



THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Congratulations ! This information sheet is to help us in your pastoral care as you prepare for an important moment in your and your baby's life. Hopefully it will reply to some of your questions and doubts regarding the celebration of your baby's baptism.

WHAT PREPARATION CAN I DO ?

Each Diocese and Parish have different practises according to their situation. Some offer courses or retreats. Congratulations, you have already initiated your preparation by taking this sheet !

WE ASK YOU TO READ THIS CAREFULLY.

Times change rapidly. We cannot presume that everyone was educated in a catholic school or brought up in a catholic environment and therefore people can be looking for baptism for a variety of reasons. Not all of them always correct. Sometimes we feel "forced" to baptise our baby because of tradition or it is "religiously correct", or even to please grandparents, because of the baby's health or even because we fear God - the God of love! Please believe that we are not here to complicate the arrangements for the baptism of your baby but genuinely are here to help and welcome baby into the Church.

We *may* ask you to participate with other parents interested in the Sacrament of Baptism in a short practical meeting.

Hopefully this will be an excellent contact, especially to get to know your priest, if you do not already know him. Hopefully this will take away any doubts you have, or if necessary, be an opportunity to make a further appointment to clarify them. Here we will also discuss the final dates, places and times of the celebrations of the Sacrament. **These meetings will be announced in our regular Parish Weekly News Letter and are announced on the notice boards in our parish churches. If there are no meetings planned all this will be done between you and the parish priest.**

THE PARENTS? MUST THEY BE PRACTISING CATHOLICS?

The fact you are wanting to baptise your baby shows that you want what is best. The best way of bringing up a child in the faith is by example. We have excuses, many very genuine but it may also be a time to evaluate how my relationship is with God. Let's be honest ! You should be practising catholics. Why initiate your baby into the practise of the catholic faith if you yourself are not

participating? It would appear that by desiring to baptise your child you wish to have a serious commitment of the child growing up within the catholic community. On our part we welcome you and by presenting your baby for baptism presume you want what is best.

AND THE GODPARENTS ?

Baby does not chose his Mum and Dad but you do chose the godparents and since you want what is best in life for the baby you should want the best godparents. The Church, to help you ,has fairly clear guide lines:

Godparents have to be responsible Christians who are committed to the religious well being of your child.

The minimum acceptable age is 16 years and they should be practising catholics, having made have made their confirmation and first communion.

Godparents are meant to nourish the baptised in the community of believers. So how can they do this if they do not participate in the Catholic Church? So the godparent is not an honorary position. For this reason the Catholic Church insists that at least one should be a practising catholic (another one may be of another Christian church presuming they are aware of their obligations as a godparent). Relatives from the other side of the world should not really be godparents but witnesses at the baptismal ceremony.

DO WE HAVE TO BRING THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

It is probably a good idea to hand in a photocopy with your baptismal presentation form so we can ensure our records are copied correctly. After the baptism it is always good to write on the back the date, church and name of celebrant of the baby's baptism as we rarely lose our birth certificate.

WHEN ARE BAPTISMS CELEBRATED?

Normally the celebration of baptism will be agreed upon at our meeting trying to choose the parish church most central to all. Most baptisms are celebrated on Sundays.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BAPTISMAL CERMONY

Please arrive early for the celebration of your baby's baptism bringing all the necessary information if it has not already been handed in. During the ceremony the parish will provide books for people to participate more actively in the service. A baptismal candle will be provided for each family which you can take home.

It is important that both parents and godparents participate actively in the celebration. So do try and feed baby before you arrive. If the baby cries a lot feel free for someone else to look after him so you can pay attention to the ceremony. Normally photographs can be taken in a discreet way not to upset the prayerful atmosphere. After the ceremony there is always the opportunity for each family to take photographs.

HOW MUCH DOES A BAPTISM COST ?

The Church is not a business and we do not sell sacraments. We do have expenses with material and a lot of time can be spent accompanying families. An offering is normally given to meet these expenses and help contribute to the priest's income. However, this is left to each individual's discretion to contribute with what they can. It is always good to evaluate just how much you are spending on the secular activities after the baptism. But this is a purely a voluntary contribution.

NOW WHAT SHOULD WE DO ?

Confer with a recent Parish Newsletter or Poster at the back of the church and see when the next meeting for parents desiring baptism for their children is. Fill in as best you can the baptismal form and make an appointment with our parish priest or other representative. Hopefully this will be initiating the process for your baby's journey in the Church.

And congratulations !

BAPTISM - THE BEGINNING.

The desire for Baptism is part of a process of initiation into the Christian life and Christian community. It is only the first step, later to be deepened by Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. We rejoice that you have a baby to baptise and look forward to meeting you.

PRESENTATION FORM FOR SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

BABY'S NAME:

Male **Female** Date of Birth.....

MOTHER'S NAME:

Address: _____

Telephone: (Home) Baptized catholic ? **Yes** **No**

FATHER'S NAME:

Address: _____

Telephone: (Home) Baptized: **Yes** **No**

GODPARENTS:

NAME:.....

Address:.....

Religion:.....

NAME:.....

Address:.....

Religion.....

Please indicate preferential dates and parish for the celebration of baptism (these will be agreed in the baptism meetings)

(Please fill in and hand in to the person responsible in your parish church)