



SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

PARISH POLICY & INFORMATION

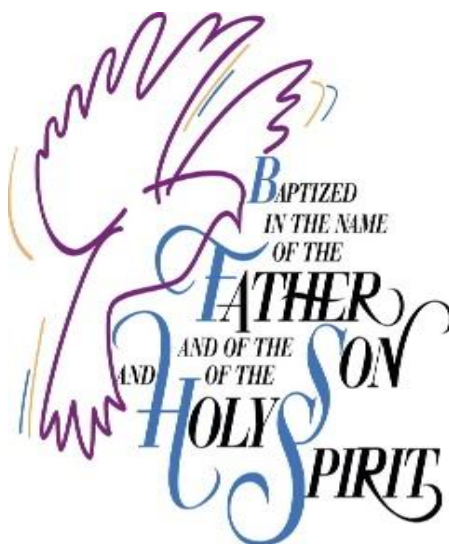
Serving the areas of:
Melton, Melton West, Bonnie Brook, Aintree,
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CONTENTS

Welcome	3
The Celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Parish of Melton	4
Role of the Godparent	5
Procedure for Booking a Baptism Date	6
On the Day of the Baptism	7
Symbols of Baptism	8
The Baptism Rite: What Happens!	10
Ways to Prepare for Your Child's Baptism	11
Questions People Ask	12
House of God	15



WELCOME

Congratulations on choosing the Catholic Parish of Melton for your child's Baptism. We aim to help you plan and prepare for this first Sacrament of Initiation.

We hope to journey and support you in future years as your child prepares and receives the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

Your child's baptism is a time for celebration and joy. Following careful thought and preparation, you bring your child to church to ask for Baptism. It is a public sign of your own faith and trust in God's love. The ceremony/rite of Baptism speaks powerfully of this love and as you follow the service by joining in the prayers and responses, you are drawn deeper into God's love.

This booklet provides information regarding expectations and responsibilities for the baptism of your child and the procedure for the Baptismal rite.

Your child's baptism is the beginning of a new life in which she or he will become a child of God and grow closer to the parish family.

Any queries, please contact the Presbytery on 9743 6515.

We look forward to meeting with you and your family.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Alex Clemente

Parish Priest

THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM IN THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF MELTON

The rites for entry of children and adults into the Catholic Church have been revised. We are reminded that initiation consists of the following Sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.

Baptism is not merely a personal event in the life of the person being baptised, nor is it a private family celebration. It is also an important event in the life of the community into which they are being initiated.

Baptism incorporates us into the risen life of Christ and gives us membership into the faith community. There is mutual responsibility involved:

- the worshipping community expresses its pastoral responsibility to its members and
- the family accept its responsibility by nurturing the faith offered in the sacrament.

To achieve a pastoral practice which is consistent with the church's new emphasis on belonging and initiation, the following guidelines are offered:

1. The local community will support parish families in nurturing the faith of its new members (Canon Law 857/2). Thus, children who live within the parish of Melton, will be baptised into the Catholic Community of Melton.

Families living outside the normal parish boundaries, who have no link with our community, are encouraged to celebrate the baptism within their own parish.

Likewise, former parishioners of Melton parish, who have not maintained some active involvement/ministries in the parish, are encouraged to celebrate the baptism within their own parish - given that their child will most likely be attending their own parish school and receive the next two sacraments of initiation, First Eucharist and Confirmation, there.

If you live outside the Melton and Melton South Parish boundaries, a letter of permission from your Parish Priest, must accompany your application for baptism in the Melton parish.

2. Parents should be prepared for the celebration by instruction in the understanding of the Sacrament (Canon Law 851/12).
3. The Sacrament will always be celebrated in St Catherine of Siena Church and not in a private house or hospital, except in danger of death.

4. Baptism (and Information Sessions) dates and times are advertised on the Parish website.
5. A person cannot be re-baptised. If a child has been baptised in another denomination, or if non-Catholic parents want to have their child become a Catholic to get them into a Catholic school, a personal discussion with the Parish Priest about the faith of the parents is essential.
6. In the Parish of Melton, baptisms *are never* arranged through grandparents or others!

ROLE OF THE GODPARENT

The role of the godparent, together with the parents, is to help the child to live a Catholic life befitting the baptised. One godparent is sufficient but there may be two or more.

To be a godparent it is necessary to be:

- At least 16 years of age (unless the priest makes an exception)
- A Catholic who has been baptised and
- Lives the life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken
- Not be the father or mother of the child (because godparents are to support the parents)
- A person baptised in another Christian church may be permitted to act as a Christian witness in the place of the second godparent
- Non-Christian persons may not be godparents.



PROCEDURE FOR BOOKING A BAPTISM DATE

As part of the Baptism process, we require you to complete:

- an **Application for Baptism Form** which is available from the Melton Parish website at www.melbcatholic.org/melton
- return it to the Melton Parish Office along with a copy of the child's **Birth Certificate** (preferably **two months in advance**) to secure your date.

**** If you live outside the Melton and Melton South parish boundaries, a letter of permission from your Parish Priest, must accompany your application. ****

- A confirmation email is sent to confirm your date. Ring the Parish Office on 9743 6515 if you haven't heard from us within a fortnight.

**** COMPULSORY BAPTISM INFORMATION SESSION ****

Commences at 7pm SHARP at St Catherine of Siena Church

Attendance is compulsory at least **a month before the Baptism** of your child. **At least one parent** is expected to attend this session (**not a proxy for the parent**) although both parents and godparents are encouraged to attend. Please arrive 10-15 minutes earlier for administrative details to be recorded. The session will be approximately one hour in duration.

WELCOME MASS

Families (and godparents if possible) are also asked **to attend a 5 pm Mass on any Sunday** prior to the baptism. The priest will welcome and present the child to the parish community. Please let the Mass Manager know that you are present at this Mass.

COST: We ask for an offering of **\$125** per family to the Church.

Payment may be made by:

- Cash on the day of the baptism or
- **Prior** to the Baptism date - Direct Deposit to:
St Dominic's Melton Church A/c
BSB: 083 347 Account No: 546088702
Reference: (Child's name)
Description: Baptism

BAPTISMAL REGISTER

Your child's baptism will be recorded in the Parish Baptismal Register. In the years ahead, proof of baptism may be obtained from the Parish in the form of an extract of Baptism issued on the basis of this registration. Your child's confirmation, marriage or ordination will also be noted alongside this entry in the register.

ON THE DAY OF THE BAPTISM

On the day of the Baptism please remember:

- The ceremony starts promptly, so **arrive 15 minutes** beforehand to allow us to finalise any details and get you and your family seated. We ask that families respect our sacred space by sitting quietly and waiting for the ceremony to start.
- Your child must wear something **white**. If you have a stole or family shawl or bonnet, this is placed on the child after the anointing with the oil of chrism.
- Ensure that you have the completed, and have with you, the **Baptism certificate** (given to you at the Information Session) which will be signed by the celebrant at the end of the ceremony
- Bring your Baptismal **candle**
- Bring a white **hand towel/face washer** to wipe your child's head after the pouring of water
- If you haven't made a direct deposit into our Parish bank account, please place your **offering** (\$125) in the provided envelope, write your name on the envelope and give it to the team member at the Information desk upon arrival.
- The Baptism ceremony is a sacred and prayerful time; therefore, we expect that no photos or videos will be taken during the ceremony except by **one 'Designated Family Photographer'**: someone the parents choose to undertake this role.

We ask that the photographer NOT obstruct/obscure the ceremony, be mindful of other families whose children are being baptised and does not use the flash setting. Please pass this information on to your relatives and friends. At the conclusion of the baptism, the priest will be happy to pose for photos.



SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM

SIGN OF THE CROSS

A symbol is a sign showing its origins or ownership. The sign of the cross is the mark of Christians – a symbol for Jesus Christ who died on the cross.

The celebrant, parents and godparents trace the sign of the cross on the child's forehead to invoke God's protection, asking for entrance into the body of the Christian church. This action shows that the baby belongs to Christ, who now offers His help and grace when facing the challenges in life.

In signing ourselves we also reiterate our faith in the One loving God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

WATER

Water is the Christian symbol of divine life as well as a sign of purity and cleansing from sin. We live in a world which is obviously sinful, a world which influences us from the moment of conception, tradition names this 'Original Sin'. Baptism cleanses us of this Original Sin with which we are all born.

The holy water signifies that life is given to us by God and is a symbol of His grace. Water is also necessary for life and so is a sign, too, that the life of the risen Christ is ours.

OILS

The Oil of Catechumens/Salvation is olive oil rubbed on the breast of the child. If we are to be truly free to become the person that God has created us to be, we need strength, just as athletes used to rub themselves with oil to strengthen and prepare for the fight ahead. So this anointing of the child is a symbol of strengthening.

Oil of Chrism is a mixture of olive oil and balsam (sweet-smelling ointment) and is rubbed on the crown of the head. It is a sign of who the child is now, a Christian, (literally, an anointed one). He/she is now a follower of Christ. It is also a sign of the sealing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The profession of faith, which you make on behalf of your child at Baptism, will later be confirmed personally by your child in the Sacrament of Confirmation when Oil of Chrism will be used again.

The oils are blessed by the Bishop on Maundy (or Holy) Thursday each year.

A WHITE GARMENT

The white garment used in the ceremony is a relic of new clothes worn by Christians after baptism in the first centuries. It is a sign of Christian dignity and the new life of the Resurrection that becomes a part of your child's life through baptism. It is a sign of innocence and the new life of the Resurrection.

LIGHT / CANDLE

The candle symbolizes Christ - the Light of the World. The baptismal candle is lit from the Paschal Candle, which stands beside the font, and at Easter near the altar, as a sign of the Risen Christ. This lighting of the candle also symbolizes the role of parents and godparents as guides to the faith journey of the baptised.

Light, like water, is essential to survival of life because, without the light of the sun, nothing would exist on earth.

The baptismal candle reminds us that the light of Christ has entered the child's life; and its flame symbolizes the flame of faith which will burn through the life of the child.

The candle may be used as a memento for your child later in life (e.g., light it for prayer at birthdays or major life events).

BAPTISMAL FONT

The traditional baptismal font holds the water used for baptism. It symbolizes the baptismal streams, rivers or pools of water in centuries past, like the River of Jordan where Christ was baptized by John the Baptist.

Water from the font is poured over the baby's head three times while the celebrant says 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' and we respond 'Amen'



The symbols of baptism are closely interwoven into the Christian faith and rituals. Some of these symbols can also be found in many other sacraments of the Church rather than just during a baptism ceremony.

THE BAPTISM RITE: WHAT HAPPENS!

WELCOMING

‘When two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them’.

Matthew 18:20

The ceremony begins with a warm welcome to you and your family from the priest on behalf of the Christian community, the Church. He will ask what name you have given your child and whether you accept the responsibility of bringing up your child in the practice of the faith. Then with you, the parents and godparents, he greets your child with the sign of the cross on the forehead as a sign that this is a child of Christ.

To prepare for the baptism itself the priest prays that your child may be delivered from every evil and this prayer is reinforced by the anointing with Oil of Catechumens as a sign of Christ’s strengthening power and signifies welcome by the community as a whole. This anointing also signifies parental acceptance of responsibility to raise the child in the faith. The water is blessed. Then the priest asks you to renew the vows, which were made for you at your own baptism, at the same time reminding you of your duty to bring up your child as a good Christian.

WASHING

‘Baptise in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit’.

Matthew 28:19

Water is the symbol of new life, for without water there will be no life. Water also makes us clean. Baptism signifies the new life and the cleansing from sin won for us when Jesus rose from the dead.

The priest pours the baptismal water over your child’s forehead three times, saying: ‘Now I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’.

WORSHIPPING

‘Unless a person is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’. John 3:5

Your child is now a Christian. Following an ancient custom your child is anointed with Oil of Chrism, ‘Chrism’ means, ‘anointed one’ – for Jesus was given a special work to do. He suffered, died, and rose again to unite us to his heavenly Father.

Your child has the special work of living as a member of Christ’s body – the Church. In this, he/she will be helped by celebrating the other Sacraments and will take part in the Eucharist. The offering of thanks and praise to the Father, which begins at Mass, is the beginning of an eternal life of joy and total happiness.

WITNESSING

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:14

As a sign of this power to witness to Christ, the child comes dressed in white clothing or a white garment is brought by you and placed on your child to show that he or she is a new creation clothed in Christ.

Finally, a parent or godparent takes the baptismal candle to light from the Paschal Candle. This symbolizes the light of Christ, which will shine on and through your child for life.

The ceremony is concluded with the prayer Christ taught us, the ‘Our Father’, followed by special prayers for each parent and all who have joined in this joyful Sacrament.

WAYS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR CHILD’S BAPTISM

To experience the power of baptism we need to be immersed in the love of the baptised. The baptism of a child is an opportunity for the whole family to reflect upon the sacred meaning of this sacrament. To grow in faith as a family here are some practical ways:

1. **Gaze upon your child often.** Reflect on the miracle of creation. A ‘sense of the sacred’ opens us 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.
3. **Pray with oil.** When you rub moisturiser or ointment on your baby during the course of a day, take a moment to reflect on the symbol of oil to be used during the baptismal ceremony.
4. **Pray with light.** Light a candle each night 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.** Write a baptismal ‘love letter’ to your child which will be opened at his/her Confirmation.
6. **Tell stories of belonging.** Baptism is an immersion in a community of faith. Reflect on this by displaying photos of family members grandparents, uncles, aunties. As well as blood family, include photos of your wider faith community, 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 garment a family heirloom? Tell the story behind it as a way of passing on the faith. If you do not have a family tradition, why not start one. Make or buy a garment which will be worn one day at the baptism of this child's grandchild.
8. **Make the sign of the cross.** The Cross is a sign of our faith. This is the faith in which your baby is immersed at baptism. Ensure 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.** Invite the godparents over for a meal and talk about your hopes and dreams for your 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 the church to show them where their little brother or sister is to be baptised. Help them to anticipate this sacred event.

Establish a 'sacred site' in your home: a focal point for prayer and displaying symbols of our Catholic faith. Maybe a small table or shelf with a bible, candle and crucifix. For your baby's baptism, place baptismal symbols – bowl of water, candle, some oil. Involve young children in gathering and placing the symbols.

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

My husband's family is not Catholic but he would very much like his sister to be godmother to our baby son. Is this allowed?

Godparents go back to the days when most adults converts to the Christian faith had no Christian parents. Godparents spoke up for the baptised person and, if necessary, helped him or her to grow in the faith. Today, in most infant baptisms this task belongs primarily to the parents.

The Church insists that at least one godparent is a Catholic whose primary role remains that of supporting the parents in bringing up the child in the Christian faith. But most parents choose two. When this happens, provided one godparent is a Catholic, it is certainly allowable for a non-Catholic to act as a witness to the baptism. It remains important, however, that your sister-in-law is baptised another Christian faith and of sufficient age and maturity to appreciate her role.

My wife goes to a different Christian Church and would like her minister to take part in the baptism. Is this possible?

Yes. Your wife's minister may share in the prayers and readings at your baby's baptism. Discuss it with your priest; he will be happy to explain what is customary.

How much does a baptism cost in the Catholic Church?

We ask for an offering of \$125 per family to be made to the Church.

How soon should I have my baby baptised?

The Church teaches that all babies born into Catholic families should be baptised as soon as possible after birth. This is because of Christ's teaching on the fundamental importance of baptism. If there is any danger of death the baby must be baptised immediately, and anyone can baptise. You pour water over the head of the baby, at the same time saying the words: 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.

Usually, a baby should be baptised four to six weeks after the birth. The time will depend partly on the mother's health for it is important that she is present, and partly on the time needed for the preparation of the parents.

If you have experienced some difficulties with the practice and your faith you may need to allow a little longer in order to rebuild a life of faith within your family.

My mother says I have to give my baby girl the name of a saint, but I don't agree. Who is right?

In the first few centuries of the Church, the custom grew up of changing one's name at baptism to express some Christian idea such as Irene (peace). In succeeding centuries, the Church advised parents to call their children after a saint. These customs were confirmed in the 17th Century when priests were instructed to discourage parents giving their children 'strange, laughable, obscene or idolatrous names'. You are not obliged, then to call your daughter after a saint (although there are plenty to choose from) but the Church still expects you to choose a name which reflects your own Christian faith.

My friend's baby was stillborn. What will happen to the baby?

Your friend's baby is entrusted to the mysterious but infinitely kind and powerful love of God. If anyone has any doubts about such love then look at the crucifix. The cross proves that God's love is greater than any human mind can understand or follow.

Jesus told us that 'unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). This has led people to question whether the unbaptised are saved? Various ideas have been put forward to answer the question. Adults who have never heard of Christ, it is said, can have 'baptism of desire' provided they live according to their conscience. Any unbaptised infants, some suggested, pass into a state of 'Limbo' – where the baby is excluded from both heaven and hell. But this latter suggestion remains just that and has never been universally (dogmatically) taught by the Church, whose primary insistence, like that of Jesus himself is to experience God's love, mercy and justice and in so doing call every person to repentance, to belief and to baptism.

My baby was baptised at birth because of illness. Can he be re-baptised in Church.

Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime event. It means that we become a member of God's family, we become a Christian. We cannot become what we already are. The baptism can't be repeated but it is desirable that you have a celebration in church and share in the prayers and blessings, which are part of the baptismal ceremony. You may also wish to appoint godparents at the same time. Such a service is a lovely 'thanksgiving' for the safety and wellbeing of your baby.

I have been lapsed for a number of years and my seven-year-old daughter has never been baptised. Could I have her baptised at the same time as our baby?

Yes, but you will need to allow time for her preparation. She will need to be given some instruction about baptism to understand what is happening. You may well feel that you would also find some form of preparation helpful to clarify any points about the faith, which have given you difficulties. It may be helpful, for example to speak to the priest in confession where you will experience the compassion of Jesus Christ himself. People sometimes wonder about how to approach a priest. After Sunday Mass is not always the best time as there are usually crowds of people around. Try to book a time convenient for both of you to meet in an atmosphere of quiet and peace.

I'm an unmarried mother; I want my baby baptised but am anxious about the kind of reception I'll get.

You will be given a friendly welcome by the priest. So don't worry at all. The priest will simply want to be assured of your child's Catholic upbringing.

Why does the Church insist on the baptism of babies? Wouldn't it be better to wait until the child can make up its own mind?

The Church has always baptised children soon after they are born for them to receive graces which come from God's love. Some of the oldest baptisteries contained a second, much smaller, font beside the main one. This was used by children who were too small to stand comfortably in the main font, which in those earliest days of the Church was a deep pool let into the floor.

We have already seen how baptism is God's way of showing his love for a child of his. Baptism is the sign by which he loves us and 're-creates' us in his own image. To suggest that a child should be left alone until old enough to make his or her own decision is really to miss the whole point of what baptism is about.

Baptising a baby, before the baby can make the slightest effort to do anything for his/her own salvation says very dramatically that all salvation is from God. Clearly in the adult there must already be an element of Faith – some sign of accepting God's love. But the infant is carried to the font by the faith of the family, the same family who will take charge and nurture the child in its growth and life of faith.

Baptism at an early age also brings that child, through its family, in the wider 'priesthood of the faithful', the broader believing community of the parish and the Universal Church. That community is charged to welcome and journey with the family and the child to help nurture the faith of each member.

HOUSE OF GOD

*Welcome, you have now entered Sacred Ground.
This Church is not a theatre or studio, but the “HOUSE OF GOD”
where WE, the Body of Christ in his name, gather.*

*We believe that God is present in the Eucharist,
(THE BLESSED BREAD) which is kept in this Church.
We ask you to practice the following protocol:*

*Please maintain silence as people use this opportunity for personal prayer,
devotions and religious ceremonies.*

Limited photos taken respectfully by ONE designated family photographer.

No caps in Church.

Please turn off your mobile phones and pagers.

Please refrain from eating, drinking, or chewing gum.

Please honour the ‘House of God’.

*Thank you for your respect and meditative silence and hoping that these
moments will be memorable for you.*