

# **BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT**

Session 3

## **The Church's People Are Baptized**

### **FOCUS**

Baptized persons are known in the world as Christians. The learners should be able to say whether they, or others they know, have been baptized—and to share stories of the sacrament of baptism.

### **GETTING READY**

This session offers teachers and learners an opportunity to share what they know about Holy Baptism as it has been preserved and practiced in the Church. We remember over and over what this sacrament means—for ourselves and others. In preparation, read through the service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, including the introductory comments under the heading “Concerning the Service” on page 298. Note especially the first sentence:

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.”

John the Baptist's immersion of Jesus in the River Jordan is the basis for the Christian practice of baptism. Baptism was not a new concept, however. Jewish people already had been baptizing converts on the day of their circumcision. John was apparently was the first man to baptize Jews instead of Gentiles. Baptism in the early Church was generally a full immersion in water. The act of sprinkling water over the baptized came later, when immersion in colder climates was impractical.

Primary-age learners are beginning to have a sense of what it means to belong to a group along with others. Baptism, an initiation into the Church, establishes a tie to God that can never be broken. This is important to a child's growth in faith.

Grant, Lord God, to all who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, that, as we have put away the old life of sin, so we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For all Baptized Christians  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 252

### **TEACHING TIP**

Throughout this unit, the sacrament of Baptism is lifted up as the ideal for all persons. Some children, however, may not have been baptized for a variety of reasons. Be sensitive to this. Reassure the group that God loves everyone, baptized or not. Encourage children to talk with their parents about baptism.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, collect items that are part of a traditional baptism. Display them in the classroom. Suggestions: a baptismal certificate, a baptismal candle, a christening dress, and pictures of a baptism.

As the learners arrive, ask them to look carefully at the items. Show them the service of Holy Baptism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 299-308. Invite their questions.

When all are present, say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth. . . .  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 96

## STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Share a story about the Church as a community of baptized persons. Open the Bible and show the learners again where to find *Acts 2:40-41*. Read aloud verse 41a:

“So those who welcomed (Peter's) message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.  
The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Review the story of Peter's sermon and the many people who were baptized as a result (from the previous session).

2. If possible, obtain copies of baptismal records to show to the learners: certificates of Holy Baptism (actual or photocopied); a record of baptisms from the congregation's register; one or more family Bibles showing entries for baptisms. The items used in the Gathering (above) can be shared at this time. Invite the learners to share any stories they know about past, present, or future baptisms.

3. Tell the story of a baptism that you have attended. Use the service in *The Book of Common Prayer* as an outline. Describe the people who took part, the parents, godparents, or sponsors, the baby or person baptized. What happened at the moment of baptism? How did the people at the service greet the person who was baptized?

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 3, describes how baptism makes us members of the Christian community. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

## CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

### Option 1. A Baptism Book

Make booklets that can be given to the newly baptized at your church. Give each class member several sheets of drawing paper. Tell the group to fold their sheets in half and staple them in the center. Invite the learners to

use crayons and markers to fill their books with illustrations of a baptism, using the items from the Gathering and the Take-Home Cards.

### **Option 2. My Baptismal Certificate**

Give the learners copies of the simple baptismal certificate provided in the Teacher's Packet on Poster No. 15, along with a variety of materials such as glue, ribbon, glitter, paint, tissue, and construction paper. Ask the learners to make Baptismal Certificates by printing their names, birthdays, and any other information they know. (They can complete the certificates later by asking their parents or friends to help with items they do not know.) The certificates can be decorated in any way the children choose.

## **EXPLORING THE STORY** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

### **Option 1. Game, "Pass the Good News"**

In Holy Baptism, we are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Gather the group in a circle. Whisper good news to one learner, who then passes it along to the next. Continue around the circle. The last person in the circle can stand and say the "good news" in a loud voice. Compare the final message with the one first whispered, and correct any errors that may have occurred. For "news," use sentences like the following:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; . . ."

"Love one another as I have loved you."

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, . . ."

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "The Church's People Are Baptized"**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.3 titled "The Church's People Are Baptized." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Find Baptism**

On a piece of newsprint or a chalkboard, write the following citations: *Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:13; Acts 9:17-18; Acts 16:14-15; Acts 16:27, 33.*

The learners work in teams to locate the verses in their Bibles. Ask them to find out who was baptized in each passage. Write down the names on the board or newsprint. In the order given above, these are Jesus, Simon, Saul/Paul, Lydia, and the jailer.

## **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Primary-age children are very much aware of what it means to belong to an identifiable group. Talk with the class members about the groups to which they belong, such as Cub Scouts, Brownies, sports teams, dance classes, and clubs. Discuss uniforms, pins, activities, and meeting places for these groups.

Ask: How is belonging to the church different from belonging to other groups? How is it the same? What does it mean to belong to the family of God?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the congregation who was baptized as an adult or teenager to visit the class. Encourage the visitor to share details about what happened. What preparations were made? How did it feel to be welcomed into the church's family? What difference did the baptism make in the visitor's life?

## IMAGINING

*(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "When I went a baptism at our church, I saw . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What did they see? Who else was there? What happened?

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Invite the learners to act out a service of baptism. Items from the Gathering can be used as props.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again the first stanza of "Descend, O Spirit" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 297; *We Sing of God*, 50) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Use the movements from the previous session. Introduce the second stanza. Sing several times, adding the following actions:

Forbid us not (*open arms in a welcoming gesture*)  
this second birth; (*make a cradle with folded arms*)  
grant unto us the greater worth! (*fold hands in prayer*)  
Enlist us in your service, Lord; (*raise hands above head, reaching heavenward*)  
baptize all nations (*pour water with hand as a basin*)  
with your Word. (*hands together, opened like a book*)

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Baptismal Banner.* Attach the larger pieces of the felt design to the background piece of cloth for the basic design of the banner begun in earlier sessions.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 21 has a picture of an infant child being baptized in an Orthodox service, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

## CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this  
life.

We give you thanks for the gift of Baptism.  
(Add your own thanksgivings)  
We will exalt you, O God our King;  
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.  
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 393

Stand in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How familiar were the learners with the sacrament of baptism as it is administered in your congregation? How many of them had been to a baptism? What were their experiences? Encourage the children to attend a Service of Holy Baptism.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the promises that are made by a person being baptized, and by sponsors or godparents at the baptism of infants. As you prepare, think about the promises we make to others, to the children in our lives, and to God.