

More about baptism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Our church recognizes two sacraments: *baptism* and *communion*. A sacrament is something from the world of vital importance...water, wine or bread, combined with holy words and actions to convey God's grace to the receiver.

I am already baptized. May I be baptized again?

Baptism happens only once in a person's life, and the baptismal journey lasts a lifetime. Even if you don't remember it, or it was in another denomination, baptism is big enough to last a lifetime. God is the one making it work, not us.

A person may affirm or remember their baptism, with a ritual during worship, at any time throughout their life. Affirmation of baptism may mark the passage to adulthood, graduation, marriage, or any new beginning that may be enriched by formally remembering the baptismal promises.

Do I need to learn anything about baptism for it to work?

Yes and no. God is making all the benefits available to you through baptism, as a means of grace. And yet, in order for you to discover the most meaning in a baptismal life, one must engage in catechesis (learning) and community. This is not an isolated activity or singular event. Parents, sponsors, older children and adult catechumenes prepare for baptism by learning over a short stretch of time. However, baptism instruction is re-visited throughout one's lifetime as new developmental milestones are crossed.

Do I need a baptismal sponsor?

All folks coming to the font get there by community, and this begins a lifelong journey with others in a spiritual life. Baptismal sponsor(s) accompany one another on this journey together. Sponsors are sometimes called "Godparents." Their primary responsibility is to be a player-coach in life with the baptized, so it is important the sponsor has a vibrant faith life to share.

I really would like a private baptism. Can this happen?

Babies don't fall from the sky and live alone, but enter the world through family. The event of baptism is not only a milestone for the baptized and their family, but indeed for the whole, worldwide church, expanding and making room to welcome this person, so baptism happens in the worship life of the community.

Sometimes a person needs to be baptized urgently, like in a hospital with severe illness. This event, of course, may be very private, but indeed the whole community surrounds them in the presence of prayer. This baptism might continue in worship with the welcome into community.

How does the baptized interact with the whole church now?

In addition to learning the sacred stories, worshipping together, learning the faith, and prayer, the most outward activity is participating in the meal of Holy Communion. This may happen the very worship the person is baptized. Here at Holy Cross, a small baby will receive Holy Communion as soon as they reach out their hand for it. Communion instruction, just like baptism catechesis, happens over a lifetime and is re-visited at each developmental milestone.



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