

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

"CHRISTIAN, KNOW YOUR DIGNITY" (ST. IRENAEUS)

CONGRATULATIONS



*A Voice came from
Heaven;
"This is my son,
the Beloved, my
favour rests on
him."*



Congratulations on the birth of your new baby. To bring new life into the world is both a very special gift and a challenge. You obviously want

what is best for your child

In opting to have your child baptized, you have decided to give your baby the chance to grow up in friendship with Christ. Be assured of our

whole-hearted support.

Baptism is the first step of your child's journey towards God. Your own faith is essential for the steps which follow.

You promise to bring up your baby, knowing God as a loving Father.

We hope for eternal life for our children. This is the purpose of baptism.

This family of God, into which the child is now admitted, will always accompany him or her, even on days of suffering and in life's dark nights, it will give him or her consolation, comfort and light.

SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

- Sign of The Cross
- Water
- Anointing with Oil
- White Garment
- Lighted Candle



A WORD ON THE LITURGY

Baptism takes place, normally, in one of the churches of your parish. This is a reminder that the building is the gathering place of God's family. Your family and friends and, on occasions, the gathered Sunday congregation, will stand with you and around you as you bring your child to meet the Lord in

the "Gateway to the Sacraments".

Though sometimes baptismal gatherings are small affairs, with just family members and close friends, we should not lose sight of the reality of the moment. Your son or daughter is becoming part of a universal

family that finds its identity locally in the parish to which you and your child belong.

The baptismal liturgy, therefore, seeks to bring us all, at once, into the building and into the Christian family. Enjoy this great occasion; prepare for it, understand it and live it.

CHOOSING A NAME

The preparation for baptism begins, even now, as you read through this pamphlet.

You have spent time choosing a name for your child, a name that will stay with him or her through life. Most likely you have pondered on how that name might be spoken, abbreviated and understood. Possibly it's a name closely linked with your family or maybe a name you like and that you had always told yourself, you'd give your child. The

choosing of a name is important and should reflect the Christian tradition. We remember that moment when the father of John the Baptist asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John". He was making a powerful, if indeed unspoken, statement: this child is to live his life under God's direction and God has indicated, indeed chosen a name and it's the name he will be given.

Spend some time then, with

your child's name. Let it be a name chosen in faith - a name that reflects your desire to see your child carry a strong and meaning-filled name into and through life.

At the door of the church you will be asked to tell all gathered the name you have chosen for your child.

The name, therefore, is the starting point.



"What name have you chosen for your child?"

AT THE THRESHOLD

Just inside the door of the church, you will gather with your family and friends. There the priest will meet you and welcome you. He will remind you that this is the point of contact and, just as we greet people at the door of our own home, so too the child to be baptized is met at the door of our parish church. This is a reminder that baptism is a sacrament of entry and welcome into the family

of God.

The priest, in welcoming you, will remind you of the importance of this moment. Here you will tell those gathered the name you have chosen for your child. The priest will ask if you wish your child, whom he calls by name, to be baptized and you will answer 'yes'.

He will speak to you of your responsibilities as Christian

parents. In reminding you of what is involved, he will speak to you of giving faith-filled example to your children. He will ask you if you understand what is involved. It is a moment of acceptance of a mission, a calling or vocation to be the voice of God in the life of your child.

He will then speak to those you have chosen to be godparents for your child

"God's family will always be present and those who belong to this family will never be alone."

(Pope Benedict during a celebration of Baptism on January 8th, 2006)

A WORD ON GODPARENTS

Apart from you, as parent, the next most significant adults in the baptismal liturgy will be the sponsors or godparents.

This is not always reflected in the choices made. Sometimes godparents are chosen for who they are rather than what they are. While we all want to involve our friends in the important moments of life, this sometimes leads to choic-

es that are less than ideal.

The godparent must be a man or woman of faith. He or she commits to helping you in your role as Christian parents and, in that very commitment, makes a strong statement of belief.

Choose then a man and woman that you know will give your child the best by way of

example through life. It is not just about remembering birthdays but about sharing responsibility for the faith formation of your child.

Ideally there should be two godparents, a man and a woman, old enough, steeped in the Faith enough, to know what they are about.



Sponsors: "Are you ready and willing to help this couple in their duty as Christian parents?" "We are."

WELCOMED WITH GREAT JOY

“The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy. In its name, I now claim you for Christ. I trace the sign of the cross on your forehead and invite your parents and godparents to do the same”. With these words the priest begins his dialogue with the child to be baptized. Having spoken to the parents and godparents attention is now focused on the central character of the liturgy. It is a lovely gesture, a moment of touch

and identification. The child will live the rest of his or her Christian life under the sign of the cross.

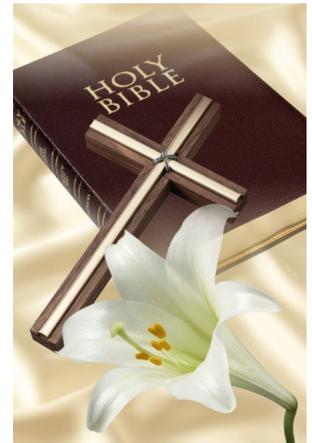
In tracing that cross on the child’s forehead the point is once again made that it is a shared task. Other family members may be asked to trace the cross as well. Again, a reminder that in the Christian family we all have a part to play.

Having been welcomed with

“great joy”, the child is placed beneath the protection of the cross, that sign which joins earth with heaven and peoples with one another.

The cross is a reminder of the death and resurrection of Jesus and even now the child is linked with this event and promised a share in this new life.

This completes the first part of the baptismal liturgy and all move to the front of the church.



“I now trace the sign of the Cross on your forehead and invite your parents and godparents to do the same.”

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

The journey is begun and we walk with the child to the front of the church where we spend some time with God’s word.

Here we listen to readings from the Scriptures that draw us into a deeper awareness of God’s plan for the world and its people.

You might become involved in this moment by speaking with the priest about the read-

ings to be used. Perhaps you might read from the Scriptures yourself or ask one of your relations to do so.

The word shared is central to all the sacraments and the word spoken during the baptism is intended to deepen the awareness of the gathered assembly.

Sometimes, given the presence of small children, it might be difficult to focus on

what is said. For that reason, a shorter reading might be appropriate, one that stays with the listener and encourages him or her to respond to what has been heard.

During the child’s life and faith formation he or she will learn much of the teaching of Scripture but, on the day of baptism, the word shared is intended, not for the child but for the adults present.

**“I did the planting,
Apollos did the watering, but
God made things grow.”**

(Corinthians 3:6)

SAINTS CALLED AND THE WATER BLESSED

The liturgy now calls on the saints to join our prayers with those of these holy ones, asking them to intercede for God’s blessings on this child.

The litany of the saints is a reminder of those gone before us and, in particular, those who lived the Christian message to the full. The intercession of the saints will be

an important support throughout the child’s life.

The baptismal water is blessed. A prayer is used that traces the history of water through the biblical ages and reminds us of its cleansing powers.

We hear reference to the waters of the Great Flood, the water that flowed from the

side of the Crucified Lord, waters that quenched thirst, cleansed, healed and nourished.

All this reminds us of the role of water in the liturgy of baptism. Jesus himself entered the waters of baptism and we are reminded that the water was made holy by the one baptized.



“Make holy this water which you have created, so that all those whom you have chosen may be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

ANOINTING WITH OIL

There are two moments of anointing with oil during the celebration. The first takes place before the blessing of the water and involves the anointing of the child's breast with the oil of catechumens. This links us with the early Church when people were prepared for baptism over a long period of time and were anointed with oil as part of that preparation.

On a practical point, this oil is applied on the breast of the

baby so it is helpful to have an opening at the top of the baptismal garment so that the priest may anoint him or her easily.

The second takes place following the pouring of water when the child is anointed on the head with the oil of chrism.

Chrism is used at baptism, confirmation and ordination. It is a reminder of the biblical anointing of priests, prophets

and kings for their mission. It is now a sign that the child is being blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This gift, once given, will never be taken back. Even if the child or adult gives up the practice of the faith, the effects of the sacraments remain.

Chrism is a scented oil and reminds us of the fragrance of God's presence in our lives.



"He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ himself was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life."

BAPTIZED, BLESSED AND ENTRUSTED

The water having been blessed will soon be used to share the gift of new life with the child. Before we do this we renew our own commitment to Baptism in the renewal of baptismal promises. Here we begin by rejecting what is evil and choosing what is good.

Then we remind one another of the central teachings of our faith - belief in one God, belief in the Trinity and an acceptance of the Holy Cath-

olic Church. We answer "I do" to the questions asked but it is more than just an agreement. It is a commitment to the faith into which the child is about to be baptized.

When all who have gathered have professed their faith the priest once again addresses you, the parents, and solemnly asks if you wish your child to be baptized in the faith professed. Water is then poured over the head of the baby accompanied by those

life-giving words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"

This is the central moment of the celebration of baptism. You will feel a sense of oneness with your child, reminiscent of that first time you held your baby in your arms. Your child is now a member of God's family.

**"The Lord Jesus made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father. Amen."
(The Rite of Baptism)**

WHITE GARMENT, BAPTISMAL CANDLE AND PRAYER

After your child is baptized our attention focuses on the white baptismal garment. This is an outward sign of the Christian dignity of your child. It will be your task, together with the godparents and the Christian community to help keep that dignity alive and unstained as your child journeys through life.

The lighted candle is handed

to the parents. The candle is lighted from the Easter candle and serves as a reminder of the need to spread the light of faith through a sometimes darkened world.

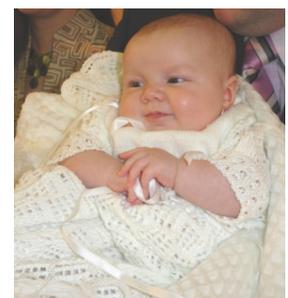
A prayer is said over the ears and mouth of the child, seeking God's touch and blessing on these most important organs of communication.

You will be invited with your

child and the godparents to come around the altar and together pray the Our Father. In this simple gesture, we look forward to the day when your child will receive the Eucharist.

The liturgy ends with a blessing of both parents for your important mission. Then all gathered are blessed before leaving the church.

The white garment



The outward sign of your Christian dignity