

ORDER FOR THE BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS' CHILDREN

Ministers are referred to the rules about baptism in the Manual of Faith and Order.

The minister should advise the parents, before they choose any godparents, that the godparents should also be believers (and can then make their own vow during the service).

Parents may be encouraged to choose a baptismal text for their child. This can be printed on the baptismal certificate, if necessary on the back. Examples of suitable texts are: Dt.31:6,8, Josh.1:9, Ps. 27:1, 34:19, 55:18, Isa.26:3, 28:16, 41:10, 41:13, 43:2, 43:25, 50:7-9, 54:10, Mt.6:34, 10:15, 10:19f., Mk.9:23, Ro.8:28, 8:31, II Cor.2:14, 4:3f., 4:7, 12:9, Phil.4:13, I Pet.5:7, I Jn.5:4.

Baptism is normally administered in the face of the congregation on the Lord's Day. As festivals of the great acts of God with which baptism is associated, Easter and Pentecost are particularly appropriate Lord's Days.¹

If only one child is to be baptized, 'child' should replace 'children' in some places in the Order.

The Word properly precedes the sacrament to explain and expound what it signifies. The sermon should at least refer to baptism. (See Calvin's Institutes IV.xiv.4.)

The parents should attend the sermon as well as the baptism.

For suitable texts for reading and preaching on baptism see the Order for the Baptism of Believers.

If the baptism precedes the sermon and children are present, a brief children's talk on the sacrament should precede it. The children can be invited to stand around the font for the baptism.

If baptismal candles are to be presented, a candle needs to stand on the Holy Table and be lit before the service begins.

In bringing a child forward to be baptized, parents may be accompanied by their other children and/or the grandparents as well as any godparents. Especially when there are no godparents, a family's district Elder may also accompany it.

¹ See the WCC publication: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 'Baptism, §1, p.2.

This order has various options, which are indicated by the word 'may' or by 'or' or by brackets.

Preamble

The Minister stands behind the Holy Table or at the font.

We are now going to baptize the children of....

The minister or alternatively an elder or a parent asks:

What does that mean?

The minister continues:

After his Resurrection Jesus said to his followers,

Go and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Mt.28:19

Thus in becoming disciples people are baptized:
they are plunged under water
and brought up out of it again
or else water is poured on them.

This signifies being buried with Jesus in his death
in order to be raised with him in his resurrection.
It signifies the washing away of all their sins
and the gift of new life.

For as Jesus died for our sins,
so we die to our old life under the power of sin.
As he rose in victory over death,
so he will raise us in union with him
to a new, eternal life in the power of his Spirit.

This is not an empty sign.

Jesus said:

No one can enter the Kingdom of God
unless he is born of water *and the Spirit*.

Jn.3:5

The Holy Spirit makes the sacrament effective
when we put our faith in Christ.

As the apostle Paul wrote:

You were buried with him in baptism,
and in that baptism you were also raised with him
through faith in the power of God,
who raised him from the dead.

Col.2:12

We are baptized *in God's Name*,
 which means that
 he claims us to be his own people,
 redeemed by him and consecrated
 to serve and witness to him in the world.

If the children include any babies or toddlers, the minister or an elder asks:

But why do we baptize little children
 who may not yet have the necessary faith?

The minister continues:

God made his covenant of grace with a community
 that included both parents and children, saying,
 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.'

Thus when people brought babies to him to touch,
 our Lord said:

Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them;
 for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.
 Truly I tell you: whoever does not accept the kingdom of God
 like a little child will never enter it.

Lk. 18:16f.

Or

Thus on the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter said:
 Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
 in the name of Jesus the Messiah;
 then your sins will be forgiven
 and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 The promise is to you *and to your children*
 and to all who are far away,
 to everyone whom the Lord our God may call.

Ac. 2:38-39

(Baptismal Hymn)

The parents bring the children to be baptized to the font.

Welcome

The minister addresses the parents at the font by their Christian names, or forenames, and adds:

We in this congregation greet you in the name of the Lord
 and rejoice with you as you bring your *children* to be baptized.

Vows

From this it is clear
that parents who bring their children for baptism
must first declare their own allegiance to Christ
and promise to bring up their children in the faith.

You, the congregation, represent the whole Church,
the Church catholic, into which *these children* will be baptized.
Do you, then, renew your commitment, with God's help,
to be a congregation in which children are made welcome
and find true faith and love?

If the enrolled members of this congregation do,
will they please signify this by standing for the vows now....
I invite all others present to stand in fellowship with us now.

(Pause)

(Pause)

During the second vow all of you are invited
to reaffirm the vows of your own baptism
by repeating together with the parents
the Apostles' Creed....

The minister indicates where the Creed is to be found.

Minister and parents face each other.

Minister: Do you believe and trust
in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord,
in God as your Father
and in the Holy Spirit as your Helper?

Parents: I do (each in turn).

Minister: Declare then your faith in the words
of the Apostles' Creed.

We say together:

All: **I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven.
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again**

to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Minister: Do you undertake to continue faithfully
in the apostles' teaching and the fellowship,
in the breaking of bread and the prayers?

Acts 2:42

Parents: **I do** (each in turn).

Minister: In bringing your *children* for baptism,
do you promise to teach *them* the Word of God,
to train *them* in the worship of God
at home and at church
and to show *them* the Christian way of life,
so that by your teaching, your prayers
and your own example
they too may come to know Christ
as Saviour and Lord?

Parents: **I do promise, with God's help** (each in turn).

If there are godparents, the minister may put the following question to them.

Minister: Do you, the godparents of *these children*,
confess your faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and do you promise to stand by these parents
in bringing up their *children*
in the Christian faith and way of life
and help them as you are able?

Godparents: **I do** (each in turn).

The minister faces the parents and says

The Lord grant you strength to carry out your promises faithfully.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you
for the gift of water to cleanse us and revive us;

We thank you that you liberated your people from slavery
and led them through the waters of the sea
to freedom in the promised land.

We thank you that your Son Jesus Christ,
who was baptized in the river Jordan,
was also brought through the deep waters of death
to be raised to life in triumph.

Grant, we pray, that *these children* who *are* washed in this water
may by your Spirit be made one with Christ,
and so through his death and his resurrection
be cleansed and delivered from all sin,
and be raised to full and eternal life.
For all might, majesty, authority, and power are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Series 3, altered

Or:

Almighty and eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ instituted this holy sacrament,
look upon us with mercy, we pray,
and ratify in heaven that which by his command
we now do on earth.

Grant that *these children*
may be born anew of water *and* of the Holy Spirit
into the family of God,
and ever remain your faithful *sons and daughters*.

O Christ our Saviour
who took the little children into your arms and blessed them,
take *these little ones*, we pray,
and seal *them* to be your own for ever.
To you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God,
be the glory now and always. Amen.

As Christ has taught us, we boldly pray

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,**

**the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Matt.6:9-13

Naming

The father takes each child and presents him to the minister.

Name this child.

The father or mother states all the child's forenames.

Baptism

I baptize you, NN,
in the Name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Or

You, NN, are now baptized
in the Name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The baptism should be visible to the congregation.

As the minister names each Person in the Trinity, he/she pours water onto the child's head with his right hand. (Alternatively the minister may pour the water once.)

Enough water should be used for the congregation to hear it fall into the font.

Robing

The newly baptized may be robed in white garments.

The minister may in any case say:

You who were baptized into Christ
have been clothed with Christ.

Gal.3:27

You have taken off your old self with its practices,
and have put on the new self

which is being renewed in the image of its Creator.

Col.3:9f.

There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles,
between bondservants and those who are free
between men and women;

you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal.3:28

All people of every kind are one in him.

Christ is all, Christ is in all.

Col.3:11

Blessing (sung by the whole congregation)

The minister may invite the congregation to raise their right hands in blessing as they sing:

**The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.**

If the Aaronic Blessing is not sung the Minister may say it.

The congregation sits.

Declaration and Presentation

The minister turns to the congregation.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I declare that *NN and NN* have been received into the holy catholic Church by baptism according to God's holy covenant, to serve Christ to the end of *their* lives and to witness to his gospel in the world. In token of this I now present *NN and NN* to you. And I call upon you to be a congregation in which children are made welcome and find true faith and love.

The minister takes the baptized children, one by one or with the aid of elders, down the aisle into the body of the church and then back.

Exhortation and Candles

The minister returns the children to their parents and says:

Your children belong to God, by his covenant in Jesus Christ. Tell them of *their* baptism; unfold to them the treasure given to them today, so that in due time they may make *their* own response in faith, hope and love.

The minister may take a candle for each child, light it from a candle on the Holy Table and present it to the parents, saying:

Take these baptismal candles.
Light a candle on every anniversary of this day to remind your children of *their* baptism.
Teach your children that Christ is *their* Light and calls them in turn to shine as *lights* in the world

to the glory of God *their* Father.

The minister may suggest to the godparents that they give special candleholders to their godchildren.

Prayer

This prayer may be said by the minister or a district elder or one of the godparents.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who in your infinite mercy and goodness has promised to be the God and Father not only of us but of our children, we thank you for declaring your love and your covenant to *these children* even before *they* can hear and understand your gospel.

As you have loved *them* from the beginning, so continue to keep *them*.

May your Spirit rest on *them* and remain in *them*, to guide and sanctify *them*,

to bring *them* safely through the dangers of childhood and the temptations of youth, and to uphold *them* always as your faithful disciples.

In the power of that Spirit may *they* have courage and boldness to witness to you as the Saviour of all people and the Lord of all the world.

O God our Father

whose Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home, bless, we pray, the *homes* of *these children*.

Help *their* parents to give their *children* both security and freedom, and by their love to show *them* the meaning of your love.

Forgive us all, O Lord, for wherever we have fallen short of the grace of our own baptism by wandering from your ways.

By your Spirit bring us back in true repentance, and keep us faithful to our own baptism,

so that we may be ready for that day when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea

and all creation will be made perfect

in your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Baptismal Hymn

Those who have come forward to the font return to their seats during the hymn.

Commission

The service ends with the minister saying:.

Jesus said:

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth!

Go to the people of all nations

and make them my disciples.

I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.

Mt.28:18-20

In the power of the Spirit go into the world:

serve the Lord and witness to him.

We go in the name of Christ.

Benediction

God's grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love.

Eph.6:24

Amen.