

Holy Baptism

The First Sunday after Epiphany (January 6) is also known as the Baptism of Our Lord. Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into the Church. Because we baptize people in the traditional name of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the material used in the Godly Play baptism presentation is three overlapping white circles, a symbol of the Trinity. We then place images on each of the white circles: the pouring of water for the Creator, the lighting of the Christ Candle for the Redeemer, and the image of the dove and the invisible scent of oil for the Sustainer. If your child has been baptized this is the perfect time to dig out the pictures and other mementos to share.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her

own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

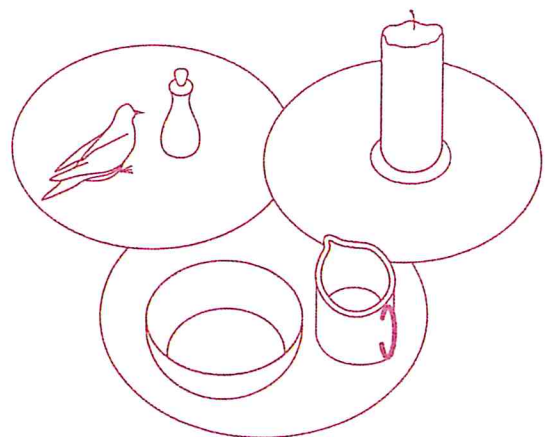
Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. If you do read the presentation, invite your child to show you in the illustration what images represent each of the Persons of the Trinity. (**Note:** The language in this lesson follows the customs of the Episcopal Church; you may wish to substitute your church's customs and key words.) Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation

We baptize people in the name of the Father...the Son... and the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we call the Father *the Creator*. We call the Son *the Redeemer*. We call the Holy Spirit *the Sustainer*.

We remember the Father, the Creator, with water—the water of creation, the dangerous water of the flood, the water the people went through into freedom, the water Jesus was baptized in, the water you were—or will be—baptized in, and so much more.



There was once someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things that people couldn't help it—they just had to ask him who he was. One time when they asked him who he was, he said, "I am the Light." This person was Jesus, the Son, the Redeemer. We remember Jesus with light, like the light of the Christ candle that we lit at Christmastime.

The Holy Spirit, the Sustainer, goes where it will. It rides the invisible wind like a dove and comes to us when we need its comfort and power. It is invisible, but still there, like the scent of oil.

People are baptized when they are babies, or children, or teenagers, or grownups, or when they are very old. We ask the person about to be baptized questions, or we ask the parents or godparents if the baby is too little to answer. We say prayers for them.

We name the child too. Names are very important in baptism. We say the child's name, and then we say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father...and of the Son...and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Then we say to the child, "You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen." We use oil, blessed by a Bishop, to make the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.

This is the day when the child receives her light.

To show this we give the child a candle, lit from the Easter candle called the Paschal candle.

Godly Play Understanding Play (Part 6)

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. To fully enter into Godly Play, we need to be deeply aware of what makes *real* play and what distracts or detracts from it.

Real play—*Godly Play*—is closely related to the Christian word and experience of *grace*. The theologian Frederick Buechner defines grace in his *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, p. 38): "Grace is something you can never get but only be given." There is nothing that the person "saved" can do. To put it more clearly, still following Buechner:

There is *nothing* you have to do.
There is nothing *you* have to do.

There is nothing you *have* to do.
There is nothing you *have* to do.

We can compare the outrageous quality of grace to the outrage of "wasting time" in play. We don't earn it. Paul flatly asserts that grace is unconditional: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Being graceful is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit being with us. The result is effortless movement, *life play*. We no longer try too hard, which makes us self-conscious, awkward and likely to stumble. It is at this graceful point, that we find play—and *Godly Play*—at its most authentic.