

Preparing

Preparation is a key element of any significant celebration in our lives. Baptism is the first significant moment of celebration on our journey of faith. So, when a child is presented for Baptism, the family will be invited to participate in some form of preparation. In this diocese, there are a number of ways that families are assisted in this preparation. In many parishes, it's now customary to have baptism teams – a group of parishioners, trained by the parish for this task.

In our Parish the Baptism team meet the **first Monday** and **third Wednesday** of every month at 8pm in the Synod Hall. It is **compulsory** that at least one of the parents of all children to be baptised attend the Baptism Course, but ideally both parents should attend. If only one parent is available, you are welcome to also bring along a grandparent or a godparent. The course can be booked through the Parish Office at 028 3752 2813. The course is an opportunity to learn more about the Sacrament and to understand the responsibilities it involves.



Registration

It is usual for the name of the child to be entered in the parish baptism register, in the same form as the civil register. The priest will confirm all such details with you before completing the entry in the parish's baptismal register.

Godparents

Godparents must be baptised and confirmed Catholics who are committed to sharing their faith with their godchild. They must normally be sixteen years of age or more. While it is possible to have one godparent, there is usually one male and one female godparent. It is permitted for a baptised non-Catholic to act as a "witness" (instead of one godparent).

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

RCIA is the process that is used for adults who seek baptism or full membership of the Church. This process is marked by a series of rites that, over time, take place in the local parish and that typically culminates with full initiation at the Easter Vigil.

Getting Ready

On the day of Baptism, bring a white shawl with you to the Church and your child's baptismal candle will be provided. The candle should be kept in a safe place as it will be needed at the time of First Communion and Confirmation. This candle could also be lit on your child's birthday and /or a special family occasions. The parish fee for baptism is £30, and this should be paid on booking or prior to the baptism in the Parish Offices.

For further details, contact Claire at Armagh Parish Office (Tel 028 37522813) or see www.armaghparish.net



Sacrament of Baptism Parish of Armagh

Dear

Congratulations on the birth of your child _____.

Your child's Baptism is a time for celebration and joy and it will take place in

_____ on _____ at _____.

You are booked in to attend the Parish Baptism Programme in the Synod Hall, St

Patrick's Cathedral on _____.

Before your child arrived and since their arrival, there was so much to think about and so much to "get done". Some people think of Baptism as something else to "get done" but Baptism is such a unique celebration that it's about so much more. It's about being born into the Christian community and beginning a journey of faith and it is in every way as solemn and important as the birth itself. It's such an important occasion in the life of the child, in the life of the family and in the life of the parish community that it should be carefully planned and prepared for. The very fact that you have asked to have your child baptised shows that you recognise the importance of God in your life. By asking for Baptism, you're promising to bring your child up in the practice of the faith and you're asking the parish community to which you belong, to help you to do that.

Your efforts in the years to come will not only help your child to grow in the love of God but they will also help you to grow in your faith. Your child's baptism is the beginning of a new life in which you can grow closer to one another, in the family of God. Choose your child's Godparents with care, they will have a special role to play in the life of your child and they too are being called to share their faith. Think about the name you give to your child and it's preferable that you include a name which has some religious significance.

We look forward to meeting with you and your family at the Baptism Ceremony and we look forward to welcoming your child into our Parish Community.

Baptism

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."

Baptism is one of three sacraments of initiation along with Confirmation and Eucharist.

It's the Church's sacrament of welcome and the gateway to the other sacraments.

“The Christian community welcomes you with great joy.”

(The Rite of Baptism)

Understanding

Baptism celebrates the love God has for each of us. Through its celebration, the Church welcomes a new member and affirms him/her as a child of God, a follower of Christ, a member of the body of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Beyond Baptism, the journey of faith is to become what we already are – daughters and sons of God, brothers and sisters in Christ. We make this journey in our daily lives, hopefully with the support of family and the Church community.

When we celebrate Baptism, the whole community is called to welcome the new member. Every Baptism should be an opportunity for the Christian community to renew its commitment to God and to the Church. The celebration reminds us of the need to support one another on our journeys of faith. Baptism invites us to be active members of the Body of Christ, the Church.

The central role in passing on faith belongs to the parents and guardians. It is they who will be role models of faith for their children. It is in their home that children need to learn to experience trust, love, faith, hope and commitment in order for their faith to grow.

Within the Rite of Baptism itself, the presence of godparents reminds parents/guardians that they are not alone in this task. Their loving affection for the baptised child expresses the care of the whole Christian family. Baptism is the common starting point of all Christians. It means that there is a fundamental equality between us all – old and young, rich and poor, men and women, native and stranger. All Christians are graced with the same dignity. The valid Baptism of non Catholics is respected as much as Catholic Baptism. This means that Baptism need never be repeated

The seven sacraments touch all the stages and the important moments of the Christian life: they give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christians life of faith. There is thus a certain resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of the spiritual life. (Catechism 1210)

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 – we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission. (Catechism 1213)

You have become a new creation clothed in Christ. See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. (Baptism Rite)

There's no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

Celebrating

The Rite of Baptism contains a wonderful sequence of movement, symbols and gestures. It usually begins at the door of the Church, proceeds into the Church to hear the Word of God, moves to the font and concludes at the altar.

At the door of the Church – Welcome and Sign of the Cross

The children are presented to those who have gathered and who now represent the Church community. The parents/guardians proclaim their children's names, and their own commitment to sharing the gospel with them. The community welcomes the children and the sign of the cross is made on their foreheads, “claiming” them for Christ.

At the Ambo – Word of God

The people move to where the Word of God is proclaimed, to listen to the readings and to pray together. The Word of God is an ongoing source of nourishment for all of us on our faith journey.

At the Font – Anointing and Baptism

Before Baptism, the priest prays to God, to protect the children from evil and he then anoints them. The baptismal water is blessed. Parents/guardians and godparents profess their faith in Christ. The children are then baptised.

Accompanying Rites – Symbols and Actions

A series of gestures follows. These are joyful ways of expressing what we mean by baptism. Each child is anointed on the head with the perfumed oil of Chrism. The children are clothed with a white garment and their baptismal candles are lit from the Easter candle. Finally, the priest prays over the mouth and ears of each child, that they may come to hear and proclaim the Gospel.

At the Altar – Final Blessing

All join in praying the Our Father and this is followed by blessings for the parents/guardians and all present. We pray for and look forward to the future celebrations of Confirmation and Eucharist that will bring these children to full membership of the Church.

A FAMILY PRAYER

*Loving God, we ask your blessing on our family.
Watch over us and guide us. Make our home a place of love and safety, a place of peace and joy, a place where we grow in faith together. Amen*

