



*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ
(Romans 8.13-17)*

BAPTISM AS ENTRY INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan. As he came up from the water the Spirit descended upon him and filled him and he heard a voice from heaven: **“You are my Son, the Beloved. In you I am delighted”**. After forty days being tested in the wilderness, Jesus reappears with the message: **“The Kingdom of God has come near! Repent and believe in the good news!”**

Our baptism is modelled on Jesus' baptism. In baptism:

- ❖ we repent and turn to God
- ❖ we receive the Spirit
- ❖ we are restored as children of God and members of the Body of Christ, which is the community of the Kingdom of God.

If you look at the story in the Bible at Acts 8.26-39 an Ethiopian official is baptised by Philip after a very short explanation of the 'good news' (gospel) about Jesus. What is most important is that he wants to be baptised in response to that news. Nothing else is asked of him.

Later on it became traditional to prepare for baptism during the forty days of Lent and then to be baptised on Easter Sunday or at Pentecost (50 days after Easter). During the weeks leading up to baptism people would be taught the faith and practice of the followers of Jesus.

To enter the Kingdom and to be restored as a child of God is an ongoing journey but baptism marks a decisive point on that journey. To be able to call God 'our Father' means that we are moving from an old way of life to a new way of life: from darkness to light; from slavery to freedom; from fear to love. But this requires us first of all to admit that we and humanity as a whole have been living in darkness, slavery and fear. This admission is the beginning of what we call 'repentance'.

A Baptism of Repentance

In the baptism service we say out loud that we turn away from evil and turn towards Christ. Sometimes this is acted out like this:

Facing west, towards sunset and darkness.	Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God? I reject them. Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil? I renounce them. Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour? I repent of them.
Turning to face east – towards the rising sun as a symbol of Christ.	Do you turn to Christ as Saviour? I turn to Christ. Do you submit to Christ as Lord? I submit to Christ. Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life? I come to Christ.



- Repentance means 'turning around' or 'returning'. We turn away from the things that destroy

our life and that of other people and turn towards God as the source of life.

- 'Sin' is any way of living in which we are separated from God and from one another.

- The 'Devil' is the force or power in us and in the world around us that tempts us to do what is wrong or which tells us that we are no good (and that there is no point trying).

- We have to face this temptation every day and every day we turn again to God. God's door of mercy is always open. Even if we have broken our promises a thousand times God, as a loving Father, still calls us to return.

- To turn to Christ means that we recognise we need help, that we cannot make the spiritual journey on our own and that want to set Jesus as our guide and teacher at the centre of our lives.

To be a child of God is to seek to know, love and obey God. Jesus taught his followers to pray to God as Father and to pray for the coming of the Kingdom

Our **Father**, who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name;
Thy **Kingdom** come!
Thy will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us
And lead us not into
temptation but deliver us
from evil.
For Thine is the **Kingdom**,
the Power and the Glory,
for ever and ever, Amen.