

HOLY BAPTISM | CHRISTENING

Holy Baptism is the beginning of a journey – a journey of faith. In Baptism God makes us one of His children. We become a member of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth.

Baptism is an expression of God's love. Christians believe God reaches out to us and helps us journey with him for the whole of our earthly life, so that we may also be with him always.

Baptism is not just for children, and although this is written for parents / guardians, adults can be baptised too. Adults are baptised when they have been regularly worshipping at a church for some time.

WHAT IS HOLY BAPTISM

In Baptism, you as parents are thanking God for the gift of life. You are deciding to start your child on the journey of faith, and asking for the Church's support.

In relation to your child, baptism marks the start of a journey of faith. This journey involves turning away from the darkness of self-centredness, turning towards Christ, and becoming a member of the local and worldwide Christian family.

Baptism is a 'sacrament': a visible and outward sign of God's love. In baptism, we are thanking God for his gift of life and publicly acknowledging his love. We are acknowledging that we all need to turn away from darkness and to make a new start with God.

People often say that Baptism gives them a feeling of new-beginning. The word 'baptism' comes from a Greek word meaning to dip or immerse in water. During the service the priest will usually pour water over the person being baptised. This is symbolic to show that Christ washes away a person's sins and gives them a new fresh start.

THE BAPTISM SERVICE

The Church expects that Parents and Godparents will take responsibility to ensure those who are baptised will attend regularly; learn the Lord's Prayer; and encouraged them as they grow to read about Jesus' ministry.

In Baptism the Parents and Godparents make three decisions for the child:

- To reject evil.

- To repent of sin.

- To turn to Christ.

They also make three decisions announcing clearly that they:

- Believe in God, who made the world.

- Believe that Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Believe that God sends the Holy Spirit to all; helping us in our daily lives as we try to live as Christians.

If Parents and Godparents do not play their part then the child will not get very far on this journey of faith.

THE ROLE OF A GODPARENT

GODPARENTS | AN ANCIENT ROLE

In the early days of Christianity when a person decide to convert to being a Christian, they would choose a Christian friend to act as someone who would vouch for them and would help them grow as a new Christian.

When it became more usual to baptise babies, these people became known as Godparents.

A Godparent was expected to keep a close relationship with the family and to help guide the child in its Christian growth.

Now, as then, Godparents have no legal role. Of course, if the Godparent is a relative or close friend, they may be asked to be the child's legal guardian should anything happen to the child's parents.

The only Church requirement is that a Godparent is baptised themselves.

GODPARENTS | THINGS TO CONSIDER

The Godparents you choose for your child must be at least 16 years of age, and there must be at least two. It is a requirement that Godparents have been baptised themselves.

The Service requires Godparents to publicly state that they are a Christian, and that they will do what they can to encourage the child to grow as a Christian. Are they able to make such a declaration?

When you talk to them, If they feel, in all conscience, that they cannot, it is probably better to ask someone else. Of course, this does not prevent them from playing a very important part in the child's life in other ways.

Are their views on religion, spirituality and morality similar to yours?

If they are, all well and good. If not, this need not be an obstacle: however, make sure you know their views and are happy with them before you make any decision.

Will they be there for the child as he or she grows up?

Being a Godparent involves developing a relationship with the child and helping you as parents in your child's spiritual upbringing, If they are about to emigrate to the other side of the world, this will become quite difficult.

Do they have an interest in the child's well-being?

If they don't really relate well to children maybe you need to talk to them about being a Godparent. But bear in mind that many Godparents find they only really begin to establish a relationship with their Godchild when the child reaches teenage years or even beyond.

GODPARENTS | THE BAPTISM SERVICE

During the service Godparents will sit with you near the font, and at certain points will be asked to make statements and promises. Some of these they will make on your own, others they will make with you.

Early in the service the Priest will ask them if they will support you as parents in their role of bringing up the child as a Christian:

Priest: Will you support and help N's parents in doing these things?

*Godparent: **With the help of God, we will.***

Later in the service the Priest will ask you all to make serious promises on behalf of the child. If the person to be baptised were an adult, these promises will be made for themselves. Young children have adults to make these promises on their behalf, which is the privilege of being a Godparent.

The Priest will say to the Godparents and the parents:

Do you turn to Christ?

I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?

I repent of my sins.

Do you renounce evil?

I renounce evil.

After the making of the sign of the cross on the child's head the Priest will then go on to ask you to make this declaration of faith:

Do you believe in God the Father, creator of all?

I believe and trust in God the Father.

Do you believe in his son Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world?

I believe and trust in God the Son.

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit, giver of life?

I believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit.

The child will then be baptised; some prayers will be said for the child and you as a family; and a special candle will be lit and presented by a member of the church or Mothers Union.