

Celebrant's Guides: Infant Baptism



Music for Baptisms

Baptism normally takes place in one of two contexts: a Sunday Mass or a self-contained service. A family which regularly attends Mass might naturally arrange the Baptism for their usual Mass, and the musical support would be in keeping with the way that particular Mass is usually celebrated. Where the structure of Baptism within Mass differs from the self-contained service, the {Mass Adaptations} are given in braces below.

Self-contained services tend to take place on Sunday afternoons – since Baptism is normatively on Sunday and the building is in use the rest of the day! – and the congregation may well include few people who are regular churchgoers or familiar with Church music. It is quite possible to celebrate such a service with no singing at all – yet with only a little effort, some solemnity may be added through music.

- ▶ The celebrant could sing, solo, the blessing over the water, the final blessing over the people, and short verses during processions from one place to another; he could also lead a sung Litany of Saints.
- ▶ An organist or other musician can provide instrumental pieces (this may have cost implications, of course).
- ▶ A soloist or cantor can sing pieces on their own, or bring in the congregation for simple refrains (ditto costs).
- ▶ Suitable hymns utilising a few well-known tunes may work if enough of the congregation are at least occasional churchgoers.

Sometimes a devout family will choose a baptism outside Mass because of timing considerations for their guests; if a large number of regularly practicing churchgoers are expected, you could be more ambitious. Baptism is the gateway to all the sacraments – it deserves to be celebrated well!

Liturgical opportunities for hymns, antiphons and instrumental pieces:

- ▶ Procession of celebrant to greet family (= Entrance)
- ▶ Procession from place of greeting to Chair/Ambo {Gloria where required}
- ▶ Liturgy of the Word (responsorial psalm/Alleluia)
- ▶ Between homily and intercessions {but not at Mass}
- ▶ Procession from place of exorcism to the font
- ▶ ‘Expression of Faith’ in lieu of Q&A Creed
- ▶ Acclamation immediately child is baptised
- ▶ Procession from font to altar {At Mass, leads into preparation of gifts}
- ▶ Thanksgiving/Magnificat after Dismissal (= Recessional)

In addition to the hymn material listed below, remember the possibility of:

- ▶ Psalms intoned by the celebrant using tones known to him
- ▶ Material from nn 247-249 of the Rite chanted to similar tones [these are useful for providing a SHORT musical interlude]

USEFUL HYMNS:

This and the following tables are based on three hymnals in common use in England and Wales:

CfE = *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone* (I consulted the 1995 McCrimmons edition)

HONS = *Hymns Old & New with Supplement* (using the 1989 Kevin Mayhew edition)

Laudate is based on the 2004 *Decani Music Melody/Guitar* edition

Disclaimer: *the choice to include anything in the list below is partly based on my own familiarity with the piece. Worthy music from the hymn books and other sources used may have been excluded, simply because I would not feel competent to carry it – and if I am in a parish where there are pieces that others CAN carry, this will become apparent. This list is no substitute for your own research!*

In the table which follows, I have attempted to identify hymns whose content touches on Baptismal themes, and which are most likely to be familiar to congregations I've worshipped in, or which can be sung to familiar tunes. Don't forget to make use also of the thematic indexes in your parish's hymnbook – you can make use of topics such as 'Entrance' and 'Thanksgiving' as well as those touching directly on baptism.

Clicking on the name of a hymn or tune should play the first line to help you identify the piece. I have not sought copyright permission, on the basis that the first line is a spur to encourage you to buy the full music and of no use other than to identify the piece in question.

FIRST LINE	TUNE	NOTES	HONS	CfE	Laudate
Abba, Abba Father			1	7	932
Abba, Father, send your Spirit			3	8	293
All over the world			26	/	984
Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the Risen Lord			14	32	268
Awake, awake, fling off the night!	Or use Creator of the stars of night or On Jordan's Bank	LM: AA BB	52	64	851
Baptised in Water	<i>Morning Has Broken</i>	Theme of dying & rising with Christ	/	67	407
<i>Blest are the pure in heart</i>	SM: Franconia		66	88	908
<i>Breathe on me, breath of God</i>	SM: Carlisle		70	98	302
<i>Come to the Water</i>			400	/	408
<i>Do not be afraid</i>			122	147	972
<i>Father, in my life I see</i>			132	160	317
<i>God, at Creation's Dawn</i>	<i>Thou Whose Almighty Word</i>		/	204	401
<i>If God is for us, who can be against</i>			231	295	793
<i>O Praise Ye the Lord</i>			425	547	406
<i>Oh living water, refresh my soul</i>			402	566	931
<i>Oh the word of the Lord</i>			431	/	979
<i>Rejoice, Rejoice (Kendrick)</i>			618	618	157
<i>The light of Christ</i>			529	703	747
<i>You shall cross the barren desert</i>		=Be not afraid	627	830	964
<i>You who dwell in the shelter</i>		=On Eagle's Wings	783	832	952

Settings of Psalm 23 and of the Magnificat

These can be found in my [Index of Psalms and Canticles](#).

Other music useful for Baptism Services

Credal songs

HONS 558 *This is our faith*

CfE 173 *Firmly I believe and truly*

CfE 417 *We believe* (in one God / one Lord / one Spirit)

Laudate 546 *We believe* by C. Walker – refrain to Q&A

Litany of Saints

Simple Chant – Rite of Baptism of Children p. 165

Saints of God, come to our aid! – James Walsh, *Laudate* 369

Pray for us to the Lord Our God! – Gerard Bradley, Wonersh file

More advanced music...

A good number of people present must know the piece well to carry these.

CfE 221 *God, our fountain of salvation*

CfE 401 *Water of life*

CfE 145 *Deep Within*

CfE 787 *We shall draw water joyfully*

Laudate 396 *Up from the waters*

Laudate 402 *O Come Let us Follow*

[Credits & References](#)

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