



ARRANGING A BAPTISM AT ST PAUL'S KNIGHTSBRIDGE

What is Baptism?

The service of baptism is the outward sign of a new relationship with God. In church-speak it is a 'sacrament' – which is a way of saying that it is an outward and external sign of an inward and spiritual event and transformation. In baptism we both signal entry into the committed and active life of the Church and experience the grace and love of God. Baptism is something *we* do: it is something done on our behalf by *priests*; and it is – above all – something done by *God*. Those who bring people to be baptised come not as spectators but as participants in an action that is done on behalf of the whole Church.

In the very earliest centuries of the life of the Church, whole families – adults and infants – were baptised in elaborate ceremonies after proper and fairly arduous preparation. Often this happened at Easter, with Lent seen as a time of preparation for entry into the life of the Church. It was taken very seriously – and the baptism in water was both preceded by elaborate rites of enrolment and election, and immediately followed by an anointing, sometimes a re-dressing in white robes, the giving of a lighted candle and the laying on of hands to symbolise the reception of the Holy Spirit. If you are interested in finding out more about these 'Awe Inspiring Rites' of initiation, we'll be glad to talk to you about them.

Nowadays, baptism (in water) is often administered to infants – while the latter parts of initiation (the anointing and laying on of hands) has become an adult rite of confirmation. The former is administered usually by priests – the latter always and only by bishops. If an adult wishes to be baptised, they are often baptised and confirmed at the same time (or within a few days, weeks or months).

Can I be baptised?

If you are an adult, please make an appointment to see one of the clergy to talk about the possibilities; baptism for adults is a sign of new commitment and belonging, and we will want to plan things carefully and to ensure you have the chance to explore – as an adult – the faith into which you are being baptised. We will also want to talk about arranging your confirmation.

Can I arrange to have my baby baptised?

Yes. However, baptism isn't just a 'pretty event' and an excuse for a party (though it can be that too!). We take seriously the fact that, in baptism, your child is becoming part of the Church, the Body of Christ – and we will want you to think carefully about both the service and your choice of godparents who – on the day of the baptism – speak for your child and affirm the Christian commitments being made. For this reason, all godparents *must* have been baptised; you can *always* ask other non-Christians to be involved (and we will actively seek to include them), but they can't be godparents. Baptisms usually take place on a Sunday morning at the 11 o'clock High Mass – but can also, for pastoral reasons, take place on other days and at other times.

What does it cost?

Nothing! There is no charge for baptism. We do, though, as a sign of your commitment to the Church, ask you to consider making a one-off donation to sustain its life and mission, or even better a regular monthly pledge to signal your on-going involvement.

What is the next step?

Please ring the parish office to make an appointment to speak to one of the clergy: 020 7201 9999.