

## Some practical matters

We ask you to bring your own Baptismal Candle, perhaps with your child's name on it. This can be made yourself, or purchased locally.

It is not essential for your child to be dressed in white, but a white garment is one of the traditional symbols in baptism—a symbol of new life and of your child's dignity as a Christian.

Please select one or two godparents or sponsors. These are people who are mature Christians—having been confirmed and made their first Holy Communion. At least one godparent must be a Catholic; one godparent who is a baptized Christian of another tradition may be a Christian witness. Godparents promise to support you in your responsibilities as Christian parents.

There is no charge for the celebration of the sacraments. However, it is customary for families who are able to do so to make a monetary offering for the support of the clergy of the Archdiocese



Baptism is normally celebrated in the parish where families live. If you live in Watsons Bay or choose to participate in the life of our parish, please contact the parish priest, Fr Gerald Gleeson, to arrange a meeting with him and to discuss a suitable date for baptism.

## CONTACT US

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# Celebrating the Baptism of your child at Our Lady Star of the Sea

## WATSONS BAY

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Baptism is the first of the Church's three sacraments of initiation.

This brochure explains what is involved in celebrating the baptism of your child, and how you can prepare for it.

# What is Baptism?



Baptism is the **first** sacrament of **initiation** as a Christian. To be a Christian is to think, to choose and to act as a follower of Jesus Christ. So ‘becoming a Christian’ is the vocation of a lifetime! We need to be initiated into this **new way of life**, a way of life that doesn’t come naturally to us!

Parents present their children for baptism because they want their children to grow up sharing their Catholic faith. Baptism joins your child to Christ and to his Body the Church and begins the spiritual life of your child.

The Christian life involves not merely external actions, but the transformation of our whole personality, a transformation that starts from deep within our spirit. Baptism plants the seed of this new spiritual life within us, a seed that must be nurtured if it is to develop fully.

Christian Initiation is completed by Confirmation and Holy Communion. **Confirmation** is an anointing with sacred oil, normally by the bishop, which seals and strengthens the baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit. When a person first receives the Eucharist in **Holy Communion** he or she takes their place at God’s table and becomes a full member of Christ’s Body.

In presenting a child for baptism, parents are also promising to prepare them for their later Confirmation and first Holy Communion.

## What happens in the baptism liturgy?

Like all sacraments, baptism involves ritual **words**, **symbols** and **actions**. The ritual makes God’s grace visible to us and enables us to express our desire to receive God’s grace.

First, we **listen** to God’s word in the Gospel announcing salvation through Jesus Christ. Then we respond to God’s word in prayer: for example, we **anoint** the child, **praying** that God will protect and strengthen them in their struggle against evil.

The heart of the liturgy consists in the **profession of faith** and the **pouring of water**, symbolizing cleansing and life. Little children do not need cleansing for any personal sin of their own, but they are members of the human family, and so affected by the disorder and evil that is now part of our human condition.

Jesus’ death overcame the evil in our world, and his resurrection is the beginning of eternal life for all who put their faith in him. Baptism joins your child to Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection. In concluding the liturgy we **present** the parents with a candle symbolizing the Light of the risen Christ.



*“Parents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.... Your child has been enlightened by Christ...”*



## How should we prepare for Baptism?

If you wish to present your child for baptism, your most important preparation is to reaffirm your own Christian faith and your membership of the Church. You will be promising to bring your child up in the practice of the faith—this will be difficult if you do not practice the faith yourself. For Catholics, the most basic expression of our faith is participation in Sunday mass. (If we rarely join the community at Mass, then it is hard to see what our ‘being a Catholic’ means!).

In our parish, we ask parents to present their child at a Sunday mass in the weeks before the baptismal liturgy. This presentation is actually the first part of the baptismal liturgy, and gives the church the chance say to your child:

*“The Christian Community welcomes you with great joy.... In its name we claim you for Christ our savior....”*