

# St Ethelbert's Parish, Bolton



## St Ethelbert's Parish Church

Hawthorne Street, Deane,  
Bolton BL3 5RG  
01204 62653

## BAPTISM PREPARATION PACK

*Dear Parents!*

Congratulations! Thank you for getting in touch with us about Baptism for your child. We will support you in any way we can!

This Baptism Preparation Pack has been prepared to provide you with the information needed to begin the formal or immediate preparation for the celebration of Baptism.

Whether this is your first or fifth child, we rejoice with you and ask that you take the time to read all of the material before you select a date or make other arrangements to celebrate your child's Baptism.

In this Preparation Pack you will find:

- **Belonging to a Parish Community**
- **Some Questions Related to Baptism**
- **The Role of Godparents**
- **Godparents for Life** [*Important! please pass on to each Godparent*]
- **Symbols in the Baptism Ceremony**
- **A Parent's Prayer**
- **Baptism Information** [*please fill in and hand to priest at the meeting with him*]

After you have read carefully the materials in the Pack, please get in touch with the Parish Priest and meet up with him to sort out the date and any other details for the Baptism. Please don't forget to bring the completed Baptism Information with you to the Meeting.

Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation; Confirmation and Eucharist are the other two. Baptism leads the newly baptised person to the table of the Lord. Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist in Church is a valuable sign that a person is disposed to celebrating the sacrament of Baptism and being open to the wonder and grace of God.

If you have been away from the weekly Sunday Eucharist, this is a wonderful time to return to Church on a Sunday. It is Jesus who desires to nourish and feed us each week at the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist.

We pray that God will bless you and your family as you continue to grow in faith.

*Fr Duncan*

Father Duncan McVicar SI  
*Parish Priest*

## Belonging to a Parish Family

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This Baptism Preparation Pack has been provided to help parents understand the process of having their child baptised in the Catholic Church. We have included guidelines, which will be helpful with the preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism here at St Ethelbert's Parish. Please read these guidelines carefully and notify the Parish Priest at 01204 62653 with any questions or concerns, and we will be glad to assist you as best we can.

Belonging is important. From the moment of birth, children seek to belong. To know the faces, voices and touch of those we call mother and father is essential in the development of a child. The need to belong is not limited to our family.

Pope Francis reminds parents who bring their children to be baptised of their duty to pass on the faith to their children:

*"Today, carry this thought home with you. We must be transmitters of the faith. Think of this, think always of how to hand on the faith to your children. These children are links in a chain. You have a baby son or daughter to be baptized, but in several years, it will be they that have a baby to baptize, or a grandchild and so, the chain of faith! Parents, above all, have the task of raising children in the faith in which they were baptised. The faith then becomes the greatest gift a child is given. It is the most beautiful inheritance that you can give them: the faith!"*  
[Pope Francis, 2014]

The ceremony of Baptism assumes "a well-founded hope" that you will bring your child up in the practice of the faith. This means:

- **you teach your child to pray**
- **you teach your child a Christian lifestyle**
- **you come to Mass on Sundays**
- **you teach your child the Catholic faith**

Supporting the life and the work of the Church is the responsibility of all Parishioners. We support the work of our parish by sharing our time, talents and monetary resources. A weekly offering assists with the Church's ministry needs, provides a suitable location for liturgical celebrations and assists with the living accommodations of our priests. Using Offertory Envelopes [*available in Church*] assists everyone and it allows the Church to provide for others. The amazing thing is that if you pay tax, all you have to do is write your name and address on the envelope and the Parish will receive 22% extra from your donation. It is really a big help!

Although a Parish is busy with many activities, the primary works of the Church are to praise and worship God, to proclaim the Gospel and initiate new members. All these are the work of the entire parish community.

You and your family will benefit by belonging: You meet new people and good neighbours, the children make good friends who have a good influence, we have two excellent Parish Primary Schools and local Catholic High Schools - one of which is in the top 3% in the whole county for academic achievement. We support and help each other. It feels good to belong!

## **Some Questions Related to Baptism**

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*We hope these answers help you in your preparation for Baptism:*

At least one of the parents of the child should be a baptised Roman Catholic. You may be asked to produce a Baptism Certificate.

The child should be wearing something white on the day, i.e. a Christening Robe or similar. If you are also using a white shawl for the ceremony, this is normally presented during the ceremony by the Godmother.

You will need a Baptismal Candle. The Parish Priest will give you details of where you can have a beautiful candle especially made or you can arrange for your own candle. The Godfather during the ceremony would normally present the candle to the child.

You will need two Readers for the ceremony from family or friends, i.e. one for the Gospel Reading and one for the Bidding Prayers. The Readers should acquaint themselves with the text before the ceremony.

Baptisms usually take place on Saturdays at 12.30am in Church. There is always a Parish Mass beforehand, starting at 12 noon. Guests for the Baptism need to be aware that they should maintain a silent atmosphere at the back of Church, so as not to distract other Parishioners at Mass. Thank you!

The ceremony takes around thirty minutes.

There is no problem if you would like to take some photographs or video the ceremony.

If you do not live within the Parish boundaries of St Ethelbert's Parish, Deane, Bolton, you will need a "Baptism Permission" from your own Parish - this is a written document. Please speak to your Parish Priest about this and bring the Permission with you when you meet the Parish Priest to sort out the date and details of the Baptism.

Children are usually baptised within seven weeks of their birth. If children are aged two or over, the parents will be asked to take part in Welcome Meetings in the Church before arrangements for Baptism can begin. These Meetings are arranged usually twice a year. There are five evening Meetings altogether.

Please remember that organising a Baptism in Church only to get your child into one of our Parish Catholic Schools - St Ethelbert's or St Bernard's - is not a suitable reason.

There is no fee required for Baptism as it is a Sacrament. However, the Parish is very grateful for any donation you can make on the day. Please use one of our "donation envelopes" and hand it to the priest after the ceremony. Thank you for your support and generosity!

## The Role of Godparents

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As you begin to prepare for your child's Baptism, you are invited to reflect on the role and selection of a Godmother and Godfather.

Prior to inviting a relative or close friend to assume the role of Godparent it is important to understand what our Church teaches.

A Godparent is to be at least sixteen years of age and have celebrated the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist).

The parents of the child cannot be Godparents.

The Godparent is to be able and willing to enthusiastically profess his or her faith during the rite of Baptism and ready to model a Catholic Christian lifestyle. Naturally weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist is a hallmark of a Catholic Christian life. (Canon 874)

The child may have one or two Godparents. The child does not usually have more than two Godparents. If two Godparents are chosen, one is to be a man and the other a woman. (Canon 873)

A Christian from another denomination may act as a Christian witness, however, it is necessary to have one Roman Catholic Godparent. All Godparents must be baptised Christians.

The role of the Godparent should not be confused with that of a legal guardian. The relationship is spiritually based not legally based. Parents are invited to make their choice of Godparents with the following in mind.

Inviting someone to be a Godparent implies the following:

- **A request by the parents for the assistance of the Christian community in general and the individual Godparents in particular in raising their child in the Catholic faith.**
- **An affirmation of the faith of the individuals invited to be Godparents and a challenge to them to witness their faith.**
- **Godparents "must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized - child or adult - on the road of Christian life." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1255)**
- **The Godparent is to be a model, guide and witness for your child as he or she grows in faith. It is good when a Godparent lives close to the family and is able to visit throughout the year.**

## Godparents for Life

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*[Please give this Sheet to each Godparent. Thank you!]*

Congratulations!

The relationship between a Godchild and Godparent is unique and lifelong. You are embarking on a special journey, one that will last years.

On the day of Baptism the Church asks the Godparent if he or she is ready to assist the parents in raising the child in the practice of the faith. The role of the Godparent is not limited to the day of Baptism. The Church invites you to be an active presence in the life of your Godchild.

Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist is foundational to our lives as Catholics. Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist is the centre of our lives. As a Godparent you are asked to model what it means to live as a Catholic Christian.

During the opening rites of the Liturgy of Baptism, the Godparents are addressed in the following manner: "Are you ready to help the parents of these children in their duty as Christian parents." In other words, your role is to assist the parents in guiding their child to know God and to belong to his Church in the fullest way possible. As a Christian and now as a Godparent, allow the Liturgy of Baptism to speak directly to you, not just about your new role but also as fellow traveler along the road of faith.

The following suggestions may assist you in your role as Godparent.

- **Pray for your Godchild each day.**
- **Regular visits with your Godchild are encouraged.**
- **Send a card or make a visit each year on the anniversary of your Godchild's Baptism.**
- **Whenever possible the Godparent and the Godchild should participate in the Sunday liturgy and other liturgical celebrations together.**
- **The Godparent is expected to be present at the other sacraments the Godchild will receive as they grow older: i.e. Confirmation and First Holy Communion. The Godparents at Baptism is often asked to be the Sponsor of the child at Confirmation. Usually, in this Diocese, when they are six or seven years old.**
- **As you journey with your Godchild may both of you discover more and more about the mystery of God's abiding love.**

Congratulations once more, and may God bless you and your new Godchild!

## **Symbols in the Baptism Ceremony**

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+ **The Sign of the Cross.** This happens right at the beginning of the Celebration. It symbolizes with the imprint of Christ that the child to be baptized is going to belong to him. It reminds us that the Cross is not only a sign of pain, but a great sign of salvation and victory over sin and death. By signing the Cross, we sign hope on this child. The sign of the Cross is a sign of welcome to the Body of Christ, the Church.

+ **Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens.** This is a preparation for the profession of faith. It asks God to strengthen the child and keep all harm away from him. Catechumen is the name normally given to adults who prepare for Baptism and the faith. The word "Catechumen" means "candidate".

+ **Baptism.** It is performed usually by pouring the water three times over the child's head. It must be accompanied by the words: "N. I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In the waters of Baptism Original Sin is taken away. In the case of an Adult Baptism all previous sins in their past life are taken away by Christ's healing love and power.

+ **Anointing with Holy Chrism.** The child is then anointed with Chrism which has been consecrated in the Chrism Mass of the Bishop on Holy Thursday in the Cathedral. The baby who has just become a Christian is anointed like Christ himself as priest, prophet and king. The word "Chrism" comes from the name "Christ".

+ **The White Garment** symbolizes that the child has "put on Christ" and has risen with him. It reminds us of purity, free from sin and bearer of a great dignity. The child is a "new creation" clothed in Christ. It is a reminder of the first Christians who were clothed with a white robe after being baptised.

+ **The Lighted Candle.** This candle is lit from the Easter Candle. It is a sign that Jesus has enlightened the child. He is the light of the world and the child should always live as a child of the light. We entrust the Light to the parents and Godparents so that they may care for this light always. Christ shall be the guiding light for the child.

+ The last symbol is the **Ephphatha Rite.** The priest says the Aramaic word which means "be open" and touches the mouth and ears of the child. He or she is to hear the Word of God and have the courage and grace to speak it later when they are older. Aramaic is the mother-tongue of Jesus.

## **A Parent's Prayer**

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God, our Creator and loving Father,  
thank you for the gift of life.  
Cherish me as your child,  
and fill my life with the creative power of your love.

Jesus, our Saviour and Brother,  
thank you for showing me the way of love.  
Be with me as I try to be like you -  
patient, supportive and gentle with my child.  
Let me share again the delight and wonder of childhood,  
of discovering your face in the little things:  
in the vivid petals of a flower,  
in the measured movement of the caterpillar,  
in the comfort of loving arms around me when I fall.

Spirit of God, our constant friend and guide,  
thank you for leading me in the way of faith.  
Help me to show my child the loving face of God  
during our life together.  
Let me bring healing  
in times of pain and doubt.  
Help me care for my child  
materially and spiritually,  
and let us always be friends and believers together.

God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you have trusted me with my child's life.  
Help us grow together in all that is good and right.  
Be with us in times of joy and in moments of pain.  
Let us know that you are there for us,  
even when we seem to lose sight of you.  
Please be light and warmth in our home and in our hearts.  
Amen.

*Author Unknown*

## Baptism Information

Please write **CLEARLY** with **BLOCK CAPITALS**  
and take with you to the Meeting with the Parish Priest. Thank you!

Date of Baptism:
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Time:

Child's Information	
First and Middle Names:	
Surname:	
Date of Birth:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female

Parent's Information	
Father's Names and Surname:	
Mother's Names and Surname:	[Maiden Name: ]
Father's Religion:	Mother's Religion:

Address and Contact Details	
Street Address:	
Town and Postcode:	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Home Phone:	Mobile Phone:
Email Address:	

Godparent's Information	
Godfather's Full name:	Religion:
Godmother's Full name:	Religion:

We/I confirm that all the information provided is true. We/I are requesting the Sacrament of Baptism for our child through St Ethelbert's Parish, Deane, Bolton. It is our intention to raise our child as a Roman Catholic.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Father's Signature and Date

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Mother's Signature and Date