

**Parish of Newry**  
**BAPTISM INTO GOD'S FAMILY**



**Nourished by Word and sacrament, we seek to become Christ for one another.**

***Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them,  
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***

***Matthew 28:19***



## **What does Baptism mean?**

As parents you are:

- thanking God for His gift of life
- bringing your child to the beginning of a journey of faith
- asking for the Church's support and
- expressing your own belief in God and praying for your child

For your child - he or she is:

- beginning a journey of faith in new life with Jesus and
- becoming a member of the world wide Christian family

As Godparents you are:

- supporting the parents in helping the child to understand what it means to be a Christian. You can do this in many ways, but perhaps the greatest is by your own example.

Children cannot decide for themselves, so baptismal promises are made on their behalf by parents and godparents. Children are baptised on the understanding that they will receive a Christian upbringing within the family of Christ's Church. Without this understanding, the baptism of children makes little sense. Baptism is the start of a journey in faith; a journey that needs your companionship and encouragement! And we will be here to help too!

Who are the members of God's family?

Simply put, they are those who are baptised.

Dear Parent,

Congratulations on the birth of your child.

Our parish family welcomes its newest member and celebrates with you this precious gift of life from God. We seek to support you in your role as the primary teacher(s) of your child's faith and to uphold our role as a community of believers who witness within our Catholic Tradition. Together we hope to show you and your child this community's welcoming embrace as well as the Faith and Tradition of our Catholic Church.

As the priests and Baptism Team of *Newry Parish* we are here to help you and guide you. This Baptism preparation booklet explains the basics of Baptism and how to prepare for it.

After reading this booklet carefully, please do not hesitate to contact the parish office if you have any questions or other needs.

May God bless you and your family.

*A baby is a miracle sent from heaven above to touch our lives with wonder,  
to fill our hearts with love.*

## **PREPARING FOR BAPTISM**

Through Baptism our children become Children of God, members of the Church, and heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Your decision to have your child baptised is a declaration that you will bring up your child in the faith.

Your baby's baptism is a time for celebration and joy. Naturally you want the best for your child, and we want to help you plan and prepare for your child's baptism in the best possible way.

Your most important preparation is to look at your own faith. The very fact that you have asked for your child to be baptised shows that you recognise the importance of God in your life. As your child gets older he/she will grow up with the faith you have taught by your example.

As you help your baby grow up in the love of God, you too will experience growth in your own faith life. Your baby's baptism is only the beginning of a new life which will help you to grow closer to one another in the family and closer to God.

### **What is Baptism?**

One of the meanings of the word blessing is "to say good things." In baptism God says the following about your child:



he/she is precious



is a child of God



is an heir to His Kingdom



is freed from Original Sin.

In Baptism your child is truly blessed. Baptism is a sacrament, one of the special signs we have in the Church that makes visible God's love for us. By asking for baptism we show our belief in God and, by giving us baptism God has shown His faith in us. Like good parents

who sacrifice themselves for their children, God's Son sacrificed Himself on the cross for our salvation. God's continual commitment to us demonstrates how precious and valued we are to Him.

**We invite you to take a moment to think about why you want your child baptised.**

As a Church we especially hope that you will help your child experience and understand the love that God has for him/her. During the ceremony, after you have requested baptism, the priest will ask:

**"Are you willing to accept the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith and to bring up your child to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour?"**

Whatever your motivation for presenting your child for baptism, we invite you to think about the question to which you will answer "**we are**" at the baptismal ceremony. Committing yourself to 'training your child in the practice of the faith' is committing yourself to living your own Christian faith, perhaps committing yourself to a new faith journey where you learn to experience God's love and commitment for you. Every parent needs the help and support of God as they strive to be the best mother and father they can be, and every parent needs the support of the faith community, the church.

### **Symbols of Baptism**



#### **Sign of the Cross**

At the church door the priest, followed by the parents and godparents makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child to be baptised. This is a sign of our faith, and a blessing. We pray that all this child will do in life will be in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The priest pours water over the head of your baby and says "***I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***" This action is for cleansing and is a sign that our sins are washed away. Baptism cleanses us of original sin with which we are all born and, in the baptism of adults, of every sin committed prior to baptism. Water is necessary for life and is a sign that the life of the risen Christ is ours. Water is also a sign of

life without which nothing can grow. Water is a sign of the new spiritual life into which the baptised person is entering.



### **Holy Oils**

The Oil of Catechumens is rubbed on the breast of the baby. It symbolises strengthening for the struggles of life ahead. The oil is used to remind parents and godparents that God will give the person baptised all the strength and courage he/she needs to be a good Christian.

Oil of Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam and is rubbed on the crown of the head. It is a sign of sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The profession of faith which you make on behalf of your child at Baptism will later be confirmed personally by your child in the Sacrament of Confirmation when Oil of Chrism will be used again. The anointing is accompanied by the following words said by the priest, "As Christ was anointed prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life."



### **The White Garment**

Besides being useful for protection and warmth, clothes often express who we are and what we aspire to be. The colour white symbolises resurrection. By dressing the newly baptised in a white garment we are acknowledging that the life of the Resurrected Jesus and His Spirit is within them.



### **The Baptismal Candle**

The baptismal candle is lit from the Paschal Candle, symbolising the fact that Jesus is the light of the world and that we are the light of the world. The candle reminds us that the light of Christ has been lit in the child's life. It is the responsibility of the parents and godparents to keep this flame burning.

## **THE CEREMONY OF BAPTISM**

The parish clergy and Baptism Team invite you to participate fully in the service by joining in the responses and prayers. If one of your guests would like to read the scriptures reading or the intercessions, please contact a member of the Baptism Team.

## Welcome

The baptism ceremony begins at the church door. When visitors come to our home we welcome them at the door. Likewise the priest welcomes your child who us to be baptised at the church door, your child is welcomed into God's house. Our hope is that those to be baptised will be frequent visitors.

The priest reminds you, the parents and godparents about your responsibility to bring your child up to practice the faith and to keep God's commandments. After the sign of the Cross all parents and godparents process to the front of the Church with their children.

## The Word of God



***I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father  
except through me. John 14:6***

When we celebrate the sacraments in the church we always listen to the Word of God. Scriptural readings, which remind us of the meaning of Baptism, are now read followed by a short homily when the priest talks about the importance of Baptism. The Liturgy of the Word ends with Intercessory Prayers when we pray for those who are to be baptised and you, their families and godparents. Since we are all called to love saintly lives, we also invoke the saints to pray for us.



## The Baptism

After praying that those to be baptised will be 'set free from original sin' the priest anoints the children with the Oil of Catechumens.

**The parents and godparents are then asked to renew their baptismal vows.**

The priest blesses and pours water which he blessed over your child's head signifying new life and freedom from sin that Christ has won for us all by his death and resurrection.

## Worshipping

Now that he/she has become a child of God, your child is anointed with the Oil of Chrism, the oil of Kings. Just as Jesus was anointed for his special mission in the world, so your child is anointed for the special mission to live fully as a member of Christ's family.

## **Witnessing**

The Spirit of the Resurrected Jesus now dwells within your child. As a sign of this presence and the fact that eternal life begins at baptism, a white garment is wrapped around the child. Finally a godparent is handed a baptismal candle, lit from the Paschal Candle, to signify that the light of Christ will shine on and through your child for life. Then everyone prays the Our Father and the priest blesses the congregation.

## **Creating Traditions**

One tradition you may wish to establish is to make the sign of the cross on the forehead of your children to teach them to make the sign of the cross themselves. This is a prayer that articulates our desire to place our children in the care and guidance of Jesus. At the ceremony you will be given a small bottle of holy water used at the baptism. You can bless the child "in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" with this water.

At birthday parties we often light candles. Perhaps on the anniversary of your child's baptism the baptismal candle could be lit for a short time to remind your child about his or her calling to be Christ's light in the world. If you are worried or anxious about your child you might light the baptismal candle to remind you that the light of Christ is present in his or her life and that God cares for your child just as you do.



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**THE PARISH OF NEWRY**