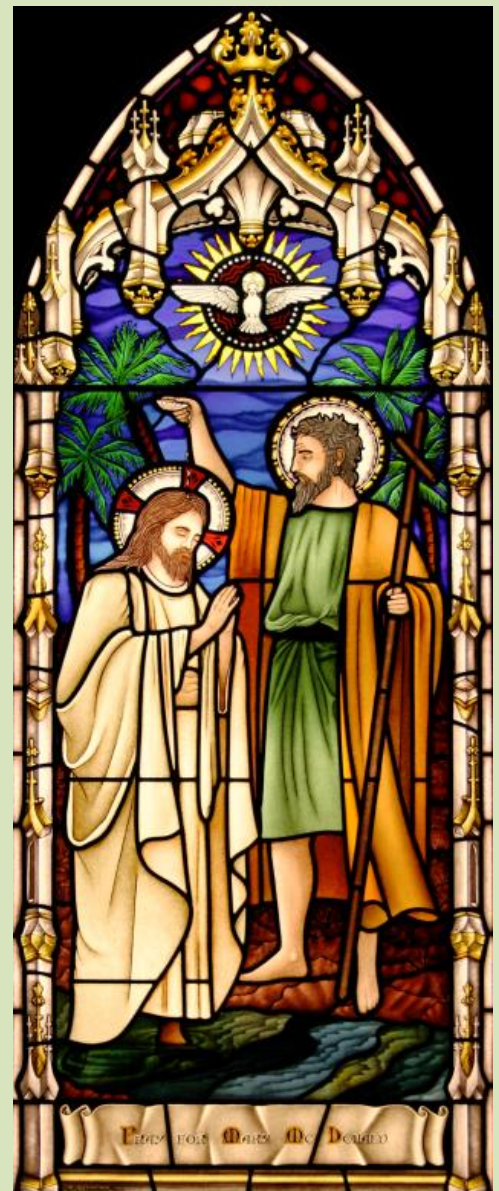




**CATHOLIC
PARISH
MELTON**

**ST DOMINIC'S
ST CATHERINE
OF SIENA**

Information Booklet Sacrament of Baptism



**Serving the areas of:
Melton, Melton North, Melton West, Kurunjang, Plumpton,
Woodlea, Rockbank & Toolern Vale**

WELCOME

Congratulations on choosing the Parish of Melton for your child's Baptism. We hope to help you plan and prepare for the baptism in the best possible way.

We hope also to journey with you through the years, seeing your children receive Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation and Marriage. To this end, we will make contact with you and your child in the coming years at the time of their birthday.

Your child's baptism is a time for celebration and joy. Following careful thought and preparation you bring your baby to church to ask for baptism. It is a public sign of your own faith and trust in God's love. The ceremonies of baptism speak powerfully of this love and as you follow the service by joining in the prayers and responses you are drawn deeper into God's love.

This booklet provides information regarding procedures / expectations / responsibilities for the baptism of your child and how the ceremony will be carried out.

Your child's baptism is the beginning of a new life in which she or he will grow closer to God and the parish family.

Any queries, please contact the Presbytery on 9743 6515. We look forward to meeting with you and your family.

Yours sincerely in Christ.

Michael Moody

Fr. Michael Moody
Parish Priest

Geoffrey McIlroy

Fr Geoffrey McIlroy
Assistant Priest

PROCEDURE FOR BOOKING / PREPARING FOR BAPTISM

Baptism is celebrated on the 3rd, 4th and 5th Sunday of most months at 12.30pm in St Catherine of Siena Church, Bulmans Rd Melton West. The ceremony starts promptly so arriving early (12:15 pm) allows us to finalise any details and get you and your family seated. There can be anything from one to 10 children baptised during the same ceremony.

BOOKING BAPTISM:

First you need to contact the Parish Office on 9743 6515 (during office hours) to book in your child's Baptism.

After booking in your Baptism, you will need to fill in the form from the parish website (<http://pol.cam.org.au/melton/ApplicationForms.aspx>). Fax or email it to the parish with a copy of your child's birth certificate.

Families who reside outside the Parish of Melton will need to supply a permission slip, as a courtesy, from their Parish Priest (ie. Permission to have a child baptised out of the Parish).

At least one parent is expected to attend an Information Night on the third Wednesday of the month (except December) at St Catherine of Siena Catholic Church Foyer at 7.30pm SHARP. Sponsors (Godparents) are encouraged to attend. This meeting will only go for ~30 minutes.

Each child for Baptism needs at least one Godparent, and may have two Godparents. To be a Godparent it is necessary: -

- To be 16 years of age (unless the Priest makes an exception);
- To be a Catholic, who has been confirmed and has received the Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
- Not to be the Father or Mother of the child (because godparents are to support the parents);
- A baptised non-Catholic may be admitted as a Christian witness along with a Catholic sponsor.

COST: There is no charge for Baptism, but a donation for the Church is customary (Normally \$100.00).

SYMBOLS YOU PROVIDE & PARTICIPATION IN THE BAPTISM:

THE CANDLE

The candle is used during the ceremony and will be lit by a person of your choice. This candle will be lit from the Easter Candle, which signifies the light of Christ that has come to your child through Baptism. The candle may be used as a memento for your child later in life (e.g. light it for prayer at birthdays or major life events).

Please feel free to provide your own candle if you wish. You can get candles at any place you wish and have them decorated appropriately as you wish (e.g. child's name, date, symbols). Size is usually about 150 mm tall / 50 mm diameter.

THE WHITE GARMENT

The white garment used in the ceremony is a relic of new clothes worn by Christians after baptism in the first centuries. It is a sign of Christian dignity and the new life of the Resurrection that becomes a part of your child's life through baptism

PARTICIPATION IN THE CEREMONY

As part of the ceremony, we encourage families to participate in the Readings and Prayers of the Faithful. Please discuss this with your family members, as Father will need to know at the Information Night who wishes to assist in this way so he can provide you with a copy of the readings or prayers.

The baptism ceremony is a sacred and prayerful time; therefore we expect that no photos or videos will be taken during the ceremony except by a "Designated Family Photographer": someone the parents choose to undertake this role. They are encouraged NOT to obstruct/obscure the ceremonies. Please pass this information on to your relatives and friends. At the conclusion of the baptism, the priest will be are happy to pose and re-create part of the ritual.

THE PROCESS OF BAPTISM: WHAT HAPPENS!

WELCOMING

“When two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them”.

The ceremony begins with a warm welcome to you and your family from the priest on behalf of the Christian community, the Church. He will ask what name you have given your child and whether you accept the responsibility of bringing up your child in the practice of the faith. Then with you, the parents and godparents, he greets your child with the sign of the cross on the forehead as a sign that this is a child of Christ.

To prepare for the baptism itself the priest prays that your child may be delivered from every evil and this prayer is reinforced by the anointing with Oil of Baptism as a sign of Christ’s strengthening power and signifies welcome by the community as a whole. This anointing also signifies parental acceptance of responsibility to raise the child in the faith. The water is blessed. Then the priest asks you to renew the vows, which were made for you at your own baptism, at the same time reminding you of your duty to bring up your child as a good Christian.

WASHING

“Baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”.

Water is the symbol of new life, for without water there will be no life. Water also makes us clean. Baptism signifies the new life and the cleansing from sin won for us when Jesus rose from the dead.

The priest pours the baptismal water over your child’s forehead three times, saying: **“Now I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.**

WORSHIPPING

“Unless a person is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”. Your child is now a Christian. Following an ancient custom your child is anointed with Oil of Chrism, “Chrism” means, “anointed one” – for Jesus was given a special work to do. He suffered, died and rose again in order to unite us to his heavenly Father.

Your child has the special work of living as a member of Christ's body – the Church, In this he or she will be helped by celebrating the other sacraments and, in particular, will take part in the Eucharist. The offering of thanks and praise to the Father, which begins at Mass, is the beginning of an eternal life of joy and total happiness.

WITNESSING

“You are the light of the world. Your light must shine so that everyone will give the praise to your Father in heaven.”

As a sign of this power to witness to Christ, the child comes dressed in white clothing or a white garment is brought by you and placed on your child to show that he or she is a new creation clothed in Christ. Finally, a member of the family, usually the father or godparent is given a candle to light from the paschal candle. This symbolizes the light of Christ, which will shine on and through your child for life.

The ceremony is concluded with the prayer Christ taught us, the “Our Father”. This is followed by special prayers for each parent and all who have joined in this joyful sacrament.

SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

- **Water:** This is for cleansing and is a sign that our sins are washed away. We live in a world which is obviously sinful, a world which influences us from the moment of conception, tradition names this ‘Original Sin’. We all live in this social context of sin which gives evidence of a tendency we have towards sin, doing wrong though we may wish to do good. Baptism cleanses us of this Original Sin with which we are all born and, in the case of baptism of adults, this includes of every sin actually committed prior to baptism. Water is also necessary for life and so is a sign, too, that the life of the risen Christ is ours.
- **Sign of the Cross:** A sign on something shows its origins or ownership. The sign of the cross is the mark of Christians for Jesus Christ died on the cross. Parents and godparents trace it on the child's forehead to show that the baby belongs to Christ, who now offers his help and grace to face and overcome the sufferings of life. In

signing ourselves we also reiterate our faith in the One loving God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

▪ **Oils used in Baptism:**

▪ Oil of Catechumens (welcoming for instruction before baptism) is olive oil rubbed on the breast of the child, just as athletes used to rub themselves with oil to strengthen and prepare for the fight ahead.

▪ Oil of Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam (sweet-smelling ointment) and is rubbed on the crown of the head. It is a sign of sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The profession of faith, which you make on behalf of your child at baptism, will later be confirmed personally by your child in the sacrament of confirmation when Oil of Chrism will be used again. The oils are blessed by the Bishop on Maundy (or Holy) Thursday.

▪ **White Garment:** This garment (can be clothes or traditionally a shawl or stole) is a relic of baptism in the first centuries where the candidate actually shed their clothing, was baptised and arose from the waters to be clothed in new white clothes signifying they cleansing death in Jesus Christ and birth into new life. It is a sign of innocence and the new life of The Resurrection.

▪ **Candles:** These symbolize Christ – the Light of the World. The baptismal candle is lit from the paschal candle, which stands near the altar at Easter as a sign of the risen Christ. The baptismal candle reminds us that the light of Christ has entered the child's life; and its flame symbolizes the flame of faith which will burn through the life of the child.

▪ **Baptismal Register:** Your child's baptism will be recorded in the parish Baptismal Register. In the years ahead proof of baptism may be obtained from the parish in the form of a certificate issued on the basis of this registration. Your child's confirmation, marriage or ordination will also be noted alongside this entry in the register.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

1. *My husband's family is not Catholic but he would very much like his sister to be godmother to our baby son. Is this allowed?*

Godparents go back to the days when most adult converts to the Christian faith had no Christian parents. Godparents spoke up for the baptised person and, if necessary, helped him or her to grow in the faith. Today, in the vast majority of infant baptisms these tasks belong primarily to the parents.

The Church insists that at least one godparent is a Catholic whose primary role remains that of supporting the parents in bringing up the child in the Christian faith. But most parents choose two. When this happens, provided one godparent is a Catholic, it is certainly allowable for a non-Catholic to act as a witness to the baptism. It remains important, however, that your sister-in-law is baptised and of sufficient age and maturity to appreciate her role.

2. *My wife goes to a different Christian Church and would like her minister to take part in the baptism. Is this possible?*

Yes. Your wife's minister may share in the prayers and readings at your baby's baptism. Discuss it with your priest; he will be happy to explain what is customary.

3. *How much does a baptism cost in the Catholic Church?*

Nothing. It is customary, however, for an offering to be made (normally \$100.00) to the Church. This is at the discretion of the family.

4. *How soon should I have my baby baptised?*

The Church teaches that all babies born into Catholic families should be baptised as soon as possible after birth. This is because of Christ's teaching on the fundamental importance of baptism. If there is any danger of death the baby must be baptised immediately and anyone can baptise. You pour water over the head of the baby, at the same time saying the words: "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit".

Usually, a baby should be baptised four to six weeks after the birth. The time will depend partly on the mother's health for it is important that she is present, and partly on the time needed for the preparation of the parents. This is why it is desirable to inform the priest before the birth that you want to have your child baptised.

If you have experienced some difficulties with the practice and your faith you may need to allow a little longer in order to rebuild a life of faith within your family.

5. *My mother says I have to give my baby girl the name of a saint but I don't agree. Who is right?*

In the first few centuries of the Church the custom grew up of changing one's name at baptism to express some Christian idea such as Irene (peace). In succeeding centuries the Church advised parents to call their children after a saint. These customs were confirmed in the 17th Century when priests were instructed to discourage parents giving their children "strange, laughable, obscene or idolatrous names". You are not obliged, then to call your daughter after a saint (although there are plenty to choose from) but the Church still expects you to choose a name which reflects your own Christian faith.

6. *My friend's baby was stillborn. What will happen to the baby?*

Your friend's baby is entrusted to the mysterious but infinitely kind and powerful love of God. If anyone has any doubts about such love then look at the crucifix. The cross proves that God's love is greater than any human mind can understand or follow.

Jesus told us that "unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5) This has led people to question whether the unbaptised are saved? Various ideas have been put forward to answer the question. Adults who have never heard of Christ, it is said, can have "baptism of desire" provided they live according to their conscience. Any unbaptised infants, some suggested, pass into a state of "Limbo" – where the baby is excluded from both heaven and hell. But this latter suggestion remains just that and has never been universally (dogmatically) taught by the Church, whose primary insistence, like that

of Jesus himself is to experience God's love, mercy and justice and in so doing call every person to repentance, to belief and to baptism.

7. *My baby was baptised at birth because of illness. Can he be re-baptised in Church?*

Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime event. It means that we become a member of God's family, we become a Christian. We cannot become what we already are. The baptism can't be repeated but it is desirable that you have a celebration in church and share in the prayers and blessings, which are part of the baptismal ceremony. You may also wish to appoint godparents at the same time. Such a service is a lovely "thanksgiving" for the safety and well being of your baby.

8. *I have been lapsed for a number of years and my seven year old daughter has never been baptised. Could I have her baptised at the same time as our baby?*

Yes, but you will need to allow time for her preparation. She will need to be given some instruction about baptism in order to understand what is happening. You may well feel that you would also find some form of preparation helpful in order to clarify any points about the faith, which have given you difficulties. It may be helpful, for example to speak to the priest in confession where you will experience the compassion of Jesus Christ himself. People sometimes wonder about how to approach a priest. After Sunday Mass is not always the best time as there are usually crowds of people around. Try to book a time convenient for both of you in order to meet in an atmosphere of quiet and peace.

9. *I'm an unmarried mother; I want my baby baptised but am anxious about the kind of reception I'll get.*

You will be given a friendly welcome by the priest who will be happy to arrange for the baptism of your baby in the privacy, which you may, perhaps, prefer. So don't worry at all. The priest will simply want to be assured of your child's Catholic upbringing.

10. *Why does the Church insist on the baptism of babies? Wouldn't it be better to wait until the child can make up its own mind?*

The Church has always baptised children soon after they are born as a sign of God's love. Some of the oldest baptisteries contained a second, much smaller, font beside

the main one. This was used by children who were too small to stand comfortably in the main font, which in those earliest days of the Church was a deep pool let into the floor.

We have already seen how baptism is God's way of showing his love for a child of his. Baptism is the sign by which he loves us and "re-creates" us in his own image. To suggest that a child should be left alone until old enough to make his or her own decision is really to miss the whole point of what baptism is about.

Baptising a baby, before the baby can make the slightest effort to do anything for her or her own salvation says very dramatically that all salvation is from God. Clearly in the adult there must already be an element of Faith – some sign of accepting God's love. But the infant is carried to the font by the faith of the family, the same family who will take charge and nurture the child in its growth and life of faith.

Baptism at an early age also brings that child, through its family, in the wider "priesthood of the faithful," the broader believing community of the parish and the Universal Church. That community is charged to welcome and journey with the family and the child to help nurture the faith of each member.

A FORM OF REQUEST FOR THE BAPTISM OF AN INFANT

(For parents)

We wish to request that our son/daughter be received into the community of God's people at the celebration of the sacrament of baptism.

We personally believe in Jesus Christ and in the good news of his life and teachings. We are dedicated to a Christian way of life and wish to share the joy of this faith with our children.

We understand that, in a special way, within the family of the church God gives us the responsibilities for the Christian upbringing of our child. We recognise that his/her first school is our home where we want to get the patterns of true Christian living. In particular, we acknowledge our commitment to be faithfully to family prayer and to the celebration of the Eucharist.

We are aware that our child must be carefully prepared for full active participation in the sacramental celebrations of the church. We realise that in order to assure our child's continuing Christian formation we are called to a life of unselfishness. We rely on God's help and the continued support of God people in the Church, as we accept these responsibilities as Christian parents.

Signed _____

(For godparents)

I/We wish to act as godparents and accept our responsibilities during the celebration of the baptism of

I/We are loyal members of the Catholic Church and seek to live out the responsibilities of confirmed Christians who regularly celebrate the Eucharistic sacrifice. We are dedicated to Christ and his church and we wish to be associated with these parents in sharing the joys and challenges of our faith with their children

I/We understand that to be genuine and courageous followers of Christ we must be faithful to prayer and to the celebration of the sacraments. We acknowledge our need of God's help as we accept the honour and responsibilities of godparents of this child.

Signed _____

HOUSE OF GOD

***Welcome, you have now entered Sacred Ground.
This Church is not a theatre or studio, but the
“HOUSE OF GOD”
where WE, the Body of Christ in his name, gather.***

***We believe that God is present in the Eucharist,
(THE BLESSED BREAD) which is kept in this Church.
We ask you to practice the following protocol:***

***Please maintain silence as people use this
opportunity for personal prayer, devotions and
religious ceremonies.***

***Limited photos taken respectfully by ONE
designated family photographer.***

No caps in Church.

Please turn off your mobile phones and pagers

***Please refrain from eating, smoking, drinking or
chewing gum.***

Please honour the “House of God.”

***Thank you for your respect and meditative silence
and hoping that these moments will be memorable
for you.***