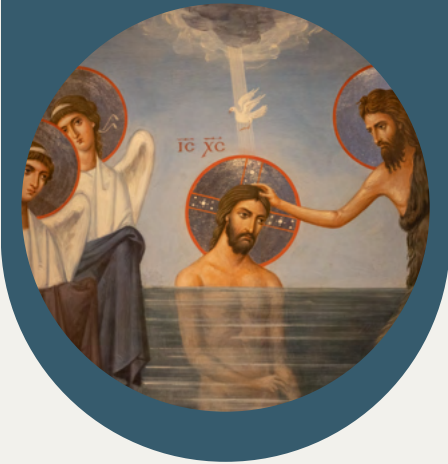


The Holy Sacrament of **Baptism**

Parent's Guidebook



*"For as many of
you as were
baptised into
Christ have put
on Christ."
Galatians 3:27*



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Introduction

It is truly wonderful that you have chosen to have your child baptised! This decision marks the beginning of a profound spiritual journey for your child, one that opens the door to a life filled with God's grace and love. Baptism is not merely a ritual or a rite of passage; it is the foundational sacrament that initiates your child into the Christian faith, cleanses them from original sin, and sets them on a path toward eternal life with God.

By presenting your child for baptism, you are accepting a sacred responsibility. The Church entrusts you with the duty of raising your child in the Catholic faith, teaching them to love God and neighbour, and guiding them to live according to the Gospel. This commitment involves more than bringing your child to the baptismal font; it requires a lifelong dedication to nurturing their spiritual growth.



The grace conferred in baptism is a free gift of God, but it flourishes through the ongoing efforts of parents, godparents, and the faith community. Your commitment to living out your faith and imparting it to your child will help ensure that baptism becomes the beginning of a vibrant and meaningful Christian life, rather than a mere formality.

May God bless you abundantly as you embark on this journey with your child. Through your love, example, and dedication, may they grow to become a true disciple of Christ, walking the path that leads to eternal life.

Introduction

To support you in this incredible mission, this guidebook offers:



Understanding Baptism

An exploration of the basic meaning of Christianity, the sacrament of baptism's meaning, its biblical foundations, and its significance in the life of a Christian.



Parental Responsibilities

Insights into your role in fostering your child's faith, including practical advice on prayer, participation in the sacraments, and creating a Christian home environment.



The Baptismal Service

A step-by-step overview of what to expect on the day of baptism, including the significance of each part of the rite and suggestions for meaningful participation.

Prayer For Children

Lord, our God, "On the lips of children and babes you have found praise to foil your enemy" (Psalm 8:2). Look with kindness on the children (this child) to be baptised, who we commend to your tender care. Your Son, born of the Virgin Mary, gladly welcomed little children. He took them in his arms, blessed them, and held them up as an example for all. We pray that you, Father, will also send your blessing upon them, so that they may grow in Christian maturity and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's witnesses (witness) in the world, spreading and defending the faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



The Beginning
In the beginning
created the heavens
the earth. ²Now the
was a formless and
darkness was
of the

Psalm 139:13-16

"For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be."

Genesis 1: 26-27

"Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

1 John 4: 7-10

"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us."

The Good News

God and Creation

The Bible tells us, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This profound truth reveals that love is at the very essence of God's nature. In the Catholic faith, God is understood as a Trinity - one God in three persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. This divine relationship is a perfect relationship of love, with each person of the Trinity loving and being loved eternally.

God's love is so abundant that it overflows into creation. He didn't create the universe out of necessity but as an expression of His boundless love. By creating us, God invites us to share in the love and communion that exists within the Trinity.



The Meaning of Life

Our very existence bears witness to God's desire for us to experience His love and to enter into a loving relationship with Him. We are not meaningless accidents as so many sadly believe, we have been willed and loved into existence.

God created every person, including you and your child, out of love. The purpose and meaning of our lives is to know, love, and serve God in this life and for life eternal. God desires a personal relationship with each of us.

The well known story of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis teaches essential truths about the human condition, although not in a literal, historic, or scientific way. It uses symbolic language to teach us about God, the meaning of creation, human nature, sin and sin's consequences on our relationship with God.



**Sadly, humanity
chose to rebel
against God's loving
plan, bringing with it
suffering and death...**



Genesis 3: 1-10

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Romans 3:21-26

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."



The Good News

Sin

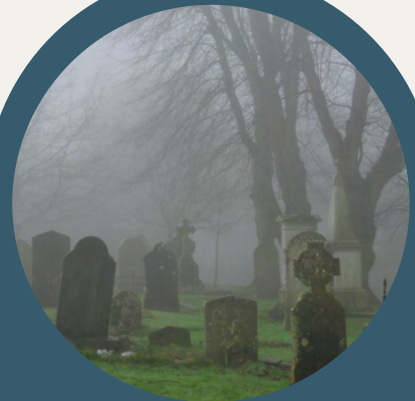
The story of Adam and Eve teaches us that rebellion against God is the cause of sin in our the human experience. This original sin is not merely a personal fault of our first parents but a state inherited by the entire human family. It signifies how the effect of the original sin separated humanity from God and our human nature was wounded and inclined toward sin. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

"By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice."

The teaching of original sin helps us understand the presence of evil, suffering, and death in the world. It explains why humans, although created in God's image an likeness, have a natural inclination toward sin and why we require God's grace for redemption. As the Catechism states:

"Original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants. It is a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature has not been totally corrupted: it is wounded in the natural powers proper to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin."

The condition of original sin affects every person, including infants, because of the solidarity which exists between all members of the human family. This highlights the necessity of divine grace for salvation for all people, not only those who have personally sinned.



Sin brings separation from God, suffering, and ultimately death (Romans 6:23). Left to ourselves, we are incapable of repairing this rift. We cannot earn our way back to God or undo the consequences of our rebellion. This is where Jesus, the Saviour, enters the story...

THE WORD OF GOD



The Saviour

John 3: 16-17

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

Romans 5: 6-11

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."

Colossians 1:13-14, 19-20

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Jesus Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

The Good News

The Saviour

The incarnation—God becoming human in Jesus Christ—is central to the Christian response to the Fall. It is the moment where the Creator enters His creation, not from a distance but as one of us. In Jesus, God takes on human nature, living among us, experiencing our struggles, and showing us who He is in the most personal way.

By becoming human, God steps into our broken story to restore it. As both fully God and fully human, Jesus bridges the gap caused by sin. His humanity allows Him to represent us, while His divinity gives Him the power to redeem us. Through Him, God offers reconciliation and healing for the damage caused by the Fall.

The incarnation is a profound act of love and humility. In Jesus, God reveals His character—His justice, compassion, and grace. For Christians, the incarnation is the ultimate answer to the Fall and the beginning of humanity's redemption.

The defining moment of Jesus' role as Saviour is His death on the cross. At Calvary, Jesus bore the weight of humanity's sin. He became the ultimate sacrifice, fulfilling the requirements of justice while extending mercy. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Through the cross, Jesus pays the penalty for sin—death—on our behalf. This act of self-giving love opens the way for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. It is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for the world, as captured in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus' resurrection is the triumph of life over death, of grace over sin. By rising from the dead, Jesus breaks the power of sin and death, offering the promise of eternal life to all who trust in Him. His victory is not just for the future but transforms life now, offering hope, peace, and purpose.

Jesus' salvation is for every nation, every person, every sinner. As the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:4-5, "[God] wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."

Jesus saves not through imposition but by invitation. He calls each person to respond in faith, to accept his free gift of salvation...



THE WORD OF GOD



Salvation

John 14: 6

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

Roman 6: 3-4

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Acts 2: 38

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

1 Corinthians 12: 27

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

Ephesians 5: 25-27

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

The Good News

Salvation

To receive the gift of salvation that Christ has won through His death and resurrection, we must allow ourselves to be united to Jesus so that we can share in his victory over sin suffering and death. Union with Jesus is achieved through faith, baptism, and remaining in his love. Salvation is God's free gift, but it calls for our active participation.

The first step is faith in Jesus Christ. We must believe that He is the Son of God who died for our sins and rose to give us eternal life. This faith isn't merely intellectual—it's a personal trust in Christ and a commitment to follow Him.

Faith leads to baptism, the sacrament through which we are spiritually reborn. In baptism, our sins are washed away, and we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). It's the moment we enter the Church, becoming part of the body of Christ, and receive the Holy Spirit. Infants are baptised, not in their own faith, but in the faith of the Church and their parents.



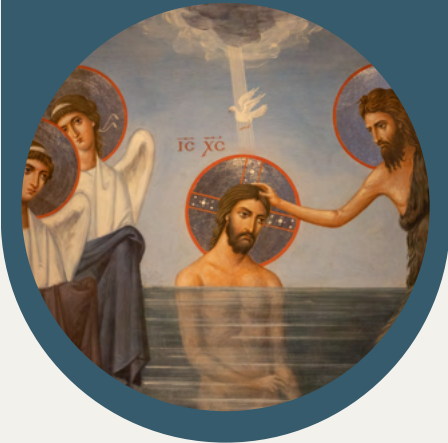
The sacraments are the means by which we receive the salvation Jesus won for us. But, what are they?

The Church

Baptism does more than cleanse sin; it makes your child a member of the Church, which is central to salvation. The Church is not just a building or community—it is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), the living presence of Jesus in the world. Through the Church, we encounter Christ and receive the grace He won for us on the cross.

The sacraments, entrusted to the Church, are God's chosen way of sharing His life with us. Baptism is the first of these, but the journey doesn't stop there. The Eucharist nourishes us with the real presence of Christ, and reconciliation restores us when we fall. The Church teaches, guides, and supports us, ensuring we stay connected to Christ and His saving work.

By bringing your child into the Church through baptism, you are giving them the greatest gift: a lifelong connection to Jesus and the means to grow in holiness. The Church will walk with your child, helping them live a life rooted in God's love and truth, so they may one day share fully in the eternal life Christ has promised.



Understanding Baptism

The Seven Sacraments

We encounter Christ through his sacraments. He acts through them to impart his grace (spiritual gifts), strengthen our faith, and incorporate us more fully into his life and the life of his Church. The 'sacramental life' is central to Catholic spirituality and practice, guiding believers from their initiation into the Church, to moments of healing and forgiveness, through to their vocational commitments, and ultimately leading them toward salvation.

The proper disposition of the recipient is also crucial. The sacraments always confer grace, but the fruitfulness of the sacrament depends on the disposition of the one who receives them. It is possible to receive a sacrament without it bearing any fruit in our lives if received it without the correct disposition.

Each sacrament has its own form (the ritual words and actions) and matter (the physical elements used, such as water in Baptism), which are symbols of the gift of grace given in the sacrament. Sacraments are sometimes called 'outward signs of an inward grace, instituted by Jesus Christ.'

1. **Outward signs** (Human signs that are perceptible to the senses).
2. **Inward grace** (God's gift that are not perceptible to the senses).
3. **Established by Jesus Christ** (for a particular purpose).

There are seven sacraments of Church:

1. **Baptism:** By which a person becomes born again as a Child of God, initiated as a member of the Church and cleansed of sin.
2. **Confirmation:** Which strengthens the gifts of the Holy Spirit received at Baptism for living the Church's mission.
3. **Eucharist** (Holy Communion): By which the Body and Blood of Christ are consumed and spiritual union with him is achieved.
4. **Reconciliation** (Confession): Through which sins are forgiven and reconciliation with God and the Church are obtained.
5. **Anointing of the Sick:** Which offers comfort, strength and healing to those who are ill or dying.
6. **Matrimony** (Marriage): Which unites a man and woman in a lifelong, sacramental partnership, reflecting God's love.
7. **Holy Orders:** Which ordains individuals to serve the Church as deacons, priests, or bishops.

Understanding Baptism

Baptism

Baptism is the foundational sacrament, marking the beginning of a person's spiritual journey as a member of Christ's Church. Through baptism, individuals are cleansed of original sin, reborn as children of God, and initiated into the Church. This sacrament serves as the gateway to life in Christ and opens access to the other sacraments.

Instituted by Jesus Christ, baptism is essential for salvation. In the Gospel of John, Jesus emphasises its importance:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"
(John 3:5).



Outward sign & Inward Grace

As with every sacrament, there are both outward signs and inward graces for Holy Baptism:

Outward Signs:

- **Matter:** Water, which symbolises purification, the washing away of sin, & life-giving properties.
- **Form:** The Trinitarian formula given by Jesus: "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28: 19)

Inward Graces:

- **Forgiveness** from original sin and personal sins.
- Spiritual **rebirth** as a child of God.
- **Incorporation** into the Body of Christ, the Church.
- Baptism leaves an **Indelible character** upon the soul and cannot therefore be repeated.

These elements together constitute the sacrament, with the outward signs affecting the inward graces they signify.



The purpose of the sacraments is not the outward signs, but the inward graces they signify. Lets look more closely at the graces of baptism!

THE WORD OF GOD



Baptism in the Bible

Mark 1: 9-11

"At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

John 3: 1-8

"Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

1 Cor 12: 13

"For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body"

Romans 6: 3-5

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his."

Understanding Baptism

The Graces of Baptism



Forgiveness of Sins

We are “baptised into his death” (Romans 6: 3) through which Jesus paid the price for sin. Baptism therefore washes away sin, restoring us into right relationship with God. For children, it removes original sin, while for older children or adults, it also forgives all personal sins committed before baptism. This cleansing marks a fresh start in God’s grace, leaving nothing to stand between the baptised person and God.



Spiritual Rebirth

Jesus Said: “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Through baptism, we are spiritually reborn as children of God by water and the Spirit (outward sign and inward grace). We receive a new identity, with God the Father saying over us ‘you are my beloved son,’ just as at Jesus’ baptism. Baptism allows us to call God our Father as Jesus taught us to pray.



Membership of the Church

St Paul tell us “we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Corinthians 12: 13). Baptism brings us into the Church, the Body of Christ, and connects us as members of it. It makes us part of God’s family, sharing in the Church’s mission and grace. Baptism marks the start of a faith journey nurtured through the Church: its teachings, its leadership and its sacraments.



Indelible Mark

Baptism leaves an indelible spiritual mark on the soul, permanently uniting the baptised with Christ and spiritually configuring them to him. This mark identifies them as a Christian and sets them apart as member of God’s family forever. It cannot be removed, even by sin, because the baptised now belong to Christ and are call to live their lives as His disciple. After baptism sin is forgiven through confession.



Matthew 28: 16-20

"Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'"

Matthew 19: 4

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'"

Ephesians 6: 4

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Deuteronomy 6: 4-9

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Parental Responsibilities

Parental Responsibilities

Bringing your child for baptism is a wonderful act of faithfulness to Jesus who said:

“Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.”

(Matthew 28: 19).

Jesus gives us four invitations:

1. **Go and make disciples.**
2. **Baptise them.**
3. **Teach them.**
4. **Know that I am with you always.**



**Go, Make
Disciples...**

Baptise them...

Teach them...

**Know, I am with
you always...**



It's essential to recognise that isolating baptism from the other invitations can reduce it to a mere ritual or cultural tradition. As parents, you bear the responsibility to uphold the integrity of all these invitations. Failing to undertake this responsibility in its fourfold fullness would be to embark them on the journey towards heaven without giving them the tools, training, and directions to complete it. There is no responsibility so great as a Christian parent as to ensure your child is saved so that you can enjoy eternal life with them and Jesus in heaven.

As parents, you are entrusted with the sacred duty of nurturing this budding faith, guiding your child toward a deep and personal relationship with God. This responsibility involves creating a home environment where love, respect, and the teachings of Christ are central. Your actions, words, and daily interactions serve as the first and most influential examples your child will encounter. By embodying Christian virtues and actively participating in the life of the Church, you lay a strong foundation for your child's spiritual growth and development.



Parental Responsibilities

Go and Make Disciples

The term 'disciple' refers to a follower who adheres to the teachings of another. Christian discipleship is therefore about being on a journey with Jesus Christ, 'the way the truth and the life' (John 14: 6). His path of salvation ultimately leads to eternal life with him in heaven.

As parents, your primary mission field in forming disciples is your home, and your first disciples are your children. To effectively disciple your child, it's essential to move further along on your own spiritual journey. This is possible through engaging in regular prayer, study the Scriptures, and participation in the sacraments. In this way you will deepen your own relationship with Christ. Your personal journey of discipleship not only enriches your faith but also sets a compelling example for your child, illustrating the transformative power of a life devoted to following Jesus. If see the Joy and Peace that discipleship brings to your life, they will want it for themselves.

Baptise Them

It's wonderful that you are bringing your child for baptism, as Christ instructed. However, this sacred act should not be viewed in isolation from the broader context. Baptism is the beginning of your child's spiritual journey, not the culmination.

Teach Them

Its amazing to think that in the past 2,000 years, despite humanity's many remarkable advancements, not one person has surpassed the teachings of Jesus Christ as we find them in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. To truly understand and embrace these teachings, it's essential to engage in daily Bible reading. Without immersing ourselves in Scripture, you will not fully grasp Jesus' life-changing message, nor effectively share it with your children.

Either get yourself a Bible or consider downloading a Bible app that offers daily verses. The key thing is to make Bible reading a daily habit!

As your child matures, introduce them to the Scriptures by reading together, starting with a children's Bible. This will not only impart knowledge but also strengthen your spiritual bond together as well as fostering a love for God's Word that will guide them throughout their lives.





Parental Responsibilities

Know, I Am With You Always

In Prayer...

Jesus promised to be with us always, to the very end of the age. He is faithful to that promise! Even time we turn to him in prayer it is an act of faith and trust that he hears us, loves us and cares for us. Jesus is inviting you and your child into a personal relationship with him: he wants you to let him into your life and he wants to share his life with you. This is achieved through prayer.

Daily prayer is essential in maintaining our connection with Jesus. Be honest about where you are right now in your life of prayer. Don't try to move forward too fast and set yourself up for failure, but move one step at a time. The key to prayer is to keep it daily and to keep it consistent. If you don't pray at all right now, then perhaps just commit to spend 1 or 2 minutes per day in quality prayer each day. Once this is established in your life only then take the next step, and so on.

For young children, begin by praying for them and once they are old enough, pray with them daily too. They don't say 'the family that prays together stays together' for no reason! Family prayers transform family life, causing it to go from strength to strength. Whether in the morning or before bed, before & after meals, nobody has ever regretted having a strong life of prayer in their family. As your children mature, encourage them to enter into personal daily prayer, teaching them that communication with the God who created them and loves them is a vital aspect of their faith journey.

In The Eucharist...

Jesus is most faithful to his promise to remain with us always through the Eucharist. In the Mass, we encounter Jesus in multiple ways: through His words in Scripture, in the prayers, and within the assembly of His Body, the Church. However, His presence is most especially real in Holy Communion, where He is truly present—body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Jesus being really present in Eucharist speaks of how important it is that we are present to him by coming to Mass. Even if your children are noisy or restless, remember Jesus' own words: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:4). He delights to have them there!

As your child grows and matures, they will have the opportunity to receive Him in the Eucharist themselves, profoundly deepening their relationship with Jesus.

Finally, Jesus is to be encountered in different ways in all of the sacraments: his forgiveness in Confession, his healing in the Anointing of the Sick, and so on.





Practical Tips

First Confession & Communion

In the Catholic Church, children typically receive the sacraments of First Confession (Reconciliation) and First Holy Communion around the age of seven, often referred to as the "age of reason." This is when a child begins to discern right from wrong and can understand the significance of these sacraments. To receive these sacraments it will be necessary to prove your child is a baptised Catholic. Keep their baptism certificate safe and, if you do lose it, remember the church they were baptised in, and the date, in order to have a new certificate of baptism issued by that church.

Confirmation

Confirmation, together with Holy Communion, completes Christian initiation. Through Confirmation, the faithful receive the Holy Spirit, strengthening their bond with the Church and empowering them to witness Christ in their lives. This sacrament, along with Baptism and the Eucharist, fully initiates individuals into the Christian community. In the Archdiocese of Birmingham, children typically receive the Sacrament of Confirmation during Year 6, at the age of 10 to 11.

Marriage

In the Catholic Church, marriage between two baptised individuals is a sacrament, symbolising the union of Christ and His Church. Baptised Catholics have a duty to marry according to Church laws to ensure their union is valid.

The marriage should be officiated by a Catholic priest or deacon and witnessed by two individuals, within a Catholic church. If this is not possible, a dispensation from this requirement can be obtained.

Baptised Catholics need to provide a recent copy of their baptismal certificate, usually issued within six months before the wedding. This can be obtained from the parish where the baptism occurred. It might seem a long way of but it will help your child a lot to know this information in the future.



Practical Tips



Catholic School

Catholic schools play a significant role in supporting parents to raise their children in the Catholic faith. They provide an environment where religious education is central, fostering spiritual growth alongside a typically excellent academic development. By integrating faith into daily learning, Catholic schools help children understand and live out Catholic values.

However, it's important to recognise that Catholic schools complement but do not replace the essential role of parents as the primary educators of their children's faith. The home remains the first place where faith is nurtured and practiced.

When applying to a Catholic school, a baptismal certificate is typically required as part of the admissions process.

Pilgrimage

Family pilgrimages to shrines such as Walsingham (UK), Lourdes (France), and Fatima (Portugal) are excellent ways to deepen your faith together as a family. Visiting sacred sites brings the stories, history, and teachings of the Catholic faith to life, making them more tangible and meaningful, especially for children. These experiences can inspire a renewed commitment to living out your faith together.



Parish Life

Engaging fully in parish life will enrich your family's faith. Beyond only attending Mass, consider participating in the various forms of parish activity, especially those aimed at families and children. Involving your children in these will not only nurture their spiritual growth but also foster a sense of their belonging to the parish family. Consider:

Children's Liturgy: Special sessions during Mass where the Word of God is presented in an accessible way for young minds, helping them understand and engage with the teachings.

Altar Serving: Serving at the altar not only contributes to the worship of God but also helps young people to engage more fully with the Mass. They'll make great friends too!

Parish Youth Initiatives: Most parishes have youth clubs for children, and organise trips and events for them.

Choosing Godparents

You will need to choose at least one Godparent for your child, although it is more typical to choose two. Choosing godparents for your child is a significant decision. In the Catholic Church, godparents, the role of God parents is to support the child on their faith journey, primarily through prayer but also by being a supportive role model of Christian living.

Key Considerations When choosing Godparents:



Faith Commitment:

A godparent should be a fully initiated Catholic, having received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. They must actively practice their faith, exemplifying Catholic values in daily life.



Age and Maturity

The godparent must be at least 16 years old and possess the maturity to undertake the responsibilities associated with this important role.



Christian Witnesses

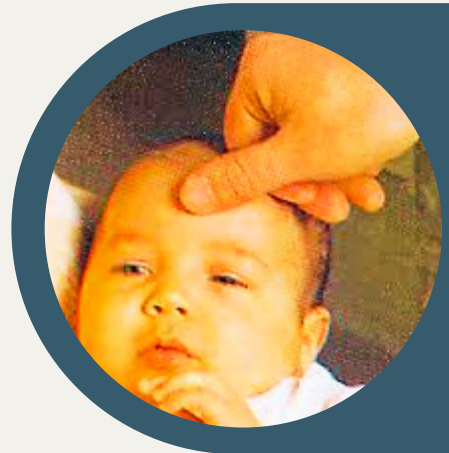
While at least one Catholic godparent is required, a baptised non-Catholic Christian may serve as a 'Christian witness' alongside a Catholic godparent. Former Catholics who have joined another non-Catholic Church are not eligible. A Christian Witness will be recorded in the baptism register along with godparents if there is space.

The Rite of Baptism

1) Reception of the Child

Greeting: The priest greets the family at the entrance of the church, asking for the child's name and your intentions for baptism.

Sign of the Cross: The priest, parents, and godparents trace the sign of the cross on the child's forehead, symbolising their initiation into the faith.



"You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

The parents respond: "We do."

2) Parental Promise

Declaration of Intent: The priest addresses the parents, reminding them of their responsibility to raise the child in the practice of the faith.

Parents' Affirmation: You will publicly commit before God, the priest, and the congregation to nurture your child's faith, guiding them to know and love Christ.

3) Liturgy of the Word

Scripture Readings: Selected Bible passages are read, highlighting the significance of baptism.

Homily: The priest offers a reflection on the readings and the sacrament's meaning.

Intercessions: Prayers are offered for the child, parents, godparents, and the Church community.



4) Exorcism & Anointing

Prayer of Exorcism: The priest prays for the child to be freed from original sin and strengthened against evil.

Anointing with Oil of Catechumens: The child's chest is anointed with blessed oil, signifying preparation for the sacrament.

The Rite of Baptism



5) Blessing of the Baptismal Water

Invocation: The priest blesses the water, recalling God's saving works and asking the Holy Spirit to sanctify it for baptism.

6) Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

Parents' and Godparents' Responses: You and the godparents publicly renounce sin and profess your faith on behalf of the child, saying 'I do' to the priest's questions.



7) Baptism

The central action of the entire rite: the priest pours water over the child's head three times, saying, "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

8) Anointing with Sacred Chrism

Chrism Oil: The priest anoints the child's crown with holy oil, symbolising the gift of the Holy Spirit.



The Rite of Baptism

9) Clothing with the White Garment

White Garment: The child is clothed in a white garment, representing purity and new life in Christ.



10) Presentation of the Baptismal Candle

Lighted Candle: A small candle (representing your child) is lit from the Paschal Candle (which represents the resurrected Christ). It is given to the parents or godparents, symbolising the light of Christ entrusted to your child.

11) Ephphetha Rite

Blessing of Ears and Mouth: The priest touches the child's ears and mouth, praying they may soon hear and proclaim God's word.



12) Conclusion

Lord's Prayer: The congregation prays the Our Father together.

Blessings: The priest blesses the mother, father, and all assembled, but especially invoking God's grace upon the newly baptised child.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a fee for the Baptism?

No, there is no fee for the sacrament of baptism. However, it is customary to offer the minister a donation as a token of appreciation. The amount is entirely at your discretion, reflecting your personal circumstances and sense of gratitude. Please place your donation in the envelope provided and hand it to the minister on the day of the baptism.

Do I need to bring a Baptism candle?

No, it is not necessary to bring a baptism candle, as the church will provide one. However, if you wish to bring a special candle, perhaps due to cultural traditions (as is common in some Eastern European communities), you are welcome to do so.

Do I need to bring a white garment for my child?

Yes, bring a white garment for the clothing after baptism, symbolising purity and new life in Christ. This doesn't need to be elaborate; a simple white scarf is perfectly acceptable.

Does my child need to dress in white?

No, but you are welcome to do so as a fitting symbol of the purifying grace of Baptism.

Will my child be the only one baptised during the ceremony?

Typically, baptisms are conducted individually. However, during certain times of the year it there may be more than one child baptised during the service.



Can I bring a photographer to the baptism?

Yes, you may have a photographer present. To maintain the sanctity of the service, it's advisable to have only one person designated to take photographs to minimise distractions. There also will be an opportunity for additional photos after the ceremony has concluded.

How long does the Baptism service last?

The Baptism service typically lasts between 25 to 35 minutes.

Can family members or friends participate by doing readings or bidding prayers?

Yes, family members or friends are welcome to participate in the ceremony by performing readings or leading bidding prayers. Please inform the priest in advance to make the necessary arrangements.



"DON'T YOU KNOW THAT ALL OF US WHO WERE BAPTISED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTISED INTO HIS DEATH? WE WERE THEREFORE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH IN ORDER THAT, JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, WE TOO MAY LIVE A NEW LIFE."

ROMANS 6:3-4

