

Frequently Asked Questions

At what age should a child be baptised?

The Church says that children should be baptised “within the first few weeks”. Baptism is God’s way of demonstrating love for your child. A child needs to know the love of their parents to grow as a human being. Being told is not enough, they need a parent’s touch. Baptism enables God to touch the child in a particular and special way. It says God overwhelmingly loves me. Baptising a baby, before they can make any effort to do anything for themselves towards their relationship with God, says very dramatically that all salvation is from God. The child is carried to the front by the faith of their family.

Can a non-catholic best friend be a Godparent?

The short answer is no. But you need to read all of this section before you make your choice or get upset because of that answer. First you need to understand the role of the godparent. The Church requires only one Godparent. Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent. A baptised member of another Christian Church is technically a Christian witness rather than official Godparent. Culturally, this second person is referred to as a Godparent.

If my wife is a practicing Presbyterian can she take part in the ceremony?

Certainly. The question of how you want your child to learn about and to grow up in the Catholic community is an important one when you are thinking about Baptism. You will need to talk these issues over with your parish priest or pastoral worker and with the minister of your wife’s Church.

When is baptism celebrated?

Different parishes have different ways of celebrating baptism. It is a community affair so you will need to contact the parish and find out how they operate. Do this sooner rather than later and remember:

- You will be required to participate in some form of preparation
- While some parishes include baptism as part of Sunday Mass, other parishes have regular baptism ceremonies on Sundays after Mass or in the afternoon
- It is likely that other babies will be baptised at the same time
- Do not make arrangements with family and friends about the baptism date until you have contacted your local parish.

Do not contact the parish and tell them you want your baby baptised on a particular day.

My other children have been baptized, do I need to go through the preparation programme again?

Yes every child is different. The arrival of every child changes the family dynamics. Therefore, the preparation programme will speak to you differently because everyone is different. As the process of life begins, the same medical practices are prepared differently amongst your children. Similar logic applies to Baptism. Preparing to bring your child into the family of faith means they must have their own preparation process. They must be treated as an individual.

My grandmother says the baby must have a saint's name, is that true?

You can give your child any name you choose as long as it does not mean something contrary to Christian teaching. The taking of a Saint's name comes from the early years of the Church when at the time of Baptism adults changed their names to something that expressed a Christian ideal. In later centuries when infant baptism became the norm parents were encouraged by the Church to call their children after a Saint. Including a Saint's name is therefore traditional and does provide a role model and guide to the child but it is not necessary.

What happens if a baby dies before baptism or is stillborn?

God loves us all and is full of mercy. God loves each child baptised or unbaptised. Unbaptised babies are not guilty of personal sin and we commend them to the loving care of God in heaven. Older people may talk about 'Limbo' a place where unbaptised infants went after death that was neither heaven nor hell. This was never an official Church teaching. A baby dying before baptism is entrusted to the mysterious but infinitely kind and powerful love of God.

Our child was baptized at birth due to the danger of dying. Do we need another Baptism?

Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime event and as such cannot be repeated. It is however good to have a celebration in your local Church that acknowledges your child's place in the family of faith. This particular ceremony would include prayers for the baby, blessings for the parents and family, as well as prayers of thanksgiving. This would also be an opportunity to give the baby godparents if there were none at the Baptism.

If we are lapsed Catholics can we still have our child baptised?

es. However, you will need to be willing to participate in baptismal preparation which may ask you to answer some tough questions about why, if you are not sharing in the Church's life, you want your child baptised into the Church family.

It can be daunting to approach a priest or pastoral worker about these sensitive issues. Don't be put off. Think about when would be best to approach them and be prepared to spend a bit of time talking. The fact that you are looking for baptism for your child would suggest something is stirring within you, so don't be afraid. Perhaps you have a friend or family member that might come and support you the first time. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son you are welcome home.

If we are not married can our child be baptised?

Yes. There is no reason for your child not to be baptised. You will need to explain the situation to the priest and others involved in the preparation programme, to which both parents are invited.

Who do we contact if we want our baby baptised?

The first step in presenting your child for baptism is to contact your local parish. <https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/administration/media-communications/parishes/> provides information about all the parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Auckland. The parish will inform you of their local way of providing baptism preparation programmes. It could be any of the following: processes or a combination.

- Meeting with the priest or pastoral worker.
- Having a member of the parish visit you in your home.
- Attending parish provided sessions.
- Even if a family friend or relative (who is a priest or deacon) has agreed to baptise your child you need to contact your local parish.

What does it cost to have our baby baptized?

Nothing. There is never a charge for sacramental celebrations in the Church. It is customary to make a donation to the Church, which helps to pay for such costs as materials involved in the baptismal preparation course.
