



Catholic Parish of
Christchurch North

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."
(Matthew 28:19 - 20)

Welcome, and thank you for your interest in getting your child baptised!

We hope that this booklet will provide you with information on having your child baptised in our parish, and don't hesitate to email, phone or message us if you have any other questions.

WHY DOES THE CHURCH BAPTISE CHILDREN?

From the very beginning, the Church has always baptised children as well as adults. Our Lord said: "Unless a person is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

This means that children should not be deprived of baptism. Children are precious to Jesus. He loves them dearly. He wants to save them by giving his blessings to them as they grow up in the Spiritual Family he began, the Church. We experience the Church and belong to the Church in our local Parish. It is there that we gather to worship God and to learn together about the ways of God.

So, baptism takes place in one of our Parish Churches for it is there that the Parish Family gather.



IS 'CHRISTENING' THE SAME AS 'BAPTISM'?

You may have come across the term **Christening**, and often people use this word interchangeably with **Baptism**. For us as Catholics, it is more correctly called **Baptism**.

The word '**baptism**' means washing, or cleansing, in water. It comes from the Greek language. In the Church, baptism does not mean just ordinary washing or bathing with water but has a spiritual meaning. Baptism **always** means the washing with water that has the spiritual meaning given to it by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

SO, WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF BAPTISM?

When a child is baptised by the Church, Jesus baptises that child. He sends the Holy Spirit into the child and makes them a child of God by cleansing from original sin and giving the child the new life of God. **No man or woman can do that.** Only God can make someone His son or daughter. God does this in the Sacrament of Baptism, and that is why we are invited to ensure that our children are baptised.

WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO BAPTISE MY CHILD?

Ordinarily, once a baby has been born and you have settled back at home, you are invited to contact the Parish to organise baptism preparation and finalising the date of baptism.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE BAPTISM OF MY CHILD?

We hold a baptism preparation session every **third Sunday afternoon and Monday evening** of each month. We ask the mother, father, and the godparents to attend this programme, and that a babysitter be arranged for that hour. The Sacrament of Baptism can only take place once the preparation session has been attended.

WHEN IS THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

Baptisms are celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of the Month – at **St Gregory's Church, Bishopdale**. **There may be special circumstances and this will need to be pre arranged with the priest.**

Please note that It is possible that there may be more than one child baptised in the same celebration.

*Many people ask what is an appropriate amount for a donation after a baptism. While there is no set amount, **we suggest \$100.***

It is important to note that this donation is not kept by the priest personally. Half goes towards the upkeep of all the priests of the Diocese, while the other half goes towards the upkeep of the Parish.

This offering is never insisted upon as we do not “pay” for Sacraments. No one is ever refused the Sacrament because of a difficulty in making an offering.

HOW DO I CHOOSE THE GODPARENTS?

To be a child's Godparent is an honour and a privilege. It means that the parents want this person to be an influence for good on their child; to be a good example; to be a guardian and helper "*in the things of the Holy Spirit and of faith.*"



For this reason, a Godparent should be:

- a Catholic over 16 years of age,
- has received First Holy Communion and,
- lives a life of faith.

A Christian person who is not Catholic may also be chosen, although they are what is known as a 'Christian Witness' and not a Godparent.

STEPS TO TAKE

- Fill out the information form, and return the form to the Parish Office (contact information on back page) for the booking process to commence.
- The Parish office books the parents into the preparation session.
- A confirmation will be sent to the parents via email to confirm a date for Baptism and the preparation class.
- If you live outside our Parish boundary, you are invited to have your child baptised in the parish where you live. You are invited to contact your local Parish Priest.
- If you were once a parishioner here and are coming back temporarily (e.g. for Christmas or holidays) and wish to have your child baptised here, you would need to talk to your Parish Priest in your present parish, and a priest here in North Parish.
- Baptismal Candle—you are invited to provide a baptismal candle for your child. You can find baptismal candles at Christian and Catholic Shops in Christchurch.

*By baptising your child in our parish, you will automatic become a member of the Catholic Parish of Christchurch North.
If you would like to opt out of this, please phone the Parish Office.*



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