



Course One: *A Journey of Faith*

SEGMENT 4: THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

PARTICIPANTS' GUIDE

Baptism is one of two main sacraments in the Episcopal Church. It is the means by which we become part of the family of God. There are two components to a sacrament – a visible one (in this case water) and an invisible one (in this case forgiveness of sins and a new life in Christ). The Baptismal Covenant includes a statement of belief and promises made to God. The Christian family lives into the teachings of Jesus and our call to ministry in the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

OPENING PRAYER

All praise and thanks to you, most merciful Father, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP 311)

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

What is baptism?

What is a covenant?

What is a sacrament?

VIDEO PRESENTATION



Baptism

Baptismal Covenant

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

USING THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

As we live out the ministry of the baptized, we find direction through the five Baptismal Covenant promises. These promises are made at every baptism and we ask God's help in keeping these promises. For this class all the promises are particularly relevant.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Using a dictionary, look up the meaning of “covenant.” What kinds of covenants do we make in our daily lives?

2. The Prayer of Thanksgiving over the Water on page 306 of *The Book of Common Prayer* references several Bible stories. Look up the references listed under each section of the prayer and answer these questions: (You might want to give each small group section one of the scripture passages.)

What is the importance of water in each story?

What is the resurrection/new birth that occurred in each story?

Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Genesis 1:1-2

Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. Exodus 14:21-22

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION, continued

In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:13-17

In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Romans 6:3-11

Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:44-48

Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:18-20

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION, continued

3. The Baptismal Covenant has five promises following the affirmation of faith in the Trinity (BCP 304-05). Look at each promise and answer the following questions:

What are we being asked to do?

What insights does the video provide for you in living into this promise?

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION, continued

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

W R A P - U P

We affirm our relationship to “The Story” in the Creeds. We say that we believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ cross symbolizes for us the process by which we also grow, both individually and by giving ourselves to others. As we challenge and stretch ourselves in pursuit of goals, we grow. The crucifixion of Jesus did not end his interaction with us. The resurrected Christ lives among us. This is the last segment of the first course. In this course, we have explored what it means to be on a spiritual journey, and we have begun that journey. We learned the Great Commandment and Great Commission – Jesus’ teaching on loving our neighbors as ourselves and His call to mission to go out and make disciples. We studied the two creeds used in the Episcopal Church – the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. And, we carefully examined the sacrament of Baptism and the covenant promises we make and reaffirm at every baptism.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised us to the new life of grace. Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give us an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen. (BCP 308)

C L O S I N G P R A Y E R / H Y M N

The following selections can help us reflect on our discussions today. You may either read and pray or sing and pray your selection(s).

The Hymnal 1982

#296 - We know that Christ is raised and dies no more

#490 - I want to walk as a child of the Light

Wonder, Love, and Praise

#767 - Baptized in water

Lift Every Voice and Sing

#134 - Take me to the water

NOTES

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