

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

The Story of God

(Pitcher of water is placed on the altar or the communion table before the worship service. The officiant now retrieves the water, holding it out for the congregation, proceeding to the font.)

Living waters have always been a sign of God's spirit moving among us. This is the water which burst forth from the Womb to give birth to all of creation. This is the water of the Red Sea parted to allow the Hebrews out of slavery and into liberation. This is the water of the river Jordan which the Hebrew people crossed over to get to the promised land. That same water was also used by John the Baptizer to inaugurate the Reign of God in Rome and the mission and ministry of Christ and so many of his community. This is the water _____ *(name the body of water most proximate or central to the community.)*

This is the water of _____ *(name the church community)*

Mni Wiconi. Water is life!

All of us are adopted into the community of Christ by the movement of the holy Spirit, as a dove, reminding us that we are not to be at war with the earth. The earth is our mother. And in the Christian tradition, family is not defined by blood but by the liberation and love of water.

God creates all things; all life is a gift from God. Today we give thanks to God for a gift entrusted in hope. All people are a sign of God's gracious creation. Into this fertile soil, God's wind has breathed life.

All of us are adopted into the community of Christ by the movement of the holy Spirit in love. Let us remember today that family is not defined by blood but by the love we share with those who are entrusted to us.

FOR INFANTS

Introduction of Participants

I invite parents, godparents, and grandparents and this gift entrusted in care to come forward.

Affirmation of God's Love

(as the family comes forward) The adoption of anyone into our community is an occasion for thanksgiving and great joy. Today we baptize with the scallop shell. In ancient Christianity, the scallop shell was a teaching. Its many ridges or spines represent the diverse journeys we walk to the one Source. The scallop shell teaches God's love for our diverse journeys.

Baptismal Prayer

Let us pray. O God, you have adopted all of us as your children to mature into full faith in you. We give you thanks for this child who blesses this family and have welcomed this child as their own and for the extended community which promises to be a haven for this child. By the moving of your living water and Spirit in the form of a dove, may all the world know this home as green and flowering. Amen.

Promises of the Participants

(Have parents place a hand on the head of the child.)

What name have you given this child?

In accepting _____ *(name of child)*, you also acknowledge the faith of Jesus Christ who shared food, healed with the earth, and spoke of the beauty of wildflowers.

So now I ask these questions of you.

Do you receive _____ *(name of child)* from the hand of a loving Creator, and will you encourage them to love this good earth as Creator does? If so, respond by saying, "I do."

Will you, with humility and hope, accept the obligation which is yours to love and nurture them and lead them in the faith of Jesus Christ and their community by teaching and example? If so, respond by saying, "I will."

Will you ask for the strength and courage of God's Spirit and the support of the church that you may be a good steward of this gift of life? If so, respond by saying, "I will."

FOR ADULTS

Introduction of Participants

One: I invite the person who wishes to be baptized to please come forward.

Baptismal Prayer

We give you thanks this person, God of Transformation, who joins hands today with Christians around the world in repentance and freedom. May they walk as a disciple—knowing that your love forever makes space for her and liberate her to follow Christ. May they continue to grow wild and free. May their feet be planted firmly on the earth. May they drink deeply from these waters when they need courage and resolve to begin again. Amen.

Promises of the Participant

One: Child of God, what is your name?

One: _____ (*name of person*), I now ask these questions of you:

One: Do you acknowledge that you have been awakened to life by a Loving Creator who wishes you love, beauty, and joy? Do you promise to grow in love for this good earth as Creator does? If so, respond by saying, “I do.”

One: Will you follow, with grace and humility, the journey of Jesus of Nazareth, walking the road of justice, stopping on the path for healing, valuing the beauty of wildflower and sparrow over and against the opulence of empire, building a home of hospitality, sharing bread and grape? If so respond by saying, “I will.”

One: Will you embrace and encourage the Spirit of God found in the Christian church universal, this local church, and in other communities where God is still speaking and working? Will you join with us in this same spirit? If so, say, “I will.”

IF GODPARENTS OR SPONSORS

I turn now to the godparents/sponsors. There will be times in the lives of this family/person when they will need you to be a safe harbor amidst the tempests that do blow as a certainty in every family. They will need your grace, your listening ear, and your compassion when the waters of baptism threaten to throw them all out of the boat. Will you honor the journey of _____ (*name of person*) and their family as they learn what it means for her to be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. If so, respond by saying, "We will."

Congregational Response

One: And now I turn to the congregation. The church is the community of Christ, the gathering of lovers in which we grow in faith and commitment.

All: We rejoice to take _____ (*name of person*) under our care. We seek grace to be a community in which the gospel is truly proclaimed to all on God's good earth. Neither differences in culture or religion, race or social standing, politics or gender will keep us from being a presence in love for _____ (*name of person*). May this fertile soil green and come to full flower with us. In turn, may we then become the murmuration of God's hopes and dreams.

Baptism and Blessing

(Take child from parents)

_____ (*name of person*), you are baptized in the name of the God who is Creator and Lover of us all, the One who cares for us as Wildflower and Sparrow, the One who is Wind and Breath of us all. _____ (*name of person*), be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth.

May this Child of God grow into stories of faith and courage, the joy of family and community, acts of subversion and compassion, and heads over heels love for this God's good earth. May they laugh with the poor and weep with the mourning, standing against the wind of oppression so that God's liberating reign may blow into every stream, field, forest, vale, river, and mountain. Amen.

Affirmation

(practiced before baptism and said by the children of the church)

Youth and Young Adult Director: Let this baptism affirm, let it proclaim from the rooftops, let it remind us again and again that no matter what people call me . . .

Children: I am a child of God

Presentation to the Congregation

(Out to meet the new aunts and uncles and cousins)

Gifts from the Congregation

Officiant: Now I would invite the leadership of the congregation to come forward to present gifts to the baptizand/family.

One: On behalf of the Christian Education program, we would like to present this scallop shell. The lines in an scallop shell are the different, individual journeys we take to a common, sacred place. Though our paths may be different, we pray that _____ *(name of person)* will find people here to walk this unique path with them.

One: We give you this small seedling. The seedling is a reminder of _____ *(name of person)* tie to creation. As creation's life goes, so goes the life of _____ *(name of person)*. As _____'s *(name of person)* life goes, so goes the life of creation. In your/their honor, a tree has been planted to reforest areas affected by environmental disasters, restore native biodiversity to protect holistic ecosystems, and to boost the liveliness of local communities (find a place to do that at this website: <https://onetreeplanted.org/products/gift-trees>.)

One: And this is a certificate that will remind all of you that on this day _____ *(name of person)* was taken into the love and care of this community of faith. Praise God for the blessing and promise which is shared here.

Officiant: Let the congregation say, "Amen!"