

# Your child's christening



Just how amazing is your child? With sleepless nights, toddler tantrums and in time teenage sulks, it's no wonder that we can forget. Yet each child, each human life, is truly amazing. When I hold a newborn baby, I have this incredible sense that life is a gift. It's no wonder that so many parents and carers want to find a way to celebrate their child's life.

At the heart of any celebration, in Christian terms, is giving thanks. Think of celebrating a child's birthday; the party isn't just an excuse for having fun. Deep down, the party is really marking the sheer goodness of being alive. As parents and carers we don't say to a child "we're so glad you're part of our life." We'd be too embarrassed for a start. Yet the presents, the cake and the party all speak louder than words of the thanks we feel.

*The font is the womb of the church.*

we feel at the gift of life. Water is poured into the font (or bowl). Then, I'll 'wet the baby's head'. Pouring water is such an obvious sign of new life.

Pouring water is also a sign of God's love for your child. God loves your child before you do. Baptism

doesn't make God love us; God's love is there for us anyway; we just need to receive it. It's like a waterfall that cascades down all the

*A Prayer of Thanks*  
*Thank you for .....*  
*Thank for the gift of*  
*his/her life.*  
*Thank you for giving*  
*him/her to us.*  
*Help us each day to*  
*cherish him/her.*  
*Amen.*

A christening or baptism uses words and actions to express thanksgiving. At baptism we celebrate the sense of wonder

*The river of God is full of water.*

time. And Christians see that love poured out for us above all in the life of Jesus.

Your child's christening is 'Christ-ing'. It's coming to share in the love we see poured out in Jesus. His life was literally 'poured out in love' - dying on the cross - so that we could know life. God's love, poured out for us; water at baptism is a sign of that generous love.

*Christ claims you for his own.  
Receive the sign of his cross.*

You may already have begun to think about godparents and their role is to offer Christian support as your child grows. Godparents can show interest in your child's well-being and development. They can share in caring for your child. Yet it's from you that your child learns most; all the way from potty training to learning to smile. This is also true for learning the love of God.

As adults we often have lots of questions about

*Immortal love, forever full,  
forever flowing free,  
forever shared, forever  
whole,  
a never ebbing sea!*

Your child also receives the sign of the cross - on the forehead. You can't see the sign but the cross will be seen as you help your child to live out the Christian life.

*Parents and godparents, the Church receives these children with joy. Today we are trusting God for their growth in faith. Will you pray for them, draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ?*

***With the help of God, we will.***

*In baptism these children begin their journey in faith. You speak for them today. Will you care for them, and help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church?*

***With the help of God, we will.***

faith; we may not be sure how to pray, we may wonder about evil and suffering, and we may be hurt or upset by how badly other Christians have sometimes behaved. Above all, as adults, we can be very self-conscious. If we make a prayer it tends to be silently in our hearts; not so others could hear.

What's true for us as adults is a world away from the experience of children. Your child may well enjoy sharing a bed-time prayer with you; it's a chance to name loved ones (including pets!) in the knowledge that they're cared for, not just by us, but by the one who has made us.

## **The Decision**

*Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?  
**I reject them.***

*Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?  
**I renounce them.***

*Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?  
**I repent of them.***

*Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?  
**I turn to Christ.***

*Do you submit to Christ as Lord?  
**I submit to Christ.***

*Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?  
**I come to Christ.***

Caring for a child is an amazing privilege; it can also be a daunting task. As a church, we're ready to share in helping your child to grow. Baptism marks a new belonging; your child joins the biggest family in the world; the church. As the local church family we're here for you and your child. We'll remember you in prayer. We'll invite you to special events. And we hope you'll find the church family ready to welcome you for worship and the other activities that take place here.

Sometimes, parents want to leave making a decision for children

when they are at an age to make this for themselves. You may in that case want to find out about a Service of Thanksgiving; your child can receive a blessing at this service and still come forward for Christian baptism at a later date.

Once they are four or five years old it's important to talk with children themselves before a service of christening. Children at this age want to know what's going on. You can bring them to another christening so they can see what takes place. Your child can even play at christening a doll at home.

From the age of 11, young people can come forward for Confirmation; a ceremony that completes baptism and allows them to make their own commitment to the Christian faith. Confirmation is also open to adults. Contact us for more information.

The baptism service ends with your child receiving a lighted candle (with young children this is passed to a godparent for safe-keeping!). Although the candle marks the end of the service it's

*God has delivered us from the  
dominion of darkness  
and has given us a place with the  
saints in light.*

*You have received the light of Christ;  
walk in this light all the days of your  
life.*

*Shine as a light in the world  
to the glory of God the Father.*

really just the beginning for your child. The candle shines as a sign that the light of God's love continues to burn in the life of your child. Your child's christening is the beginning of a life-long relationship with the Christian family world-wide. We will continue to pray for you and your child; we invite you to help your child belong.

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