

## **St Clare's Catholic Parish, Fulwood, Preston**



### **The Sacrament of Baptism**

This booklet has been provided to help parents understand the process of having their child baptized into the Catholic Church. We have included guidelines and some frequently asked question, which will be helpful with the preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism here at St Clare's Parish. Please read this booklet carefully. If you have any question please do not hesitate to contact one of the Priests at St Clare's, who will be more than happy to help you.

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Dear Parents

As parents of a new baby or a baby eagerly awaited, the responsibility and wonder you sense is something we want to celebrate with you as you bring your child to the Church for the Sacrament of Baptism. Our parish family is very happy to have a new member already here or on the way. Your child is important to our community as he/she will bring new life to you and to our Church.

Like all parents you hope to give your child all that is best for them, so that your child will grow to be a good and complete human being, achieving their God given potential and fullness of life. This will include a desire for your child to share in the life of Christ as a member of the Church. As you are aware the first step to sharing in the life of Christ and his Church is Baptism.

Baptism is a wonderful gift to offer your child. Through this Sacrament, your child will be incorporated into the Body of Christ and become a member of our household of faith, here at St Clare's. In your home, we hope your child will come to know, love and serve God. The following guidance is our way of assisting you and your child on your journey of faith in the Catholic Church.

We must point out that Baptism is not simply a "naming ceremony" or even just a blessing for a new baby. It is the beginning of the Christian life and the gateway to eternal life. It is our intention that this booklet will help you to understand this more fully and equip you to be able to decide if you wish your child to be baptised here at St Clare's

The Parish of St Clare's looks forward to welcoming your new arrival into our community of faith.

Best wishes

### **Prayer**

Lord we ask that you be with our family and send your Holy Spirit to help us to make the right decision for our child with regard to baptism. We also ask that you help us to be an example to our child through our faith journey.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen

## **What is the Sacrament of Baptism?**

First a sacrament is a means by which God comes into our lives to deepen our relationship with him. The Church recognizes seven sacraments, namely, Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, Ordination, Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. The seven sacraments touch all stages and all the important moments of the Christian life. First let us look at what the Catechism of the Catholic Church has to say about the sacraments:

*“Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace. The sacraments are perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature. By the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit they make present efficaciously the grace that they signify.” (1084)*

*“Celebrated worthily in faith, the sacraments confer the grace that they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work: it is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies.” (1127)*

We believe Jesus himself gave us each of the sacraments and each one flows from his life and ministry. Through each sacrament we are given the grace of God and drawn closer to him. Each sacrament is a visible sign of God’s unconditional love for us. A visible sign where God comes to us, enters into our life and brings us closer to him through his grace.

Baptism is always the first sacrament to be administered and as such is often referred to as the “gateway to the sacraments” because Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God’s people. Baptism as the first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence we are called and indeed we are the children of God.

Before we begin to discuss the baptismal process, we would like you to have an understanding of the symbols of Baptism: sign of the cross, water, oil, white garment, and candle. This is so that when the time comes to begin preparation for your child's baptism, you will have a better understanding of how these symbols relate to this very important sacrament.

### **Sign of the cross**

The sign of the cross is traced on your child's forehead; this is the moment when the Church in the name of Jesus Christ welcomes your child.

### **Water**

Water is a symbol of both life and death. When we are baptised we are baptised into the death of Jesus, we die with him upon the cross. When Jesus dies so do sin and death. Our baptism does not end in death but continues in life. As Jesus is raised from the dead by the Father and given new life, so are we through the waters of baptism, raised to life in Jesus Christ. The water of baptism washes away original sin and makes us a new creation.

### **Oils**

During the Sacrament of Baptism your child will be anointed twice with oil, the first anointing is with the oil of the catechumens. A 'catechumen' is somebody who is preparing to become a Christian, and so this oil is used to accompany the Rite of Baptism. Anointing at Baptism is a symbol which points to the gift of the Holy Spirit, which comes to the newly baptized person as it did upon Christ at His Baptism in the Jordan. In Baptism we are "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), the Holy Spirit which is the gift of Christ to His Church. Then there is the second anointing this anointing also reminds us at Baptism that we are made inheritors of the Kingdom of God. The head of

the person is anointed with the oil of Chrism. (Kings and Queens are anointed at their coronations.) Holy Chrism is the oil used to anoint people at their Confirmation, and is also used to anoint priests at their Ordination. It is also used in the consecration of altars and Church buildings. 'Consecration' means making holy or setting apart for God's purposes. It differs from the other oils in that it alone is not pure olive oil. A scented balsam is mixed with the oil to make the Chrism.

### **White Garment**

Once we have been claimed for Christ through the water of life, we are clothed in a white garment. This white garment, the Church, tells us is an outward sign of our Christian dignity. Once we have put on Christ, we are to always walk as His followers.

### **Candle**

The light of Christ is passed on to us in the form of a lit candle, which is lit from the Paschal candle that was blessed at the Easter Vigil. We are called to be the light of Christ in the world, and we are asked by the Church to keep that light burning brightly.

As with all things Christian, God chooses the ordinary things of this world, and by His Grace makes them Holy. He then uses them to make His presence felt in the world. He does this when through the Holy Water of the font He gives new and eternal life to His people. He does this supremely when He takes the bread and wine at the hands of a priest and returns them as the Body and Blood of Christ. He does this when, by the means of Holy Oils, He pours His healing and life- giving Spirit into the Church and upon her members.

Now that you have the basic understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism and the associated symbols, we would like to cover some frequently asked questions.

### **Some frequently asked questions:**

#### **How soon can I / we have my child baptised?**

Children should be baptised within the first few weeks or months after birth. Arrangements can even be made before the child is born. It is wrong to put off the Baptism simply in order to have a more elaborate celebration party afterwards. It is better to have the Baptism sooner and make the celebrations simpler. A date and time for your child's Baptism can be provisionally given once you have completed the parish form and have met all the criteria. The Baptism date and time will only be confirmed once you have completed the Baptismal Preparation Course.

#### **Must I / we be Catholic to present a child for baptism?**

At least one parent must be a Catholic to have their children baptized in the Catholic Church.

#### **I / We are not married, can my child still be baptised?**

Yes, and I know I do not need to remind you of the importance of marriage for yourselves and the Church. We are also aware that there are many reasons why people are either together and not married or separated. This is not the time or the place to discuss this, but please feel free to talk to one of the priests about this subject.

## **Who can be a godparent and how many can we have?**

The choice of godparents is important, as these will be the people who support you bringing up your child in the Catholic faith. A godparent represents the Catholic Church, and then serves as the role model for your child by living a fully Christian life, providing a lifelong example of Christian living, encouraging your child in the experience of our Catholic faith. Therefore the godparents should be people whose faith lends itself to this living example.

There are usually two godparents, but there must be one and no more than two will be permitted. If two godparents are desired, one must be male and the other female and if there is one this can be either male or female. According to Canon Law, the law governing the Catholic Church, godparents must be at least 16 years of age, practicing Catholics and should have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, meaning they are fully initiated into the Catholic Church, and be living a life in harmony with the Catholic faith.

There are occasions when it is permitted to have one Catholic Godparent and a Christian witness at Baptisms. A Christian witness must be a practicing baptized member of another Christian denomination accepted by the Catholic Church.

## **Is there any preparation course that we need to attend before our child is baptized?**

Participation in our Baptismal Preparation Course is a pre-requisite to your child being baptized here at St Clare's. The preparation course is run throughout the year and lasts for three sessions one of which the Godparents will be required to attend. The course is designed to give parents and godparents an even greater appreciation of this sacrament and will present you

with suggestions on how to pass on the beliefs and values of the Catholic Church to your child.

### **Do we have to make any payment for the Baptism?**

No fee is charged for administering the Sacrament. It is however customary to make a donation.

### **Baptism and parents responsibilities**

Because of the lifelong nature and consequences of Baptism, the Church is insistent that the sacrament should only be administered if the child's parents are committed to what they are undertaking and have also been prepared in such a way that they clearly understand the nature of Baptism and are able to demonstrate this.

Parents are responsible for instructing and forming their children in both the teaching and practice of the Catholic faith. Although Catholic schools exist to help parents in this regard, they are not a substitute for it. The best instruction that you can give your child is through commitment and good example in the ways of prayer and Christian living. The atmosphere at home is especially important. The Church views the family as the basic building block for itself and the wider society.

Baptism is the great moment that begins the spiritual journey. It is the way of life that you are seeking for your son or daughter. It is wonderful that you desire your child to share in the sacramental life of the Church. As you make this request for your child, it should also be a reality in your own life for example:

**Do you participate in the sacramental life of the Church?**

**Do you regularly attend Mass?**

**Do you make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?**

**Are you fully initiated into the Church through Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation?**

We understand that life can get complicated and we are not here to judge. But, we expect that parents lead by example. The birth of a child often raises questions and issues about the faith life of adults.

If after reading this booklet you feel ready to present your child to the Church for baptism please apply for a Baptism Enrollment Form via [enquires@saintclares.co.uk](mailto:enquires@saintclares.co.uk) or see one of the priests after Mass. Once your form has been submitted one of the priests will contact you to make an appointment for you to come and discuss your child's Baptism. After the initial meeting with one of the priests and on acceptance onto the Baptism Preparation Course one of our baptism preparation team will be in contact with you to confirm the details of the next course dates and times.

With all our best wishes and prayers during this important time in your family's life.