

# The Sacrament of Baptism and your Child 2024



The Church of  
St. Edmund of Canterbury,  
Beckenham

20 Village Way, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 3NP

[www.saintedmunds.net](http://www.saintedmunds.net)

[beckenham@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:beckenham@rcaos.org.uk)

## BAPTISM PREPARATION

Before your first child is baptised the Diocese requires that you attend a baptism preparation session.

You are welcome to attend before you have your baby.

**The next session is on Sunday 28 April in the Church Hall. It will begin at 10.45 am, after the end of the Family Mass..**

Before your child is baptised you will need to complete a Baptism Registration Form which is on the last page of this pack. There are also forms for the godparents to complete.

Completed forms should be sent to the Parish Office in advance of the baptism.

If you are reading a paper copy more pages can be downloaded from

**[www.saintedmunds.net](http://www.saintedmunds.net)**

Baptisms are conducted on Saturday and Sunday at 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm.

Arrangements are made through the Parish Office.

If you do not live in the Parish but have a strong and current connection with St. Edmund's, it may be possible for your baby to be baptised here as long as your own Parish Priest gives permission. If you wish to enquire further please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Office.

**We ask you also to input your family details on ChurchSuite which is the parish app and the place we hold our records.**

**Please go to our web page and follow the link.**

# The Sacrament of Baptism



## Introduction

Thank you for deciding to have your child baptised. This is a vital step, offering your child a unique gift, eternal life. Through baptism your child becomes a member of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church, and a child of God. The whole treasures of the Church are laid open. From this moment a whole way of life opens up, immersed in the Holy Spirit, one blessed richly by God the Father.

Baptism is a sacrament, the beginning of your child's life in the Church, as a member of God's family free from sin and intimately united with Jesus Christ. It is a life for which you, as parents, are primarily responsible.

I am sure you have happy memories of your First Holy Communion Day, complemented perhaps by memories of going to Confession or Confirmation, or your Marriage, or friends made in the Parish or at your Catholic school. Each of us has our own personal story, but what we have in common is our desire to pass on that precious relationship with God which has been first given to us. However, none of this can be taken for granted. Our society is increasingly hostile to the values of the Gospel and this affects our children. If your children are to be brought up in the Faith then all of us, parents, priests, catechists and teachers, need together to make a concerted effort to pass on what is so precious to us.

The people primarily responsible for passing on the Faith are parents. The Catholic community has a duty to support you, welcome you and encourage you. To this end we offer a special programme beginning with preparation for baptism. This is followed by preparation for First Confession and First Holy Communion and completed with preparation for Confirmation.

## Baptism Preparation Course

We would like to meet both parents so we can explain how we approach baptism in this Parish, to answer your questions and to explain how the Church understands what baptism is so that you can freely choose this sacrament for your child, knowing exactly what you are letting yourself in for! To this end the Diocese of Southwark requests that parents attend a Baptism Preparation Session before a first child is baptised.

This pack contains a series of sheets that explain how to set about arranging your child's baptism. There are various things to think about and some important decisions to be made. Please read the pack carefully before filling in the application form.

# Naming Your Child

At the beginning of the Baptismal Ceremony you are asked what name you have given your child. This is a solemn part of the ceremony where you proclaim to the Church the name that you have given your child. This name is a lifelong gift from you and because you have chosen to have your child baptised in the Christian Church it is assumed that you will give your child a Christian name.

The Church requires that **AT LEAST ONE** of your child's name be a Christian name, and that none of the other names you choose goes against our Christian faith, morals or principals in any way. A Christian name is normally the name of a Saint. Every culture and nation has its own lists of Saints. If you are in any doubt you should ask now.

Sometimes Saints' names come in different versions: e.g., *Callum* and *Colum* are versions of Columba who was a Celtic Saint and *Jean* is the French form of John. Either version is acceptable.

Sometimes a Christian name is not a Saint's name but refers to a Saint - *Assunta*, *Maris-Stella*, *Monserrat* and *Carmel* all refer to Saint Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Your baby's birthday might be a Saint's day. You might like to make one of your child's names that of the Saint. It is a good way of acknowledging the date.

If possible find out the meaning of the names you give your child: *Chukwu*, a Nigerian Christian name means *God's Gift*, just as *Christopher*, a Greek name means *Christ Bearer*. All this information is widely available online. It may take a little work and looking around, but remember, the names you give your child are gifts for life. It is worth making a special effort now to make your choice Meaningful and prayerful.



*'Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you.  
I have called you by your name, you are mine.'*

# Information

It can be hard work organising anything if you have a young baby or child in your family, and gathering family and friends together for a baptism and a party afterwards takes time and energy.

We can't help with the party, but here is some information which should help.

*Please read everything before completing the forms.*

## Dates and Times

Baptisms take place on Sundays, either during Mass or in the afternoon. Occasionally they will be on a Saturday if there is a sound reason for this.

No baptisms take place during the last two weeks of Lent, but Easter Day is an especially appropriate time for celebrating the sacrament of Baptism.

## The Ceremony

Parents and godparents should arrive at least ten minutes early. ONE OF THE GROUP SHOULD GO INTO THE SACRISTY AND LET THE CELEBRANT KNOW THAT THEY HAVE ARRIVED. They can then find seats near the font for their party and make themselves comfortable. Parents and Godparents and Witnesses should sit together - they will need to move to the font - and grandparents might like to sit behind them, as some celebrants like them to assist in anointing the child.

During the service the celebrant will direct all the participants. He will show them what to do, where to stand, what to hold.

If there are older siblings let them join you at the font so that they too are part of the service.

If you wish someone to read an appropriate bible passage please come prepared. If you wish some music (not secular) to be played please download it onto a phone with a head-phone jack so it can be played over our system

Traditionally, christening garments are white, but you can dress your child in whatever you wish. The only requirement is that you **bring a white garment** to put on the child at the appropriate time as a symbol of the gift of holiness and freedom from sin which Baptism imparts. This is usually a white shawl that can be easily draped over the shoulders, but a cardigan or a piece of white fabric is fine too. It is a good idea to let one of the Godparents be responsible for holding on to this.

Another Godparent can be responsible for lighting the Baptismal Candle. This Candle is lit from the Paschal Candle and is a sign of the new Life which Jesus has shared with your child at his/her Baptism. Remember to take the candle home with you and keep it safe. It can be re-lit on the anniversary of your child's baptism, and increasingly they are used to light candles when the child gets married.

Babies cry at christenings! if yours does don't worry, try to keep calm. If you want to get up and move around with your child, do. If you have a baby that needs feeding, go ahead and feed. Stick to your routine!

## Other Points

Do let visitors to our Church know that there is a lavatory at the front behind the blue velvet curtain. It is suitable for disabled people.

All services taking place in St Edmund's are live streamed. This means that family and friends who are not in the church can share in a service as it takes place. However the font is out of camera range and so nothing of the baptism would normally be seen. However if you have family who cannot attend the baptism we can set up a font at the front of the sacristy so it can be seen on camera. We can arrange for the service to be recorded for private viewing. **PLEASE ADVISE THE OFFICE IF YOU WISH THIS TO BE ARRANGED.**

A Baptism Certificate is given to you at the end of the service. Please keep it safe: you will need it if wish your child to attend a Catholic school.

And finally..... It is a long-standing tradition in the Catholic Church to give a 'Thanks Offering' (known as a Stole Fee) to the priest or deacon who conducts your service. (For the priest or deacon, this forms an important part of his income so please give it serious consideration.

No charge is made for the Preparation Course or the Certificate, and the Baptismal Candle is a gift from the Parish.



# Choosing the Godparents

Godparents, sometimes called 'sponsors', are specially chosen to give support and encouragement to you as parents as you bring up your child in the Christian Faith.

Your choice of Godparents is important. It is not simply a social gesture or compliment to a member of the family, or an old friend. You are choosing for the good of **your child** and the people you choose should be discussed and thought about by both of you as parents before you approach them.

The Catholic Church requires only one Godparent, but you may have more. Godparents should be Roman Catholic, ideally confirmed and practising. *If there are any difficulties please see Deacon Seán or one of the priests as soon as possible.*

Godparents are people who can set a good example of what it means to be a Catholic. . You must be sure that they will care for the child spiritually as it grows up and be able to offer advice and encouragement. They should play a supportive role in its faith development and be present at special occasions such as First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

During the Baptism Service they make certain public promises which are explicitly Catholic and it is important that they understand this. It is an important commitment for Godparents to make, and it is important for your child's faith and future maturity to have Godparents who are willing to undertake this commitment.

If you have found someone who is **not** a Catholic but a baptised and practising friend/ member of the family from a different Christian denomination whom you would like to be a Godparent, though they cannot actually fulfil the role of Godparent we are happy to welcome them in the role of Witness. This is a role similar to that of Godparent but without the implication of having to set an example of being a good Catholic. For, while all Christians have the same faith in Jesus Christ, we do have important faith differences which affect the life and shape of our different faith communities. So, for example, some Christians do not believe in the real Presence of the Eucharist which alters the support and part they can play in preparation for First Holy Communion. *It is out of respect for these differences* that we acknowledge the different role they will play in the faith development of your child and therefore hope that this enables them to take on this important role with integrity.



*This pack contains a number of forms titled Godparent / Witness - Statement of Commitment. Give one to each adult that you choose. Those you ask should tell you what their decision is and only if they agree to be Godparents or Witnesses should they complete the form and return it to us. If you need more forms please feel free to print more.*

# Godparent - Statement of Commitment

Godparents are specially chosen to give support and encouragement to Christian parents as they bring up their child in the Faith. They set an example of what it means to live the Christian faith as a practising Catholic. Through prayer, interest and thoughtfulness they act as an extended family and represent the Church in the care and commitment given to their Godchild and the child's parents throughout its life. Please think carefully about whether you are ready to take on this commitment.

Baptism is a sacrament, which marks a person's entry into God's family, the Church, and the Church regards your part in this sacrament as important.

Before returning this form please tell the parents of the child of your willingness to be a Godparent.

## **EACH GODPARENT NEEDS TO COMPLETE A SEPARATE FORM**

I undertake to sponsor, as a Godparent

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Full name of child)*

I was baptised as a CATHOLIC at \_\_\_\_\_  
(name and place of church)

on \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Date of your Baptism)*

***I understand the duties and obligations of being a Godparent  
and freely undertake to fulfil them***

***Signature*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Print your name*** \_\_\_\_\_  
***(Christian name and family name, in clear capital letters please)***

Please return this form to:  
Baptism  
Church of St. Edmund of Canterbury  
Village Way, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 3NP

beckenham@rcaos.org.uk



# Godparent - Statement of Commitment

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I undertake to sponsor, as a Godparent

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Full name of child)*

I was baptised as a CATHOLIC at

\_\_\_\_\_ *(name and place of church)*

on

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Date of your Baptism)*

***I understand the duties and obligations of being a Godparent  
and freely undertake to fulfil them***

***Signature*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Print your name*** \_\_\_\_\_

***(Christian name and family name, in clear capital letters please)***

Please return this form to:

Baptism

Church of St. Edmund of Canterbury

Village Way, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 3NP

beckenham@rcaos.org.uk

# Witness - Statement of Commitment

Godparents and Witnesses are chosen to give support and encouragement to Christian parents as they bring up their child in the Catholic Faith. Through prayer, interest and thoughtfulness they act as an extended family and represent the Church in the care and commitment given to the child and the child's parents throughout its life.

Baptism is a sacrament, which marks a person's entry into God's family, the Church, and the Church regards your part in this sacrament as important. In the Catholic Church only a Catholic can be a Godparent, as that demands a person renewing their own baptism commitment and promising to set an example of a faithful Catholic which the child can follow. However, we very much value the Christian commitment of other Christians and the support and example of Christian living which they show through their faithful following of Jesus Christ in their own Christian community, and we celebrate that through the role of a *Witness*.

Before returning this form please tell the parents of the child of your willingness to be a Witness.

## EACH WITNESS NEEDS TO COMPLETE A SEPARATE FORM

I \_\_\_\_\_ undertake to act as a Witness  
(*First name and family name, in clear capital letters please*)

at the Sacrament of Baptism of \_\_\_\_\_  
(*Full name of child*)

I was baptised in the \_\_\_\_\_ faith  
(*enter denomination*)

on \_\_\_\_\_  
(*Place and date of your Baptism*)

***I understand the duties and obligations of being a Witness  
and freely undertake to fulfil them***

***Signature*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Print your name*** \_\_\_\_\_  
(*First name and family name in clear capital letters please*)

Please return this form to:  
Baptism  
Church of St. Edmund of Canterbury  
Village Way, Beckenham, Kent. BR3 3NP

beckenham@rcaos.org.uk

# Baptism at St. Edmund's

Please complete this form in **CLEAR BLOCK CAPITALS**.  
We use this information to record this baptism in the Parish Register.

Your son/daughter's surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Your son/daughter's fore-names: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please make these appropriate for your child's baptism, at least one must be a saint's name.)

Your son's/daughter's date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Your family's address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

An email address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's (full) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's(full) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's maiden name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Place and address of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The date that **both of you** will attend/have attended the Parish Baptism Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Agreed date of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Godparents: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must be baptised Catholics.)

Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Must be christened)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Mother) \_\_\_\_\_ (Father)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**I confirm that I have registered my family on ChurchSuite**

**Please return this form to the Parish Office before your child's baptism**

