 9:1-19 Saul (Paul)
- 10:44-48 Gentiles in Caesarea
- 16:11-15 Lydia and her household
- 16:31-34 Jailer at Philippi and his entire family
- 18:5-11 Crispus, all his household, many of the Corinthians
- 19:1-10 Some disciples in Ephesus
- 22:6-16 Paul's conversion / baptism story retold

## **So what can I learn about baptism from the Book of Acts?**

One very important thing to learn from the Book of Acts is that the early Christians baptized entire households -- including women and Gentiles (people who were often overlooked by the religious leaders of Jesus' day). The Book of Acts (and the entire Bible for that matter) offers no

age, gender, or ethnic restrictions for those who are baptized. (See Galatians 3:27-28). Baptism is a gift from God offered to all through faith.

### **Is that why Lutherans and many other Christian denominations practice infant baptism?**

Yes, and there are other reasons too: Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Matthew 19:14). In the Bible - time and time again – a divine-human relationship is initiated by God. God chooses us first and invites us into faithful response.

### **Isn't faith a pre-requisite for baptism? How can an infant have faith?**

In the Book of Acts, adults are baptized after coming to faith. For adults who desire to be baptized today, this is still the practice of the church. Come to faith first (repent; turn back to God), then be baptized to mark the conversion and to be cleansed of all sin. For infants and children, a public statement of faith is made by parent/s, sponsor/s, and the church, speaking on behalf of the infant regarding faith.

### **What should I do if I'm an adult and have never been baptized? Is it too late?**

Absolutely not! Lutheran Christians baptize infants, children, youth, and adults regardless of age, gender, race or ethnic background. Jesus tells a story (see Luke 15:11-32) of a father whose son runs away from the family home. After a time away, this son realizes how lost he now is without his father, and decides to return home and beg to become a slave in his father's house. But once the father sees his son, the father immediately runs to meet him, celebrates and welcomes him back into the family with open arms! So it is with our Heavenly Father - God - and his love for all those who have run away from him.

### **Who can baptize?**

For the sake or order in the church, ordained pastors who are called to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament preside at a baptism. In extraordinary circumstances or in the case of an emergency, any Christian person can baptize someone with any kind of water in any kind of setting "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

### **What if I want a private baptism?**

Baptism is a public event for the whole family of God to celebrate, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ (the whole church) are welcome to be present and participate. In such a way, "the liturgy of Holy Baptism is not just for the candidates themselves (or their family and friends). It is also for those who have been baptized and who now pray for those about to join" the family of faith. Every baptism is an act of worship of the entire gathered community, on behalf of the whole people of God. Because baptism marks an entrance into Christian community, "private baptism" is really a contradiction in terms. All baptisms at the Chapel of the Resurrection will be celebrated in the context of the gathered community in worship.

## **I would like to be baptized, or have my child baptized at the Chapel of the Resurrection, what do I need to do?**

All celebrations of baptism through the Chapel of the Resurrection are preceded by conversations with one of the ministers. If you desire to be baptized through the ministry of the Chapel of the Resurrection, first contact either University Pastor Jim Wetzstein or Interim Campus Minister Deaconess Kristin Lewis.

- If you **desire to be baptized**, one of the ministers will walk with you through a process of *catechesis*. *Catechesis* is an age-old process of forming people in the faith. It prepares adults for baptism and lives of discipleship through mentoring, Bible Study, and intentional reflection upon the baptismal vocation in the world. The process may be formal or informal. During the process of *catechesis*, the ministers will plan a time with you when your baptism can be celebrated within the regular worship life of the Chapel of the Resurrection. Because baptism leads into life within Christian community, the ministers will assist you in finding a congregation that can become your church home.
- If you **desire to have your child(ren) baptized**, one of the ministers will meet with you to discuss your desires for the baptism of your child(ren), talk with you about baptism, the parental responsibility of parents when children are baptized, and the role of baptism in the life of faith. The staff will also plan with you a time within the regular worship life of the Chapel of the Resurrection when the baptism of your child(ren) can be celebrated. Because baptism leads into life within Christian community, it is essential that your child(ren)'s baptism be registered within a congregation. If you need assistance finding a congregation for you and your children, the ministers will be more than happy to assist you.
- Generally, baptisms should be scheduled at a minimum of three months prior to the celebration.
- The following days have been identified for the celebration of baptisms at the Chapel of the Resurrection:
  - Easter Vigil - 8 p.m. Saturday (actual date varies with Easter)
  - Services either as part of our Sunday morning worship when one of the two ministers is preaching/presiding *OR* at 1 p.m. on these days:
    - Holy Trinity Sunday, (date varies with Easter)
    - Mary Mother of Our Lord – Sunday closest to August 15
    - All Saints Sunday, Sunday following November 1
    - Transfiguration Sunday, (varies with Ash Wednesday)

**I would really like the baptism I am planning to be celebrated at the baptistery in the Chapel of the Resurrection. Is this possible?**

Baptisms through the Chapel of the Resurrection can be celebrated at the Baptistery, in the Nave or in the Gloria Christi Chapel. Plans simply need to be made far enough in advance so that appropriate logistics can be arranged for the respective worship service and space.