

Ten Ways to: *Prepare for your Baby's Baptism*

To experience the reality of baptism we need to be immersed in the love of the baptized. The baptism of a child is an opportunity for the whole family to reflect upon the sacred meaning of this sacrament. Here are ten practical ways to prepare for the baptism and to grow in faith as a family.



Helpful hint

If you don't already have one, establish a 'sacred site' in your home - a focal point for gathering, praying and displaying symbols of our Catholic faith. This might be a small table or shelf displaying a bible, candle and crucifix. For your baby's baptism, place baptismal symbols at your sacred site: a bowl of water, a candle, a green branch or a decorated egg (symbol of birth and new life). Involve young children in gathering and placing the symbols.

1. Gaze upon your child

Gaze upon your child often. Reflect on the miracle of creation of which you have been a part. A 'sense of the sacred' is fundamental to opening ourselves to the presence and action of God.

2. Pray with water

Invite the family to gather around as the baby is being bathed. Say a simple prayer together and talk about how water is a symbol of cleansing and new life. At the baptism the Church will use water to signify the child's immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ, and life in his Spirit.

3. Pray with oil

When you are rubbing moisturiser or ointment on your baby during the course of a normal day, take a moment to reflect on the symbol of oil to be used during the baptismal ceremony. The Church uses oil as a sign of the strength and protection given to Christians by the anointing of the Holy Spirit in baptism and confirmation.

4. Pray with light

Your baby's baptismal candle, symbolising the light of Christ, will be an important feature on the big day. But even now, light a candle each night (or if it's winter, light the fire) and reflect on ways this family can 'light the way' for its newest member as he/she grows up as a child of God.

5. Write words of love

At baptism the Church community proclaims the Word of God. The Gospels are the written recordings of our ancestors in faith. They wrote out of love for their people, so that all might know and believe in the risen Lord. What words express your love for our child? Write a baptismal 'love letter' to your child which will be opened at his/her Confirmation.

6. Tell stories of belonging

Baptism is immersion into a community of faith. Reflect on this by displaying photos of your child's ancestors - e.g. grandparents and great aunts/uncles. As well as blood family, include pictures of people from your wider faith family, past and present. Include a picture of the saint after whom your child is named. Remember and talk about these special people.

7. Start a family tradition

Is your baby's white baptismal garment a family heirloom? If so, tell the story behind it. This is all part of passing on the faith. If the garment is not part of a family tradition, why not start one? Make or buy a special garment which will perhaps be worn one day at the baptism of this child's grandchild.

8. Make the sign of the cross

The Cross is a bold declaration of faith: we believe in Jesus Christ, Crucified and Risen! This is the faith in which you are enveloping your baby at baptism. Ensure that your home is marked with a cross. Invite family members to trace the sign of the cross on your baby's forehead.

9. Pray for the godparents

Pray for the godparents of your child. Invite the godparents over for a meal and talk about your hopes and dreams for this child. Explain to them why you chose them for this special role.

10. Visit the church

If you have other young children, take them to the baptismal font in your parish church to show them where their little brother or sister is to be baptised. Help them to excitedly anticipate this sacred event.