

What can I do?

If you have had the joy of a child born into your family, the Church wishes to affirm and share in that joy. So the first step is to approach your local Priest. He will be delighted to talk with you about the meaning of Christian Baptism and arrange the date of your child's Christening. It is the case these days that many adults find they were not baptized as children, but wish to share the joys and benefits of living as a member of God's Family, the Church. So if you as an adult wish to be baptized yourself, don't be afraid. Talk to your Priest too, and he will happily prepare you for Baptism (and for the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist – see the other leaflets in this series about Confirmation and Mass).

Prayer

Loving God, when the waters of the flood would have washed away all things from the face of the earth, you called Noah to build his ark as a refuge for all living beings. You led your ancient people from slavery through the waters of the Red Sea to freedom in the Promised Land. And your Son Jesus, who was baptized in the River Jordan by John, told his followers to baptize people everywhere in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May those who approach the waters of Baptism be given new life, forgiveness, and hope for their journey through this world to heaven's shores. In the name of Christ I pray. Amen.

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'
(Matthew 28.19)

What is a Sacrament?

A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What Jesus did on earth he still does through his seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation (Confession), Anointing of the Sick, Marriage, and Holy Orders. Each of these sacraments enable us to have a personal encounter with Jesus our risen Lord. The sacraments are God's gifts to equip us to lead a full and holy life.



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THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



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What is the Sacrament of Baptism?

The Sacrament of Baptism is the gateway into the life of Christ and his Church. It is the beginning of a life turned towards Christ and his kingdom, 'a first step in response to God's love' (Common Worship Baptism Service) which wipes away the stain of sin (all those acts and tendencies which separate us from God and one another). Baptism gives us a share in the life of Christ, who died for us and rose to new life again. Sometimes Baptism is also called 'Christening' – being made like Christ. An adult – or the parents and godparents on behalf of the child they present for baptism – makes a public declaration that they intend to live a Christ-like life, walking in his ways, and living according to his teaching.

Outward sign

Baptism is a 'washing away' of our sinfulness, so the outward sign of the Sacrament is being washed in water, accompanied by the words of Christ's command at the end of Saint Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 28.19), 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. In some parts of the Church, especially in the case of adults, this may mean being fully immersed in water; in many places it will be the pouring or sprinkling of water over the head of the person to be baptised, adult or child. Since baptism is the beginning of the Christian journey, you can only be baptized once; but if you feel you want to make a renewed commitment to living the life of Christ, it is possible to renew your baptismal vows.

Inward Grace

The Church of England's Catechism says that by baptism 'I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and in inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.' Through Baptism, we are 'born again' through water and the Holy Spirit. Passing through the waters of Baptism, we die with Christ and rise again with him. We are 'adopted' as sisters and brothers and Jesus. We become part of the Family of God (his Church on earth) and are united with all who, through Baptism, belong to him in every times and place. And we are 'commissioned' and given grace to spread the Good News of Christ to others.

