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**Shell Year—Primary, Unit III**

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# GOD'S PEOPLE ARE BAPTIZED



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## CHAPTER 1

# Jesus Was Baptized

Think about water.

In the beginning, when God began to make all things, water was everywhere.

Water makes everything live. People and animals and plants would die without water.

Water washes things clean. Every day we wash with water. When God chose Noah and his family, a great flood came and washed the whole earth.

Every day we drink water. We thank God for it.

When the time came for Jesus to begin his work as the Messiah (Christ, the Son of God), his cousin John was preparing the way. John preached to crowds of people and told them to “repent” (turn around) and ask God to forgive all their sins. Then he invited them to be “baptized” with water.

“Baptize” was a Greek word. It meant “to take a bath,” or “be washed.” John asked people to come into the River Jordan and be made clean. John knew



Jesus was baptized in a river.  
Today some people are baptized outdoors.

God was about to do something new: God's Son, Jesus, would teach and preach and heal. People would see what Jesus did, and they would know that God is ruler over all.

Many people listened to John and then came to be baptized.

John said, "A man is coming who is much greater than I. I am not even worthy to touch his shoes!" He was talking about Jesus.

One day John had a great surprise. Jesus came and asked to be baptized. John said, "But you should be baptizing me! Do you really want me to do this for you?"

"Yes," Jesus said.

John the Baptizer took Jesus into the river and covered him with clean water. As Jesus stood up to leave, the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son. I am pleased with You."

Jesus went away at once to pray. He needed to be alone.

## CHAPTER 2

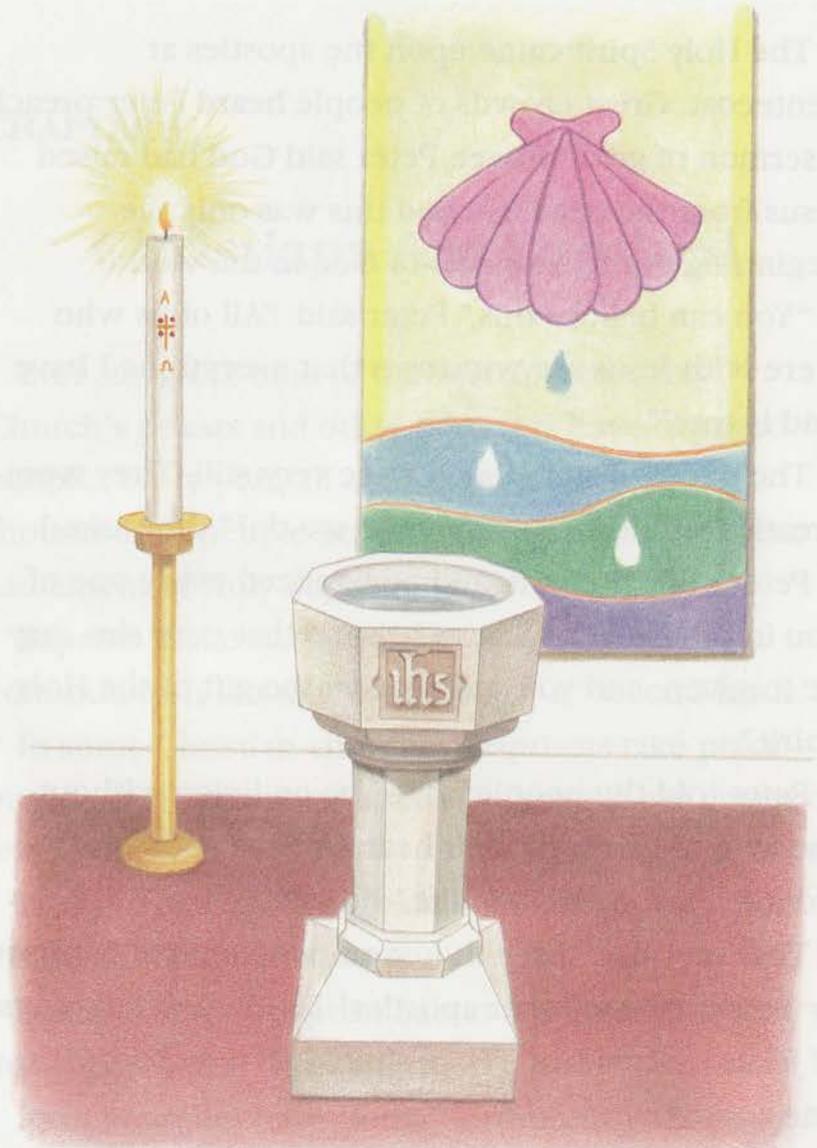
# The Apostles of Jesus Baptized People

The twelve disciples of Jesus were with him when he taught people. They saw him do great deeds of power. After Jesus rose from the dead, the eleven faithful disciples chose Matthias to take Judas' place.

They all remembered the words of Jesus. He said, "Go and tell others about me. Ask them to be disciples, too. When people believe, *baptize them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them all that I have taught you. I will be with you always."

The Church had a new name for the Twelve. They were called "apostles." *Apostle* means "one who is sent out."

Peter, Andrew, James, John—and all the other apostles—would go out to share God's good news with the whole world. They would tell everyone that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus forgives sins. The apostles would baptize everyone who believed!



We are baptized in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles at Pentecost. Great crowds of people heard Peter preach a sermon of great power. Peter said God had raised Jesus from the dead. He said this was only the beginning of the new rule of God in the world.

“You can believe this,” Peter said. “All of us who were with Jesus are witnesses that everything I have said is true!”

The people listened and were very still. They were greatly troubled. “What should we do?” they asked.

Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter told the people not to go on living without the love of Christ in their hearts. “Save yourselves from the wrong kind of life,” he said.

That very day, three thousand people were baptized by Peter and the other apostles! These new followers of Jesus praised God. They shared all they had with one another.

## CHAPTER 3

# Christians Are Baptized

Ever since the time of the first apostles, the Church’s priests and other ministers have baptized people. Every year, all over the world, many thousands of people become Christians in the great Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Baptism makes us members of the Christian community. It is a new beginning—a “second birth.”

In some Christian churches, baptisms take place outdoors in streams or lakes. The people are covered with water.

In some churches, baptism is done in a deep pool inside the church building.

Some churches baptize babies by dipping them down into water three times.

Most churches have “fonts” for water that is poured or sprinkled on the heads of persons who are baptized.

In some churches, the service of Baptism is very long. In others, it is simple and short.



We are marked as Christ's own forever.

At all baptisms, the words are the same: "I baptize you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." These are the very words all Christians have heard ever since the Church began! These words are spoken in many languages, in every country of the world.

In *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Service of Holy Baptism begins on page 299. Here we can read the promises that are made, the prayers, and the directions for baptizing.

After persons are baptized with water, the Bishop or Priest makes the sign of the cross on their foreheads and says: "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen."

Then the congregation hears this sentence: "Let us welcome the newly baptized." We share our happiness. We pass the Peace. We get ready in our hearts and minds to receive Holy Communion on this very special baptism day.

## CHAPTER 4

# Promises Are Made in Baptism

Peter told the crowd at Pentecost about God's great promise. He said God promises to forgive the sins of all who believe in Jesus Christ. He said Christians will have life everlasting.

"This promise is for you, and for your children, and for people in the future—it is for everyone God calls," Peter said.

People make promises, too, at a Baptism. Adults and older children do the promising themselves. Parents and godparents make the promises for babies and young children.

The parents and godparents promise that the children will be "brought up in the Christian faith and life." They promise to pray for the children. They promise to teach the children about Jesus Christ.

All the people in the church make a promise. It is found on page 303 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. We hear this question: "Will you who witness these

vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?"

The people answer, "We will."

Then everyone stands to make the most important promises of all, found in The Baptismal Covenant (page 304). The Covenant begins with three "Do you believe . . . ?" questions. The answers are from the Apostles' Creed.

Five more questions begin "Will you . . . ?" The answer to each one is "I will, with God's help."

We promise to learn all we can about Jesus Christ and to take part in the Church and its services of Holy Eucharist.

We promise to turn away from doing wrong.

We promise to tell others about God in Christ.

We promise to serve and love other people.

We promise to work for justice and peace and to respect everyone as a child of God.

These promises at our Baptism are for life!



We promise to learn about Jesus.



We belong to the family of God.

## CHAPTER 5

# Baptized People Are a Family

Grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and cousins—all are important in our lives. We can learn from them.

But the Church is more than just our relatives. It is our neighbors and friends, and even people we do not know. It is people near and far. All baptized people are in Christ's family.

Some families are large. Others are small.

What do families do together? We eat our meals. We laugh, and we cry. We play, and we work. We speak, and we listen. In many ways, we care for one another.

Christian families pray together. We read the Bible. We go to church and hear the good news of Jesus in Scripture and in sermons. We receive Holy Communion.

Christians reach out to help people in trouble. When people are happy at baptisms and weddings,

we smile with them. When people are very sad about sickness and death, we pray with them and give them our love.

Every time someone is baptized and received into the Church, we can say to ourselves: "That is a new member of Jesus Christ's family. It is good when our family grows, and we are glad."

The apostle Paul cared about families. In a letter to his young friend and helper, Timothy, he said: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you." (*II Timothy 1:5.*)

This was Paul's way of saying that Timothy's *family* was important. Timothy learned about Jesus Christ from his grandmother and mother, who had been baptized into the Church.

Paul called the Church's family "the body of Christ." If anyone hurts, the pain is felt by all. And if anyone rejoices, the joy is shared by all. (We can read Paul's words in *I Corinthians, ch. 12.*)



We promise to pray.

## CHAPTER 6

# We Think About Baptism in Lent

Long ago, most Christians could not read and write. Very few owned Bibles and prayerbooks. Plenty of time was needed for teaching. The Church's bishops and priests used the season of Lent to prepare new believers for baptism at Easter.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days, until Easter. In these six weeks, the Church still prepares for baptisms. Parents, godparents, and others are helped to understand about baptism.

It is important for all who are baptized to learn these things:

- Christians believe in God who made everything, in Jesus Christ who is God's only Son our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit.
- Christians promise to be faithful in prayer and worship, and in receiving Holy Communion.
- Christians promise to live a good life—turning away from what is wrong, telling others about Christ,

serving and loving people, and working for justice and peace.

But Lent is more than just a time to prepare others for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is also a time for all of us to remember what it means to be baptized people.

We remember to ask forgiveness for hurting God and others.

We remember to ask God's help in learning to be kind to our families and neighbors.

We remember to do good deeds in Christ's name.

Above all, we remember to be thankful for all that God has done for us in sending Jesus Christ as our Savior.

When Maundy Thursday comes, the night before Good Friday, we hear the story of how Jesus washed his disciples' feet. (*John 13:1-15.*) Jesus wanted them all to be humble servants. Later, they remembered the water and Jesus' words. They said, "We know what it means to be baptized people!"

## CHAPTER 7

# Baptism and Good Friday

Good Friday is the day we remember how Jesus died.

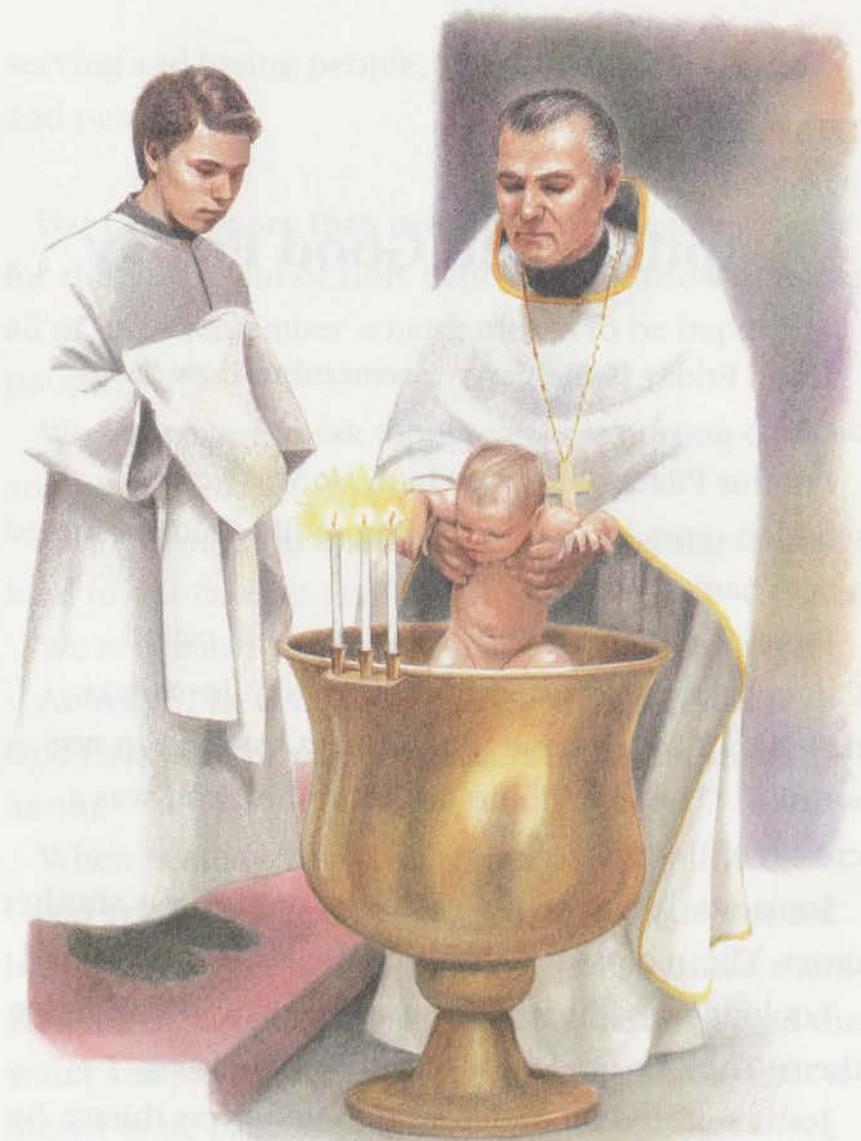
Pontius Pilate sentenced him. He was given a wooden cross too heavy for him to lift. Soldiers forced a man named Simon to carry it.

Outside the city of Jerusalem, on a hill called Calvary, the cross stood against the sky. Jesus was nailed to it by his hands and his feet. At the top was written, "The king of the Jews." On his head was a crown of thorns.

Jesus was helpless. On each side of him was another cross. These crosses were for two thieves.

Looking up to heaven, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing."

Jesus suffered on the cross. When he was thirsty, he was given only vinegar on a sponge. In the middle of the afternoon, death came to the Son of God.



We thank God for the water of baptism.

When we hear the story of Jesus on the cross, we know that good news will come on Easter. But on that first Good Friday, Mary the mother of Jesus, the disciples, and all his dear friends were overcome with sorrow and grief. They thought it was the end—the end of his life and work, and the end of their hopes.

Every time we have a service of Holy Baptism in the Church, the Bishop or Priest blesses the water with a special prayer, found in *The Book of Common Prayer* on page 306. The prayer says, “We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death.”

The prayer makes us think of Good Friday!

But in baptism, no one dies. We are able to live and be thankful. We thank God for life. We thank God for what happened *after* Good Friday—death was followed by new life!

The Easter Vigil in our Church comes on the evening of the day after Good Friday. What a wonderful time for baptisms!



"Alleluia. Christ is risen."

## CHAPTER 8

# Christ Is Risen!

In the Church, our Easter celebration opens with a service called The Great Vigil of Easter. It begins in quiet and darkness, and it ends in joyous song and great light.

As the people arrive, they wait silently—"Vigil" means "watching." The priest lights a fire and prays. We remember that this is the night when Jesus "passed over from death to life."

Next, the new Paschal (Easter) Candle is lighted from the fire. It is carried by a deacon or priest, who says three times, "The light of Christ." Each time, the people say, "Thanks be to God." Sometimes small candles are given to the people. These are lighted from the Paschal Candle. (Candles on the altar are not lighted at this time.)

Then a long and beautiful prayer is sung or said.

The people hear readings from the Bible, followed by psalms and prayers. These might be the story of

Creation, the story of Noah and the Flood, the story of Moses leading the people across the Red Sea, and words from the Hebrew prophets.

A sermon comes after the readings.

Now everyone is ready for the two great parts of the Vigil: Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist.

At the Baptism, we join once more in all the prayers and the promises. As the water is blessed, we remember that this Sacrament is a sign of *new life*. We feel joy.

As the Eucharist begins, the candles at the altar are lighted from the Paschal Candle. The church is shining bright as the priest says: "Alleluia. Christ is risen." All the people shout, "The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia."

Our waiting and watching are over. Easter is here. With the newly baptized, we sing the glad news of the resurrection.

We can find the Easter Vigil in *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 285.

## CHAPTER 9

# God Forgives, and We Forgive

It is a good thing for us all to remember, every day, that we belong to Jesus Christ. When we are baptized, we know this in a special way. We promise to go on learning more about Jesus and to be forgiving people.

Each day we say the prayer Jesus taught us. It begins, "Our Father, . . .," and we call it the Lord's Prayer.

We ask God to forgive us our sins (trespasses), just as we forgive others. Being Christians means being able to forgive.

Everywhere we turn in the Church, we hear that God forgives. This is the good news at our baptism. It is the good news we hear every time we go to Holy Communion. On Good Friday, Jesus asked God to forgive those who put him on the cross!

We are grateful that Jesus opened the way for us all to be forgiven by God. But it is never an easy thing for us to forgive other people.



God forgives me.

Sometimes people say unkind words that hurt very much. We cannot forget how they sounded in our ears.

Sometimes people take things from us unfairly. We feel cheated and angry.

Sometimes people tell lies. Or they hit and injure people.

Sometimes people break important promises. They spoil life for their families or friends.

Sometimes people just ignore us and forget that we are around. It feels bad to be left out.

If we are very, very honest, we admit that we have been guilty of such sins ourselves. When we are truly sorry, we can ask God to forgive us. God will always do it. Being forgiven by God makes us feel new again—like being washed clean.

Because God shows such kindness to us, we are asked to forgive those persons who do bad things. With God's help, we really can forgive others. For baptized Christians, it is the right and good thing to do.