

# Sacrament of Initiation

# Baptism

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Baptism is the first sacrament. It incorporates us into the Church and through it we are ‘reborn’ as daughters and sons of God.

Baptism is performed by immersion in or pouring of water and the words ‘I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’.

Parents who ask to have their children baptised accept the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith and bringing them up to keep God’s commandments.

## **Baptism Symbols**

Water is the central symbol of baptism. Because water is essential to all life, the water of baptism symbolises the life-giving grace that sustains those who have become children of God.

Oil is used twice in the ceremony. Before the baptism, the child’s breast is smeared with the oil of catechumens as a sign of healing and strengthening. Afterwards the crown of the head is anointed with perfumed chrism as a symbol of joy and thanksgiving.

The white garment with which the newly baptised is then clothed symbolises their new life in Christ and is “the outward sign of Christian dignity”.

A baptismal candle is lit from the paschal candle beside the font and presented to the new member as a sign of the light of Christ.

## **When and Where?**

Baptism is about being made a part of the community of faith; it is not a private family occasion. Therefore baptisms are normally conducted during Sunday Mass or with several other families at another time on Sunday in the parish church.

Some parishes do not hold baptisms during Lent which is a time of penance and preparation for the sacraments.

Parents sometimes want their baby to be baptised in a school chapel or other place which has some meaning to them as individuals, but that is not appropriate as it is the local parish community that welcomes new members and provides the sense of belonging for the children.

## **Godparents**

A godparent has to be at least 16 years old, must have been confirmed and received first Holy Communion, and needs to live a life of faith which will be an example and support to their godchild.

## **Contacts**

Please make contact with the Parish to make enquiries about having your child baptised. Most parishes conduct preparation sessions for parents and godparents before the baptism is scheduled.