

**Christian Initiation  
Additional Texts in Accessible  
Language**

**Texts for Authorization**

1 **TEXTS FOR AUTHORIZATION**

2  
3 **Presentation of the Candidates**

4  
5 *The candidates may be presented to the congregation. Where appropriate, they may be*  
6 *presented by their godparents or sponsors.*

7  
8 **EITHER**

9  
10 *At the baptism of infants, the president addresses the whole congregation:*

11  
12 Jesus said, 'Let the children come to me. Do not stop them'.

13  
14 We thank God for *N and N* who have come to be baptized today.  
15 Christ loves *them* and welcomes them into his Church.

16  
17 So I ask you all:

18  
19 Will you support *these children* as *they* begin *their* journey of faith?

20 *All* **We will.**

21  
22 Will you help *them* to live and grow within God's family?

23 *All* **We will.**

24  
25  
26 *The president then addresses the parents and godparents:*

27  
28 Parents and godparents, you speak for *these children* today.

29 God knows *them* by name and *they* are his.

30 Will you pray for *them*,  
31 and help *them* to follow Christ?

32 *All* **We will.**

33  
34 **OR**

35  
36 *The president asks those candidates for baptism who are able to answer for themselves*

37  
38 Do you wish to be baptized?

39 **I do.**

40  
41 *Testimony by the candidate(s) may follow.*

42  
43 *The president addresses the whole congregation*

44  
45 We thank God for *N and N* who have come to be baptized today.

46 Christ loves *them* and welcomes *them* into his Church.

47 Will you support *them* on *their* journey of faith?

48 *All* **We will.**

1 **The Decision**

2  
3 *The president address the candidates directly, or through their parents, godparents and sponsors*

4  
5 We all wander far from God and lose our way:  
6 Christ comes to find us and welcomes us home.  
7 In baptism we respond to his call.

8  
9 Therefore I ask:

10  
11 Do you turn away from sin?  
12 **I do.**

13  
14 Do you reject evil?  
15 **I do.**

16  
17 *The candidates, together with their parents, godparents and sponsors, may turn at this point.*

18  
19 Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?  
20 **I do.**

21  
22 Do you trust in him as Lord?  
23 **I do.**

24  
25 **Signing with the Cross**

26  
27 *The president or another minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each*  
28 *candidate, saying*

29  
30 Christ claims you for his own.  
31 Receive the sign of his cross.

32  
33 *The president may invite parents, godparents and sponsors to sign the candidates with the*  
34 *cross. When all the candidates have been signed, the president says*

35  
36 Do not be ashamed of Christ.  
37 You are his for ever.

38 *All* **Stand bravely with him**  
39 **against all the powers of evil,**  
40 **and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.**

41  
42 May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,  
43 and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

44 *All* **Amen.**

45  
46

1 **Prayer over the Water**

2

3 *EITHER*

4

5 Loving Father,  
6 we thank you for your servant Moses,  
7 who led your people through the waters of the Red Sea  
8 to freedom in the Promised Land.

9 We thank you for your Son Jesus,  
10 who has rescued us from the deep waters of death  
11 and opened the way of salvation.

12 Now send your Spirit,  
13 that those who are washed in this water  
14 may die with Christ and rise with him,  
15 to find true freedom as your children,  
16 alive in Christ for ever.

17 *All* **Amen.**

18

19 *OR*

20

21 We praise you, loving Father,  
22 for the gift of your Son Jesus.  
23 He was baptized in the River Jordan,  
24 where your Spirit came upon him  
25 and revealed him as the Son you love.  
26 He sent his followers  
27 to baptize all who turn to him.  
28 Now, Father, we ask you to bless this water,  
29 that those who are baptized in it  
30 may be cleansed in the water of life,  
31 and, filled with your Spirit,  
32 may know that they are loved as your children,  
33 safe in Christ for ever.

34 *All* **Amen.**

35

36

1 **Commission**

2

3 *EITHER*

4

5 *Where the newly baptized are unable to answer for themselves, a minister addresses the*  
6 *congregation, parents and godparents. The address includes*

7

8 • The welcome of the Church, local and universal

9 • The importance of belonging to the Christian community

10 • The responsibilities of parents and godparents

11 • The challenge to grow in Christian discipleship

12

13 *OR*

14

15 *Where the newly baptized are able to answer for themselves, a minister addresses them.*

16 *The address includes*

17

18 • The welcome of the Church, local and universal

19 • The importance of belonging to the Christian community

20 • The challenge to grow in Christian discipleship

21 • The call to share God's love

## GUIDANCE NOTES

A set of draft Guidance Notes follows. These notes are intended to complement the liturgical texts with suggestions for making the rite more accessible when actually performed. The notes emphasise movement and symbolism as important components in conveying meaning. Unlike the texts, the Guidance Notes do not require Synodical authorization.

### GUIDANCE NOTES

#### *Introduction*

These texts are all alternative to the existing provision in *Common Worship: Initiation*. Any one of the sections may be substituted for the equivalent section in *Common Worship: Christian Initiation*. It is not necessary to use all the alternative sections together: an alternative Prayer of the Water could be used, for example, while retaining one of the forms of Decision from *Common Worship: Christian Initiation*. Where one of the alternative sections is used, that section should be used in its entirety: existing and additional provision should not be combined within a given section.

To make a baptism service accessible to those who are not used to being in church is to think seriously, both about the texts that are to be used, and about the way the whole rite is articulated. A rite is made up of more than words: movement, action, silence and gesture are also of primary importance. These notes complement the provision of additional texts with suggestions for their use in practice.

#### *1. The Decision*

The Decision includes two pairs of questions.

- The first pair represents a movement of separation from the old order of sin and death, from the old Adam.
- The second pair represents a turning towards newness of life and an adherence to Christ. This separation and turning can be well expressed through a physical movement of turning. The articulation of the movement will depend on the layout of the church.

The first pair of questions might typically be answered facing away from the east end, and the second pair after turning to face a symbolic location of new life in the risen Christ, such as the font, holy table, or the Easter Candle. (Ministers should think carefully about where they themselves stand at this point, so that the symbolic turning does not appear as a turning towards the minister).

#### *2. Signing with the Cross*

When the Signing takes place immediately after the Decision, the minister may trace the sign of the cross on the candidate's forehead with olive oil (also called the oil of catechumens). The roots of this anointing lie in the enrolment of catechumens at the beginning of the preparation period for baptism. Parents, godparents and sponsors may also be invited to sign the candidate with oil. There is rich biblical symbolism associated with

anointing. It is an image of cleansing, of blessing, of consecration to God's purpose, of preparation for athletic contest which is itself an image of the struggle of the Christian life (cf. 1 Sam 16.13, Psalm 23.5, Psalm 45.7, Psalm 133.2).

Anointing with the oil of chrism may accompany the prayer after baptism, possibly by pouring the oil over the crown of the candidate's head. Alternatively, if the Signing with the Cross takes place after baptism (rather than as a response to the Decision), oil of chrism can be used for it. Chrism is a fragrant oil, evoking the presence and joy of Jesus Christ, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

Many parishes use oil which has been blessed by the Bishop. This underlines the fact that each individual baptism is an act of the whole Church.

### **3. *Prayer over the Water***

Given that water is essential to the performance of a baptism, and that the symbolism of water is central to the meaning of the rite, it is worth drawing attention to the water. It can be poured into the font from a jug, visibly and audibly, possibly by a godparent, before the prayer over the water.

### **4. *White robes***

Immediately after the baptism, the newly baptised can be wrapped in a white scarf or shawl, symbolic of being clothed with Christ.

### **5. *The Commission***

It is intended that the minister (or other suitable person) will talk directly and simply in his or her own words to the parents, godparents and congregation, or to the newly baptized in the case of the baptism of those able to answer for themselves, covering the topics listed in the bullet points. Some ministers may find it helpful to speak from notes held in the hand, but it is desirable to avoid giving the impression that a written text is simply being read aloud. As an example, the address might be something like the following:

Parents and godparents, we are glad to have welcomed you here for the baptism of *N and N*. Today they have joined us on our Christian journey. Baptism unites us with Christ and to his whole Church, on earth and in heaven.

Here, we shall do all that we can to ensure that there is a welcoming place for you. We will play our part in helping you guide *these children* along the way of faith.

Bringing up children as Christians has its challenges. *N and N* will need to discover the story of Christ's birth, death and resurrection, the pattern of his loving life, and the teaching that he gave. We pray that *they* will come closer to God as *they* grow in faith, explore the Bible, and make *their* baptismal promises for *themselves* when *they* come to confirmation.

As well as worshipping with the church, Christians follow Jesus by standing up for truth and justice, and showing compassion to those in need. They are to be faithful and loving. The example that you give by prayer and the life that you lead will affect *N and N* for *their* whole life. Remember to ask for God's help, and pray for *them* often, as we now pray for you.

Or, at the baptism of those able to answer for themselves:

*N*, we are glad to have welcomed you to (*name of church*) for your baptism. There will always be a place for you here. Your baptism joins you to Christ and to his whole Church, in every part of the world, in the past and in the future, on earth and in heaven.

Even before today, God began his work in you, but it will take the whole of your life to complete that work. There will be moments when the journey ahead is a delight and there will be times when it is hard, but you will never be alone. You will always have the support of other Christians. There will be many milestones on your journey: confirmation will be one of them.

Remember that in Jesus heaven has touched our world. Belonging to him will change your life and, through reading the Bible, you will learn more deeply the story of God's love. Through worship, prayer and caring for others you will grow more and more like Jesus. Stand up for fairness, truth and kindness.

God's love is for you, and for everyone. Share with other people the good news of his love.

## **6. *The Giving of the Candle***

The candle given to the newly baptized is appropriately lit from the Easter candle in churches which use one, and will itself often be a miniature copy of the Easter candle. It needs to be clearly explained that the candle is for the family to take home. They can be encouraged to light it at future birthdays, on the anniversary of baptism, or other special occasions.

## **7. *Welcoming a child into the wider congregation***

Where a baptism has taken place at a separate service, the family can be invited to return at a main Sunday service for the child to be welcomed by the wider congregation.