



THE PARISH OF SAINT PAUL, NEW SOUTHGATE, LONDON N11



Thinking about a having your child baptised ? Some frequently asked questions...

Q. What is baptism ?

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

For your child, baptism : marks the start of a journey of faith, which 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 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 the darkness of evil and to make a new start with God.

Q. Isn't it about making decisions and promises ?

A. When you bring your child for baptism, you will be asked to declare publicly on behalf of your child that you believe in God and that you will bring your child up to follow Jesus.

You will be asked to answer on your child's behalf, that you have decided to turn away from everything which is evil or sinful and to turn instead towards Christ.

The declarations made by you *and* the child's godparents will be made in front of the church congregation. The Christian community will promise to support you and pray for you and your child.

During the service, you will be asked to make the following declarations :

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God ?

Parents and godparents : I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil ?

Parents and godparents : I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour ?

Parents and godparents : I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour ?

Parents and godparents : I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord ?

Parents and godparents : I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life ?

Parents and godparents : I come to Christ.

Q. What happens during the service ?

A. Your child's baptism will normally take place during the main Sunday Mass (at 10.30am). This is so that your child can be seen to be joining the family of the Church and be welcomed into membership. In turn, the Church will promise to support and pray for you and your child.

People will be on hand to make sure you know where to sit and when you need to move. Some parts of the service will be for the whole congregation to join, some will be for you and the godparents.

For the baptism itself, parents and godparents will be asked by the priest to gather around the font (the font is a large basin on a pedestal, at the back of the church)

The priest will ask the parents and godparents to make declarations on behalf of the child.

Q. What do the symbols mean ?

A. There are a number of important symbols which will be used during the service itself :

(a) *The sign of the cross* - the priest will make the sign of the cross on your child's forehead. This is like an invisible badge to show that Christians are united with Christ and must not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him.

The priest says: 'Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross. do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.'

(b) *Water* - the priest will pour water on your child's head. Water is a sign of washing and cleansing. In baptism it is a sign of being washed free from sin and beginning a new life with God.

Water is a sign of life, but also a symbol of death. When we are baptised our old life is buried in the waters (like drowning) and we are raised to *new life* with Christ.

(c) *Anointing* - after baptism in water, the minister may put the christening robe on the child and anoint him or her with oil. This is a sign of the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.

The priest says: 'May God, who has received you by baptism into his Church, pour upon you the riches of his grace, that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit, and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory.'

(d) *The welcome* - the church congregation will say some formal words of welcome to acknowledge that your child has joined the Church and to show how pleased they are to have you among them.

(e) *Candles* - Jesus is called the light of the world. You will notice a large candle lit near the font (the Paschal, or Easter, candle – which represents the risen Christ) and you will be given a lighted candle at the end of the service as a reminder of the light which has come into your child's life. It is up to you, the child's godparents and the church community to

help your child reject the world of darkness and follow a way of life that reflects goodness and light and shares this light with others.

It is good to keep your child's baptismal candle and relight it each year on the anniversary of their baptism – their other (and most important) birthday, when they became a son or daughter of God.

Q. What is the role of godparents ?

A. Godparents make the same promises on behalf of the child being baptised as parents. Godparents promise to pray and support the child and to help the parents to bring up the child in the Christian faith. It is an *important* and *responsible* role.

Ideally, you should have at least three godparents : two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex (although one of each is sufficient). Godparents can be family members or friends. However, it is important that you choose people who will take an interest in your child's spiritual welfare and who will pray for you and your child *and encourage your child to come to church.* They should be baptised themselves.

Q. What's the difference between a “baptism” and a “christening” ?

A. None, they are just different words for the same thing.

Q. Can we have a private service of baptism ?

A. No. Baptisms take place in the church's main service, because they are a public declaration that your child has become part of the church family. It is important that the church congregation is there to support you and welcome your child.

Q. What is the right age for baptism ?

A. Baptism can happen at any age. What matters is that those concerned believe it is right to ask for baptism.

Teenagers and adults may also be baptised. This is celebrated with confirmation by the Bishop. You can only be baptised once, but there are ways of renewing your commitment publicly as an adult – The Vicar, Fr. Mark McAulay SSC, can advise you on this (020 8361 1946).

Q. I'm not a regular churchgoer. Can I still have my child baptised ?

A. Of course. The Church believes that God's love is available to all, regardless of their background. Both you and the godparents must, though, take the promises above seriously.

You may also wish to find out more about the Christian faith and what joining the Church involves before you make a decision about baptism. The Vicar, Fr. Mark McAulay SSC, can give you guidance (020 8361 1946).

Q. What does it cost ?

A. The Baptism service is free. However, no church “pays for itself” and Saint Paul’s is no exception ! It would be a nice gesture if you and those in your party at least made a contribution to our usual Sunday collection.