

### **What about fees?**

The Church charges no fee for administering the sacraments. However, it is customary for the parents to make a donation (approx. £30-£40) and/or to organise a collection for the Church on the occasion of the Baptism of their child.

### **Where should Baptism take place?**

Baptism should normally take place in the church in the parish where you live. If you are not from Ulverston/Dalton Catholic parish, you should consult your local priest in the first instance. With just reason, your priest can give permission for baptisms to happen in a place other than his parish.

### **Welcome**

Baptism makes your child a member of this parish community.

If you regularly come to Mass and practise your faith, a baptism in the family is an occasion for a renewal of your own faith. If you have other children it is a significant occasion for them and you can help them to understand that they too received this gift of grace and new life.

If you have been away from the Church you will find, like so many others, that the occasion of your child's baptism can become an opportunity to return to the practice of your faith. If you have any questions about deepening your own faith the priest will be pleased to help you.

### **Our Parish welcomes you**

Thank you for reading this leaflet. Baptism is the entry into the life of the Church, and the parish community would like to make this experience as special as possible.

Sunday Masses: Sat 6pm, (Ulverston)  
9am, (Dalton)  
10:30am, (Ulverston)

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St Mary's, Ulverston  
&

Our Lady of the Rosary and Saint Margaret of Scotland, Dalton

# **The Sacrament of Baptism**

## **A Guide for Parents and Godparents**

(Updated January 2022)

*This booklet only applies to children under 14 years old.  
For baptism of persons aged 14 years or older please speak with the priest*

## ***Baptism***

The birth of a new child is usually a time of great happiness for families. Soon afterwards, friends and relatives will come to offer congratulations and to have a look at the new arrival. Christian parents, filled with joy and pride, are conscious that they have been privileged to share in the miracle and mystery of the creation of new life, which they recognise is a gift from God.

Like all new parents, Christian parents will be aware that their child is precious, not only to them, but precious to God too. They will hope to give their child all that it is best, so that he or she will grow to be a good and complete person, achieving their God-given potential and the fullness that life offers. This will include a desire for their child to share in the life of Christ as a member of the Church, and so one of their priorities will be to arrange a baptism shortly after a child is born.

For some people, however, the reasons for asking to have their child baptised are not always clear. This booklet is to help parents to understand and think about baptism, to help them prepare for the sacrament and to help them make a responsible decision.

Baptism ***should*** be requested when parents have a genuine desire to bring their child up as a member of God's family, the Church, so that they may know God and inherit the eternal life that faith in God promises. Baptism ***should not*** be requested simply to please family or friends, because others do it, or to secure a place at a Catholic school.

The opening prayer of the baptismal ceremony reads 'You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us by loving God and neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?' Only if the honest answer to this is 'I/We do' should a child be presented for baptism.

Church Law concerning baptism requires that the priest or deacon who will baptize your child must have a 'well-founded hope' that he or she will in fact be brought up as a Catholic. It is the parents' responsibility to demonstrate this.

Also, please note that there is only a limited amount of space in the church registers for godparents to be included; therefore asking too many will lead to some not being recorded as such.

### **How do I request Baptism?**

The best way is to come to Mass at the weekend and see the Parish Priest afterwards. He will then arrange to meet with you to take further details. These include details about the child, parents, godparents and home address. When giving details please ensure that, where appropriate, the details you give match those given to the Registrar of Births. If you have any queries about this then please ask the priest. The information you provide will only be used for Church purposes, and is not passed on to third parties. You may suggest a date for the baptism; however, a date will **only** be confirmed after you have completed the required parental preparation for baptism. Any venues you might book for parties etc. in the meanwhile are at your own risk, if a date for baptism has not been confirmed by the priest.

### **Can I choose any name?**

You may not choose a name 'alien' to Christian sentiment. A Christian, biblical or saint's name is normally included among those you choose. During the ceremony the family name (surname) is not mentioned, only 'given' names.

### **What do I need for the ceremony?**

You will need to bring along a white shawl, or similar garment, to wrap your child in during the service; this can be new or borrowed. A baptismal candle will be provided for you to keep.

### **What about photographs?**

Photography is normally permissible in church at the priest's or deacon's discretion, but the ceremony should not be interrupted by excessive movement, equipment noise or the use of camera flashes: it is also usually possible to pose around the font after the ceremony. Similarly, videoing the baptism must not interrupt the ceremony, and care should be taken to ensure that no children other than your own family members are recorded on film. Parents are asked to tell their guests if a video camera is to be used.

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **When is Baptism celebrated?**

Baptism is normally celebrated in one of two contexts in our parish: within the celebration of the Sunday Mass, or at a baptismal service, usually at 11.45am (Ulverston) or 12 noon (Dalton). Please note that other children may be baptised at the same ceremony.

### **Must I/We be Catholic to have my baby baptised?**

Normally, at least one parent must be a Catholic to have their child Baptised in the Catholic Church.

### **I/We am not married. Can my child be baptised?**

Yes. A child may be baptised so long as one parent is Catholic and there is a well-founded hope that they will be brought up in the practice of the Catholic Faith. If you have any questions about marriage in the Catholic Church, please ask the priest.

### **What about Sponsors (Godparents)?**

The Church requires a 'sponsor' for the child, who is, in effect stating that he or she supports the parents' request for baptism. They are also expected to play a role in supporting parents in bringing up the child, especially in the faith and religious practice. Church Law only requires one sponsor (godparent); however, most children have two - one godfather and one godmother. *If you are thinking of having more than two sponsors, please ensure that the priest has agreed to this in advance, as he will want to know that any additional sponsors are serious about their faith, and will want to establish what their contribution to the child's religious upbringing will be.*

**At least one of the sponsors must be a confirmed and practising Catholic; but of course, both the sponsors must be Christian and will be expected to profess the Christian faith, in public, at the baptism ceremony with you. The minimum age for godparents is 16 years. Please ask the prospective godparents to read this leaflet before they accept your invitation so that they are aware of their responsibilities and duties.**

Since the role of sponsor is an important one, please do not try to please friends or relatives in your choice, but rather choose a sponsor for your child who can genuinely support you in your role as Christian parents, and, later, can journey with your child as they live-out a relationship with God.

## *What is Baptism?*

Baptism (Christening) is not simply a 'naming ceremony' or even just a blessing for a new baby or an occasion for a family celebration. It is the beginning of the Christian life and of a life-long journey of discipleship of Jesus and a response to his promise of eternal life.

### **Baptism is a sacrament**

A sacrament is a means by which God comes into our lives to deepen our relationship with him. The Church recognizes seven sacraments, namely: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, Ordination, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. Baptism is always the first to be administered and as such is often referred to as the 'Gateway to the Sacraments'. Jesus commanded that we should baptise when he said, 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always, yes to the end of time.' (Matthew 28:19-20)



### **Baptism is a rite**

'Rite' is another word for a religious ceremony. In the Rite of Baptism we use many symbols as signs to us of God's presence. This is true of other Sacraments too. At baptism, water reminds us of God's gift of life and the washing away of sin; anointing with oil shows we are set apart for God; a white garment shows the purity of the newly baptised and a lighted candle reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World who lights up our path.

### **Baptism is an invitation to become a committed follower of Christ**

As a result of baptism we are called to follow the teachings of Christ, listening to his voice through the bible and the teachings of his Church. It is the parents, with the help of the godparents, who promise to bring their child up as a follower of Jesus, and so they are required to state their own belief in the essential elements of the Christian faith during the Baptismal Ceremony.

## **Baptism is a sign of membership**

Baptism is the visible means by which we become children of God and join the Church community, becoming united with other Christians throughout the world. Through membership of the Church we assume the rights and duties of belonging to that community. Baptism will make your child part of that family of God, who call themselves Catholic Christians, and who gather each week in church to give thanks and praise to God in the celebration of Mass.

### ***Baptism and Parents' Responsibilities***

Because of the lifelong nature and consequences of baptism, the Church is insistent that the sacrament should only be administered if the child's parents are committed to what they are undertaking and have also been prepared in such a way that they clearly understand the nature of baptism and are able to demonstrate this.

Just as in so many other areas of life, it is the parents who bear the responsibility for instructing and forming their children in the teaching and practice of the faith. Although Catholic schools exist to help parents in this regard, they are not a substitute for them. The best instruction that you can give your child is through commitment and good example in the ways of prayer and Christian living. The Christian atmosphere at home is especially important. The Church views the family as the basic 'building block' for itself and for the wider society. Indeed, the family is often called the 'domestic Church'.

Baptism is only the *beginning* of a life of faith. It is assumed that you will want to accompany and provide on-going support for your child in their Catholic Christian journey as much as other aspects of life; therefore it is important that you allow them to participate fully in the Church's life. For example, in time, you may want to send them to a Catholic school, and you should allow them to receive the other sacraments at the appropriate time. Attendance at Sunday Mass is, perhaps, the most important part of Catholic life and worship.

If you are not a regular attender at Church, you might want to ask yourself what example you are going to give to your children in this regard. Anyone is welcome to come to church; and there is no requirement to be in the limelight, so to speak. Come and see.

## **Parental Preparation**

This is not overly complicated, and usually involves meeting with the priest or sometime others, to discuss the significance of baptism for you and your child. The symbols used in the ceremony are explained, as is the role of godparents. You can also raise any questions which you may have in relation to the baptism of your child. Only when Baptism preparation is complete can a date for the ceremony be confirmed. Please note: it is not necessary to wait for the birth of your child to begin preparing for their baptism - in that case simply leave the relevant parts of the form blank and phone them through when they are known. Sometimes baptism preparation may raise questions for a non-Catholic parent who may wish to discuss their own membership of the Catholic Church. We welcome any such enquiry in confidence and without any obligation or pressure.

### ***The Baptismal Register***

Once the baptism has taken place, the details you have provided about your child will be entered into the parish baptism register.

This is a permanent written record of the baptism, based on information given at the time. We do not rely on the legal basis of 'consent' for holding this personal data, but rather our 'legitimate interest'. It is not possible to alter the facts of baptismal records at a later date (other than correcting small inaccuracies such as a misspelled name).

There are also two spare spaces in the register for your child's confirmation and also for their marriage at a future date, if they are married in the Catholic Church.

The information you provide will not be passed on to third parties without parental permission. Once your child is old enough, the data will be deemed as theirs (and to the church which holds the baptismal records). Special rules apply if a child is later adopted.

The baptismal record is not a civil public document, and so members of the public cannot demand to see it. You may however ask for a copy of your child's baptismal entry at any time - for example, if you need it for a place in a Catholic school.