



Ten ways to Prepare for your Child's Baptism

To experience the power of baptism we need to be immersed in the love of the baptised. The baptism of a child is an opportunity for the whole family to reflect upon the sacred meaning of this sacrament. Here are ten practical ways to prepare for the baptism and to grow in faith as a family.

1. Gaze upon your child

Gaze upon your child often. Reflect on the miracle of creation. A 'sense of the sacred' is fundamental to opening ourselves to the presence and action of God.

2. Pray with water

Water is part of a family's everyday activities: drinking, cleaning, recreation... As you engage with these, say a simple prayer with your child and talk about he/she will be baptised with water.

In the baptism ceremony water is poured to signify your child's immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a sign that Christ gives life, cleanses from sin, renews and frees us to love and serve God.

3. Pray with oil

The Church uses oil in the baptism of children as a sign of strength and protection, and as a sign of their dignity in Christ. When you rub sunscreen, moisturiser or ointment on your child during the course of a normal day, take a moment to reflect on the symbol of oil to be used during the baptism ceremony.

4. Pray with light

In the baptism ceremony your child's baptism candle is lit from the Paschal (Easter) candle. It signifies that your child is enlightened by Christ who is light to the world. As you prepare for the baptism, light a candle each night (or if it's winter, light the fire) and reflect on ways this family can 'light the way' as your child grows as a follower of Christ.

5. Write words of love

At baptism the Church community proclaims the Scriptures, the Word of God. The Gospels are the testimonies of our ancestors in faith. They wrote out of love so that all might know and believe in the risen Lord. What words express your love for your child? Write a baptismal 'love letter' to your child.

6. Tell stories of belonging

Baptism is immersion in a community of faith. Reflect on this by displaying photos of your child's ancestors; e.g. grandparents, great aunts/uncles. Include too pictures of people from the wider faith family, such as your favourite saints and holy people you admire. Remember all these special people.

7. White garment

Scripture speaks of being 'clothed' in God's goodness and glory. A white baptismal garment symbolises that your child has 'put on' Christ (Gal 3:27). Talk to your child about the special clothing (or perhaps a white stole) to be worn as part of the baptism ceremony, how it is a sign of the dignity and beauty of their new life of Christ.

8. Make the sign of the cross

To make the sign of the cross is to make a bold declaration of faith: I believe in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen! This is the faith in which your child is immersed at baptism. Ensure that your home is marked with a cross. Trace the sign of the cross on your child's forehead.

9. Pray for the godparents

Pray for the godparents/sponsors of your child. Invite them over for a meal and talk about your hopes and dreams for this child. Talk about why they were chosen for this special role.

10. Visit the church

Take your child to the baptismal font in your parish church to show where the baptism is to take place. Help them to anticipate this sacred event.

Helpful Hint

Establish a 'prayer space' in your home: a focal point for prayer and displaying symbols of Catholic faith. This might be a small table or shelf with a bible, candle and crucifix. For your child's baptism, place baptismal symbols at your sacred site: a bowl of water, a candle, a green branch or a decorated egg (symbol of birth and new life). Involve your child and other young children in gathering and placing the symbols.

TeresaPirola.net

Text: Teresa Pirola

Design: Sarann Ryan

© The Story Source, 1998, 2010

