



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

## BAPTISM

- Guidelines
- Suggestions
- Resources





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Dear Priests and Parish Leaders,

Christian life begins with Baptism. This material is provided to assist parishes in providing robust pastoral preparation for families who bring their child forward for initiation. It is not a blueprint but a guidebook of suggestions that you are able to adapt and change according to parish need.

Baptism provides a window of opportunity to nurture the faith life and commitment, of parents many of whom are not regular Sunday Mass attendees. The act of requesting Baptism for a child is in itself a sign of faith. Therefore, parents are to be welcomed and shown an appreciation by the parish community/pastor for approaching the Church for Baptism. We pray and hope that the infant who is brought for Baptism will be raised in the Catholic community. Our mentality should be to look for reasons to justify giving the sacrament rather than for reason to postpone or delay it. The priest or deacon who works with the parents in place of the pastor who has delegated this task to them is the one to make the decision to baptize or to delay with consultation of the pastor.

This reality calls us to welcome families in such a manner that parents are enabled to renew their faith and deepen their communion with the Church as reflected in our diocesan guidelines *The Celebration of Infant Baptism: Pastoral Guidelines*. A copy of this document in full can be found in Appendix A (p.32).

Yours sincerely in Christ

+ 

+ Patrick Dunn  
Bishop of Auckland



*Rite of Baptism for Children 7#1* It is the duty of the Bishop to coordinate such pastoral efforts in the diocese, with the help also of deacons and lay people.

# INTRODUCTION

## PARISH SERVICE/PARTNERSHIP

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Every baptised person is called to Christian witness and evangelization. Part of this outreach occurs at parish level. In the case of preparation for the reception of the sacraments, the priest has particular responsibility. He will often invite others, suitably prepared, to co-operate with him in that preparation. It is fitting that, in the case of Baptism, committed and well-catechised Catholics assist parents who ask to have their children baptized. A team of lay faithful can prove to be a very effective support for families preparing for Baptism.

### **PRACTICAL**

Team support can be used for home visitation, preparation and presentation of sessions and the administration, as well as helping with the celebration of the sacrament and other pre- and post-baptismal prayer celebrations.

### **ECCLESIAL**

“The child has a right to the love and help of the community, before and after the celebration of the sacrament.”

(Introduction to The Rite of infant Baptism 1973 No. 4)

The fact that a parish has a team of people working with the priest in the area of Baptism proclaims that the local community is involved in service before and after the celebration of the sacrament.

### **MINISTERIAL**

“Adults are called to the Gospel by the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Church and infants are baptized and educated in its faith. It is of great importance, therefore, that catechists and other lay people should collaborate with priests and deacons in the preparations for Baptism.”

(General Introduction to Christian initiation 1973 No. 7)

It is good for a team of people to work with the priest. As parents themselves they are able to speak clearly and use their own life experiences to enable the Word of God to be more known more fully.

## NORMS REGARDING BAPTISM

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Both the *Code of Canon Law* and *Rite of Baptism for Children* define the normal procedures for Baptism.

Canons 849 - 878 pertain particularly to baptism. They can be viewed from the Vatican website [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P2U.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P2U.HTM). Of significant interest regarding the Baptism of Infants are the following:

## PARENT INSTRUCTION

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**Can. 851** “The celebration of baptism must be prepared properly; consequently: the parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible, visiting them.”

**Rite of Baptism for Children (5.1)** adds that parents, “should be provided with suitable means such as books, letters addressed to them and catechisms designed for families. The pastor should make it his duty to visit them or see that they are visited, he should gather a group of families together and prepare them for the coming celebration by pastoral counsel and common prayer”.

## THE DAY OF BAPTISM

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**Can. 856** “Although baptism can be celebrated on any day, it is nevertheless recommended that it be celebrated ordinarily on Sunday or, if possible, at the Easter Vigil.”

The Canon says nothing about celebrating infant baptism during a Sunday mass.

**Rite of Baptism for Children (9)** highlights the benefit of celebrating baptism during Sunday mass but cautions that “this should not be done too often”.

## SPONSORS/GODPARENTS

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**Can. 873** “There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each”

Only one \Godparent is required

**Can. 874** indicates that they must

- Be 16 years or older
- Be a confirmed Catholic who has received first Eucharist
- Not be a parent of the child

Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent. A Christian who is not a Catholic may serve as a witness rather than official sponsor. Culturally this second person even though they may not be a Catholic is referred to as a Godparent.

## WAYS TO USE THE RESOURCES

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These resources are for parishes to use as they wish. Catechists responsible for preparing families for the baptism of their infants are encouraged to prepare programmes that meet the needs of their community and utilise the gifts and talents of the parish family.

## **HOW TO ACCESS THE RESOURCES**

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Resources are available by contacting the Faith Formation [stephenf@cda.org.nz](mailto:stephenf@cda.org.nz) for a small cost. They are supported by material on the website which will be updated regularly. <http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/sacramental-programmes/>

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## **SUPPORT FOR PARISHES**

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The Religious Education Team is available to support parishes in their preparation programmes, especially the Catechists.

For Catechist formation and support contact the Sacramental Programme advisor Rev Deacon Stephen Fraser who is available to work through the materials with people, help them create a suitable programme and provide training sessions for catechists.

Catechists are also encouraged to subscribe to the quarterly e-news for catechists which is full of information and resource suggestions.



# PRAYERS

## FOR PARENTS

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The following prayer is also available as a prayer card that can be given to parents either at preparation sessions or during home visits. Examples of these cards can be found in Appendix B and are available from the RE Team.

### A PARENT'S PRAYER

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Loving God  
thank you for the gift of life.  
Cherish me as your child  
and fill my life with the creative power of your love.

Jesus Saviour and Brother,  
thank you for showing me the way of love.  
Be with me as I try to be like you -  
patient, supportive and gentle with my child.  
Let me share again the delight and wonder of childhood,  
of discovering your face in the little things:  
in the vivid petals of a flower,  
in the measured movement of the caterpillar,  
in the comfort of loving arms around me when I fall.

Spirit of God, constant Friend and Guide,  
thank you for leading me in the way of faith.  
Help me to show my child the loving face of God  
during our life together.  
Let me bring healing  
in times of pain and doubt.  
Help me care for my child  
materially and spiritually,  
and let us always be companions and believers together.

God - Father, Son and Spirit,  
you have trusted me with my child's life.  
Help us grow together in all that is good and right.  
Be with us in times of joy and in moments of pain.  
Let us know that you are there for us,  
even when we seem to lose sight of you.  
Please be light and warmth in our home and in our hearts.

## PRAYER FOR SESSIONS

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The following prayers are available on the RE Team Website.  
Feel free to change and adapt them according to your needs.

GOD IS LOVE

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LEADER God is love, God gives us life.  
We love because God first loves us.  
In baptism God declares that love;  
in Christ, God calls us to respond

PRAYER God of power,  
look on us today  
as we deepen our understanding  
of what it means to be disciple.

Grant that we may come to know and love you  
and always heed your will  
with receptive minds and generous hearts.

We ask you this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen

READING Matthew 4:18-22

RESPONSE (Adapted from "Psalms/Now")

Our great God is forever searching for those  
who will open their lives.  
God is not looking for such  
in verbal professions alone  
but in the way they live and act.

It is obvious that God works  
through those who trust,  
through those who dedicate their lives to service.  
It is they who are set free from self-glory  
to enjoy and to serve the living God.  
They can truly celebrate the eternal presence of God.

PRAYER

- A. We thank you God for your love in all creation, especially for your gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.
- B. We thank you for your covenant with your people Israel; through the Red Sea waters you led them to freedom in the promised land.
- C. We thank you that through the deep waters of death Jesus fulfilled his baptism. He died to set us free and was raised to be exalted Lord of all.  
  
We thank you that through the waters of baptism you cleanse us, renew us by your Spirit and raise us to new life.
- D. We thank you that in the new covenant we are made members of your Church and share in your eternal kingdom.

And so we pray together

ALL:

As the community of faith we rejoice in this gift of baptism and wish to share with others what we ourselves have received:

a delight in prayer  
a love for the word of God  
a desire to follow the way of Christ  
and food for the journey.

This we will do in your name + Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

We are a pilgrim people.  
As members of Christ's body, the Church, we have been  
challenged to affirm our faith in God.  
May we grow in the Holy Spirit, fulfil our ministry and follow  
Christ our whole life long.  
God bless us with wisdom and love; may others find in us, our  
homes and families, Christ's love and understanding.  
Amen

## THE WONDER OF GOD

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*The arrangement of Symbols of Baptism is the focus for this prayer.*

Leader: These are the symbols which help us understand something of what is happening for our children and what we believe has happened in our baptism also. Let us pray that the wonders God has done for us will become a reality in our lives:

Reader 1: *Takes the oil and prays:*

We have been anointed with the chrism of salvation in the name of Christ our Saviour. May he strengthen us with his power, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reader 2: *Takes the bowl of water and prays:*

We have been baptised with water. May we be strengthened by the Spirit of God who graces us throughout our lives.

Reader 3: *Takes the white garment and prays:*

We have been clothed in Christ and this garment is an outward sign of our Christian dignity. May we keep it safe and bring it to everlasting life.

Reader 4: *Takes the candle and prays:*

We have received the light of Christ. May we keep this flame burning brightly all through our lives by living out our faith.

*Ask each person to light a candle and stand to renew their baptismal promises:*

Leader: Do you reject Satan, all his works and all his empty promises?

All: We do.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

All: We do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

All: We do.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: We do.

Together: This is our faith, the faith of the church into which we have been baptised. We are proud to profess it through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

*Conclude with a song that will be used at the Baptismal ceremony.*

## WATER OF BAPTISM

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### SETTING

- Participants seated in a closed circle
- Small table covered with white cloth in the centre
- Candle, jug of water, empty glass dish (or more if the group is large)

### INVITATION by the leader

Reflect on the event of your own baptism, on the love and faith of your parents in bringing you to that moment; of what God was doing in their lives through this event. Bathe yourselves in the memory of the loving human remarks relations and family friends were making about you on the day and then gradually focus on the action and love of God expressed through your baptism.

### READING

Isaiah 44:3-4

For I will pour out water on the thirsty soil  
Streams on the dry ground.

I will pour out My spirit on your descendants,  
My blessing on your children.

They shall grow like grass where there is plenty of water,  
Like poplars by running streams.

### REFLECTION

Loving God, in baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

Your Son willed that water and blood should flow from his side as he hung on the cross. After his resurrection he told his disciples:

“Go out and teach all nations, baptising them  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit”.

As we think about these things renew your life within us.

### RITUAL

One of the participants goes to the table and slowly pours water from the jug into the dish. The dish is then passed from one person to the next, each one holding it for a few moments immersing a hand in it before slowly making the sign of the cross on their forehead. An appropriate piece of background music can be played.

The ritual concludes with the Our Father and the prayer by the leader.

### LEADER:

Let us go now, and may the blessings  
of the Spirit be ours.

May we walk with God  
in the daily unfolding  
in the midst of confusion  
in the bright light of knowing.  
May we live in Christ  
in the shelter of God's care  
in the strength of loving relationships  
in the support of the community.

May we work with the Spirit  
in the education of our children  
in the stewardship of the  
planet's resources  
in the living out of our mission.

May we increase in God's infinite wisdom

### ALL:

Amen

## PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

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### GATHERING

Leader: We gather: In the name of the Father..... *(All join in)*

### THE WORD

A reading from the letter to the Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Leader: Let us begin our prayer by recalling our own Baptism, thanking God for this great gift.  
The response to the prayers is: Gracious God Hear Us

All: Gracious God Hear Us

Reader 1: For all those who commit themselves to the ministry of leadership in Baptism preparation in our parish. *(pause)*  
We pray...

All: Gracious God Hear Us

Reader 2: For all the families presenting children for Baptism. May the Lord guide and direct them in the handing on of faith to their children. *(pause)*  
We pray...

All: Gracious God Hear Us

Reader 3: For the children who will be baptised in our parish. May the Lord bless them abundantly always. *(pause)*  
We pray...

All: Gracious God Hear Us

Reader 4: For our own needs deep in our heart. *(pause)*  
We pray...

All: Gracious God Hear Us

Leader: We bring all these our prayers, spoken and unspoken to God as we pray as Jesus taught us:

All: Our Father.....

### BLESSING

Leader: *(With open or raised hands)*

May Christ bless each of us as we leave this place and return to our homes.

May we continue our own journey of faith so that we can share it with our children.

May we be blessed with the gift of wisdom as we grow in the love of our God and our children.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

## ADDITIONAL PRAYER RESOURCES

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There are numerous websites that provide prayers for use in pastoral and/or catechetical situations.

<http://www2.richmonddiocese.org/ocf/resources/Sacraments/Infant-Baptism/documents/opening-prayer.pdf> is a single session prayer outline for parents working with parents preparing for baptism.

[http://www.archtoronto.org/discipleship/documents/ModelACatechetalsession\\_000.pdf](http://www.archtoronto.org/discipleship/documents/ModelACatechetalsession_000.pdf) has both a prayer service for the beginning of a preparation session and the outline of possible content.

<http://www.2heartsnetwork.org/parents.htm> is a series of prayers for parents.

Many books provide outlines for prayers that can for use in sessions. Including

*Prayer for parish groups* Harrington & Kavanagh ISBN:978.0.88489.620.3

*Meeting Prayers* Verhaken editor ISBN 0-8146.2772.2

*In Touch with the Word* Calderone-Stewart ISBN 978.0.88489.851.1 These are available around the Sunday Readings so have a cycle A-C version.

These books and others are available from the Diocesan Liturgy Centre

<http://www.liturgycentre.org.nz/> .

The Religious Education Team would appreciate the forwarding of websites or books that people find useful so that we can pass them on through the RE website and e-news.

# BAPTISM BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Some of this information may be incorporated into appropriate session presentations.

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

### KEY THEMES OF BAPTISM

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#### Themes of Baptism

##### *Life*

In Baptism we are called to share in God's Life. We are assured of God's power and strength to help us to grow to full humanity.

##### *Community*

Through Baptism we are drawn into the community of the Church and called to share in its life and work.

##### *Relationship*

Baptism brings us into a "covenant" relationship with God and with the Church. No matter what happens to us in life, God promises us love and care. He invites us to live in his love and give ourselves to him without reserve.

##### *Freedom*

Through God's gift of Baptism we are given the power to be free from all that ties us down. We are freed to become fully alive.

##### *Journey*

Baptism invites us to journey through life with Christ. Baptism promises us that he will be with us throughout life's journey.

##### *Discipleship*

Baptism calls us, through our following of Christ, to share in his work of bringing God's message of love to the world.

##### *Death*

In Baptism God promises us strength so that we can die to all that is selfish and self-centred within us.

### SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

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In order to celebrate the wonders of Baptism the church has used certain symbols throughout its history. These have come mainly from biblical images and some of their significance has been lost in our modern culture. In the bible we find frequent use of the images of water, oil, white, robes and light. These signs and symbols are the ones used in Baptism.

**Water** is used in the creation story where it brings life into the world; it saved the Israelites in the crossing of the Red Sea; it was used in the account of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. In a country such as New Zealand, the importance of water for life is often brought to our attention, as so often areas are stricken with drought.

**Oil** is used throughout the bible for healing and strengthening. Kings were anointed with oil as a sign of their being chosen and set aside for a particular role. In our

culture, oil is used in the preparation of food, for lubrication of engines and at times for the strengthening and healing of people's bodies.

**White Garment** St Paul speaks of “putting on Christ”. In the early church new Christians were clothed in a white robe as a sign of their new life in Christ. Although not so spectacularly, new clothes are often associated with new beginnings in life e.g. new school clothes, wedding dress.

**Light** Jesus speaks of himself as the “light of the world”. The candle is one of the earliest signs of the presence of the risen Christ.

These symbols were used in the initiation ceremonies of the early church, some of which had also been used in Jewish rituals. For the first Christians, who were adults, they were a powerful way of expressing the change in their lives which baptism signified. Through these symbols, they tried to express their faith in the resurrection of Christ and their rising to a new kind of life through their union with Him in the community of the church.

As these symbols are used in the *Rite of the Baptism of Children*, we celebrate the presence of the loving God who gives “new life” in Christ (the water and the white robe), who claims this child as a son or daughter (the anointing with the oil), and who is filled with the Spirit of Risen Jesus, (the lighted candle).

At the beginning of the Baptismal ceremony, the parents present their child and are invited to give the name. In this naming, the personal identity and dignity of this child as a child of God is recognised. The community formally welcomes the child by signing the child with a cross.

As you follow the Baptismal ceremony be alert to the use of these symbols and the ritual with which they are used. The reality they signify is the enlivening love of our God for your child and also for all of us who are part of this community.

## **BAPTISM IN SCRIPTURE**

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### **Significant Scripture events**

God is portrayed as using the waters of the flood in the Noah stories in the Book of Genesis to cleanse the earth from sin.

Where is this reflected in our understanding of baptism?

The waters of the sea crossed on the Exodus journey were a source of deliverance to Israel by the power of God, and of death and destruction to their oppressors.

How is this aspect symbolised in Christian baptism?

John the Baptist came preaching repentance, and baptism as a sign of it, in preparation for the coming reign of God. He spoke of one who would baptise with fire and the Holy Spirit.

How does this reference relate to the sacrament of baptism?

Jesus began his ministry by announcing the reign of God, and before this he was baptised by John in the Jordan River. The gospel accounts of this present it as a revelation of Jesus' identity as “beloved Son”.

Note the symbols of water, spirit, voice/words and consider how these are present in the ritual of Christian baptism.



Entering into ministry as beloved Son meant for Jesus, choosing to live and work by the values of God's reign and to reject what was not of God. This is shown in the account of Christ's temptations in the wilderness (Mark and Matthew) and the Jesus' proclamation of his fulfillment of the prophesy of Isaiah (Luke).

How does the Christian baptismal ritual symbolise this aspect for the Christian?

The Acts of the Apostles, Paul's letters, the last verse of Matthew's account of the Gospel all testify to the practice of Christian baptism as an initiation into the community of believers, into the death and resurrection (the paschal mystery) of Christ, into the family of God as beloved sons and daughters, co-heirs with Christ.

Further scriptural references to Baptism can be found in the hand-out *Scripture References for Baptism* available for download from the RE website.

## PARENTS

### THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PARENTING

The Baptism of a child sees the beginning of two journeys. First of all there is the beginning of the child's own journey to God in Christ.

Secondly, there is the beginning of the parents' journey of Christian parenting and nurturing of this particular child. The rite of Baptism recognises this in one of the blessing prayers where it speaks of parents as being **the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.**

It then goes on to pray that they will also **be the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do.**

This is indeed a challenging responsibility. Fortunately the Church offers support by prayer at Mass each Sunday, Liturgy of Word with Children and other parish initiatives.

On one occasion Jesus exclaimed:

*Anyone who welcomes a child in my name  
welcomes me.*

*And anyone who welcomes me  
welcomes the one who sent me.*

What we have here is Jesus speaking of something as simple as welcoming. This is what parenting is all about. And this is what makes every home a sacred place because in welcoming a child into the home the parents have welcomed Jesus himself.

However, Christian parenting goes a step further when it is linked to the very last directive Jesus gave to his followers when he said to them at his Ascension, *Go to the whole world, baptise and preach the gospel.*

This is precisely what parents do in bringing their children to Baptism - the first part of what Jesus asked. Preaching the gospel to them takes a bit longer, but every time a parent teaches a child to pray, to do the right thing, to be good at Mass, etc., the gospel is being preached to them.

Finally, Christian parents can make a claim on the further promise of Jesus when he says:

*Anyone who declares for me before others,  
when the time comes  
I will declare for them  
before my Father in heaven.*

Presenting children for Baptism and raising them in faith does just that. The heavenly reward for Christian parents is great indeed!

### **THE TASKS OF CHRISTIAN NURTURING**

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Through Baptism children enter into new relationships. When they are taken from the church after Baptism we can say that they truly are:

- Sons and daughters of God the Father
- Brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ
- Temples of the Holy Spirit
- And members of the Church.

Of course, they have no realisation at this stage of their lives as to what all of this means. That will be the task of religious education, which will need to occur:

- in the home through family catechesis
- in the school or Parish Primary Religious Education
- in the parish through the liturgy.

The task may be summed up in saying that they will need help in realising first of all WHO they are because of their Baptism. And then, they will need help in knowing HOW to relate to each of the above.

In other words, someone has to speak to them and tell them about Jesus and God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And someone has to teach them how to pray, first of all to God in their own words at home, and secondly, in the words and actions of the Church as the community gathers for the Mass on Sundays. In this, the home has a vital role to play.

*“... the participation of the faithful in the Eucharist as a primary means of education in the faith.”*

No 51 General Directory for Catechesis 1997

### LIVING BAPTISM

The name Christ means “the anointed one” and when you were baptised or Christened (made like Christ) you were called to share in the work of Jesus Christ, who came to us as

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| a priest  | whose work is to lead people to God by helping them to worship, teaching them to pray and proclaiming God’s word.   |
| a prophet | we usually think of a prophet as someone who foretells the future, but really a prophet is someone who proclaims to others the way God wants us to live.  |
| a king    | in the Bible the word “shepherd” was sometimes use as a title for the king. Jesus is our shepherd-king, who guides us, encourages us, feeds us, heals us and strengthens us as we journey to God’s kingdom. |

Parents are called in a very special way to share in the work of Jesus Christ. They are called to be priest, prophet, and shepherd for their baby as their baby begins the journey of life.

How can they do this?

These are some ways in which you will be able to do this in the years to come.

- 1 Taking my child to Mass.
- 2 Teaching my child right from wrong.
- 3 Teaching my child to share.
- 4 Listening to my child.
- 5 Telling my child stories about Jesus
- 6 Helping my child to say, “I’m sorry”.
- 7 Saying night prayers with my child.
- 8 Saying grace before meals with my family
- 9 Encouraging my child to make their own prayers as well as teaching them the traditional ones
- 10 Showing my child how to be a good friend

These notes are presented in the PowerPoint *Baptism: An Introduction* available from the RE Team Website. They can also be downloaded as a page hand-out. The ways in which parents can support their child are included in the *Family Book* and are part of the Pamphlet *Baptism An Introduction* available from the RE Team.

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## THE AFTER BAPTISM QUESTION

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**HOW** are parents to help their child live out his/her Baptism?

The after-Baptism activity on the part of parents is contained in what might be termed the **Three R's of Baptism**. These occur at the very beginning of the rite in church when the priest enters into dialogue with the parents saying:

"You have **REQUESTED** to have your child Baptised.  
In doing so you are accepting the **RESPONSIBILITY** of raising him/her in the faith.  
Do you dearly **REALISE** what you are undertaking?"

When parents answer, "I do" to this question they are, without doubt, taking upon themselves before God and the faith community a task of great magnitude, particularly in today's world where the values of Christ are not as evident as they were in the past.

This is a responsibility, which is not entered into lightly and that is why, today, preparation for Baptism is so important. It gives parents a chance to think through all of this beforehand.

So what are some of the tasks facing parents as they nurture their children in the Christian faith begun at Baptism?

## HAND-OUTS FOR PARENTS

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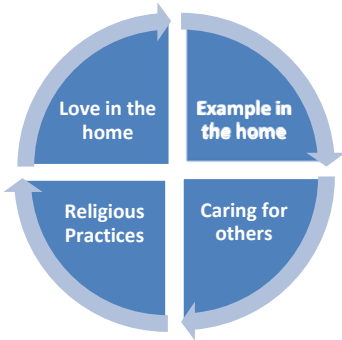
*A Guide to the Rite* which gives an overview of the rite can be downloaded from Sacramental Programs on the Website.

*The Responsibilities of Parents* hand-out is also available on the website. This reminds parents of the responsibilities they have accepted. It also, includes the suggestions for nurturing faith in the above section.

*Practical Tasks for Parents* gives parents ideas about the preparation and celebration of the sacrament. There is a copy in Appendix C. It can be downloaded from Sacramental Programs.

*Baptism: An Introduction* pamphlet is available from the Religious Education Team. An example of the pamphlet can be found in Appendix D.

*Godparents: Their role in infant Baptism* pamphlet is from the Religious Education Team. An example of the pamphlet can be found in Appendix E.



# PREPARATION PROCESSES FOR BAPTISM

## VARIOUS PASTORAL INITIATIVES

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When it comes to the form which preparation for Baptism takes no two parishes are exactly alike. In some places it is the priest who undertakes the task himself.

Many parishes have a Baptism Team made up of lay people in addition to priests. This team approach is very much in keeping with an understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ and mirrors the kind of community of which the child is becoming a member.

Some parishes organise their preparation around visits to the home. A member of the Team calls round first of all to express the parish's joy and welcome for the child and also to offer advice and assistance concerning the celebration of the sacrament and what goes on in the church on the day.

Other parishes hold one or more preparation meetings for the parents. Godparents are also encouraged to attend if possible. There are many ways of organising these meetings. This resource provides a couple of sample outlines.

Whether the preparation is by means of home visits or preparation meetings the emphasis is very much on:

Friendship  
Welcome  
Hospitality

## VISITING FAMILIES

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### Tips for Visitation of Homes

- Be yourself
- Focus on the child at the beginning (Baby talk)
- Express the parish's (and Christ's) welcome for the child, (irrespective of marriage situation)
- Meet and greet other members of the family, usually siblings, though it's amazing how often granny is there also.  
It's important that the decision to have the child baptise emanates from the parent primarily!
- Gently introduce what you've come to talk about
- Be alert for any desire on their part to ask a question or look for clarification
- Never give any indication of being judgmental
- Find an opportunity to say a little prayer over the child, or for the child - short, simple and positive  
A few examples can be found in the prayer section

- Take something with you to leave with the parents, e.g.
  - a prayer card (Appendix W)
  - an explanatory pamphlet (Appendix Y)
  - baptismal water
  - a certificate
  - a form to be filled
    - or .....
- be conscious of time, don't go on too long, but yet remain flexible, especially in those situation where a good relationship develops and where it is obvious the other person or couple wants to prolong the discussion
- Remain open to the promptings of the Spirit during the visit

These 'Tips' are available on the RE website. They can be printed onto A4 card and cut in two.

## PARENT MEETINGS

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### Creating an atmosphere of welcome

#### INTRODUCTION

The following suggestions are offered to encourage preparation teams to explore the best way to create an atmosphere of welcome. Parish teams and individual members will develop their own style of organizing and conducting preparation meetings according to their particular skills and parish situation.

#### ATMOSPHERE

A relaxed and friendly atmosphere is a welcoming atmosphere. Many families are disconnected with local parish structures and may feel reluctant or uncertain about coming, others will be so much part of parish life that they may feel that they don't need to be part of formal baptism preparation programmes. So consider:

- Have someone to meet them (encounter)
- Have something they can listen to (music)
- Have something they can look at (visuals)
- Have something to put in their hands (hand-out)
- Have something they can do (dink tea!)

#### Encounter

It's always nice when there is someone at the door with a greeting, a smile and a welcome. Name tags can be helpful also.

#### Music

Having some gentle music playing in the background is the old reliable sound filler.

### Visuals

- A few well-chosen non-threatening questions for pondering and chatting about with one's spouse and/or other participants
- Large photographs of previous baptisms
- Photos of parish events involving families
- Interesting quotes about belonging/Church...
- On a table display symbols of baptism: candle, white robe, water, oil, etc.

### Supper

Eating and drinking provide wonderful opportunities to socialise and get to know other people. It is a welcoming and inviting activity.

### Hand-outs

A variety of hand-outs can be given to families. It may be useful to give one out before the session starts formally; some will fit better as part of the presentation, others at the conclusion of the session.

- Prayer cards (See Appendix B)
- Baptism: An Introduction (See Appendix D)
- Godparents: Their Role in Infant Baptism (See Appendix E)
- Information about your parish

### INPUT RESOURCES

- DVD
  - *Getting Your Baby Done*
  - *Why Bother with Baptism?* Available on loan from RE Team  
Or other suitable ones the parish has.
- Talk
  - Parish Priest or pastoral worker may give input
  - Catechist
    - A PowerPoint *Baptism: An Introduction* is available from the RE website. It is the basis of the example session.



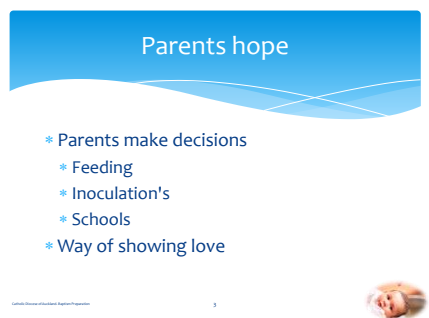
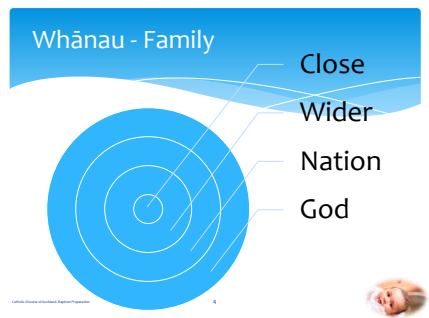
### PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of the Christian life. The Baptism preparation process is an ideal time to model family prayer and an opportunity for families to engage with the parish community.


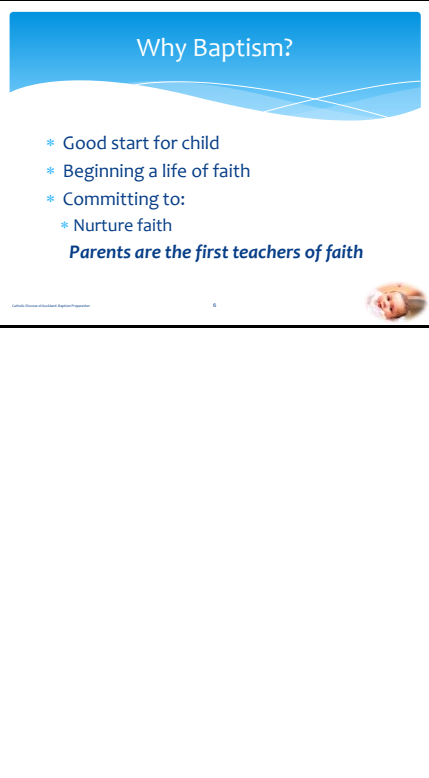
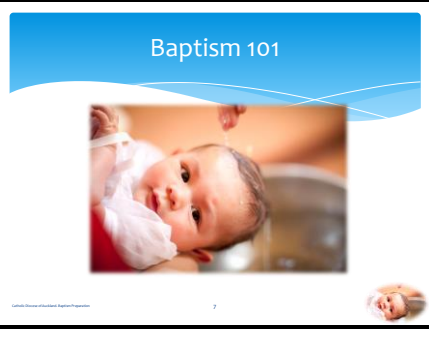
Prayers are provided in the resource for use at sessions. Catechists are encouraged to prepare their own to reflect the life and culture of their parishes. They are also encouraged to share their prayers by sending them to the RE Team so that they can be uploaded to the website.



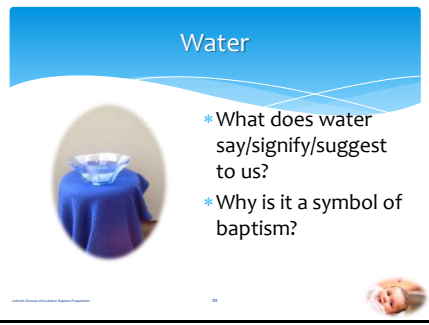
A BAPTISM PREPARATION SESSION

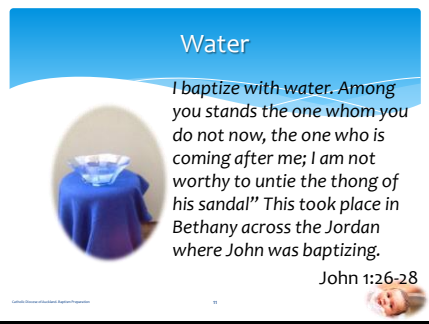

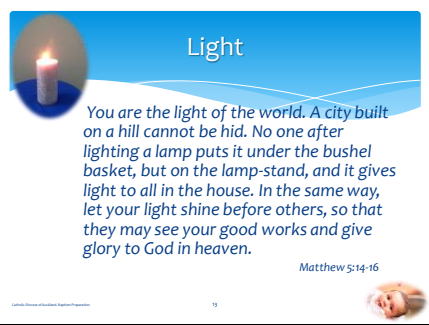

The PowerPoint and these notes are available to download from the RE website/CD




<p>Slide 1</p>		<p>The Family Book is available from the RE Team Website for download or it can be purchased from the Team directly. When reference is made to the website it is the RE Team Website – Baptism preparation pages that are being referred to.</p> <p>The session would start with welcome and prayer. There are examples of prayer on the website and in the parish guidelines.</p>
<p>Slide 2</p>		<p>With the birth of a baby, a new person has entered the world. This tiny helpless child will, with their family's help, grow up into a unique person. There has never been anyone quite like this child before, and there never will be again.</p> <p>The gift of life and the gift of love are two of the greatest gifts parents give their children. They also hold great hope for their child. <b>Parents complete <i>Hopes for Your Child</i></b> – either from the family book or as a separate sheet (from website).</p>
<p>Slide 3</p>		<p>Right from the start parents make decisions which they hope will give their baby the best start in life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because they want their child to be healthy they decide about food and inoculations.</li> <li>• Because they want them to be successful they decide what schools they would like them to attend.</li> <li>• Because they want them to be secure they make decisions about who will look after them if they are absent.</li> </ul> <p>Because a baby is not able to make any decisions for himself, parents make them for him. It is their right and their responsibility. It is one of the ways that parents show their love.</p>
<p>Slide 4</p>		<p>Every baby is born into a family – whānau. It is rather like ripples on a pond, spreading out into wider and wider circles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close family: parents, siblings family members that are part of everyday experience</li> <li>• Extended family: A wider circle, hapu, iwi, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins – living and dead</li> <li>• In a still wider family, a child belongs to a country – has a nationality</li> <li>• Widest circle – a child is part of the human family</li> </ul>

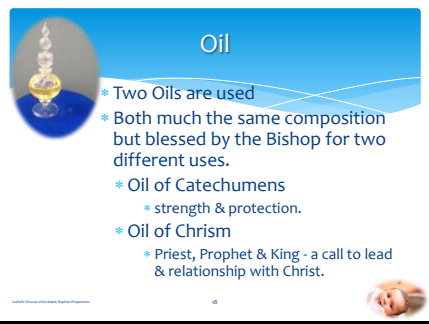
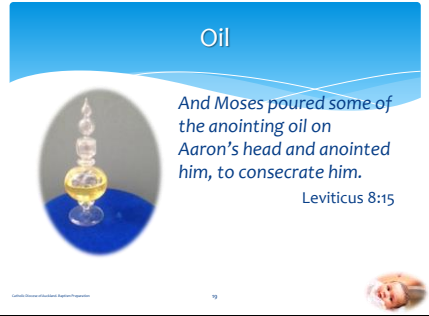



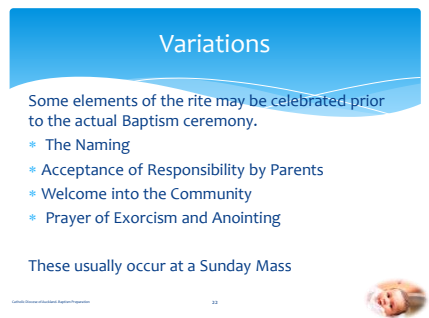
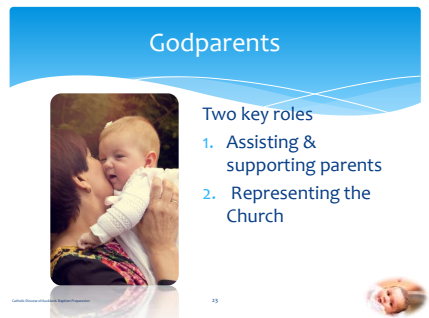

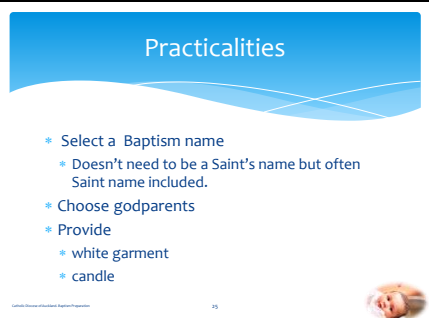
<p>Slide 5</p>		<p>Discuss with the group the types of family structures there are. We talk about work being a family, the school family – the Church family</p>
<p>Slide 6</p>		<p>Before showing the slide have <b>parents</b> take the time to do <i>Why Baptism?</i> <b>Feedback</b> could be through a continuum. Create a line down the room. One end is a very good reason for baptism the other no way a good reason for baptism. As you read each of the points participants stand where they think the reason sits on the continuum. Some participants for each are asked to share the reason for where they are standing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To give their children a good start in life, parents make decision for them right from the beginning. They know they are laying down foundations for the future. They want nothing but good for them, and knowing the love of God is at the heart of this.</li> <li>• By choosing to have a baby baptised parents give them the best possible gift; a beginning in the life of faith, and membership in the family of God.</li> <li>• Parents by presenting the child for baptism is agreeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to help them fulfil their true potential.</li> <li>• Come to know God – including teaching them to pray, taking them to Church, helping them prepare for Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist</li> <li>• Parents are the first teacher in faith they need to teach by example as well as words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Godparents agree to help parents with this</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Later the parish and Catholic school will help.</p>
<p>Slide 7</p>		<p>If you have internet access use the hyperlink (click on the large picture) above to watch the video <i>Baptism 101 Why we Baptise infants</i>. Or you may like to download it onto your desk top <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05YB2jdHLSY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05YB2jdHLSY</a> is the URL At the conclusion ask participants what they heard, saw and what surprised them.</p>

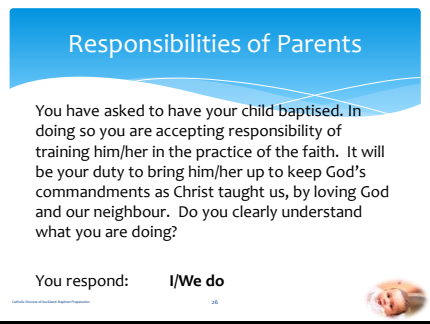
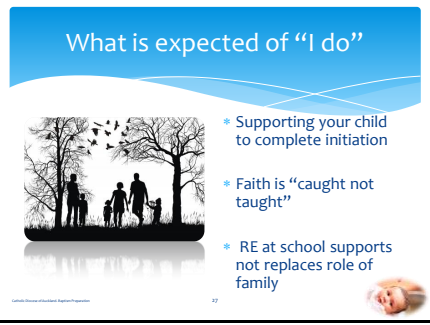
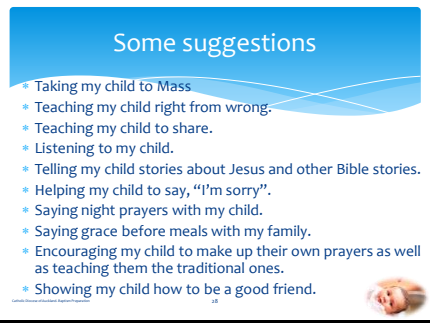
<p>Slide 8</p>		<p>Baptism acknowledges that God is part of our families. Through baptism God gives us many gifts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The gift of new life</b> – we are born not just for life in this world but to share God’s life forever in heaven. Baptism purifies us from sin and gives us this new life which grows and develops through our whole lifetime.</li> <li>• <b>The gift of becoming a child of God</b> – through baptism we are able to recognise that God not only made us but that God is all loving and loves each of us unconditionally</li> <li>• <b>The gift of belong to a family of faith</b> which we call Church. The Church isn’t just an institution but a big family. This family also spreads out like ripples. In the closet circle are the people who make up our local parish. Then our parish is part of a larger family of the Church the diocese, then a larger circle again the Church throughout the world sometimes referred to as the Church universal.</li> </ul>
<p>Slide 9</p>		<p>Symbols tell a significant story they enable us to understand the sacrament by using every day objects in sacred ways. Each symbol is explored through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A picture</li> <li>• A scripture reading (which facilitator could organise someone to read)</li> <li>• A question being posed</li> <li>• Key points presented</li> <li>• An symbolic action experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Not necessarily in that order</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The <i>Family Book</i> works through the symbols or families can be given print outs of the slides. Symbols and symbolic actions are meant to be strong, clear and beautiful - appealing to all the senses. If using the family book remind parents that there are notes in the book as well as family and prayer actions that they can do at home.</p>
<p>Slide 10</p>		<p>Have someone pour water from a jug (at some height) so that there is the sound of it cascading.</p> <p><b>Discuss in groups and record on butcher paper/white board;</b>  What does water say/signify/suggest to us?  Why is it a symbol of baptism?</p> <p>Ideas to draw out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common - easy to find</li> <li>• baptism originated in lands where water often scarce - a precious resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water a force &amp; source of life - settlements &amp; towns grew up near some water (wells, oases)</li> <li>• falling rain was an event - blessings of God likened to falling rain</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hebrew scriptures (which Jesus studied and prayed) full of references/reflections about water’s power to refresh &amp; give life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In such a land people could never forget water is necessary for life so this life-giving liquid used for baptism.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• It is an outward sign of hidden reality - new &amp; eternal life.</li> <li>• Paradox - Water can destroy (floods).</li> </ul> <p>Image of baptism - we are plunged/buried in waters of baptism to rise to new life in Christ.</p>

<p>Slide 11</p>		<p><b>Reading of Scripture:</b> Jn 1: 26-28 : John answered them “I baptize with water. Among you stands the one whom you do not now, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing”</p>
<p>Slide 12</p>		<p>Some key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water &amp; life are inseparable – we spend our first 9 months in the water of our mothers womb, we need water to nourish the growth of plants, we need to drink water to stay alive and healthy etc etc</li> <li>• The waters of baptism are a symbol of the life that God offer us through this sacrament</li> </ul> <p>Exodus tells us the story of the people of Isreal being led out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea – in baptism we are lead out of the slavery of sin –we are liberated</p>
<p>Slide 13</p>		<p>If you are able to darken the room (blank the Data Projector – by pressing B on the computer keyboard), turn off the lights etc when it is dark as possible (dim is just as effective as complete darkness) have some one light a candle or candles</p> <p>Take responses – <b>why do we use candles in our liturgies?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To remind us that Christ is the light of the world</li> <li>• Because we are called by baptism to be light for the nations</li> <li>• The flame of faith</li> </ul> <p>Read the Scripture (you might prime someone else to do so) and turn on the lights – make light.</p>
<p>Slide 14</p>		<p>Have some quiet time for participants to consider: <b>How am I light of the world and how do I shine?</b></p> <p>Remind them that sometimes it is easier to see others than themselves.</p> <p>Share with one other person one way they are light of the world. Click to the next question: <b>What is one way I can share my light better?</b></p> <p>Note that this is for personal reflection and not sharing.</p>

<p>Slide 15</p>		<p>Some Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's baptismal candle is lit from the Easter Candle which is renewed once a year during the Easter vigil. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the Easter Vigil the new candle is blessed and then lit from the Easter fire before being processed into the darkened Church. During the procession members of the congregation light their own candles from the Easter candle which is a symbol of Christ the light of the world. When we light our candle from it we are making a statement "I am a disciple of Jesus, the light of the world".</li> </ul> </li> <li>When the child's baptismal candle is lit from the Easter candle the parents and Godparents are reminded that "this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. Your child has been enlightened by Christ. He or she is to walk always as a child of the light"</li> <li>The candles can be of any size, shape or colour it is the symbolism of light that is important. Some people do but special baptismal candles bearing the child's name and the date of baptism.</li> </ul>
<p>Slide 16</p>		<p>Some families have baptismal gowns that the child wears to the ceremony because it would be impractical for them to be put on during the rite. They might still have a stole but over them during the ritual or might the garment may be covered by a coloured shawl etc that is removed.</p> <p>Pastoral considerations for families needs to be considered when talking about this with families.</p> <p>Some key notes:</p> <p>The white garment is a sign of welcome, acceptance and belonging (the "best robe" that the Father puts on the prodigal son on his return).</p> <p>Looks back to the earliest days of Christian baptism when the catechumens were baptised by immersion took off their old clothes, went into the waters of baptism naked. The old clothes were discarded as symbolic of the old way of life that they had now left behind. Coming up from the water, rising with Church they were clothed in white a symbol of their new life as a Christian.</p>
<p>Slide 17</p>		<p>Have someone read the Scripture Galatians 3:27</p>

<p>Slide 18</p>	 <p><b>Oil</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Two Oils are used</li> <li>* Both much the same composition but blessed by the Bishop for two different uses.</li> <li>* Oil of Catechumens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* strength &amp; protection.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* Oil of Chrism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Priest, Prophet &amp; King - a call to lead &amp; relationship with Christ.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two types of oil are used. Their difference comes from the use that the Bishop blesses them from</li> <li>• If we are truly free to become the person that God has created us to become, we need strength. The child is anointed on the chest with the oil of catechumens. This is a symbol of strength. This is a prayer in action. Through the community's love, wisdom, instruction and example we pray that this child be strengthened for life's journey with God. The words used are that Christ our Saviour 'may strengthen you with his power'.</li> </ul>
<p>Slide 19</p>	 <p><b>Oil</b></p> <p>And Moses poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.</p> <p>Leviticus 8:15</p>	<p>Have read Leviticus 8:12</p>
<p>Slide 20</p>	 <p><b>Oil</b></p> <p>May our Loving God strengthen you to share the Good News with all</p>	<p>Have a small bowl of oil, pass it around and have participants anoint each other as they pray a simple prayer such as the one on the slide.</p>
<p>Slide 21</p>	 <p><b>The Rite</b></p> <p>If baptism takes place during Sunday Mass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Reception of the Child</b> takes place at the beginning of Mass</li> <li>* <b>The Celebration of the Sacrament</b> takes place after the Prayer of the Faithful.</li> </ul>	<p>You might walk participants through the rite showing them what happens at various times.</p> <p>A leaflet – <i>A Short Guide to the Rite of Baptism for Children</i> can be downloaded from the RE website – you might give that to participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide them with time to read it themselves &amp; then take questions</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• Talk them through it</li> <li>OR</li> <li>• Give it to them as a take home to read and absorb in their own time</li> </ul> <p>You may wish to hide this slide and the nest if not using it for instruction</p>

<p>Slide 22</p>		
<p>Slide 23</p>		<p>Available from the website is a leaflet (3 per A4 page) <i>Godparents their role in infant Baptism</i> that contains this information and hints of how to be a Godparent</p> <p>Godparents have two key roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assisting and supporting parents</b> in the Christian upbringing of the child. During the liturgy of baptism they will be asked; <b>Are you willing to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?</b> Therefore they need to live a faith-filled life. <b>Represent the Church family</b> into which the child is being baptised. During the liturgy of baptism they will also; Renew their baptismal vows Renounce Satan Profess the creed.</li> </ul> <p>During the liturgy Godparents may also be asked to participate in other ways such as holding the candle.</p>
<p>Slide 24</p>		<p>Only one Godparent is required.</p> <p>To be a Godparent a person is required to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 years or older</li> <li>• A confirmed Catholic who has received First Eucharist</li> <li>• Not a parent of the child</li> </ul> <p>Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a god-parent.</p> <p>A baptised member of another Christian Church may be a witness rather than official Godparent. Culturally this second person is referred to as a Godparent.</p>
<p>Slide 25</p>		<p>It is up to the parish community to decide how the practicalities will be handled.</p> <p>The RE Team website has a handout <i>Practical Tasks for Parents</i> which could be handed out at this time or at the end of the session</p> <p>Select a Baptism name:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditionally, Christian parents have taken care to include a saint's name among them. This is a praiseworthy practice as it is one way of recognising that the child is becoming a member of a community of followers of Christ. The child is thus linked to a patron saint, someone to learn about later, petition, and admire</li> </ul> <p>Choose Godparents – detailed previously requirements etc</p> <p>Provide white garment &amp; candle – as per previous comments re shawl and lack of need of candle decoration.</p>

<p>Slide 26</p>	 <p>This material is also available on the back page of the Family Book, in the pamphlet <i>Baptism an Introduction</i> and as a hand-out downloadable from the RE website/ CD.</p>	<p>During the celebration before the actual Baptism, the celebrant will say:</p> <p>You have asked to have your child baptised. In doing so you are accepting responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are doing? You respond: I/We do</p> <p>Baptism is not a private affair. We are baptised into a community of Faith. Brainstorm with participants ideas of how this might be done by families – share good practice.</p>
<p>Slide 27</p>		<p>Due to the promise you are going to make at your child's baptism when your child is 7 - 8 years old and ready to take another step in his/her journey of Faith there are further responsibilities. Your child will be able to prepare for Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist you will need to encourage and support them in the process.</p> <p>You are the most important teachers of the faith. Your child learns most from you in matters of Faith. "Faith is caught not taught." If you've drifted away from the celebration of the sacraments this might be a good time/right time to think again.</p> <p>The school RE programme <u>supports</u> you in this important task of preparing you as does the parish but it is you, as parents who best prepare your children.</p>
<p>Slide 28</p>		<p>Some practical ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking my child to Mass especially Sunday Mass.</li> <li>• Teaching my child right from wrong.</li> <li>• Teaching my child to share.</li> <li>• Listening to my child.</li> <li>• Telling my child stories about Jesus and other Bible stories.</li> <li>• Helping my child to say, "I'm sorry".</li> <li>• Saying night prayers with my child.</li> <li>• Saying grace before meals with my family.</li> <li>• Encouraging my child to make up their own prayers as well as teaching them the traditional ones.</li> <li>• Showing my child how to be a good friend.</li> </ul>

# APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### THE CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM: PASTORAL GUIDELINES

#### **PREFACE:**

The unfolding of Christian Life begins with the reception of Baptism when a person enters into the death of Jesus Christ, and is united with Him in His Resurrection. The seed then planted must continue to grow. For those baptized as infants it is parents who are the first teachers of their children in the faith, and their homes the child's first and best classroom. The wider church family is charged with helping the parents in this role for we are baptized, all of us, into the Christian community where we share responsibility for the growth in faith of the whole family.

#### **PRINCIPLES:**

1. The church baptizes infants because she is convinced that the self-giving of God towards us is for everyone, independent of their age. Because the love of God anticipates all human effort, the Church cannot deny infants<sup>1</sup> the gift of Baptism. As with adults, so for the infants: Baptism washes away Original Sin, grace comes to them, and they are initiated into the Church.
2. Canon Law states parents are 'obliged to see to it that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks'<sup>2</sup>.
3. It is primarily the task of the parents within the family to ensure the ongoing unfolding of the life of faith of their children. This education is to be supported by the wider faith community. This can only happen when the parents play an active and involved part in the liturgical and faith life of that community. They are called to first live what they are to teach. This should ensure there is a well-founded hope that the child will in fact be brought up to grow in the knowledge and practice of the faith.
4. Many parents, who bring their children forward for Baptism in good faith, struggle to give shape to their life of faith and to bring it to expression in the gathered community. All the more is the parish community called upon to take responsibility for the care of the baptised children and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> 'infants' means those less than seven years of age who cannot make conscious decisions about faith for themselves.

<sup>2</sup> CIC 867.1



5. Parents and Godparents should be asked to reflect on the nature of the initiation that they seek for their children. Baptism is not to be seen as an end in itself, but rather the beginning of a life long journey in the family and in the community seeking an ever closer relationship with God. This journey leads the children to the completion of their initiation when they receive the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. After this, as full members of the community, their journey in faith continues and deepens.

**PASTORAL CONCERNS:**

6. Faith and Baptism are inseparably connected with one another, so it is important that the parents prepare themselves for the Baptism of their children. The goal is that they make the connection between their lives and the Gospel of Jesus. Meeting with actively engaged families and groups in the community of faith can be helpful in this respect.
7. Parents should meet first with the Pastoral Minister when they register their child for Baptism. This may well be an opportunity to clarify the motivation for their child's Baptism as well as learning of the usual preparation requirements of the Parish before the celebration of the Sacrament.
8. The parents' preparation for Baptism of a child should be shaped to enable the parents to renew their faith and to deepen their communion with the church. Meeting the parish community and participation in the liturgy belong to this process.
9. When parents are not in a position to provide a Christian education for their child, the role of the Godparent (and possibly significant others in the extended family of the child) becomes particularly important. It seems right that they too should be part of the preparation process for the celebration, and that they give their support to the parents as well to the child<sup>3</sup>.
10. Parents will come to the Baptism of their children from a wide spectrum of life and faith situations. The real circumstances in which they find themselves, and their relationship to God and to the Church, will present challenges to those charged with preparing them for the Baptism of their children. It might well be that contact with the community, sharing experiences with other families preparing with them, and encouraged by the team, they might come to want themselves to renew their faith and to deepen their communion in the Church. When parents come in good faith, even when their own circumstances are difficult, every effort should be made to welcome them. Members of preparation teams, parents who know the reality and the difficulties that some

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<sup>3</sup> This in no way relieves the parents of the responsibility to ultimately grow into the task themselves.

others face, may well be the ones to best show the compassionate face of Christ to those in difficulties<sup>4</sup>.

#### **PRACTICAL ISSUES:**

11. Parents and Godparents are encouraged to attend preparation programmes together. These may well start at some stage during the pregnancy, and need not wait until after the child is born.
12. The number of sessions, and the length of the preparation, will be determined by the type of programme offered. The preparation needs to be significant if it is to reinforce the importance of initiation into the church community. The parents need time to come to understand the nature of the sacrament they are seeking for their children, the requirements for the ceremony itself, and their responsibilities to the children for the rest of their journey.
13. Baptism is essentially a sacrament of the Church and an initiation into the community. It is fitting that the sacrament be celebrated in the heart of the community. This may be at a Parish Mass or at a ceremony at another time when families seeking baptism for their children gather together in church for the celebration. There should be only one celebration of Baptism on any given day. Multiple individual Baptism ceremonies fail to give witness to the communitarian aspect of the sacrament.

To further celebrate the communal aspect of baptism some of the ritual of the infants liturgy e.g. naming, signing with the cross, anointing with the oil of Catechumens could be celebrated at Sunday Masses prior to baptism. This will also serve to ensure that the infant and family have experience of the Sunday assembly.

The baptism certificate could be presented at a Sunday Mass after baptism.

14. When Baptisms take place outside of Mass, it may be appropriate that at a given Mass each month parents be invited to bring their newly baptised to Mass so that they can be presented to the community to which they now belong<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Even when circumstances might not look all that promising as regards a well-founded hope for continued faith commitment, God knows what might happen when parents are welcomed...and that should be good enough for anyone.

<sup>5</sup> Depending on the number of Baptisms in a parish this may happen more or less often

15. At least one of the Godparents must be a confirmed practicing Catholic “normally 16 years or older”<sup>6</sup> able to help the parents in their duties of both teaching the faith and giving witness to it by their lives.
16. If a priest or deacon from outside the family’s parish is invited to celebrate a baptism, he should refer the family to their parish – even if he agrees to be the celebrant. If a visiting priest is invited to celebrate a particular baptism, it is desirable that he participates in a community, not a private, celebration.
17. Baptism requests should be referred to the family’s parish, that is where the parents generally worship. It is within this parish Church that the Baptism will usually take place.
18. Parents have a right to express their preference for the language in which the preparation and the ceremony will take place. The parish should willingly arrange for a chaplain to minister in the language preferred. Even given this favour, it is appropriate that the Baptism take place in the home parish of the parents. Dialogue between families and the parish community are encouraged to incorporate any appropriate cultural considerations within the Baptism rite.
19. Both pouring of the Baptismal water and immersion of the one to be baptised are approved methods of Baptism in the Diocese. The Trinitarian formula is to be used.

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<sup>6</sup> CIC 874.1.2

## BACKGROUND TO THE CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM: PASTORAL GUIDELINES

In September 2010 Maureen Hammond coordinator of the Religious Education Team of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland convened a Baptism Policy Working Party comprising:

- Father Pat Brady
- Father Mike Wooller SM
- Father Bernard Kiely
- Audrey Cooper
- Karen O'Connor
- Vicki Cullen

At their initial meeting (30/09/2010) the Working Party reflected on background material supplied through the Religious Education Office. This included:

- Policy Statements from several of the Aotearoa/New Zealand Dioceses
- A document from the German Bishops' Conference (2008)
- 'Baptism – General Norms Archdiocese of Sana Fe'
- Notes from the Council of Priests meeting where material from the various Deaneries had been collated.

The writing party noted the need to refer to the *Ritual for Infant Baptism* and any Catechetical material provided therein. After much discussion it was agreed that a 'working paper' be produced that tried to distil a draft policy from what was best in these resources.

Given the variety of situations found in the Diocese, and recognising the myriad pastoral situations in which parishes, families, and ministers might find themselves, a format was agreed: The document would have three sections

1. Principles that have universal application.
2. Pastoral considerations... matters raised both by the working group and in feedback from consultation that might impinge on the application of the principles.
3. Practical Issues... the nitty gritty of bringing Principles and Pastoral Considerations together in a fitting ceremony of Initiation.

Father Mike Wooller SM agreed to draft the document.

The draft policy document was presented to the *Catholic Diocese of Auckland Council of Priests* at their 16 November 2010 meeting. It was favourably received with minor adjustments. It was then sent to the Diocesan Deaneries for comment. Deanery comment was received at 15 February meeting of the *Council of Priests*. Again a few minor additions were suggested.

The feedback received from the two *Council of Priests* meetings was incorporated into the document which was renamed *The Celebration of Infant Baptism: Pastoral Guidelines* to reflect the concern for flexibly to meet the needs of divergent parish and ethnic communities, and the reality of families differing levels of engagement with parish life.

Sr Siân Owen RSJ  
RE Team Leader  
March 2014

## APPENDIX B

### PRAYER CARD FOR PARENTS – SAMPLE

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#### *The Parent Vocation*

The name Christ means "the anointed one" and when you were baptized or Christ-ened (made like Christ) you were called to share in the work of Jesus Christ.

Parents are called in a very special way to share in the work of Jesus Christ. They are called to be priest, prophet, and shepherd for their baby as their baby begins the journey of life.

#### How can you do this?

These are some ways in which you will be able to do this in the years to come.

- 1 Taking my child to Mass.
- 2 Teaching my child right from wrong.
- 3 Teaching my child to share.
- 4 Listening to my child.
- 5 Telling my child stories about Jesus
- 6 Helping my child to say, "I'm sorry".
- 7 Saying night prayers with my child.
- 8 Saying grace before meals with my family
- 9 Encouraging my child to make their own prayers as well as teaching them the traditional ones
- 10 Showing my child how to be a good friend



A digital copy of this can be found on the CD for printing.

## APPENDIX C

### PRACTICAL TASKS FOR PARENTS

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This double sided hand-out can be downloaded from the RE Team Website.

#### PREPARATION TASKS FOR PARENTS

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Before the Baptism of a child a number of things need to be thought about by the family and some tasks need to be undertaken.

##### **1. Select a Baptism Name**

By the time of Baptism most parents already have a number of names chosen for their child. Traditionally, Christian parents have taken care to include a saint's name among them. This is a praiseworthy practice as it is one way of recognising that the child is becoming a member of a community of followers of Christ. The child is thus linked to a patron saint, someone to learn about later, petition, and admire.

##### **2. Choose Godparents**

As with the choice of name for the child, tradition also influences the choice of Godparents. Nevertheless, it is desirable to try and pick someone who is suitable for the role. The Church advises that Catholic Godparent “must be firm believers, and able and ready to help the newly-baptised child on the road of Christian life” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1255). They should be over sixteen years old and be baptised, confirmed and have received first Eucharist . Only one Godparent is required although it has been traditional to have two. A Christian of another denomination may not officially be a Godparent but can witness the Baptism, and by cultural practice is often referred to as a second Godparent.

##### **3. Inform the Parish**

Once the family has decided to go ahead and have their child baptised the priest needs to be contacted, forms filled out, and participation in the preparation programme undertaken.

Nowadays families are much more involved in the baptismal celebration than was the case in the past. Here are some tips to help ensure the day runs as smoothly as possible.

**1. Plenty of Time**

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the church and to select a suitable place for your group.

**2. The Baptismal Candle**

Make sure to bring it. It doesn't have to be decorated.

**3. The White Garment**

The white garment or baptismal shawl is not put on the child until after the water is poured. It signifies newness of life, that this child, in Christ, is a new creation. To highlight this some parents even bring their child to the church draped in some other colour besides white, e.g. a coloured blanket or towel that is replaced later by the shawl. This practice is optional.

**4. The Responses**

The rite of Baptism contains important questions and responses. It would be as well to go over these a few times beforehand in order to enjoy the ceremony, see everything that's going on, instead of having one's head just stuck in a book or leaflet from start to finish.

**5. The Prayers**

The prayer of the faithful follows the readings. A member of each family is often requested to read out one of the prayers.

**6. The Offering**

Baptism is, of course, a free gift from God and as such has no cost attached to it. Nevertheless, there are expenses involved including the priest's time. It is the usual practice to make some offering. Don't be afraid to ask someone in the parish for advice on this.

**7. The Roles**

It is a pity when someone has been honoured with the title of Godparent not to have something distinctive to do on the day. The following suggestions might help in involving both parents and Godparents.

Mother:           The mother carries the child.

Godmother:       The godmother carries the white shawl to the time it is put on the baby at the font. In some cases the godmother holds the child after this.

Godfather:       The godfather could carry the child's candle until the time comes for lighting it.

Father:            The father might then carry the lit candle from then until the end of the celebration.

## APPENDIX D

### BAPTISM: INFORMATION FOR PARENTS - SAMPLE

# BAPTISM

## AN INTRODUCTION



### INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

*Congratulations on the birth of your child.*

Now you are presenting your child for baptism. In the sacrament of baptism a child is welcomed into the Catholic family – the Church, and the parents promise to do all they can to make the Catholic faith part of their family life.

This pamphlet provides information to help you in the process of preparing yourselves for the baptism of your child.

*The parents must give thought to the Baptism and prepare themselves spiritually.*  
Instruction on Infant Baptism #29

## THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN PARENTING

The Baptism of a child sees the beginning of two journeys. First of all there is the beginning of the child's own journey with God in Christ.

Secondly, there is the beginning of the parents' journey of Christian parenting and nurturing of this particular child. The rite of Baptism recognises this in one of the blessing prayers where it speaks of parents as being the **first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.**

It then goes on to pray that they will also be the **best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do.**

Parents are called in a very special way to share in the work of Jesus Christ. As parents they nurture the faith of their child.

### How can they do this?

These are some ways in which you as parents are able to do this in your family.

1. Taking your child to Mass, especially Sunday Mass.
2. Teaching your child right from wrong.
3. Teaching your child to share.
4. Listening to your child.
5. Telling your child stories about Jesus and other Bible stories
6. Helping your child to say, "I'm sorry".
7. Saying night prayers with your child.
8. Saying grace before meals with your family.
9. Encouraging your child to make their own prayers as well as teaching them the traditional ones.
10. Showing your child how to be a good friend.

*In the family...a Christian education is more witnessed to than taught; more occasional than systematic, more ongoing than structured.*  
General Directory of Catechesis #255

## THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

### What Baptism is About.

#### Life

In Baptism we are called to share in God's Life. We are assured of God's power and strength to help us to grow to full humanity.

#### Community

Through Baptism we are drawn into the community of the Church and called to share in its life and work.

#### Relationship

Baptism brings us into a "covenant" relationship with God and with the Church. No matter what happens to us in life, God promises us love and care. He invites us to live in his love and give ourselves to him without reserve.

#### Freedom

Through God's gift of Baptism we are given the power to be free from all that ties us down. We are freed to become fully alive.

#### Journey

Baptism invites us to journey through life with Christ. Baptism promises us that he will be with us throughout life's journey.

#### Discipleship

Baptism calls us, throughout our following of Christ, to share in his work of bringing God's message of love to the world.

#### Death

In baptism God promises us strength so that we can die to all that is selfish and self-centred within us.

### "COVENANT"

A solemn agreement often involving the taking of an oath by the parties concerned.

As parents bringing a child to baptism you need to consider why you are seeking baptism.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### Inform the Parish

The first step in presenting your child for baptism is to contact your local parish. <http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/parishes/all/> provides information about 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.

### Select a Baptism Name

Traditionally, Christian parents have included a saint's name. This is a positive practice as it is one way of recognising that the child is becoming a member of a community of followers of Christ. The child is thus linked to a patron saint, someone to learn about later, petition, and admire.

### Choose Godparents

Only one Godparent is required.

To be a Godparent a person is required to be:

- 16 years or older
- A confirmed Catholic who has received first Eucharist
- Not a parent of the child

Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent. A baptised member of another Christian Church may be a witness rather than an official Godparent. Culturally this second person is referred to as a Godparent.

### Further Questions

If you have additional questions you may find the answers in the *Baptism FAQ* section of the credo website [www.credo.org.nz](http://www.credo.org.nz)








## APPENDIX E

### GODPARENTS: A GUIDE – SAMPLE

 <p><b>God-parents</b> their role in infant Baptism.</p> <p>It is a great honour and responsibility to be asked to be a godparent</p> <p>Godparents have two key roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Assisting and supporting parents</b> in the Christian upbringing of the child. During the liturgy of baptism they will be asked; <i>Are you willing to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?</i> Therefore they need to live a faith-filled life.</li> <li><b>Represent the Church family</b> into which the child is being baptised. During the liturgy of baptism they will also; Renew their baptismal vows Renounce Satan Profess the creed.</li> </ol> <p>During the liturgy godparents may also be asked to participate in other ways such as holding the candle.</p>	 <p><b>God-parents</b> their role in infant Baptism.</p> <p>It is a great honour and responsibility to be asked to be a godparent</p> <p>Godparents have two key roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Assisting and supporting parents</b> in the Christian upbringing of the child. During the liturgy of baptism they will be asked; <i>Are you willing to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?</i> Therefore they need to live a faith-filled life.</li> <li><b>Represent the Church family</b> into which the child is being baptised. During the liturgy of baptism they will also; Renew their baptismal vows Renounce Satan Profess the creed.</li> </ol> <p>During the liturgy godparents may also be asked to participate in other ways such as holding the candle.</p>	 <p><b>God-parents</b> their role in infant Baptism.</p> <p>It is a great honour and responsibility to be asked to be a godparent</p> <p>Godparents have two key roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Assisting and supporting parents</b> in the Christian upbringing of the child. During the liturgy of baptism they will be asked; <i>Are you willing to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?</i> Therefore they need to live a faith-filled life.</li> <li><b>Represent the Church family</b> into which the child is being baptised. During the liturgy of baptism they will also; Renew their baptismal vows Renounce Satan Profess the creed.</li> </ol> <p>During the liturgy godparents may also be asked to participate in other ways such as holding the candle.</p>
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<p><b>REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>Only one Godparent is required. To be a Godparent a person is required to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 years or older</li> <li>A confirmed Catholic who has received first Eucharist</li> <li>Not a parent of the child</li> </ul> <p>Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent.</p> <p>A baptised member of another Christian Church may be a witness rather than official Godparent. Culturally this second person is referred to as a Godparent.</p> <p><b>HOW TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>To be a good Godparent doesn't require a person to be a saint. A good Godparent gives example by living the Catholic faith. They provide guidance, support and inspiration to their godchild as they journey with God.</p> 	<p><b>REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>Only one Godparent is required. To be a Godparent a person is required to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 years or older</li> <li>A confirmed Catholic who has received first Eucharist</li> <li>Not a parent of the child</li> </ul> <p>Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent.</p> <p>A baptised member of another Christian Church may be a witness rather than official Godparent. Culturally this second person is referred to as a Godparent.</p> <p><b>HOW TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>To be a good Godparent doesn't require a person to be a saint. A good Godparent gives example by living the Catholic faith. They provide guidance, support and inspiration to their godchild as they journey with God.</p> 	<p><b>REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>Only one Godparent is required. To be a Godparent a person is required to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 years or older</li> <li>A confirmed Catholic who has received first Eucharist</li> <li>Not a parent of the child</li> </ul> <p>Traditionally a second person has often been asked to be a Godparent.</p> <p>A baptised member of another Christian Church may be a witness rather than official Godparent. Culturally this second person is referred to as a Godparent.</p> <p><b>HOW TO BE A GODPARENT</b></p> <p>To be a good Godparent doesn't require a person to be a saint. A good Godparent gives example by living the Catholic faith. They provide guidance, support and inspiration to their godchild as they journey with God.</p> 
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## APPENDIX F

### WORKSHEETS FOR SESSIONS

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These hand-outs can be downloaded from the Religious Education Team Website.  
They could be sent to families for completion before they attend preparation.

#### HOPES FOR YOUR CHILD

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Which of the hopes below do you think are very important? Put V in the box for these.

Which of the hopes do you think are important? Put I in the box for these.

Which of the hopes do you think are not so important? Put N in the box for these.

DO WELL AT SCHOOL	<input type="checkbox"/>	HAVE A GOOD JOB	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAVE LOTS OF FRIENDS	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE GOOD LOOKING	<input type="checkbox"/>
KNOW HOW TO ENJOY LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE HAPPY	<input type="checkbox"/>
KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG	<input type="checkbox"/>	MAKE MONEY	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAVE A NICE HOME	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE TRUTHFUL	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR	<input type="checkbox"/>	BE CONFIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have any other hopes, write them in the space below.

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### WHY BAPTISM?

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Put a ✓ in the box if you think it is a good reason for having a baby baptized, or put an x if you think it is not a good reason for having a baby baptized.

- |    |   |                          |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1  | It's the thing to do  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | My family would want it.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | You have to have some kind of party for a new-born baby.    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | I do not want my baby to go to Limbo                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | I want my baby to have what I have.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | I think it's the right way to start off my baby's life.     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | Jesus is important to me, and I want my baby to know Jesus. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | After buying baby clothes - it's the next thing to do.      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | I want my baby to be part of the Church.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | I want my baby to go to a Catholic school                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | I want God to be a part of my baby's life.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | It's the right thing to do.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | If a baby is not baptized it will be unlucky.               | <input type="checkbox"/> |

