

BAPTISM

IT'S GOOD TO BE



Lord Jesus,
we bring our children
for you to touch and bless.
help us to help them
and encourage them,
that they may grow up
rooted in love,
strong in faith
and courageous in life.

CHRISTENING

The word 'christening' is sometimes used instead of baptism. This is an old English word, which means 'making a person a Christian'. In the days before official government records were kept, a baby's Christian name was given at the baptism.

Now, of course, babies are given their names officially when they are registered with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Your baby's name is important, and a great deal of time has probably been spent choosing it. But of central importance at this service is that your child is welcomed into God's family, so for this reason, the word 'baptism' is preferred.

You have been asked to be godparents. In accepting this honour, you are being placed in a special relationship to your godchild. You may like to help organize a party on the day of the baptism or give a present such as a children's translation of the Bible or a child's prayer book. These are available from all good book shops.

BAPTISM

Baptism is a sign of God's generosity and love. Through baptism God gives new life in Christ.

That's not all there is to it of course, but it is an important aspect. Those who are baptised are received into the family of the Church and called to live as disciples of Christ. A prayer for those who are baptised is that they will come to place themselves on the side of God's love, that they may, in the words of the thirteenth century monk, Gregory of Sinai:

"become what they already are, find him who is already theirs, listen to him who never ceases to speak to them, own him who already owns them."

GODPARENTS

Godparents are those who take on special responsibilities for the Christian upbringing of the newly baptised.

In the service of baptism, parents and godparents (or sponsors, as they are called in the later revisions of the Anglican Prayer Book) promise to give their child/godchild the help and encouragement needed to grow in the Christian life.

The Prayer Book reminds us that children are baptised in response to God's all-embracing love.

Parents and godparents who have responded to that love come to bring their children for baptism.

They express their own trust and commitment to the promises of God, and their intention to bring up their children in the faith and practice of the Church. So godparents should be people who have themselves been baptised and who are willing to take seriously the promises they make.

Sponsors are asked:

- to accept the responsibilities placed upon them in bringing the child for baptism,
- to answer on behalf of the child, and
- to encourage the child in the life and faith of the Christian community by their prayers and example, their friendship and love.

Sponsors promise on behalf of the child

- to turn to Christ,
- to repent of their sins,
- to reject all that is false and unjust, and
- to renounce evil.

They also declare their own faith in God and their intention to strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with all their heart and their neighbours as themselves, as long as they live.

If you would like to discuss these issues or find out more of what they mean, please do not hesitate to contact the Revd. Debbie May

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