

Thinking about Baptism for your child?

Many congratulations on taking the first step towards planning a baptism in the Catholic Church.

We are delighted that you want to celebrate a baptism with us and will do everything we can to make your day a happy and memorable one. Most importantly, we promise to pray for you and to keep praying for you between now and the baptism.

Baptism, very specifically, is the sacrament by which a child or an adult becomes a member of the Catholic Church. It is the beginning of the Christian life and the gateway to eternal life. The Church rejoices in the precious gift of baptism and takes it very seriously.

You may request baptism for your child in the Catholic Church if:

- at least one of the parents is a practicing Catholic; and
- you are willing to bring your child up as a practicing Catholic.
- you normally reside in the Catholic Parish of Cranleigh and Bramley or regularly attend Mass in either Cranleigh or Bramley.

It is important for parents to understand that the child is being baptised in the faith as practised by its parents.

You may have your child baptised if you are not married.

You will need to give us at least 2 months notice of your intention to celebrate a baptism.

You will, generally speaking, need to attend a course of preparation before the Baptism.

Enquiry Stage

It is tempting to move straight on to thinking about dates for your child's baptism, who you would like to invite and what your celebration will be. Please put that out of your mind for a while as there is a step by step process to go through to prepare for your child receiving the Sacrament of Baptism and there will be plenty of time to think about parties after that.

Please download the Baptism Application Form or contact the Parish Office to request a copy. Then complete the form and return it to the Parish Secretary either by post or by hand to start the baptism preparation process.

Baptism Preparation Course

To make sure you fully understand what you are asking and the commitment you are making to bring up your baptised child in the "practice of the faith", you will be required to complete a baptism course - even if you have already had a child baptised.

These courses are run regularly and forthcoming dates can be advised. They are run over two evenings with each session starting at 7.30pm and lasting for about one and a half hours. Most courses are held in the Bramley Parish Room. We aim to have as many parents as possible present so that we can share experiences and encourage one another to deepen and grow our faith.

Once your form is received, the Parish Secretary will inform you of the date of the next Baptism Preparation Course. These are usually held every two months over two evenings starting at 7.30pm in the Bramley Parish Room behind St Thomas Church in Bramley (finishing by 9pm at the latest). Please attend the Preparation Course as discussed with the Secretary. It is important that you

attend both sessions and so you should clear other items from your diaries - emergencies notwithstanding. Ideally, both parents attend the meeting (bringing baby if necessary). Potential Godparents are welcome too.

The Baptism Service

Once you have attended the baptism course, Deacon Roy or Father David will visit you at home to discuss your child's baptism in detail. They will help you to think about the baptism, agree a time and date for the baptism and will answer any questions that you may have.

Your child's baptism will usually take place within Mass on the second or fourth Sunday of the month or in the afternoon on the second or fourth Sunday of the month. If your child is baptised within Mass, the Order of Service will be set and no reading or hymn choices are necessary. Very often, two babies or young children are baptised during the same ceremony. This cannot be avoided owing to the large numbers of infant baptisms that take place in the parish and the fact that baptism is not a private ceremony. Your child will usually be baptised in the church that you regularly attend - Cranleigh or Bramley.

For Baptisms that take place outside Mass, the Order of Service will be discussed and agreed with you. There will always be at least one reading from the Bible. More are possible, if you wish, but not necessary. Usually, only Bible readings are acceptable. Texts from other sources, or poems, are best reserved for use at another time. One of your party may wish to read the Bible at the baptism, and the Priest or Deacon can help you choose an appropriate reading from the list.

Rite of Welcome

If your child's baptism is not in Mass, a Rite of Welcome is celebrated at a Sunday Mass for your child. This is invariably the first Sunday of the month in which your child will be baptised and takes place during the Mass that you normally attend.

Godparents

The Church's Canon Law states that a child to be baptised will need one or two Godparents. You may have more if you wish. Godparents need to be confirmed and practising Roman Catholics and over the age of 16. Christians of other churches may stand as Christian Witnesses in addition to a Godparent. Both Godparents and Christian Witnesses will publicly state their belief in Jesus Christ during the baptism ceremony.

Each Godparent and Christian Witness will need to complete an Application Form and return it to the Parish Secretary at least two weeks before the baptism.

Fees

There are no fees, as such, for a baptism in the parish. However, it is customary, if you can afford it, to make a personal offering to the celebrant. You must decide how much you'd like to give.