

# Baptism

Baptism is the first of the sacraments of Christian Initiation. Through Baptism we are freed from sin, and reborn as children of God. Through Baptism we become members of the Body of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and begin to share in her life and mission.

The other two sacraments of Initiation are Confirmation and Eucharist (Holy Communion): those baptised as infants celebrate these sacraments at a later date. Those who are adult - or are older children will celebrate all three sacraments in a single celebration.

## ...is a beginning

Baptism is a sacramental celebration. But it also is about much more than that celebration. It marks the beginning of a life lived in Christ.

In order for baptism to bear fruit, the celebration of the sacrament has to be followed by an active sharing of the life of faith afterwards. Living, and trying to live, according to the teaching and example of Jesus enables the gifts of baptism to flourish as a child develops and grows.



Our community is delighted that you wish to raise your child as a Christian, a member of the Roman Catholic church. We will do all that we can to support you in your role as parents, the first teachers of your children in the faith. We will try to do this through our parish community, its ministers and its groups; and through our schools. But no-one and nothing can replace the role of a parent.

As a parent, you have a most important role in helping the promise and potential of baptism to be fulfilled. Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children in the ways of faith by what they do and say.

## Practicalities

### The Basics

Before a child can be baptised it is necessary that at least one of the parents (or guardians) of a child consents to the baptism and that there is a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the practice of the Catholic faith.

## Preparing for baptism

In our parish preparation for baptism has three parts:

1. *An initial meeting with a member of the parish team* to meet with you, to learn about why you ask for baptism, and to have a first conversation about the practicalities of the preparation. You will either complete a form there and then, or be given one to take away and complete. When the form is completed and returned you will be given details of the next Baptism Preparation meeting
2. *A Baptism Preparation meeting which is hosted by a parish catechist* and is attended by a number of parents. It is usually held in the Jubilee Room at Our Lady's at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon. It explores the sort of questions posed on the back of this leaflet. The meeting is kept deliberately short to make it easier for parents to arrange for child care.
3. *A meeting with the priest or deacon who will be baptising your child.* This will usually take place during the week before the baptism and will focus on immediate preparation for the baptism service.

## Children and preparation for baptism

A child up to about four years of age is baptised as an infant and on the basis of the faith of his or her parents. Thus the preparation we offer for the baptism of infants is intended to help parents consider and even deepen their own faith, and reflect on how they will share that faith with their children.

Older children - children of catechetical age - are baptised on the basis of their own faith. That faith needs to be developed and nurtured so that they might be able to understand what they promise at baptism, and what baptism means. Children over the age of five receive a much more extended process of preparation for baptism, which usually includes the parish first holy communion programme.

## Godparents

A child may have a single godparent (either godfather or godmother) or two, in which case there should be both a godfather and a godmother.

Godparents must be Catholics who have been confirmed. They must be at least 16 years old. They should take their faith seriously - for example coming regularly to Mass, and trying to live their daily lives following the teaching of Christ. They should be able to fulfil the responsibilities of godparents.

Other Christians may be witnesses and share in the customary roles of godparents. The role cannot be given to non-Christians.

### Day and Time of the service

Parish baptisms take place on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month at 3.30pm. The celebrations are for the baptism of several children. However should a family wish to have the baptism during Sunday Mass they are welcome to ask for this.

### Parish Prayer before and after Baptism

Baptism is a service of importance to the family, but also to our parish. Because most baptisms take place outside of Mass we also arrange prayer before and after baptism whereby the parish can welcome your child and pray for him/her before baptism, and also celebrate the fact of their baptism afterwards. At the 0930 Mass on the first Sunday of the month there is a prayer of blessing for families who will be bringing their children for baptism during that month. At the 12 noon Mass on the second Sunday of the month parents are invited to bring children baptised in the past month to be introduced to the parish and for a blessing. (It is wise to check with the priest in case the dates have to change in any particular month.)

### Fees

There are no fees for baptism in our parish. However if you wish to make an offering to the Church you are of course most welcome to do so. And if you are a UK tax payer, and use a Gift Aid envelope (one is attached), the parish can reclaim the income tax you have already paid on this gift - increasing its value to the parish by 25% at no additional cost to you.

### Photography

During the service itself the focus is on prayer, and photographs should not be taken. There is generally ample opportunity for photographs to be taken after the service.

#### A prayer for you and your family.

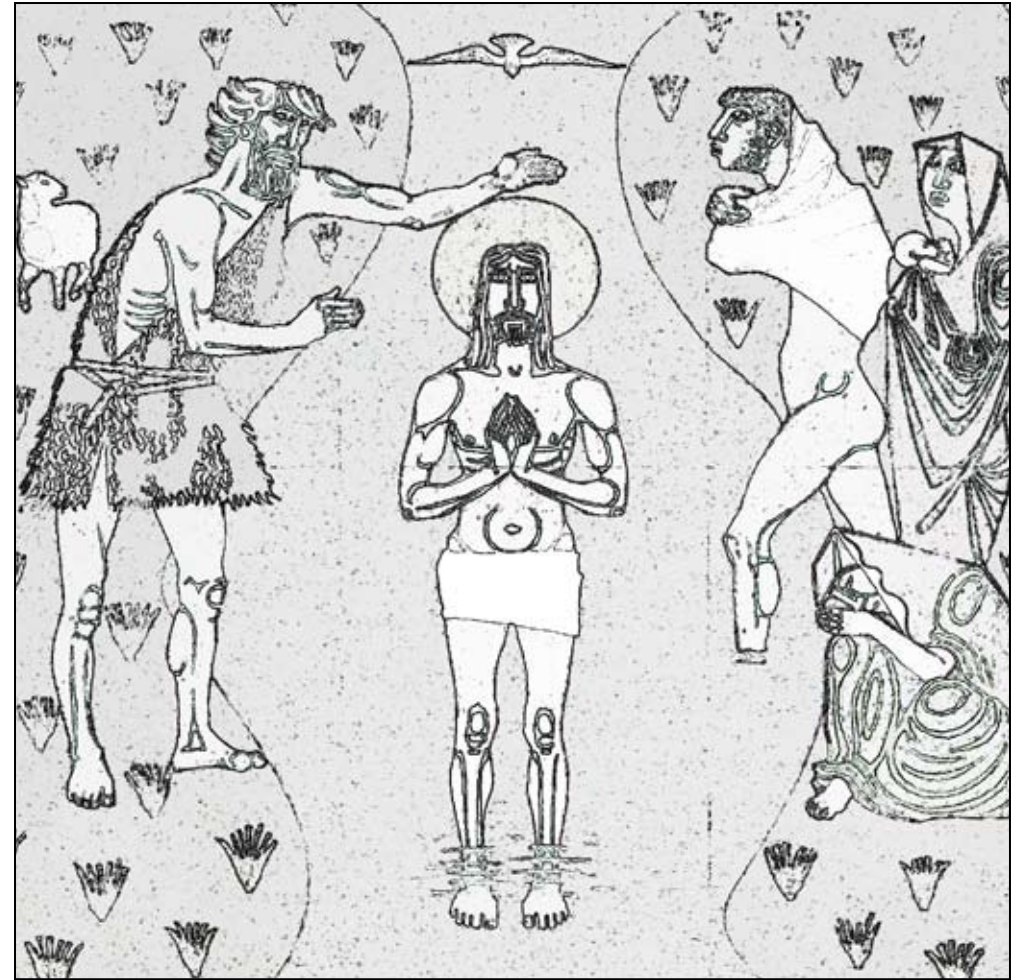
God, our creator, cherish this child.

Jesus, our Saviour, protect him/her.

Holy Spirit, our comforter, strengthen him/her. Amen.

#### Some questions to ponder

- What does it mean to be a Christian parent?
- Why am I having my child baptised?
- What does baptism do or make possible?
- What is a Christian name? Has my child got one?
- What are godparents for? How should I choose them?
- When should my child begin to attend Mass?
- When and how should I teach my child to pray?



# Alive in Christ

**You, your baby  
& Holy Baptism**