

Information about the Sacrament of Baptism and a practical guide to your child's baptism

Welcome

It is wonderful that you are preparing to have your child or children baptised. We hope the following information is helpful.

Please make contact with the parish office if you would like your child to be baptised. We will arrange for you to meet with Fr John or Fr Benedict. During that meeting the priest will fill in the parish application form with you.

What is the Sacrament of Baptism?

Through baptism, God enables us to participate in his life in Jesus Christ and makes us his children. It is through this sacrament that we receive the Holy Spirit and become members of the People of God, of the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Baptism becomes our commitment to grow in this new life and to strive to acquire spiritual maturity. By baptism, God purifies us from sin.

Baptism is the sacrament of faith which has the Risen Christ as its source, and it is the offer of salvation for all people. Intimately linked to confirmation and to eucharist, baptism forms, with these two sacraments, Christian initiation.

When your child is baptised, **they join our parish community**. This means that they are invited to apply for a place at **one of our four primary schools**. But, of course, wanting your child to go to one of our schools is not reason enough for them to be baptised.

Commitment to the Catholic Faith

By presenting your child for baptism you are taking on the responsibility of bringing your child up in the Catholic faith.

If you are married, **and one of the spouses is not a Catholic**, it is the Catholic spouse who takes on this responsibility.

"Today, carry this thought home with you. We must be transmitters of the faith. Think of this, think always of how to hand on the faith to your children. These children are links in a chain. You have a baby son or daughter to be baptised, but in several years, it will be they that have a baby to baptise, or a grandchild and so, the chain of faith! Parents, above all, have the task of raising children in the faith in which they were baptised. The faith then becomes the greatest gift a child is given. It is the most beautiful inheritance that you can give them: the faith!"

Pope Francis (2014)

What is required?

Your child must be under the age of seven. If they are not, please speak to Fr John or Fr Benedict about this.

Ideally, you will be coming to Mass on Sundays, with your child. But as a minimum your life much not be out of harmony with Catholic values. There must "be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion" (Canon 868 1.1). In other words, the Church is ensuring that this child will be raised in the practice of the faith into which he or she has been baptised.

Your child is to be baptised in the faith of their parent(s), godparent(s) and of the Church. It is important you read through the following questions which the Godparent(s) and Catholic parent(s) will be asked to profess during the ceremony:

- Do you reject Satan?
- And all his works?
- And all his empty show?
- Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

If you do not believe what you are being asked to profess, please speak to Fr John or Fr Benedict. This does not mean your child cannot be baptised, but is worth speaking about.

Basic duties of a Catholic parent:

- To love and care for your child as God loves them.
- To teach your child to pray.
- To teach your child the Catholic faith.
- That you come to Mass on Sundays with your child.

The Godparent(s)

- It is important that you discuss who you are considering to be a Godparent with the priest before you someone to take on this roll.
- You may have **up to two** godparents. If you have two, **one must be a man and the other a woman.**
- They must be a Catholic who has received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist.
- They must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and will be a good role model for the one being baptised, and be neither the father nor the mother of the child.
- Being a Godparent is a spiritual role – it is not in any way related to being a legal guardian (or potential future legal guardian) of your child.

Christian Witnesses

- Christians from other denominations may act as 'Christian Witnesses.'
- You can have multiple Christian witnesses (but only two Godparents).

- A non-baptised person cannot be a witness (Code of Canon Law, cc. 872-874; Catechism of the Catholic Church 1255).

Inviting someone to be a **Godparent** implies the following:

- A request by the parents for the assistance of the Christian community in general and the individual Godparents in particular in raising their child in the Catholic faith.
- An affirmation of the faith of the individuals invited to be Godparents and a challenge to them to witness their faith.
- Godparents “must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptised - child or adult - on the road of Christian life.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1255)
- The Godparent is to be a model, guide and witness for your child as he or she grows in faith. It is good when a Godparent lives close to the family and is able to visit throughout the year.

Practical information ahead of the ceremony

- Please be aware that the priest will, on three occasions, need to touch your child. Once to anoint them at the bottom of the neck, once to anoint the forehead and once to bless the ears and mouth.
- The priest will ask you / one of the parents to hold your child over the font for the moment of baptism.
- The ceremony lasts approximately **30 minutes**.
- You are welcome to take **photos**, but please do so discreetly. Ideally the parent(s) and godparent(s) will not be taking photos. There will be the opportunity at the end to have group photos. If you would like the priest to be in a group photo, please just ask.
- There is no fee for the service. However, **it is customary to give an offering to the priest.** (The priest's income comes from these offerings).
- Your child does not need to have a saint's name, although this is desirable. As a minimum, the Church requires that **no name "foreign to a Christian mentality" be given to the child** (Canon 855).
Consider, however, choosing a name for the child from the rich tradition of models of the Christian life. In some cultures one name could be after the saint whose feast day the child is born on or around. Then, as the child grows up, encourage him or her to learn about the patron, perhaps promoting a devotion to that saint.
- Ideally your child will be **wearing white**.
- Please bring a **white shawl**, which they will be wrapped in during the ceremony.

Symbols in the Baptism Ceremony

The Sign of the Cross

This happens right at the beginning of the Celebration. It symbolises with the imprint of Christ that the child to be baptised is going to belong to him. It reminds us that the Cross is not only a sign of pain, but a great sign of salvation and victory over sin and death. By signing the Cross, we sign hope on this child. The sign of the Cross is a sign of welcome to the Body of Christ, the Church.

Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens.

This is a preparation for the profession of faith. It asks God to strengthen the child and keep all harm away from him. Catechumen is the name normally given to adults who prepare for Baptism and the faith. The word "Catechumen" means "candidate".

Baptism

It is performed by pouring the water three times over the child's head. This action is accompanied by the words: "I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Anointing with Holy Chrism

The child is then anointed with Chrism which has been consecrated in the Chrism Mass of the Bishop on Holy Thursday in the Cathedral. The child who has just become a Christian is anointed like Christ himself as priest, prophet and king. The word "Chrism" comes from the name "Christ".

The White Garment symbolises that the child has "put on Christ" and has risen with him. It reminds us of purity, free from sin and bearer of a great dignity. The child is a "new creation" clothed in Christ. It is a reminder of the first Christians who were clothed with a white robe after being baptised.

The Lighted Candle

This candle is lit from the Easter Candle. It is a sign that Jesus has enlightened the child. He is the light of the world and the child should always live as a child of the light. We entrust the Light to the parents and Godparents so that they may care for this light always. Christ shall be the guiding light for the child.

The last symbol is the Ephphatha Rite

The priest, whilst touching the mouth and ears of the child, says the words of blessing, praying that the child will hear the Word of God and have the courage and grace to speak it when they are older.