



HAVING YOUR CHILD
BAPTIZED AT
ST PANCRAS
CATHOLIC CHURCH,
IPSWICH

When to Have Your Child Baptised

Like the celebration of the other six sacraments, the Sacrament of Baptism is, first and foremost, an act of homage paid to the living God rather than a social event. The Sacrament of Baptism is the gateway to heaven and salvation. Without it, no one can get to heaven (John 3:3-5). Therefore, a child should be baptised at the earliest possible opportunity after birth without waiting until arrangements for a full social gathering can be put in place.

What Does Baptism do for Your Child?

When you, as parents, ask for the Sacrament of Baptism you are placing yourselves and your child into the arms of Our Lord who said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 19:14). In return for this act of faith, God grants four gifts to the child being Baptised:

- the stain of original sin is washed from the child's soul;
- the child's soul is filled with sanctifying grace;
- the child becomes an adopted child of God, and can now call God, 'Father';
- and the child becomes a brother or sister of Our Lord, and a co-heir with Him (Romans 8:17) to all the graces and blessings of the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3), and a member of God's Church.

Baptism as a Sacrament

When Adam committed the original sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis ch. 3), he forfeited a number of special gifts that he had been given in trust on behalf of the whole human race. These included the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, that is, the life of God dwelling in his soul. When he forfeited these gifts, the whole human race became alienated from God's friendship, not because God had stopped loving us but because we, collectively as a race and individually through the sins each of us would go on to commit, had turned our backs on Him. In consequence, we all fell under the influence of Satan.

In the Sacrament of Baptism, the child is exorcised of the devil's influence, the stain of Adam's original sin is cleansed from the child's soul, and the life of God (sanctifying grace) is restored.

It is the job of parents and Godparents alike to help the child to preserve that sanctifying grace throughout life, and to lead the child to a life of Catholic virtue. If the child should ever fall into mortal sin (when God's life is lost from the soul) then the grace may be restored once more in the Sacrament of Confession. At about the age of seven, parents must present their child to begin preparation for the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.

Parents

On your part, you will be committing yourself to raising your child as a practising Catholic, bringing your child to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation, teaching your child to pray, nurturing in your child a love of God and the things of God, and undertaking to educate your child in the life of the Church, the Sacraments, and the virtues.

Godparents

You may have one or two Godparents. Each Godparent must be a Baptised and practising Catholic (that is, a Catholic who goes to Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation), he or she must already have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, and must be at least sixteen years old. Godparents may not be chosen from the child's biological parents.

The Ceremony

First Anointing: During the ceremony, your child will need to be anointed at the base of the throat with the Oil of Catechumens. This oil represents a state of preparedness, and sacramentally preserves the child from ever again being caught in the grasp of Satan. Whatever your child is wearing will need to be loose enough at the neck for the priest to be able to do this.

Washing in the Waters of Baptism: The priest will pour blessed water over the head of your child three times, saying as he does so, ‘N. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.’

Second Anointing: The priest will then anoint your child on the crown of the head with a different oil, the Oil of Chrism which is also used in the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Order. This holy anointing sacramentally symbolizes and actually accomplishes your child’s initiation into, and his/her participation in, the life of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King. In other words, as your child grows, he or she is to share in the life of the Church’s worship, share in making known the Gospel to others by how s/he lives and what s/he says, and accept the rule of Christ as King and Sovereign over his or her life.

White Garment: At this point, the priest will drape a white baptismal garment around your child’s shoulders. The garment sacramentally represents the purity of your child’s soul following the Baptism, and the prayer commissions the parents and the godparents to help preserve the purity of this child’s soul throughout his or her life. You will need to bring with you a white (not off-white) garment – perhaps a shawl – to serve this purpose, but it must be a separate garment from what your child is already wearing.

The Lighted Candle: The priest will then present a lighted candle to the Godparents to symbolize sacramentally the flame of God’s love that is now alight in the child’s soul. The Godparents’ role is to assist the parents of the child in keeping that flame of God’s love alight throughout his or her life.

Cost

There is no fixed fee for a Baptism, although some parents like to give a donation to the church.

The Beginning

Being baptised is just the beginning of a life of faith for your child, a life that will be ordered towards God and, finally, heaven. The spiritual gift of sanctifying grace is the most precious gift you can give to your new-born child. Help him or her to preserve this gift, to treasure it, and to value it above all things in the weeks, months, and years that follow.

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