

MY CHILD'S BAPTISM

A simple preparation book for parents and godparents

New life in Christ begins here

THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU

Work through three short conversations before the Baptism. You do not need to prepare a lesson or know all the answers beforehand. Read, talk honestly, learn the essentials, pray together and take one small next step.

Child's name

Date of Baptism

Church / parish

St Mary's | St John Bosco | St Edward's Parish

Parent and godparent parish edition | 2026

WELCOME

This book belongs to you

Thank you for asking the Church to baptise your child. Baptism is not simply a family custom or a beautiful day. In this sacrament Christ gives new life, frees from sin, joins the baptised to himself and his Church, and begins a lifelong Christian vocation.

You do not have to pretend to be a perfect Catholic family. Preparation is a chance to understand what you are asking for, what the Church will celebrate, and what it means to help a child grow in the faith afterwards. If prayer or Sunday Mass is not yet part of your routine, begin honestly from where you are and take a real next step.

HOW TO USE THE THREE CONVERSATIONS

Set aside about 15–20 minutes for each one. Parents should work through all three. Godparents should join where possible; if they live elsewhere, send them a copy and ask them to read the same pages. Try the questions in your own words before reading the short answers.

	What to do	How
1	Begin	Make the Sign of the Cross and read the REMEMBER sentence aloud.
2	Read	Read the short teaching slowly. Stop where something needs talking through.
3	Talk	Use the TALK ABOUT IT question. There is no need for a polished answer.
4	Understand	Try THE ESSENTIALS in your own words, then read the concise Catholic answer.
5	Pray	Pray the short prayer together.
6	Act	Do the THIS WEEK action. One small faithful step is enough.

WHEN YOU HAVE A QUESTION

Make a note and ask the parish priest. You are not expected to solve every theological, family or canonical question yourselves.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What this preparation is for

The aim is simple: that parents and godparents understand the gift being asked for, can make the profession of faith sincerely, and are ready to help the child grow within the Catholic Church.

NOT AN EXAM

You do not need perfect theological language. What matters is honest understanding, a sincere request for Baptism, and a real willingness to let the Catholic faith have a place in the child's life.

THE THREE CONVERSATIONS

1	Baptism: New Life in Christ	What Baptism is, what grace it gives, and why the Church baptises infants.
2	The Rite: Water, Faith and the Signs	What happens in the celebration and what your "I do" means.
3	Living Baptism: Raising a Child in Faith	How parents, godparents and parish help the life of grace grow afterwards.

AFTER THE THREE CONVERSATIONS

- Use the rite guide so the day itself feels familiar rather than confusing.
- Check the parent and godparent pages, especially the sponsor requirements.
- Use "Before the Baptism: Are We Ready?" before your final parish conversation.
- Bring any genuine questions or difficulties to the priest rather than hiding them.
- Keep the family rule of life after the Baptism; the sacrament is a beginning, not a finish line.

A SIMPLE RULE

Do not rush simply to finish pages. If one conversation raises an important question, stay with it. Understanding and sincerity matter more than speed.

Baptism: New Life in Christ

REMEMBER

Baptism is the gateway to Christian life. God frees the baptised from sin, gives new life in Christ, makes them an adopted child of God and a member of the Church, and marks them permanently as belonging to Christ.

Baptism is a sacrament: a visible action through which Christ truly gives the grace he promises. The outward washing with water is not merely a symbol of something we hope might happen. God acts through the sacrament, giving rebirth by water and the Holy Spirit.

A baby has committed no personal sin. Original sin means that every human being is born into a fallen human condition and needs the salvation Christ gives. In Baptism original sin is remitted, sanctifying grace is given, the Holy Spirit dwells in the baptised, and the person is united with Christ and incorporated into his Church.

The Church baptises infants because grace is a gift. A child receives life, love, language and care before being able to choose them. In the same way, parents ask the Church to give the child the gift of new life in Christ, while parents, godparents and the Church undertake to nurture that faith as the child grows.

TALK ABOUT IT

What are you asking God to give this child in Baptism that you cannot give by yourselves?

Think about: new life in Christ, freedom from sin, sanctifying grace, adoption as a child of God, belonging to the Church and the hope of eternal life.

THE ESSENTIALS

Try each question in your own words first. Then read the short answer.

- 1. What is Baptism?** The sacrament of new birth by water and the word, and the gateway to Christian life.
- 2. What does Baptism do?** It remits sin, gives sanctifying grace and the Holy Spirit, unites us with Christ and his Church, and gives an indelible spiritual character.
- 3. Has a baby committed personal sin?** No. Original sin is the fallen condition inherited by humanity, not a personal wrong committed by the baby.
- 4. Why does the Church baptise infants?** Because Baptism is God's free gift of grace, received in the faith of the Church and nurtured as the child grows.
- 5. Can Baptism be repeated?** No. Baptism marks the person permanently and is received only once.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of this child. As we prepare for Baptism, deepen our faith and help us receive with gratitude the new life you give in Christ. Amen.

THIS WEEK

At Sunday Mass, pray especially for the child who will be baptised. At home, make the Sign of the Cross over them each evening and thank God for the gift of their life.

The Rite: Water, Faith and the Signs

REMEMBER

At the heart of Baptism, the child is washed with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Parents and godparents renounce sin and profess the faith of the Church, and the signs of the rite show the new Christian life.

The rite begins by welcoming the child by name and marking them with the Sign of the Cross.

The Church listens to the Word of God, prays for the child and family, and asks Christ to free and strengthen the child. The Oil of Catechumens may be used according to the approved rite.

Before the Baptism, parents and godparents renounce sin and profess the faith of the Church.

These are not decorative words. You are saying that the child is being baptised into the faith and life of the Church and that you intend to help them grow within it.

The central sacramental action is the washing with water together with the Trinitarian words of Baptism. Afterwards, sacred chrism signifies consecration and sharing in Christ's mission; the white garment signifies the new creation and dignity of being clothed in Christ; and the candle lit from the Easter candle signifies the light of the risen Christ entrusted to the family to be kept burning in faith.

TALK ABOUT IT

When you answer "I do" to the faith of the Church, what will that "I do" need to look like after the Baptism?

Parents: what will it change in family life? Godparents: how will you support the family and the child?

THE ESSENTIALS

Try each question in your own words first. Then read the short answer.

1. What is essential for a valid Baptism? A washing with true water together with the proper Trinitarian form, with the intention to baptise as the Church does.

2. Why do parents and godparents renounce sin and profess the faith? Because Baptism joins the child to Christ and to the faith and life of his Church.

3. What does sacred chrism signify? Consecration and the baptised person's share in the life and mission of Christ, Priest, Prophet and King.

4. What does the white garment mean? The new dignity and life of a person clothed in Christ.

5. What does the baptismal candle mean? The light of Christ and the responsibility to help the child continue walking in faith.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, prepare us to make the baptismal promises sincerely. Help our lips and our daily life to say the same "I do" to your Gospel. Amen.

THIS WEEK

Read the Apostles' Creed together. Speak with the godparents about the promises and choose one practical way you will help one another live them.

Living Baptism: Raising a Child in Faith

REMEMBER

Baptism is a beginning. Parents accept responsibility for the child's Catholic upbringing, while godparents and the parish help them nourish the life of grace through prayer, Sunday Mass, the sacraments and Christian example.

The home is normally the first school of faith. Long before a child understands a catechism lesson, they notice whether prayer is natural, whether Sunday Mass matters, whether forgiveness is practised and whether God is spoken about as someone real and loved.

Parents are not expected to be perfect. What matters is a sincere intention to raise the child in the Catholic faith and to take real steps towards that life. If family practice has become irregular, Baptism preparation can be an honest opportunity to begin again rather than to pretend.

Godparents support; they do not replace the parents. They pray for the child, give a credible Catholic example and encourage the child in the Church's sacramental life. As the child grows, the family and parish will help them prepare for Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation, and for the ordinary Christian life of prayer, charity, repentance and service.

TALK ABOUT IT

If this child learnt what Catholic life means only by watching the adults around them for the next five years, what would they learn?

Choose one or two realistic habits that would make faith visible: Sunday Mass, a short daily prayer, blessing the child, forgiveness, Scripture, a crucifix in the home or regular contact with the parish.

THE ESSENTIALS

Try each question in your own words first. Then read the short answer.

- 1. What responsibility do parents accept in asking for Baptism?** To raise the child in the Catholic faith and help the child live the life begun in Baptism.
- 2. How is baptismal grace ordinarily nourished?** Through prayer, Sunday Mass, the sacraments, Christian charity, sound teaching and life within the Church.
- 3. What is the role of a godparent?** To help the parents and child live a Christian life faithful to Baptism through prayer, example and support.
- 4. What if our family has been away from the Church?** Begin honestly. Speak with the priest and take the next real step; preparation can be part of a genuine return to prayer and parish life.
- 5. Does preparation end on the day of Baptism?** No. Baptism begins a lifelong life of grace, worship, conversion and discipleship.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, remain close to our family. Make our home a place of prayer, truth, forgiveness and love, and help us lead this child faithfully towards you. Amen.

THIS WEEK

Choose two habits to begin now: Sunday Mass, a brief bedtime prayer, blessing the child, a weekly Gospel story, grace before meals or a visible crucifix in the home.

APPENDIX A

The Baptism Rite: step by step

A practical guide for the family. The priest or deacon will guide you; the approved liturgical book governs the celebration.

Part	What it means
1. Reception	The child is welcomed by name. The parents publicly ask the Church for Baptism and accept the responsibility of Christian upbringing.
2. Sign of the Cross	The minister marks the child with the Cross; parents and godparents are invited to do the same.
3. Word and Prayer	Sacred Scripture is proclaimed; the Church prays for the child, parents and godparents and invokes the saints.
4. Prayer for freedom from sin	The Church prays that the child be freed from the power of sin. The Oil of Catechumens may be used according to the rite.
5. Blessing of water	The Church gives thanks for God's saving work through water and blesses the baptismal water as provided by the rite.
6. Renunciation and profession	Parents and godparents renounce sin and profess the faith of the Church, answering sincerely on behalf of the child.
7. Baptism with water	Water is poured or the child is immersed while the proper Trinitarian form is spoken. This is the central sacramental action.
8. Anointing with chrism	The newly baptised child is anointed with sacred chrism, signifying consecration and a share in Christ's mission.
9. White garment	The white garment signifies the new creation and the dignity of being clothed in Christ.
10. Lighted candle	The candle is lit from the Easter candle. The family is entrusted with helping the child persevere in the light of Christ.
11. Conclusion	Further explanatory rites may follow according to the approved rite, and the celebration concludes with prayer and blessing. If Baptism is within Mass, the Eucharistic liturgy continues.

KEY RESPONSES

The priest or deacon will guide you. The most important responses are the request for Baptism, the "I do" of renunciation and faith, and a prayerful "Amen".

Parents and godparents

PARENTS

By asking for Baptism, parents accept a real responsibility for the child's Christian upbringing.

The parish priest also confirms that the canonical conditions are met, including the necessary parental consent and a founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion.

- Keep Sunday Mass at the centre of family life.
- Pray with and for the child from the beginning.
- Teach the Sign of the Cross, the Lord's Prayer and the basic truths of faith as the child grows.
- Prepare the child in due course for First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.
- Give a recognisable Christian example of forgiveness, truthfulness, charity and repentance.
- Ask the parish for help early when faith, family circumstances or practical access become difficult.

GODPARENTS

A godparent is not an honorary title. The sponsor helps the baptised person live a Christian life faithful to the grace and obligations of Baptism, supporting the parents and remaining a recognisable Catholic witness as the child grows.

Requirement	What it means
Chosen for the role	Genuinely intends to carry out the responsibility.
Catholic life	A Catholic who is confirmed, has received the Eucharist and leads a life of faith in keeping with the role.
Age	Ordinarily at least sixteen, unless lawful provision or a just exception applies.
Canonical freedom	Not bound by a canonical penalty.
Relationship	Not the father or mother of the child.
Number	One Catholic sponsor is sufficient. If two are chosen, one is male and one female.
Christian witness	A baptised non-Catholic Christian may take part as a Christian witness together with a Catholic sponsor, according to Church law and parish guidance.

A GOOD CHOICE

Choose a godparent for the Christian life you hope the child will see, not simply for closeness, honour or family expectation.

Twelve things to understand

You do not need to memorise a theological script. Try to explain each point in ordinary words; use the concise answer when you need help.

- 1. What is Baptism?** The sacrament of new birth by water and the word, and the gateway to Christian life.
- 2. Who instituted Baptism?** Jesus Christ.
- 3. What does Baptism forgive?** All sin; in an infant, original sin is remitted.
- 4. What grace is given?** Sanctifying grace, by which we share in God's life; the baptised becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- 5. What new relationship does Baptism give?** The baptised becomes an adopted child of God, is united with Christ and is incorporated into the Church.
- 6. Does Baptism leave a permanent mark?** Yes. It gives an indelible sacramental character and cannot be repeated.
- 7. Why baptise infants?** Because Baptism is God's free gift of grace and the Church baptises infants in the faith of the Church, which is then nurtured as they grow.
- 8. What is essential in the rite?** A washing with true water together with the proper Trinitarian form and the intention to baptise as the Church does.
- 9. Who ordinarily baptises?** A bishop, priest or, in the Latin Church, a deacon.
- 10. What do parents accept?** The responsibility to raise the child in the Catholic faith.
- 11. What does a godparent do?** Helps the parents and child live a Christian life faithful to Baptism.
- 12. How does the life begun in Baptism grow?** Through prayer, Sunday Mass, the sacraments, Christian teaching, charity, repentance and life in the Church.

Before the Baptism: are we ready?

Use this as an honest family review before your final parish conversation. It is not a pass/fail test.

Tick only what is genuinely true. If something is not yet clear, bring it to the conversation rather than ticking it simply to finish the page.

- ☐ We understand that Baptism truly gives new life in Christ and is not merely a family ceremony.
- ☐ At least one parent or lawful guardian consents to the Baptism, and we sincerely ask the Church for it.
- ☐ There is a real intention to raise the child in the Catholic faith, with concrete next steps such as Sunday Mass, prayer and sacramental life.
- ☐ We understand that the renunciations and profession of faith are serious and are willing to make them sincerely.
- ☐ A suitable Catholic godparent has been chosen where possible, and we understand the difference between a Catholic sponsor and a Christian witness.
- ☐ We know the basic shape of the rite and the parish arrangements for the day.
- ☐ We have spoken honestly about any distance from practice, family complexity, disability, language, transport or other needs that may affect the preparation or the day itself.
- ☐ We know whom to ask if we have a question or need help after the Baptism.

YOU DO NOT NEED

Perfect theological vocabulary; an idealised family situation; a promise that family life will never be difficult; a polished testimony; or memorisation of the whole ceremony.

IF THE HOPE OF CATHOLIC UPBRINGING IS UNCLEAR

The response is a pastoral conversation, not pretending. The parish priest makes the pastoral and canonical judgement and follows the law of the Church and diocesan directions, explaining any difficulty and working with the family towards a genuine way forward.

A simple family rule of life

The aim is not a burdensome programme. Choose small practices that can become ordinary family life.

Rhythm	A simple practice
Daily	Make the Sign of the Cross with the child; bless them at bedtime; pray one short family prayer.
At meals	Say grace simply and naturally.
Weekly	Keep Sunday Mass at the centre of family life; afterwards mention one thing you heard, saw or prayed about.
At home	Keep a crucifix, Bible or holy image visible; use holy water if this is part of your family practice.
Regularly	Parents receive the sacraments faithfully, including Confession; let children see that adults also need mercy and grace.
As the child grows	Teach basic prayers, tell Gospel stories, name right and wrong calmly, practise forgiveness and prepare for the other sacraments.
With godparents	Pray for the child, mark baptismal anniversaries, encourage the sacraments and remain a recognisable Catholic support.
When things go wrong	Begin again. Return to prayer, Mass and Confession rather than allowing a difficult season to become permanent distance.

A PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILD

Lord Jesus, keep this child close to you. Help our home grow in faith, prayer, peace and love, and lead us together towards eternal life. Amen.

The day of Baptism

The priest or deacon will guide you. The aim is prayerful participation, not perfect performance.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

- Pray briefly for the child and for the family.
- Bring the baptismal candle or white garment only if your parish has asked you to provide them.
- Make sure the godparents know where and when to arrive.
- Come in good time so the family can settle rather than begin the celebration in a rush.

DURING THE CELEBRATION

- Listen to the Word of God and join the prayers.
- Answer the renunciations and profession of faith sincerely: “I do.”
- Watch and pray during the baptismal washing; this is the heart of the sacrament.
- Receive the signs of chrism, white garment and candle as reminders of the Christian life that now begins.
- If Baptism is celebrated within Mass, remain with the parish for the Eucharistic liturgy.

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT REMEMBERING EVERY WORD

The minister will lead the rite. What matters most is that you understand what you are asking for and make the profession of faith sincerely.

AFTERWARDS

Celebrate joyfully, then keep going. The lasting fruit of Baptism is not measured by the photographs or the reception afterwards, but by a child growing within the life of Christ and his Church through the ordinary faithfulness of family and parish life.

ON THE BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARY

Light the baptismal candle if you still have it, pray for the child, make the Sign of the Cross with holy water and thank God for the grace of Baptism.

If there is an emergency

DANGER OF DEATH

Contact a priest or deacon immediately if one is available. The Church does not delay Baptism when an unbaptised child is in danger of death.

If no ordinary minister is available in an emergency, any person can baptise validly provided that person intends to do what the Church does and uses true water with the proper Trinitarian form.

Use true water and say, while pouring the water on the person (or immersing): “N., I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

If an emergency Baptism takes place, tell the parish priest as soon as possible so that the Baptism can be recorded and the remaining rites supplied as appropriate. If there is doubt about what happened, do not attempt to repeat Baptism without speaking to the priest.

SOURCES AND DOCTRINAL REFERENCES

- Sacred Scripture: Matthew 28:19–20; John 3:5; Romans 6:3–4; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:27.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church: nos. 1213–1284, especially 1250–1255 on infant Baptism and 1262–1274 on the grace and effects of Baptism.
- Code of Canon Law: canons 849–878, especially 867–868 on infant Baptism and 872–874 on sponsors.
- Order of Baptism of Children: the approved liturgical book currently in force for the parish.
- Joseph Deharbe, S.J., A Full Catechism of the Catholic Religion, “On Baptism”
- Current diocesan policy and the directions of the parish priest govern local arrangements, records and particular pastoral cases.

A FINAL WORD

Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist form one Christian initiation. This booklet prepares parents and godparents for the beginning of that sacramental life; it does not replace Sunday Mass, family prayer, ongoing catechesis or the later sacraments.

May God bless your child, your family and your godparents as you prepare for Baptism.