

Lent I - Enrolment for Baptism

This rite would normally take place immediately following the homily on the First Sunday of Lent in the year when the catechumens are to be baptised.

CALLING OF THE CANDIDATES TO BAPTISM

The Pastors moves to stand beside the icon of Christ's baptism.

John the baptiser said:

I baptise you with water for repentance,
but there is one coming after me who is more powerful than I.
He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
His winnowing fork is in his hand
and he will clear his threshing floor and gather the wheat into the barn.
But the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Matt 3.11, 12

In this Lenten season
the Church is called to join the catechumens
in this final stage of their journey towards baptism.
With them, the church resolves anew to follow Jesus,
to listen to his words and learn of him,
to cast aside the works of darkness and follow the Light.

So I call now upon the catechumens,
on all whom God has called to the waters of baptism,
step forward and declare yourselves.

The catechumens come forward and stand before the icon of Christ baptised. They are accompanied by their sponsors.

The following dialogue is addressed to each candidate in turn:

N, what do you seek?

**I seek to know Christ
and the power of his resurrection
and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.
I seek baptism into Christ's church.**

The pastor then addresses the sponsors:

N, N & N, you have been mentors and companions for these women and men in their journey of faith. Have they been faithful in hearing the word of God and receiving it to their hearts and minds as the pattern for their lives?

Yes, by the grace of God.

THE LENTEN COVENANT

A pastor addresses all the candidates.

The way to resurrection is difficult.
Christ says that all who would come after him must deny themselves,
take up their own cross, and follow in his steps.
For all who want to save themselves will lose themselves,
but all who are willing to lose themselves for the Christ and his gospel
will find themselves anew.

Mark 8.34, 35

In order that we might know that you are truly reconciled to walking this path,
I ask you these questions:

Are you willing to share in this Church's Lenten worship and daily prayer,
listening always for the call of God in a spirit of humble obedience?

Each catechumen answers in turn:

I am.

Are you willing to be faithful in your Lenten disciplines,
to be a willing participant in the retreat and in your small group,
to seek and accept the spiritual counsel of your pastors and sponsors,
and to give special honour to the inner work of discernment and devotion?

I am.

The pastor continues:

Having heard your testimony, we welcome you (all) as candidates for baptism,
to be celebrated when Lent has ended, at the Vigil of the Resurrection.

The congregation responds:

***Lord Jesus, you call your own by name,
and lead them to the waters of life.***

BLESSING OF THE CANDIDATES

The candidates kneel. A pastor prays:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

God of Light and Love,
as the ancient flood washed away the world's corruption
and watered new beginnings of justice and peace,
so in the saving deluge of baptism we are washed clean and born again.
Throughout this Lenten season

unseal the wellspring of your grace in the hearts of these your children.
Come and preach the word of life anew
that each may hear the call that is for them alone.
Light of the world, shine on their rugged path
that their night of tears might turn to joy on the resurrection morn.
Amen.

(Inspired by a prayer in the *Book of Common Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (USA), p 253)

Another pastor addresses the candidates:

Journey with us now through Lent
as we prepare for the festival of our Lord's death and resurrection.
May God bring you in peace and joy to the day of your baptism
(or confirmation of baptism)
and to fullness of life in Christ's love.
May the God of all comfort, who has called you to glory,
support and make you strong in the strength of Christ.

The service continues with the affirmation of faith.

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