



## Baptism ceremony blessings

At the end of the baptism ceremony, the celebrant prays for the mother and father and then prays the following blessing for the children:

*By God's gift, through water and the Holy Spirit, we are reborn to everlasting life. In his goodness, may he continue to pour out his blessings upon these sons and daughters of his. May he make them always, wherever they may be, faithful members of his holy people. May he send his peace upon all who are gathered here, in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

To which we respond, "Amen".

## Why are there several children baptised at the one ceremony?

Often there is more than one child baptised at the same ceremony. This symbolises that the child is joining the universal Church, which is made up of over a billion people. In fact, the gathered community is also a symbol of the Church. The celebrant says to each child, calling him or her by name, "The Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name I claim you for Christ our saviour by the sign of the cross."

## How do I organise a baptism ceremony?

If you or a member of your family is not yet baptised, the first step is to make an appointment to meet with your parish priest or pastoral associate. You may be asked to come along and talk about the meaning of baptism and why you or your children would like to take this step.

Adults will probably be asked to participate in a series of talks to learn about the faith. Sometimes the priest does this himself while some parishes have a process – the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) – to prepare people for baptism.

## Am I alone in wanting to become Catholic?

Each year thousands of adults enquire about the Catholic faith and go on to be received into the Catholic Church.

Others who were baptised as an infant make an adult decision to follow Jesus more closely.

Whether we've been baptised as infants or adults, the primary role of the Church is to help and support us as we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

### Questions?

If you or someone close to you is interested in finding out more about the Catholic faith, please contact the Catholic Enquiry Centre on 1300 432 484 or email [info@catholicenquiry.com](mailto:info@catholicenquiry.com).

Further information can be found at:

[www.catholicenquiry.com](http://www.catholicenquiry.com)  
[www.catholic.org.au](http://www.catholic.org.au)



Catholic Enquiry Centre

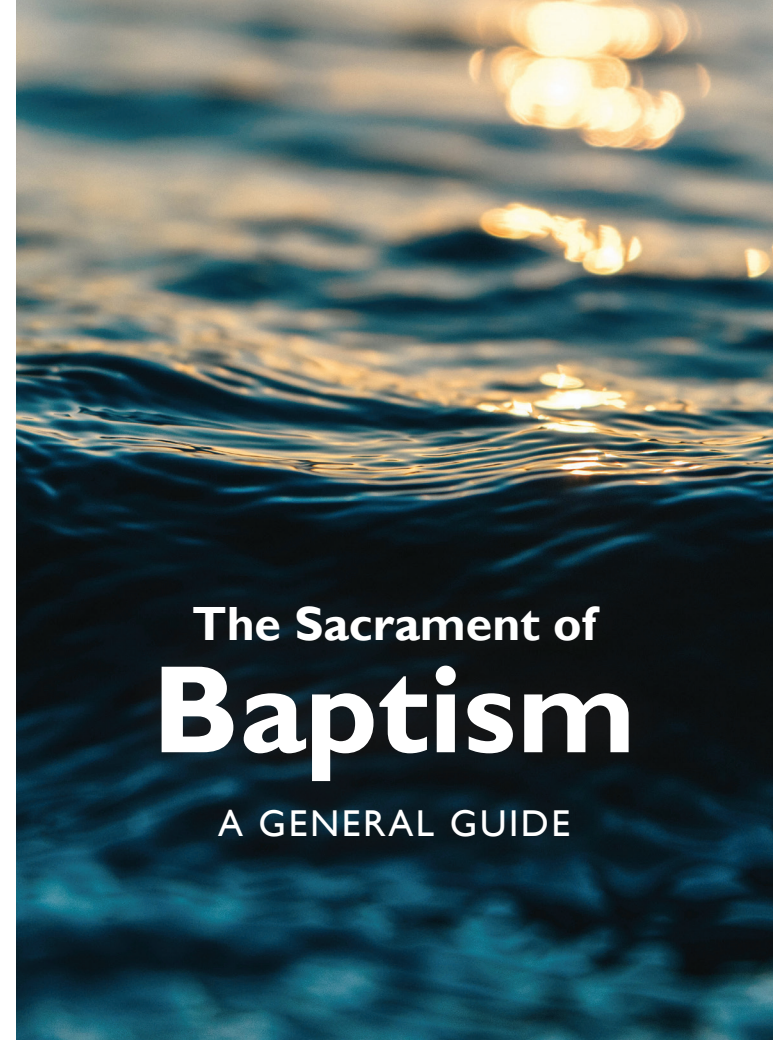
Reaching out in faith  
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

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# The Sacrament of Baptism

A GENERAL GUIDE



Catholic Enquiry Centre

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Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

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[www.catholicenquiry.com](http://www.catholicenquiry.com)



## About the Catholic Church

Welcome to the Catholic Church, a community of believers professing faith in Jesus Christ. There are over five million Catholics in Australia, the largest single denomination representing over 22% of the population. The Catholic community includes people of every nationality.

The vast majority of Catholics are ordinary men, women and children. They are served and ministered to by bishops, priests, deacons, and religious. The Catholic community has a place for everyone, whether young or old, married or single, and of all races and nations. Each person is invited personally to share in the love of Jesus by participating in the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

The Catholic Church seeks to live its mission by supporting all sectors of the community – through prayer and worship, education, healthcare and social welfare services.

People are welcomed into the Catholic family through the Sacrament of Baptism.

## What is the Sacrament of Baptism?

Through Baptism a person is welcomed into the Christian community. The person – infant, child or adult – through the waters of Baptism enters more deeply into the life of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He or she is dedicated to God and all that is good.

The bond of Baptism unites a person to God forever; the bond is unbreakable and unrepeatable.

## What happens during the Baptismal ceremony?

If your child is to be baptised, you might be wondering what you will expect to see or experience during the ceremony.

### Baptismal Promises

The family will gather around the baptismal font – a large bowl, usually made of stone, marble or glass which holds the water used for baptism. The priest or deacon (celebrant) asks the parents what they ask for their child and they reply “Baptism”. Later the parents make the baptismal promises on behalf of their child. These promises are based on the Apostles Creed.

### Godparents

When a child is to be baptised, the parents will need to consider who they shall ask to be godparents. There must be at least one Catholic godparent, who is 16 or over, and has received the sacraments of initiation. This is because the godparents represent the Church at the baptism and beyond. The godparents promise to assist the parents with their duty as Christian parents.

### Sign of the Cross

The cross is a reminder of the love that Jesus Christ showed by giving his life for his friends. The tracing of a cross on the forehead of the person being baptised is an invisible “marking” that says “they belong to Jesus”. The celebrant will trace the cross on the forehead of the child and invite the parents and godparents to do the same.

### Word of God

Every liturgy is based around the word of God in Scripture. The celebrant gives a short homily or reflection on the readings.

### Baptism with water

The celebrant pours water over the child’s head (or immerses the child in the water) and says, “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.

The water is a sign of cleansing, symbolically washing away all the sins of the person being baptised. It is also a sign of life, because without water nothing can grow. And it is a sign of the new spiritual life into which the baptised person is entering.

### Anointing with Oil

The celebrant anoints the child on the chest with the Oil of Baptism. After baptism, he then anoints the child’s forehead with the Oil of Chrism.

The Oil of Baptism (Catechumens) is olive oil which has been specially blessed. It is associated with the days when athletes used to rub oil into their bodies before events to strengthen them and make their skin more supple, and symbolises strengthening for the challenges of life ahead. The Oil of Chrism is a combination of olive oil and balsam, and symbolises the sealing with the Holy Spirit.

### White Garment

The child is clothed in a white garment, which is a symbol of purity and innocence. Sometimes families like to use a gown or shawl that has been used by previous generations, while others will use a white baptismal gown, a stole or a white bib.

### Candle

A candle will be lit as a sign of this new life. It is usually lit from the Easter Candle, which symbolises the light of Christ, and will be held by a parent or godparent.

### Baptismal certificate

At the end of the ceremony the parents are given a Baptismal certificate which they will keep as a record of their child’s initiation into the Church and present at future sacraments.