

BAPTISM –Notes for parents (1) SIGNS and SYMBOLS of BAPTISM

Baptism is the first sacrament. It is an invitation to join the Church family who welcomes the new member and will help support her or him on the faith journey.

Baptism forgives all sin and makes the baptised person a child of God and member of God's family. The Holy Spirit is given at Baptism to help the newly baptised live a faithful Christian life.

When a baby or young child is baptised, the parents accept the invitation on behalf of their child. Older children and adults accept the invitation themselves. Often adults are baptised at Easter

The symbols used at Baptism

Water is used in Baptism as a symbol of life. In Baptism Christ gives new life.

Holy oil is a symbol of strength and healing. It is a symbol that the baby has the gift of the Holy Spirit and has been made holy, a special friend of Jesus who is king. Oil of Chrism is blessed by the Archbishop during Holy Week and given to every parish to use.

At Baptism, the church wraps new members in a **white garment** as a sign of acceptance and belonging in the community of faith. White is a symbol of purity and cleanliness. The white baptismal garment shows that the newly baptised is now a Christian and with the help of family and friends will grow up to be like Jesus. They are wrapped in the white garment – wrapped in God's love.

The **candle** is a sign that Jesus is the light of the world. At Easter, the Paschal candle is lit as a sign of the risen life of Christ. At baptism, a small candle is lit from the Paschal candle and given to the parents and godparents for the child. The priest says, "Receive the light of Christ." They are instructed to keep the light burning brightly and the flame of faith alive in their child's heart.

The role of Godparents

Godparents support parents in the faith development of the child being baptised. At the child's baptism, parents and godparents answer on the behalf of the child and agree to nurture their development in the Christian life. Being a godparent is about being a role model in the life of faith. They are also present to represent the Church family which the baptised is becoming part of. Godparents take an active role in helping the parents nurture their children's faith.

Outline of the rite of baptism for infants:

- † Welcome
- † Questioning
- † The Sign of the Cross
- † Listening to God's Word
- † Response
- † Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens
- † Blessing of the baptismal water
- † Baptismal Promises
- † Pouring of water, saying: *N... I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*
- † Anointing with Oil of Chrism
- † Clothing with a white garment
- † Lighting of candle
- † Receiving the light
- † The Our Father
- † Blessing

Notes for Parents: (2) – The Rite of Baptism

Welcome

The Easter candle is lit. The priest welcomes everyone who has come to the celebration. He **questions** the parents, *“What name have you given your child?”*

When they have answered he asks, *“What do you ask of God’s Church for N.....?”* They reply, *“Baptism.”*

The priest asks the parents if they will bring up their child to live in God’s way. He asks the godparents if they will help the child’s parents to do this.

The Sign of the Cross

Then the priest makes the sign of the cross on the baby’s forehead. Parents and godparents are invited to do the same. This is a sign that the baby is welcomed into the Christian family.

Listening to the Celebration of God’s Word

Everyone listens to God speaking through a reading from the Gospel. Then everyone **responds** by praying for the baby, his family and everybody present. These prayers are a symbol of care. The priest calls on the saints to ‘Pray for us’ and will include the patron saint of the church and the saint after whom the baby is named. The prayers ask that this child will be strengthened by God’s love and watched over by God at every stage of their life journey.

Anointing

The priest makes the sign of the cross on the baby’s chest with the Oil of Catechumens. This oil is a symbol of strength and is one of the oils blessed by the bishop in Holy Week.

Blessing the water

The priest blesses the water which will be used to baptise the baby. Water is a symbol of new life.

The Promises

The parents and godparents are invited to renew their own baptismal promises as a sign that they will bring up the child in the faith of the Church and reject all that separates the Christian from God

Pouring of the Water - Baptism

With everyone gathered round the font, the priest pours water over the baby’s head, saying, *“N, I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”*

Anointing with Oil of Chrism

The priest anoints the baby on the crown of the head with the Oil of Chrism. It is a sign that the baby is to be like Jesus: - a priest, to worship God and be holy in God’s service - a prophet, to listen to God and help others to hear God’s word - and a king, ready to serve and care for all the people.

The White Garment

A white garment is put on the baby. This is a symbol of becoming a Christian and putting on a new way of life.

Lighting the Candle and Receiving the Light

The priest invites someone from the family to light a candle from the Easter candle saying, *“Receive the light of Christ.”* Both candles are symbols of the light of Christ. Jesus is the light. His light is for everyone.

The Our Father

The priest invites everyone present to welcome the new member of the Church. As a sign of the baby’s right to take part in the Eucharist, everyone prays in the words Jesus gave us: *“Our Father who art in heaven...”*

Blessings of parents and people

The priest blesses the mother and father of the baby and finally blesses the whole community assembled in the church.