

What is Baptism?

Baptism is the beginning of the Christian life; in it we are *born again* to new life in Jesus Christ. Following the example of Christ we are washed with water and filled with the Holy Spirit, and we become part of his body, the Church.

Baptism is the gateway to all the other Sacraments of the Church.

Baptism is not just a social ritual. It brings with it the responsibility of opening one's life to God, of saying 'Yes' to the challenges of the Gospel and of following Jesus Christ.

Who can be baptised?

It has been the practice of Christian parents from ancient times to have their young children baptised and to form them in the Christian faith as they grow older. Catholic parents should endeavour to have their children baptised in their first few weeks or months.

Any adult (or a younger person old enough to make his or her own decision) who wants to follow Jesus Christ may, after appropriate preparation, receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Adults who are interested in being baptised in the Catholic Church should contact Father Paul on 02476674161.

Can my child be baptised at All Souls?

If you are a Catholic and resident in All Souls parish (i.e. in the Earlsdon, Hearsall, Chapelfields and Whoberley areas of the city), then this is the normal place to have your child baptised.

If you are resident elsewhere but have some connection with All Souls (e.g. as a regular worshipper or former parishioner), then it is usually possible for your child to be baptised here, with the permission of your own Parish Priest.

If you're not sure where the right place to ask for baptism is, do ask to discuss it.

Accepting Responsibility

Most of us were baptised as infants, so our initial 'Yes' to God was given on our behalf by our parents and godparents. They accepted the responsibility of teaching us the ways of faith, and of helping us to grow in the love of God. This assumes that parents are themselves believers and that they practise their faith.

The parish community also plays a role in supporting both the newly-baptised and those adults who have taken on the responsibility of helping them to grow in faith.

However, as Christians grow into adulthood, the maturing of their personal faith becomes their own responsibility.

What is the process?

After making initial contact with Father Paul on 02476674161 or allsoulsco@gmail.com he will invite you to meet with him to discuss the celebration of your child's baptism. He'll need to take

some details down and this is an opportunity for the parents, the child and the priest to get to know each other better. It's usually possible to set a provisional date for the baptism at this stage.

After the initial meeting, Fr Paul will pass your details on to the parish's catechist (teacher). She will meet with you, either here at All Souls or in your own home. This is an opportunity to talk in more detail about what Baptism means, and the responsibilities you are taking on as Christian parents. You'll also be able to talk about the liturgy of Baptism itself and choose some appropriate scripture readings.

A week or two before the baptism we'll invite you to come forward at the end of a Sunday Mass to be welcomed by the parish community at All Souls – we are all here to support you in this new undertaking.

What about the baptism itself?

Baptisms at All Souls normally take place at 12.45pm, after the 11.15am Sunday Mass. (Note: during the Covid pandemic arrangements are being made on a case by case basis).

There are several parts to the Baptism liturgy:

- The child is received and the parents and godparents ask for baptism and agree to their new responsibilities.
- Everyone hears reading(s) from the scriptures about baptism, with some words of explanation from the Priest or Deacon.
- In communion with all the saints we pray for the child; in particular we pray that he or she may be delivered from evil, and the Priest anoints the child with oil.
- The baptismal water is blessed and the parents and godparents profess the Christian faith.
- The child is baptised by the Priest, saying, "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
- Various "explanatory rites" follow:
 - the child is anointed with chrism (sacred oil) as a sign of conformity to Christ and in anticipation of the Sacrament of Confirmation;
 - a white garment is presented, signifying the purity of the Christian dignity;
 - a candle is lit and presented, signifying the light of Christ received by the new Christian;
 - the Priest touches the ears and mouth of the child, praying that he or she may soon hear and proclaim Christ's word.
- The liturgy concludes by everyone praying the Lord's Prayer in the name of the newly-baptised Christian, and a final blessing and dismissal.

Who can be a godparent?

Godparents assist the parents in presenting a child for Baptism and help them in the child's Catholic upbringing.

Godparents themselves need to be baptised and confirmed Catholics who have received Holy Communion, are practising the faith and in good standing with the Church. Parents need to take care in choosing godparents: asking somebody to be a godparent shouldn't be used as a way of honouring a friend or family member. Rather, **parents should seek somebody who will take the responsibility seriously.**

In the Catholic Church there may be either a godfather, or a godmother, or both.

Recognising that we share one Baptism with all Christians, a baptised non-Catholic Christian may be invited to be an official witness to the baptism alongside a Catholic godparent.

What if we're not married?

Sometimes parents are worried that their own situation might make the baptism of their child difficult.

The Catholic Church teaches that the ideal place for children to be brought into the world and brought up is a loving Christian marriage. At the same time, we affirm that Christ's call to follow him is to *all* people, whether they are presently living in an ideal situation or not.

If, because you love your child, you want him or her to grow up in relationship with Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church, then we welcome you warmly; and as you prepare for your child's baptism and bring your child up in the faith, we hope and pray that you will find your own relationship with Christ blossoming.

What next?

Please contact Father Paul, the parish Priest, on 02476674161 or email allsoulsco@gmail.com