

Preparation for Baptism in St Michael's Parish, Nowra

Baptism, source of new life

Why do Catholics baptise? Because Jesus told us to.

On the day of the Ascension, Jesus gathered his disciples on a mountain in Galilee just outside of Jerusalem and commissioned them to “make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (*Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20*)



From the first Pentecost (50 days after the resurrection of Jesus), the Church has called all people to “Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit.” (*Acts of the Apostles 2:38*)

The Sacrament of Baptism invites us on a journey of faith as a disciple of Jesus, the Christ. It calls us to a way of life in the spirit. It is the beginning of our initiation into the Christian mystery. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation, the Source of that New Life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

In the waters of Baptism we are freed from the power of darkness and are empowered by the light of Christ; we die to the ways of sin – we are buried with Jesus and we rise again to new life as children of God.

What does this mean?

For us, baptism is the sign of our unity with Christ's community – the body of Christ, the Church – and a witness to our desire to be part of the discipleship of Jesus. One's baptismal commitment means participating in the Paschal Mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus. Through Baptism we become a new creation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, sharing in God's own life.

Above all, Baptism is a sacrament of faith and commitment by which we respond to the gospel of Jesus who is the Christ and enter into a holy covenant with God in Jesus through His Church. We are formed into God's people and are incorporated into the Body of Christ.

Adults and children of catechetical age make this choice for themselves; parents make the choice for infants.

Choosing Baptism For My Child

When considering Baptism for your child, you need to reflect on what it is you are asking of God's Church, and you also need to reflect on your own Baptism.

- What has it meant in your own life to be a member of the Body of Christ?
- How do you live out your Baptismal commitment today in love and service to God and neighbour?
- Are you ready to be a Christian parent, training your child in the practice of faith, teaching them to keep God's commandments?

A few things to keep in mind.

Sometimes parents ask to have their child baptised because of:

- *Fear* – fear of God, fear of what grandparents will say, fear of what family and friends will think.
- *Superstition* – believing that if their child is not baptised something bad will happen, or God will punish them for not doing so.
- *Their cultural heritage* tells them this is what you do – babies are always baptised and then you have a party in their honour.

When motivated by fear, superstition or cultural heritage, baptising our child could be a *hypocritical* action.

Baptism does not change God. God already loves your child; God will love us whether we celebrate Baptism or not. But Baptism, thoughtfully and reflectively celebrated, changes us and the one we bring for Baptism.

So when we choose Baptism for our child it should be because we understand what Baptism is about and we fully intend to live the Christian life in such a way that our child will grow in justice and love and come to know the Lord Jesus.

When bringing your child to the Church for Baptism, your Parish Community will want to know that you are a faith-filled member:

- sharing regularly in worship with them
- accepting the teaching of the Creed we profess to believe
- committed to a way of life influenced by the Lord Jesus, a way of life that values prayer and service to others.

Choosing Godparents or Sponsors

Godparents, also referred to as *Sponsors*, are companions for our Journey of Faith from the waters of our Parish Baptismal font to the fullness of life in Christ Jesus.

In choosing Godparents for your child, you need to consider *fully-initiated members of the Catholic Church* who are at least 16 years of age. A fully-initiated person is someone who has received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist and who continues to witness to that faith in the great and small ways of everyday living. You want someone who knows that being a Catholic has to do with prayer, with justice toward the poor, with kindness for friends and strangers and being an active member of a faith community. Parents may not serve in this role.

Although, traditionally, parents have chosen a godmother and a godfather for their child, *only one sponsor* or godparent is required for baptism. It is also possible to invite a person baptised in another Christian tradition to be a witness at the child's baptism, along with the Catholic godparent. Someone who has not been baptised cannot be a sponsor or witness.

The primary role of the godparents is to witness to the faith of God alive in their hearts and to be willing to share that faith in a supportive way with their god-child as well as to support the faith-life of the parents.

Baptism

- ❖ *Baptism is a beginning.
It can happen only once in a lifetime.*
- ❖ *But it can be renewed over and over again in a person's life.*
- ❖ *The Baptism of your child is an opportunity to renew your
Baptism commitment.*
- ❖ *It is an occasion to celebrate the amazing gift of life that our
God shares with us.*

Please remember to bring a *white garment* (rug, shawl or gown) to clothe your child in after they are baptised; and to have a *candle*, perhaps with your child's name on it, so that you can commemorate their baptism in the years to come.

More information will be found here:
www.nowraparish.org.au >> then click on **Sacraments**

Usually an *offering* or *donation* is made to the priest for the baptism – but no set amount is expected.

If you do not know all the details necessary for your child's baptism, please remember to contact the Parish office before the baptism:
Tel: (02) 4423 1712, Fax: (02) 4421 2057,
Email: office@nowraparish.org.au

Details. I/we have agreed to have my child baptised in (Church)

Date of Baptism: _____ **Time:** _____

Godparents: _____

