

Holy Rosary Parish

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Baptism

Baptism is a very ancient ceremony. Christian baptism dates back to the early Church, to Jesus who commanded his followers to “make disciples and to baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”. Every Christian since then has been baptised. Through baptism, your child becomes part of this long, honourable and central tradition. The word, baptism, comes from the Greek word which means “to immerse”.

In the early church, only adults were baptised, since it is an initiation into a community of faith. However, Christian parents wanted their children, growing up in the family, to share the life of the community, by being baptised into the community. This is our justification for “infant baptism”. Some Christian churches today do not baptise children.

The sacrament initiates the candidate into the Christian Community, and is followed by the sacraments of Penance (reconciliation), first Eucharist, and Confirmation.

The sacrament is rich in symbols, pointing to life, growth and hope.

Oil is a staple used for so many purposes, for healing (medicinal ointments), for health (massage), beauty (skin creams), nourishment (food), and light (oil lamps).

Water: nothing can survive without water. There is nothing so refreshing as cold water on a hot day. Plants and gardens flourish with water, and we use water to refresh and clean ourselves. In recent times, we have come to realise how precious water really is.

Light: all of us have a nagging fear of the dark. It is no accident that Satan is called the “Prince of Darkness”. In the light, our fears evaporate. We are able to see things as they are – the truth – in the light. All things need light to grow. We talk about the “light of faith”. Jesus described himself as the “Light of the world”. So you obtain a Baptismal Candle (large enough to be used for the next decade or so) which will be presented to your child during the ceremony.

White: nothing exemplifies purity, innocence and cleanliness so much as the colour “white”. It is naturally appropriate to clothe our baptismal candidates in white. So you choose a Baptismal Garment (a shawl or stole or jacket or cloak etc) in which your child will be clothed during the ceremony.

All the symbols of baptism are life-giving. They fill us with promise and hope.

But hope and promise is not the end of the story. Baptism is just the beginning of the Christian journey. It is the first of the “Initiation Sacraments”. Full incorporation into the church will take place with Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Baptism is the beginning of the Christian journey in a second sense. Just as we take great care to form our children intellectually, socially and physically, so it is important to form our children in the ways of Jesus and of the church. We do that by introducing our children to the story, the attitudes and values of Jesus, to prayer, and to the local Christian community, the parish.

Children learn the ways of the faith best in the circle of the family, and from the example of the family members, especially their parents.

Not infrequently, one hears the opinion that some parents “are not going to instruct their children in religious matters, so that they can make up their own minds when they are older”. This attitude sets the scene for a type of “spiritual stagnation”. Rarely do such children end up opting for a spiritual position: often enough, they simply do not have the background from which a meaningful decision can be made. We would never adopt this attitude in relation to the other areas of children’s development.

Every person ultimately has to make a decision about Jesus. Such a decision is best made from a position of knowledge and experience. The religious formation of our young is very important, for only in its light can the conscientious, religious decision, which comes to every person in life, be made.

To apply to have a child baptised, the parents complete an application form and make an appointment with the Parish Priest to prepare themselves for the sacrament, its meaning and its rituals.

This sacrament is usually celebrated at Holy Rosary, Nedlands, during the 8.45am Sunday parish Mass to recognise its “communal” and “incorporation into the community” aspects.