

The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Welcome










You are preparing to have your child baptized. This is a very special time for you and your family. Whether your child is a new born or a few years old, this is a time for celebrating God's gift of life and love.

As your child is welcomed into the family that is the Christian community, you are committing yourself as a parent to the nurturing and development of your child's faith and spiritual life.

This is also an important moment for the Christian community. As we stand beside you to welcome your child into the Church, so too do we reaffirm our own Baptismal calling as individuals and as a community. This shared Baptism brings us together and unites us in the Body of Christ. We are on a journey with Christ, whose saving love heals, reconciles, and transforms us so that we may participate in his ministry and mission that is the Kingdom of God.

Here at Our Lady Of Lourdes Parish we hope that this will be a time of many graces and blessings for you and your family. We hope that you will feel welcomed and included in our Parish family and that Lourdes will always be a place where your child's faith life and your own will be enriched and supported.

The Symbols & Elements of Baptism

-  *Trinity: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit*
-  *Water*
-  *The Cross*
-  *Holy Oils*
-  *Light ~ the Pascal Candle*
-  *The Faith Community*
-  *The Word of God*
-  *Communion of Saints*
-  *Profession of Faith`*
-  *White Garment*

Baptism: The First Step On Our Christian Journey of Faith



"Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit..., and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.

Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission:

'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.'

~ Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1213

In the celebration of Baptism, we are welcomed into a family of faith – Christianity. We are made members of the Body of Christ. On the day of our baptism a path is set before us – we become life-long pilgrims on a special journey with Jesus as our guide and accompanied by the Holy Spirit, towards an ever more intimate communion with God our father.

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In Baptism:

- ✦ *God reaches out to us and enables us to respond to his divine invitation in an ecclesial (Church) setting.*
- ✦ *Out of God's faithful love, the Father continues to offer us the salvation, which has been so wonderfully and fully revealed in Jesus the Son.*
- ✦ *God's Holy Spirit helps us to respond to God's love. The Holy Spirit blesses us, makes us holy, increases our faith, helps us to become more and more like Christ, unites to the Father and one another in faith, within the context of the Church.*

As with all the sacraments, Baptism is an act of praise and thanksgiving to God who has created us and loves us unconditionally and faithfully. In the gift of this divine love, God shares His very life with us and continually invites us into a more intimate relationship with Him. In God's creativity and generosity, we are blessed with faith and other gifts which help us to respond to this gift of love and enable our relationship with God to grow and deepen.

Baptism is the celebration of a very special gift of God – the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, the grace of Jesus' saving actions inspire and empower us. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments, we become disciples of Christ. We are reborn through the waters of Baptism, into the life and work of Christ. We become partners in his ministry of reconciliation and healing in our world – called to witness to the nearness of God's Kingdom with our whole lives.

The Church has always taught that faith is a 'prerequisite' for the 'efficacious' celebration of the sacraments. In

Baptism this means that God, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, shares his own divine life with the person being baptized based on the faith and desire of the individual. In the case of an infant or a child, this is based on the faith and desire of the parents.

While the gift of God's grace in any of the sacraments is always initiated from the place of divine love, our faith is an important element of the celebration. As people of faith, we believe that God has revealed himself to us in creation and in human history and continues this gift of self-communication. We believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit, breathing life into us and sanctifying us, making us holy. And we believe in God's promise of salvation, a promise fully revealed and manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is from our faith that we can freely accept these wonderful mysteries and God's wonderful offer of Grace that exists in them.

Your faith as a Christian Parent makes all the difference for your child, today and throughout his or her entire faith journey. It is from you that your child will first learn about our loving God and the beautiful truth that they are beloved children of God. In the same way that you guide them in their first physical steps, they will learn to pray and to walk in footsteps of Jesus from you. It is from your own faith and connectedness to a believing community that they will develop a sense of belonging and comfort in the faith community. And, it is from your own witness to your faith, that they will come to learn and have the courage to live as disciples of Christ.

While this responsibility and task appears daunting, the good news is that as Christian parents you are not alone. You have a big family of faith to support and accompany you along this journey. Belonging to this faith community is a one of the gifts of Baptism, not just your child's baptism, but your own.

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Baptism is also an act of the Church. It is not a 'private' or family celebration. Rather it is a celebration of the whole People of God. It is the faith community that forms the context within which the offer of God's Grace is received by the individual – the sacramental celebration sets the place in which we can respond freely and prayerfully to God's offer of salvation and to accept the particular graces offered in Baptism.

What is Baptism?



The word "Baptism" comes from the Greek word meaning "to plunge" or "to drown". When we are baptized, we are literally plunged into the life of Christ. We drown to an old way of living so that we might be reborn through the waters of baptism into the life, death and resurrection of Christ. In order to understand what it means for us to be baptized, we need to reflect on the baptism of Jesus and how it was connected to his ministry and mission.

We all remember the story of the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan by John. The Holy Spirit, in the sign of a dove, was seen and the Father's voice was heard, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him." (Matt 3:17). In the Gospels, this beautiful story is placed at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

In being baptized by John, a baptism for the forgiveness of sin, Jesus, took into himself all that is human, our goodness and our brokenness. In doing so he entered into his mission to reconcile all things to the Father. In his baptism, Jesus is blessed by the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit and it is into this relationship of divine love that our own baptism draws us into.

Jesus would call his own death and resurrection a "baptism". To his own apostles he would ask the question: "Are you willing to be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized?" In this baptism, Jesus was "plunged" into death – death on a cross – but the Father raised him to the new life through the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the sign given to us by Jesus to unite us to his own baptism. What happened in Jesus' death and resurrection is what happens to us at baptism – we "drown" to an old way of living, we enter the tomb with the crucified Jesus and are born to new life in the resurrected Christ.

Baptism is a sign of salvation because it is in this sacrament that we are united to the saving and reconciling work of Jesus who makes us part of his Body – a body which proclaims with each breath, the nearness of God's kingdom.

*"When we were baptized in Christ Jesus we were baptized in his death; in other words, when we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life."
(Romans 6:3-4)*

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The Creativity of God – Baptism is our invitation

God created us with great love. He wants us to live; he wants us to be part of his creative life. God's love for us is unconditional – that is, we do nothing to earn or merit it in our lives, nor can we do anything to make the love God has for us diminish. God's love is God's free gift to each and every one of us. It continually calls into relationship with God and with one another. This gift brings for a natural gratitude from within us – a desire to share this abundant love and to celebrate it.

Since our own baptism – the beginning of our life in and with Christ – we may have lost sight of, or perhaps forgotten God's creativity in our life. Whatever has happened in to us, whatever the quality of our relationships with the Church and with other Christians, God continues to invite us to share in his creativity.

In baptism we celebrate the love God has for each of us. God draws us near, calls each of us beloved children. During our lives we may wander away from this love and act in ways that are contrary to the goodness of this relationship. But God's love is patient and faithful, waiting for our return again and again, joyfully welcoming us home each and every moment of our lives.

As we prepare to celebrate the baptism of our children we have a natural moment to reflect on our own relationship with God and the gift of our own baptism. We might reflect on some of the following questions:

- ✧ What difference has baptism made in my life?
- ✧ Do I feel like a beloved child of God today?
- ✧ In what ways would I like to be closer to Jesus?
- ✧ How has the Holy Spirit been working in my life lately?
- ✧ How connected/ active am I in my community of faith?
- ✧ What kind of things do I need to help me grow in my faith?
- ✧ Do I feel supported in my faith by family? Friends? The Parish community?
- ✧ What do I want my child to know most about who God is?
- ✧ What does the celebration of my child's baptism mean for me? For my faith?
- ✧ How is my prayer life?
- ✧ Am I participating in the Eucharist as deeply or as often as I would like to? Am I invited to?

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Our Faith Makes a Creative Difference

At baptism we join God's family and become baby Christians. As with most things in life, being baptized won't necessarily make much difference to us unless there is further input. Being baptized is the beginning of something; it is not an isolated event or a magic moment which acts like a good-luck charm for life.

It is very difficult to be a member of a family if you never have any contact with other members of the family. And it is unreasonable to expect anyone to bring up a child as a Christian if they are not trying to live as Christians themselves.

For these reasons the Church is more concerned than ever today that parents who ask for their child to be baptized also understand what their commitment and responsibilities will be concerning the growing faith of their child. It is no good expecting anyone to bring up a child as a Catholic when neither parent is practicing their faith.

Sometimes parents ask for baptism for their baby because they think it's a nice celebration for the family or grandparents say that the baby must be baptized. It may be that they think of baptism as a special kind of blessing. All these reasons are very understandable, but they have nothing to do with baptism.

In baptism, it is the faith of the parents which brings the baby to the church. Babies are baptized because, as children of believing and practicing Christians, they have been born and are living within a Christian Community.

Baptism brings them into this family of faith. Being part of a family means growing up in the ways of that family. It means belonging, learning, sharing in a way of life – a life characterized by discipleship – a life of following Jesus in good times and in bad.

At the deepest level, faith is an assent of the heart. Our faith is a creative relationship with God – based on love, not a set of rules. The faith of parents and godparents, then is crucial to baptism.

Jesus Christ asks us to baptize in his name so that parents, godparents, the faith community and God can work together in a creative partnership throughout the crucial years ahead as our children grow to maturity.

A baby only grows and will only continue growing as long as the care, protection and guidance needed to reach successful maturity continues to be given. In the same way, a "baby" Christian will only grow and continue to grow as a Christian if there is support, example, and teaching throughout childhood and adolescence.

By bringing your child to be baptized, you are giving a sign to the world that you and God are indeed partners working together for the complete development of your child – body and soul.

As your child grows, their relationship with our loving God will grow and their lives will be shaped, guided and transformed by that love. By being attentive to the changing spiritual needs and developments of our children we can help them grow in the faithful and saving love God has for each of us.