

Educational Material – Baptism and communion

Why baptism?

Baptism is one of the sacraments of the church. Sacrament means holy act. This means that it is an act ordered by Jesus himself.

A sacrament is an act where a profane thing (water, in this case) give a spiritual gift (kinship with God).

The baptism is also a rite, an act helping people to mark an important event in their lives. We may need those rites when a child is born, when we are becoming adults, when we love each other and want to marry, and when someone has died. All are rites of life.

The Church of Sweden practices baptism of infants as well as adults. The Church also recognizes baptisms done in other churches and denominations, as long as it is a baptism in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a unique, one-time act that does not need to be done again.

The idea with baptizing infants is among other things to bring the infant into the great context of life - the community with God. The parents also show their love to the child and their wish for comfort and shelter. Baptism is the beginning of a deep community with God that has a life-long perspective. Living in one's baptism means knowing and being aware of one's baptism, living in God's presence, walking free.

The "water-mark" of baptism does not go away just because years go by. Being baptized means belonging somewhere - with God. It is a community not dependent on if life goes up or down. To be brought in to the kingdom of God is to be brought into the deepest dimension of life, where God and man belongs together in the deepest sense. Being baptized is being saved from the surface to the depth of life, from evil to the good and from death to life.

Please call the parish office in Uppsala Cathedral Parish if you are interested in baptism for you or your child. One of the priests will get back to you. Call the office of the parish you live in - see the Pink pages of the telephone catalogue and look for "Svenska kyrkan".

How is baptism done?

The priest baptizes by three times putting water on the candidate's head, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This baptismal act is often surrounded by prayer, reading from Scripture (Mark 10:13-16).

The apostolic creed is read. Often there is a candle of baptism lit for the newly baptised. The Lord's prayer and usually hymns as well as a blessing.

In case of emergency, baptism may be ministered by a baptised and confirmed lay-man. In the Book of Hymns (Den svenska psalmboken, 1986) there is an example of how to do in case there is no possibility to wait for a priest to arrive.

Water is a symbol for life. Without life we cannot live. Water gives life and is a condition of life. In the womb we are formed as we grow. Water can also put out lives.

The candle of baptism is often given to the newly baptized as a remembrance of Jesus who said "I am the light of the world. He who believes in me shall live even if he dies" (John 8:12).

Can I as an adult be baptized?

For the adult who wants to be baptized, the Cathedral Parish every year invites to discussion groups concerning Christian faith. Baptism of adults take place i. e. in the Easter Vigil in the cathedral. The baptism can also come after conversations with a priest in private. Please contact the Canon or the Church teacher for more information. There are similar opportunities in many parishes - please call your parish by looking for Svenska kyrkan in the pink pages in the telephone catalogue.

Why Eucharist?

The Eucharist is together with the baptism a sacred act, a sacrament. We celebrate the Eucharist because Jesus told us. The bread and the wine of the mass give us together with the words of the mass part of the suffering and crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ. The Eucharist is:

commemoration: we remember Jesus and his last supper with the disciples
(Luke22:1-23),

absolution: I can leave what went wrong, my mistakes and my part in the
world's negligence of God, and be forgiven,

community: we feel community with Jesus and we share a small piece of bread
with each other, with all Christians in all times and all places,

thanksgiving: the Greek word eucharisti, means thanksgiving
- a way of being with God,

mystery: God is here - a taste of eternity.

What is going on?

The Eucharist is always conducted by a priest. The Swedish suffix "-mässta" means that there is Eucharist in the service. The main points in the mass in Church of Sweden is reading the words of Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25) and the distribution of the bread and wine, saying respectively "Body of Christ, given for you"; "Blood of Christ, shed for you." In the mass you may recognize parts common to many churches: the confession of sins and absolution, Sanctus (Holy – "Helig" in Swedish), the Lord's Prayer, Agnus Dei (O lamb of god). Usually there are also hymns that are sung.

Can I receive the communion?

Anyone who is baptized and who feels that they want to receive communion are welcome to do so. If you want to take part without receiving bread and wine, you may do a sign (i. e. put right hand on left shoulder). The priest will then give you a blessing instead.