

receive the Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.” (Book of Common Prayer, 1993, p. 274-275).

Godparents and parents should therefore take these vows (that they take on behalf of the children) seriously, as it is through them and the church family, that they (the children) will receive that spiritual nurturing and training in order to effectively grow up in the knowledge and love of God. The influential roles of parents and godparents, therefore, can facilitate the spiritual growth of children. It is for this reason, therefore, that Anglicans and certain other denominations continue the practice of Infant Baptism. Let us not forget too, that in Acts 16:15, Acts 16:32-33, and 1 Corinthians 1:16, entire households, were baptized, and so children living with them, would have been baptized also.

Additionally, let us not forget that with Christianity taking some of its practices from Judaism, notice that the rite of entry into Judaism (circumcision) was performed on the male children (Luke 2:21-39). The child did not need to understand in order to become a Jew. However, as that child grew up, he/she was taught the law and other practices of Judaism.

INFANT BAPTISM AND THE EARLY CHURCH

According to Brom (2004), “There is no doubt that the early Church practiced infant baptism; and no Christian objections to this practice were ever voiced until the Reformation,” which occurred in the sixteenth century. Infant baptism therefore is a part of our tradition as Christians, as it is a means of demonstrating that “...the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16). Brom (2004) further strengthens his point, on infant baptism being practiced in the Early church, by referring to a letter written by Cyprian of Carthage to Fidus (an African Bishop) who challenged the tradition of waiting until eight days to baptize the child. Does this ‘eight days’ sound familiar?

A portion of the letter reads as follows:

“As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born” (Letters 64:2 [A.D. 253]).

CONCLUSION

It is through the waters of Baptism, that we become inheritors of God’s kingdom. This is therefore the reason the Baptismal Font is placed close to an entrance, especially at the west door, so that the moment we step into the church, upon seeing it, we are reminded that we are children of God by virtue of our baptism. We only need to be baptized once, (Ephesians 4:5) because God has accepted us as God’s children. If therefore we go astray, it is only for us to repent, be reconciled with God and each other, then continue our journey with God. God loves us all, so whether we are adults or infants, St. Cyprian reminds us that God’s mercy and grace ought not to be denied from anyone. Through the waters of baptism, we are born again, made one with Christ, and become a part of that great family, the Church, in which we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

References

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Baptism and the Anglican Church



WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is one of the seven sacraments of the church. In fact, it is also recognized as one of the two sacraments in which Jesus participated, as seen in Luke 3:21-22. According to the Book of Common Prayer (1993, p. 409), "Baptism is the sacrament by which God unites us with Christ, adopts us as His children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God." Baptism is therefore very important for all Christians, as it is the means through which we are identified with Jesus. So, as circumcision is viewed as the rite of entry into Judaism, so it is that Baptism is viewed, in relation to Christianity, as a rite which must be fulfilled, in order to be recognized as a practicing member of the faith.

It is therefore not surprising when it is said, that through the waters of baptism, we are born again, because if we are clothed with Jesus, and are committed to walking in His footsteps, the standards and quality of the lives we live must reflect the same. As a result, others should not only hear from our lips that we are Christians, but they should see it portrayed/reflected in our daily lives.

When an individual is baptized, the Trinitarian formula is used, as stipulated by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-19, which states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." The Trinity is, therefore, evoked at baptism, as Jesus had commanded, and this is further emphasized in the collect/prayer for the day, (Book of Common Prayer, 1993, p. 272), in which the different roles of the persons of the Trinity are recognized both in terms of their relationship with one another, and how they will facilitate the growth and development of the newly baptized.

Baptism using the Trinitarian formula asserts the fact that God is ONE, who had (in the past) and continues today to manifest/reveal Himself to us, as a people, in three different ways - *God as Creator and the person in control of the World* (God the Father), *God as Saviour and Redeemer* (God the Son) and *God's power active in the world* (The Holy Spirit).

THE THREE MODES OF BAPTISM

There are three modes of baptism used in the Anglican Church, which have been with us for decades. These modes of Baptism, were used by the Early Church, to baptize both children and adults, from as early as the first century, and they still remain with us today. These include:

Aspersio - This is defined as the act of sprinkling with water. *However, it must be pointed out that as Anglicans, we tend to pour water on the head of the individual instead of sprinkle.* The reason for this will be explained at a later stage.

Affusion - This is a form of baptism in which water is poured over somebody's head, while he/she is standing in water.

Immersion - This is a form of baptism, in which a person's head and upper body are lowered/dipped into water.

BAPTISM AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Baptism in the Early Church was seen as being very important. A document known as the Didache, which is a late first century to early second century document, gives specific details and insights into what the teachings and practices of the early church were. For Baptism, the document states that an individual should be "...baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water." (Early Christian Writings, 2016). Living water means running water.

Consequently, the Early Church's first preference of a water source, was a river or stream. This was important, because the moving water for them represents the literal washing away of sins from the individual, who now becomes a new creature - one who is born again. The document further states that "...if you have no living (running) water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit." So when a child is baptized at the

baptismal font, water is therefore poured on the head of the child, and not necessarily sprinkled, because of the association between the flowing/moving water and the associated meaning used in the early church. The same concept/meaning is also applied to Affusion.

Additionally, the amount of water used was not an issue in the Early Church, and neither is it an issue for us today. This is because water is just the outward and visible sign of the Baptismal process, which helps us to better understand and appreciate the inward and spiritual transformation that is taking place in us, as God's undeserved loved is outpoured in our lives. With such transformation taking place within, it is for this reason that as Christians, we say we are born again, in which we seek to live our lives in ways that are pleasing to God, via expressions of loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and loving our neighbours as ourselves. As it relates to Infant Baptism, the question may therefore be asked, "Why baptize infants?"

INFANT BAPTISM

Infant Baptism is practiced by Anglicans to give children the opportunity to be a part of the family of God. In other words, as these children grow up, they will grow up knowing that they belong to this family, the Church, and so are united with Jesus by virtue of their Baptism. It is true that the child may not know what has taken place during the baptism, and so it is for this reason that godparents are appointed to take vows, along with the parents, on their behalf.

It is the expectation of the Church that they take these vows very seriously, as through these vows they commit themselves to ensure that the child they have brought for baptism "will receive that help and encouragement by their prayers, examples and by their teachings."; and is "...brought up in the knowledge and love of God...". They also commit themselves to "...help the child to be faithful in public worship and private prayer..."; and to "...do all in their powers to see to it that the child is brought to the Bishop to be confirmed, and to

