



**COME TO THE WATER**  
**Leader's Guide**

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## Introduction

*I often ask myself what makes a story work, and what makes it hold up as a story, and I have decided that it is probably some action, some gesture of a character that is unlike any other in the story, one which indicates where the real heart of the story lies.*

—Flannery O’Conner

As a life transition, a child’s birth and baptism offers the religious educator or pastor a teachable moment, or a moment with special readiness for learning. “Every pastor has an exciting, life-renewing opportunity to interpret the essential meaning of life and the Christian vision when a child is born and parents seek baptism” (Browning 58). Baptismal practices should be the foundational practices of a church that empowers its members in their lives as disciples of the risen Christ.

Unfortunately, in most instances, this is a missed opportunity. Pastors often make a short visit or meeting with the parents, but do not set up any type of education or support experiences. Even more disturbing is that few have even considered the sacrament of baptism as a time for religious education, not just for the parents or the baptismal candidate, but for the entire congregation. The practice of baptism in most churches today is severely anemic and in need of enrichment.

It does not seem odd our congregations flounder still to find their identity, struggle with guilt and fear, and fight amongst one another with no sign of forgiveness to be found. After all, the sacramental foundations that God has given to us to nourish us in our faith have become spectator sports, slight moments packed into a one-hour worship service. In the Reformed Church, we baptize many as infants, and congregations, as viewers, peer in to watch the mysterious event from a distance.

It is for these reasons that I have chosen to write a baptismal journey guide. The attempt was for this resource to be both theologically articulate and practically relevant, a teaching tool that can be used in churches to help a family or an individual as they approach the formational moment of baptism.

This three-week study is intended to draw on the richness and centering power of baptism and to empower the church to begin to see baptism as singular and ongoing.

This resource is intended to be used by pastors as they enter into conversations with members of their congregation who desire to have their children baptized or who desire to be baptized themselves. It assumes the presence of one elder who has been chosen as a sponsor for the person to be baptized, as well as members of the family—in the case of an infant or youth, the parental/guardian figures in their lives, or in the case of an adult, it could be a parent, good friend, significant other, or spouse. The main point is to include members of the baptismal candidate’s community who can begin to walk alongside him or her in faith in a meaningful and intentional way.

May God meet you in these pages as God has met me in constructing them.

## **Week 1: *Laying Foundations***

*Purpose:* To become acquainted with one another and to learn about the meaning of baptism from a biblical, theological, and congregational perspective.

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Welcome the family and friends, and share your excitement with them about their desire to baptize their child or to be baptized.

Open with prayer.

After praying, ask the parents to share something with you about their child, or have the person being baptized introduce himself or herself to you if you don't already know that person well. If you don't already know, ask them to share briefly with you why they called to set the meeting up. Try to learn about the expectations, questions, fears, concerns, and joys the people gathered have brought with them into the meeting.

Now explain your expectations about what they should be able to learn from meeting together (see the introduction on page 2) and share the plan for the next few meetings.

Give each person a participant guide with lesson materials enclosed.

Allow a moment for them to glance over it if they seem curious.

Have them open it up to the third page, to the "True or False" quiz. Tell them that this is just for fun, and that you won't even go over the answers until the end of the third class. This way they can see what they have learned.

Allow three to five minutes for the activity.

Turn to page 4.

### **QUESTION: What is a sacrament, anyway?**

Talk briefly with the group about how they understand baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Say: "I'm curious what you experience when we celebrate a baptism or partake of the Lord's Supper."

Say:

Our church isn't alone in the practice of these celebrations. For centuries Christians worldwide have sung hymns, gathered at the table, poured water into the font, and offered their prayers communally to God. And I'm convinced that these core practices are not random acts, lifeless rituals, or religious hoops we have to jump through (if appropriate, connect with what was shared. They have likely hinted towards the "liveliness" of some practice in their life as a Christian, and if not, you can relate to that as well).

God has given us baptism and the Lord's Supper so that as we do them time and time again in community, we begin to learn and to see things from God's view. Through the sacraments, we come to know the world according to God.

The word *sacrament* itself gives us a hint into their purpose.

It is based on the Latin word *sacramentum*, which means "something sacred." In the early church *sacramentum* came to stand for many things sacred, including practices that had a hidden meaning.

This is why we say baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, such as the grace we have received from God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. In a sense, the sacraments have been given to us by God as an "aid to our faith" (Calvin 4.14.1).

Pause to check for understanding. Ask if there are any questions. Be hospitable so they will not feel timid about sharing any confusion or questions about what has been said.

### **QUESTION: But aren't we here to learn about baptism?**

Read together the story of Jesus' baptism in Luke 3:1-22. Have each member of the group read a few verses at a time.

Share observations about Jesus' baptism, and ask if anyone sees connections to how we practice baptism in our church.

Transition by asking: "What happens when Jesus is baptized? Does it relate to what happens to us when we are baptized?"

What you want to communicate is that Jesus' baptism is with water and with the Holy Spirit as a sign of God's presence and activity in his life.

The action is not an action of humanity, but of God, signified by the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove. A voice speaks and says, "You are my Son, the beloved." Jesus' baptism is not a ritual of human repentance, human preparedness, or choice. It is an act of God by which we are surely being transformed. There is no human effort but faithfulness and

obedience to bring to the waters of baptism. At the same time there is the sure and endless promise of God of transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**QUESTION: What exactly is happening in baptism? Or, is anything actually happening in baptism?**

Not only does something happen, a lot happens! Baptism sums up the whole of our Christian life—past, present, and future—and offers it to us in a single, powerful sign and seal.

Read together in unison the liturgy that is read at baptism (you may need to adapt this according to your local church practice):

In baptism God promises by grace alone:  
to forgive our sins;  
to adopt us into the Body of Christ, the Church;  
to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us;  
and to resurrect us to eternal life.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:  
to love and trust God completely;  
to forsake the evil of the world; and  
to live a new and holy life (RCA Order for the Sacrament of Baptism).

Say: Let's take this apart a little; it is dense, dense, dense!

1. In baptism God *promises by grace alone to forgive our sins*, to cleanse us, to justify us, to redeem us by the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. It isn't that the actual water of baptism forgives our sins, that the water contains in itself the power to cleanse us and renew us. In baptism we receive the promise, a seal of the promise, of our cleansing, of the work of the Holy Spirit who justifies us in the name of Christ and in the power of God. In the sacrament of baptism, the knowledge and certainty of the gift of our cleansing and forgiveness is received (Calvin 4.15.2; 1 Corinthians 6:11).

2. In baptism *we are buried with Christ unto death that we might rise with him*. When we are baptized, the old goes—we put away old ways, attitudes, habits, desires—and the new comes—we move toward new ways, attitudes, habits, and desires (Romans 6:3-4). It is a change that is so dramatic that it is like dying and rising in Christ.

3. *...so that we might walk in newness of life*. Of course, as we all know from experience, this leaving the old and becoming the new doesn't happen instantly or overnight. Our salvation in Christ is sure, but the journey of becoming like Christ is a lifelong one. I love the way one of my seminary professors put this:

The evidence that we see in our own lives is tenuous, often disappointing, and frequently slow. We wish we could die to the old self more decisively. We wish we could rise to Christ more victoriously. But in spite of what we often judge to be failures on this, God does not reject us or even judge us. The Holy Spirit is patient and persistent. We die and rise in Christ in our baptism and we continue to die and rise in Christ in our life of faith. Baptism does not depend on faith so much as it *calls forth* faith and a life of faith (Brownson).

Essentially, baptism is a once and for all event that gifts the believer with a new start, a new orientation to the world. It is a window into the heart of God through which we can always look to find our bearings and the meaning of life.

**QUESTION: It sounds like baptism is an individual thing. Why have I heard talk about “covenant?” And why does the pastor introduce the baptized person as a member of the family?**

In the Reformed tradition, we believe that baptism is the mark of corporate as well as individual faith. The journey of faith that begins in individual baptism continues in the church community; that is why in the liturgy for the baptism the congregation actually makes vows to nurture the baptized person along in their faith.

In the oneness of the church which carries from the Old Testament, through the New Testament, and into our day, children are a part of the special relationship God maintains with his people through what the Bible calls a covenant. In this covenant God says, “I will be your God and you will be my people.”

This covenant is not for individuals and is not passed down through individual professions of faith alone. God’s promise to be our God is passed through families: because you have faith, your child is included. We baptize the child into this covenant community.

To be baptized is to be incorporated into the body of Christ, and through the body of Christ to become one of those for whom the Redeemer died and rose again.

This isn’t to say that the faith of the individual is somehow irrelevant, for it seems that by being baptized the faith is more plainly opened to the individual and that obedience to the faith is more clearly required of them responsively.

In light of this, baptism is always performed in the context of a congregation of God’s people, and the congregation commits itself to the spiritual nurture of the person being baptized.

Pause to check for understanding. Ask if there are any questions; be hospitable so they will not feel timid about sharing their confusion or questions about what has been said.

When the discussion or the time wraps up, go over the application activities with the group.

End with prayer.

Suggested prayer:

*Lord, let our hearts be good soil, open to the seed of your word. Lord, let our hearts be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood. If our hearts are hard, break the stone away, and if they are lost, lead them on the way. O Lord, let our hearts be good soil. In Jesus name' we humbly ask this, Amen.*

## **Week 2: *Living Faithfully into Our Baptism***

*Purpose:* To consider what it means to live the Christian faith as a family, and discuss how to help children develop their faith.

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Open with prayer.

If the person being baptized is a child, begin by discussing this session's application questions with the parents; the idea is to have them share more personally about their own baptisms. You are not just trying to ready them to baptize their child, but you should use this time as a teachable moment to strengthen the family's own baptismal identity.

One question (What expectation does our baptism carry?) can easily lead you into the focus for this meeting: *Living faithfully into our baptism.*

Discuss: As we discussed briefly last week, in baptism, we *receive* a new self even as we *learn to live* into that new identity. There isn't an instant change; it's a process.

It is important for those who are going to be raising and nurturing this child to think intentionally about how to aid them in living faithfully into their baptism.

Ask:

- As you considered the application questions, what did you observe?
- What are some ways you believe you and the congregation are prepared to nurture your child in the faith?
- What are some areas that could use some improvement or strengthening?

Hopefully the discussion will lead to the following points (if not, just share these ideas with them after the discussion slows down a bit).

### **1. Prayer: Conversation along the way**

Of all the practices that open us for relationship with the One who calls us, prayer is one of the most central.

In prayer, we converse, commune, and listen to God, tending the relationship with him as we tend our earthly relationships. In any good relationship, each party has to attend to the other. The relationship only works because there is mutuality. In prayer this mutuality is expressed as we ask God to listen, and God asks us to listen.

Of course, there will be an ebb and flow in our prayers, times where they deepen and expand, and others where the relationship will enter what St. John of the Cross spoke of as “the dark night of the soul,” or times when prayer is dry and God seems absent.

We can turn to God’s Word for prayers for all times. Encourage the family to begin reading just one Psalm a day to see the breadth of emotions expressed. There is comfort in these words, in knowing that others have been there before us.

(If prayer is new for the group you are talking with, you may want to also talk with them about the Lord’s Prayer as a model for prayer: we name who God is, we praise God, and we petition God.)

Encourage the parents to pray with their child and as a family often—perhaps at meal times, at bedtime, and maybe even throughout the day as they drop the child off at daycare or lay the child down for a nap. Assure them that even when it seems children can’t participate with you, your prayers are heard by God, and that beginning young will also assist you as parent or guardian in forming this habit for your family.

## **2. Discipleship: Commitment to involvement at church**

Discuss: It is important to consider how we are participating in the community of faith we have been baptized into. We learn our identity as we join with others along the journey. While forgiveness is a grace we receive from God, it is in community that we unlearn our old self—the patterns of evil and vengeance.

Discipleship is a way of life, a way of always striving to become more and more like Christ. In a consumeristic society, it is an uphill battle for us not to begin to see our life with Christ as a shopping trip where we go in, pick out the perfect outfit, and leave. Discipleship is ongoing, seeking, changing...not a product.

Ask: How will your family engage its faith and challenge itself toward an interactive and living faith?

## **3. Forgiveness: Modeling the faith received**

Ask: How do we stay in community as a family of faith?

Say: It’s not easy, as I am sure all of us will agree. We have hurt others, we have been hurt. We have a tight grip on our grudges and a loose leash on our tongues.

But to be a disciple of our forgiving Lord and Savior is to be one who forgives out of our forgiveness. Forgiveness may be contrary to the human spirit, but it is the essence of the divine spirit.

There is an undeniable, inextricable connection between what God does and what we do, between the forgiveness we have received from God and the forgiveness we are to give to others.

We are not forgiven because of our goodness. We are not forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. We are not forgiven because we want to be.

We are forgiven by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ. God sent his one and only son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us and for our salvation, for the forgiveness of our sins—freely, unconditionally, without restraint.

And what has been given must be shared so that we do not end up traveling this faith journey alone, alienated from one another.

#### **4. Celebrate: Baptism anniversaries**

I've always found it striking that I do not recall the day of my baptism, of my spiritual birth in Christ, and yet I have all sorts of other dates locked in my mind to be celebrated. From Hallmark holidays to birthdays to anniversaries to the start of a new sports season, it is all locked in there.

Encourage the family to work together to create a small memory book of the baptism, especially in the case of an infant. Place pictures, notes from friends and relatives, special prayers, copies of the liturgy, a bulletin, or any items that they think would be meaningful for their child to have. They might even include some of the thoughts they have had during the classes over these weeks. As a family, every year on the anniversary of the baptism, they can take out the book and read it together. This practice will help them and their child to have an identity rooted in the waters of Christ.

Pause to check for understanding. Ask if there are any questions; be hospitable so they will not feel timid about sharing their confusion or questions about what has been said.

When the discussion or the time wraps up, go over the application activities with the group.

End with prayer.

Suggested prayer:

*Dear Lord, we thank you for putting us in families. We thank you for the love of...[list as appropriate: mothers, fathers, sisters, grandmas, etc.]. We especially*

*thank you for the love that is greater than the love of all our family. We thank you that you loved us so much that you died for us. We thank you that we have been/will be baptized as a part of your family. We thank you for all of the people who make up our church family, young and old, who have your love in their hearts and will pledge to walk alongside us in our journey of faith. Help us to live obediently into our baptismal identities as your children. Amen.*

### ***Week 3: Planning for the Baptism Day***

*Purpose:* To plan for the baptism day and familiarize families with the baptismal liturgy.

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Open with prayer.

Begin by asking the group to share which section of the liturgy spoke to them most significantly as they read it and why. Be sure to thank them for sharing and affirm their connection to the liturgy. You want the words to click with them and to sink in.

Make a note to yourself where these places were so you can personalize the service at that point.

Ask if there are any questions about wording or order in the liturgy.

Let them ask whatever they need to, and try to put the liturgical language in plain and simple terms if needed. Some folks might be familiar with the liturgy and others might find it overwhelming and confusing. Be ready for a variety of reactions.

Put the baptismal liturgy aside and have the group pull out the quiz they took the first week. Go over the answers so they can see how much they have grown even in this short time. This also serves as a great way for you, the leader, to check for learning.

Share pictures or poems from the week two application exercises, asking each person to tell what they were thinking when they drew or wrote them. One option is to ask if anyone would be willing to share their reflective picture or poem with the congregation as a bulletin cover.

Close the time in “class” with gratefulness for their vulnerability and participation.

Now transition into the more “logistical” elements of what will take place on Sunday morning.

You may want to begin with a simple tour of the sanctuary. If there are young children, let them roam in the worship center freely and touch the table, the pulpit, and the vestments. Have everyone in the group touch the font, pour water into it, and dip their hands in it. This would be an appropriate time to

talk over the significance of water and hear their reflections on the Bible passages you had them read as application last week.

The main idea here is that you want the area to become familiar and as comfortable as possible for the family. We need to be sensitive to the fact that while the area around the baptismal font is familiar to a pastor, it might be shrouded with mystery for those coming to be baptized.

Take the time to show the parents where they and their family will be seated and where they should stand during the celebration.

Have them follow the printed liturgy with you and do a dry run through this part of the service. If the parents are really nervous, even practice holding the child in front of them. If they have other children, this is a good time for them to get involved as well.

If at last week's meeting you gave the family a list of baptism songs to choose from, end by having them share the chosen musical selection. Either read or sing the lyrics together.

Pause to check for understanding. Ask if they have any questions; be hospitable so they will not feel timid about sharing their confusion or questions about what has been said.

When the discussion or the time wraps up, go over the application activities with the group.

End with prayer.

Suggested prayer:

*Father in heaven, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our mediator, that you will never again destroy us in our sin as with the flood, but save us as you saved Noah and his family, and spare us as you spared the Israelites who walked safely through the sea. We pray that Christ, who went down into the Jordan and came up to receive the Spirit, who sank deep into death and was raised up Lord of life, will always keep us in the grip of his hand. We pray that the Holy Spirit will separate us from sin and openly mark us with a faith that can stand the light of day and endure the dark of night. Prepare us now, O Lord, to respond with glad hope to your promises so that we may drink deeply from the well of living water. Sustain us all. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.*

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## **Baptism Liturgy: Order for the Sacrament of Baptism**

### PREPARATION

The minister addresses the congregation:

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father  
and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.  
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

*Matthew 28:18-20*

The minister continues, using one or more of the following:

Hear also these words from Holy Scripture:

There is one body and one Spirit,  
just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
one God and Father of all,  
who is above all and through all and in all.

*Ephesians 4:4-6*

Or

As many of you as were baptized into Christ  
have clothed yourselves with Christ.  
There is no longer Jew or Greek,  
there is no longer slave or free,  
there is no longer male and female;  
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3:27-28*

Or

Do you not know  
that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into his death?  
Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death,  
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead  
by the glory of the Father,  
so we too might walk in newness of life.

*Romans 6:3-4*

Or

But to all who received him,  
who believed in his name,  
he gave power to become children of God,  
who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh  
or of the will of man, but of God.

*John 1:12-13*

Or

I will establish my covenant between me and you,  
and your offspring after you throughout their generations,  
for an everlasting covenant,  
to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

*Genesis 17:7*

Or

And if you belong to Christ,  
then you are Abraham's offspring,  
heirs according to the promise.

*Galatians 3:29*

Or

For the promise is for you, for your children,  
and for all who are far away,  
everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.

*Acts 2:39*

**The minister continues:**

Baptism is the sign and seal of God's promises to this covenant people.  
In baptism God promises by grace alone:  
to forgive our sins;  
to adopt us into the Body of Christ, the Church;  
to send the Holy Spirit daily to renew and cleanse us;  
and to resurrect us to eternal life.

This promise is made visible in the water of baptism.

**Water is poured into the font at this time.**

Water cleanses;  
purifies;  
refreshes;  
sustains:  
Jesus Christ is living water.

Through baptism Christ calls us to new obedience:  
to love and trust God completely;

to forsake the evil of the world; and  
to live a new and holy life.

Yet, when we fall into sin, we must not despair of God's mercy,  
nor continue in sin,  
for baptism is the sign and seal  
of God's eternal covenant of grace with us.

#### PRESENTATION

**An elder presents the adult candidates or the parents of children for baptism:**

On behalf of the Board of Elders  
I present (*using full names*)  
[who bring their *child/children*]  
to receive the sacrament of baptism.

#### PROFESSION OF FAITH

**The minister addresses the parents or candidates:**

Beloved of God,  
you stand before us [having brought *this child/these children*]  
to receive the sacrament of baptism.  
I ask you, therefore, before God and Christ's church  
to reject evil,  
to profess your faith in Christ Jesus,  
and to confess the faith of the church.  
Do you renounce sin and the power of evil  
in your life and in the world?

**I renounce them.**

Who is your Lord and Savior?

**Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.**

**At the baptism of adults:**

Will you be a faithful member of this congregation,  
and through worship and service  
seek to advance God's purposes here and throughout the world?

**I will, and I ask God to help me.**

**At the baptism of infants or young children:**

Do you promise  
to instruct *this child/these children*  
in the truth of God's word,  
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;  
to pray for *them*, to teach *them* to pray;

and to train *them* in Christ's way by your example,  
through worship, and  
in the nurture of the church?

**I do, and I ask God to help me.**

The congregation shall rise; the minister or elder addresses the members of the congregation:

Do you promise to love, encourage, and support  
*these brothers and sisters*  
by teaching the gospel of God's love,  
by being an example of Christian faith and character, and  
by giving the strong support of God's family  
in fellowship, prayer, and service?

**We do.**

The congregation and the candidates (or their parents) join in affirming the faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Ghost  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The congregation may be seated now or following the prayer.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The minister says:

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give you thanks, O holy and gracious God,  
for the gift of water.

In the beginning of creation your Spirit moved over the waters.  
In the waters of the flood you destroyed evil.  
You led the children of Israel through the sea  
into the freedom of the promised land.  
In the river Jordan, John baptized our Lord  
and your Spirit anointed him.  
By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ, the Living Water,  
frees us from sin and death and opens the way to life everlasting.

We thank you, O God, for the gift of baptism.  
In this water you confirm to us  
that we are buried with Christ in his death,  
raised to share in his resurrection,  
and are being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Pour out on us your Holy Spirit,  
so that those here baptized may be washed clean and receive new life.  
To you be all honor and glory, dominion and power,  
now and forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

The baptismal covenant shall be repeated for each person receiving baptism.  
At the baptism of children, the minister may ask the parents of each child:

What is the name of this child?

The parents shall give the Christian name.  
The minister may hold infants or small children, addressing each:

*N (use Christian name; omit surname),*  
For you Jesus Christ came into the world;  
for you he died and for you he conquered death;  
All this he did for you, little one,  
though you know nothing of it as yet.  
We love because God first loved us.

Using Christian name/s, omitting surname, the minister shall either immerse  
or pour or sprinkle water visibly and generously at the declaration of each  
name of each person of the Trinity, saying:

*N (use Christian name; omit surname),*  
I baptize you in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The minister may place a hand on the person's head and may mark on the  
forehead the sign of the cross, saying to each:

*N (use Christian name; omit surname),* child of the covenant  
in baptism, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit  
and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen.

## DECLARATION, BLESSING, AND WELCOME

When all have been baptized, the minister may make the following declaration:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only King and Head of the Church,  
*this child/these children* of God *is/are* now  
received into the visible membership of the holy catholic Church,  
engaged to confess the faith of Christ, and  
to be God's faithful servant/s until life's end.

The minister shall offer the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,  
we thank you that you cleanse and renew  
*these* your *children* through your grace alone.  
Bless and strengthen *them* daily  
with the gift of your Holy Spirit;  
unfold to *them* the riches of your love,  
deepening *their* faith,  
keeping *them* from the power of evil  
and enabling *them* to live a holy and blameless life  
until your kingdom comes.

At the baptism of children:

Look with kindness upon these parents.  
Let them ever rejoice in the gift you have given them.  
Grant them the presence of your Holy Spirit  
that they may bring up *these children*  
to know you, to love you, and to serve you. **Amen.**

The congregation shall stand.

Welcome our new brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Joyfully we receive you into the body of Christ.  
Join with us as we give witness in the world to the good news,  
for we are all one in Christ Jesus.  
Alleluia.**

The following blessing may be said or sung by the congregation while the  
elders may greet the baptismal group:

**The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace. Amen.**

*Numbers 6:24-26*