

The Whys of Worship: What Christians do on Sundays and why we do it.
Class #4: The Sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist

The way we celebrate Baptism and the Eucharist starts from a model: The Great Vigil of Easter.

- Begins in darkness on Holy Saturday night.
- Starts with lighting a new light and the paschal candle (Pascha = Passover/Easter)
- Numerous readings recount the way God acted to save his people in history.
- This culminates with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Those who are prepared are baptized.
- They are given a new white robe, they exchange the kiss of peace
- And the people celebrate communion.

This is Why:

Many factors led some churches in the 20th century to emphasize Baptism rather than Confirmation as central to our identity. Therefore, many churches began to admit to communion those who were *Baptized*, allowing Christians of other denominations to receive communion. This was an unusual step in the discipline of the church, but it emphasizes our common identity in Christ. Thus, young children also receive communion.

What is Baptism?

- The cleansing of sin and beginning of a new life in Christ
- Dead to sin (into the water) and Alive to Christ (out of the water).
- We enter into his death to join his resurrection,
 Then join in the heavenly banquet (the Eucharist)
- Both of water *and* the Holy Spirit.
- Involves both “bath,” and “teaching” for a life lived.
 For adults, the teaching comes first;
 For infants, parents & Godparents teach by word and example.
- A gift—God’s grace—unearned and undeserved;
 but with our response to God as well for our life ahead

Baptism Liturgy:

Examination of the candidates:

Rejection of the world, the flesh, and the devil (that take us from God)
Acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord
Trusting in his grace and love
Promise of the Christian Community

“Font” is like “fountain”

The Baptismal Covenant:

The Apostles’ Creed, in three questions each about who God is:
 about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
Five questions about the Christian life (an innovation for the 1979 BCP)
 Christian community, repentance, evangelism, service, and justice.

Prayers (in the place of the “prayers of the people”)

The Bath:

Thanksgiving over the water
 How God has used water in the past; asking God to bless this water now.
Baptism: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Immersion was the original method; later pouring.

Chrismation:

Anointing with oil as a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What Baptism is *not*:

- A family ceremony
- A rite of passage
- A naming ceremony
- A photo op (well, maybe afterward...)

What can we do to guard against this trend?

(includes the commitments of the community)

This is Why:

- We cross ourselves as a physical sign of remembrance of God’s grace to us in our Baptism, either on our foreheads or across our chests.
- The Paschal candle is brought out and lit because of the connection to the Great Vigil of Easter.

Four Sundays especially set aside for Baptism: Easter (at the Vigil), Pentecost, All Saints, & 1st Epiphany

The Holy Eucharist (Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper)

So much to say... see BCP p.859, p.316, & p.873

The Model for our celebration of the Eucharist is the Great Vigil of Easter:

The proclamation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Every Sunday is a Miniature Easter service: a feast of the Resurrection

We share in *communion* with Christ and his church—*communion* with each other and all Christians.

We experience the special grace of the presence of Christ in the sacrament.

Not “magic,” but not mere bread and wine.

We prepare for this sacred meal with examination and confession.

(see the Exhortation, BCP p.316)

This is also a celebration of the heavenly banquet

(so both solemn *and* joyful; kneeling or standing, depending on custom or season)

Thus, Sunday is <i>the Lord's</i> day first, not Mother's day, Veteran's Day, Labor Day, Valentine's day, Secretary's day...beware the “accretions” that steer us away from the centrality of Jesus...

The Liturgy of the Table

- The Passing of the Peace of Jesus Christ (a sign of our reconciliation in Christ)

The Great Thanksgiving (“Eucharist” means “Thanksgiving”)

- “Lift up your hearts/ We lift them to the Lord”
(the Orthodox: lifting us into the heavenly throne room of God—into God's presence)
- The “celebrant” or “presider” presides at the celebration: all the people “celebrate” the sacrament.
- The prayer starts with a “proper preface” related to the day or the season or occasion.
- We join with the heavenly angels “Holy, Holy, Holy!” (ref Isaiah 6; That's why we bow)
- We remember God's saving acts for us (like at the Great Vigil)
Especially remembering Jesus' death for us, his resurrection and ascension,
And the supper the night before he died;
The words of institution
(my body given for you...my blood...shed for you...
do this in remembrance of me)
- The “epiclesis:” asking the Holy Spirit to sanctify the bread and wine (and us)
- The Lord's Prayer
- The “Fraction” the breaking of the bread
- (in Rite I: the “prayer of humble access,” p. 337)

Communion

Bread only, wine only, or both bread and wine

We handle the consecrated elements in special ways out of reverence, not out of idolatry.

Receive by drinking or “intinction” (dipping); (neither one is more sanitary)

We send out Eucharistic Visitors to “extend the altar rail” to those who cannot be with us.

The Dismissal:

Nourished with God's grace, God sends us into the world.

(note: the alleluias are in the “response” only if they are in the “call:”

and generally just for Easter Season and Feasts; not in Lent or Advent.)

Next Week: What is this stuff? Explaining the gear for worship.