

Q: What is Baptism? What is really going on? What should happen next? And what about the vows – what do they add up to? How seriously should we take them?

A: When you bring your baby for baptism, he or she will be formally named, and in a special ceremony called a *sacrament*, received into the Christian Church. Parents sometimes find it difficult to grasp that in having their children baptised, they are bringing them and placing them firmly within the family of God. From that day on, they begin a new chapter within the Church.

Baptism is not an insurance policy. God's love is not conditional upon anything you do. We baptise our children in Church in obedience to the command of Jesus (cf. Matthew 28:16-20) and because we witness to the world that with God's help, we shall bring them up as Christians.

Baptism is a sign of belonging to Jesus and of being engaged to serve him throughout our lives.

During the *sacrament*, all present have the opportunity to experience the reality of God's Grace – His love and forgiveness, freely given. We don't need to look further than the words of Jesus to see just how much children figure in God's plans. The baptism of children is God's love in action, a love that is unmerited. It doesn't rest on our actions.

It requires parents to promise certain things about how their child will be brought up. These promises are binding until such time as the child is spiritually mature and ready to make their own profession of faith.

When that time comes, our hope and prayer is that the child will then affirm the faith into which they were baptised and take their place within the Church, as they seek to love and serve Jesus, the head of the Church.

Therefore, the promises parents make before God and in His presence should not be taken lightly, because ultimately, we will all be accountable before God in how we responded to the promises.

Parents are responsible for the spiritual life of their child and their nurture within the church. It is the most important aspect of their child's upbringing, above all else.

Parents will be asked to take vows and make promises just as they did in their marriage service.

The first thing they will be asked to do will be to reaffirm their own Christian faith. The questions put to parents follow:

PROMISES / AFFIRMATION

1. Do you promise to bring your child up in the Christian faith, teaching him/her at all times by your own example?
2. Do you promise to ensure that in time your child takes its rightful place within the life and worship of either this church or any other Christian church?