

April 7, 2008

To: The clergy of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI

From: Bishop Sue

Concerning Baptism:

I have become aware that some of our clergy appear to be unaware of the discipline around Baptism in this Diocese. There are three sources of information on this topic: the current Diocesan Policy 1.1.1, the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer (p. 522, 541) and the directions in the Book of Alternative Services (p.146, 150). Private baptism is only for an emergency for someone critically ill or for other extraordinary circumstance. It is not to be administered indiscriminately. Clergy of our diocese are not free to use their own discretion in holding private baptisms in churches. Private baptisms are reserved for emergencies, normally for the critically ill person who, hopefully on recovery, will be brought to the congregation for reception by the whole faith community.

The Diocesan Policy may be found on the diocesan web site – “Diocese” on the top menu and then “Policies and Procedures” on the left menu.

Collegiality among the clergy is important. This is damaged when a priest does a private baptism for someone who is not a member of the parish and undermines the colleague who has upheld the teaching of the BCP and the BAS and the Diocesan Policy. Collegiality is also destroyed when a priest does a private baptism in a parish without the permission of the parish priest who has been inducted into that parish.

As we are all called to build up the Body of Christ, let us choose actions that accomplish that goal.

*+ Sue*