

## THE BAPTISM OF YOUR CHILD

### BEING BAPTISED AT ST THOMAS'

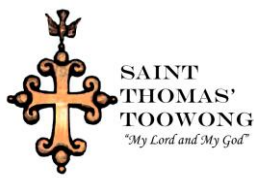
Baptism is recognised as a public act in which a person identifies himself or herself as being a follower of Christ. In some countries this can be a dangerous act and is therefore taken very seriously. In Australia we sometimes do not take it seriously enough.

Baptism is called a sacrament in the Anglican Tradition. That is, it is a God given sign at which he promises to be present by his Spirit and through which he speaks of his redemptive love. It is a picture of Christ's death and resurrection --- for without his extraordinary presence in history, baptism would mean nothing. It also teaches that we, like Jesus, must by faith die to this world (go under the water and drown) and come alive (rise, come out of the water) the family of God. It is a picture of the washing away of our wrong doing before God.

Baptism is important but it is not a magic act. It assumes that the person being baptised (or when it is a child, their parents) are people of genuine faith, committed to following and serving Jesus and desiring to be part of and contributing to his family, the church. In the case of a child, that young life shares in the faith of the parents and, through their godly leadership, grows into the faith for themselves. Parents and godparents play a critical role by praying with the child, reading bible stories, singing Christian songs and coming to worship. But above all, they show the way when their lives reveal in word and action their commitment to Jesus. For many in this country, the real 'god' can be seen in the choices people make, choices which leave Jesus out of the daily processes of life.

At St Thomas' we undertake to pray regularly for those baptised and to help parents and little one's worship God together and learn from his Word. We believe that the baptised (and their parents) need the support of a faith community. You are very welcome at St Thomas' but we don't mind if you find a spiritual home at another church. We encourage parents to be part of this or another Christian community. Just as a coal will lose its heat if removed from the fire, so our faith fades if we abandon the Christian family. Besides, it is easier to help one's child if one's own faith is active and strong.

Baptism is the beginning of a life supported and encouraged by Christ. God's love, forgiveness and peace come to us spiritually at Baptism through water, the anointing with oil and the Word of God. Baptism is the beginning point in the process of nurturing the faith life of your child.



At the Baptism service, you will promise to guide your child to live as Jesus taught. Godparents promise to help you to bring up your child in faith. Family and friends and the faith community are vital parts of this support.

The Priest is the leader of the church community and acts in the name of Christ and will baptise your child. Babies can be baptised at any early age in the Church, however children and adults of any age may be baptised.

### The Symbols of Baptism

**The Water.** Water is for cleansing and is a sign that our sins are washed away. The Church uses water as a symbol for new life in the Holy Spirit. Water is a sign of our immersion into God's life as expressed to us in Jesus Christ.

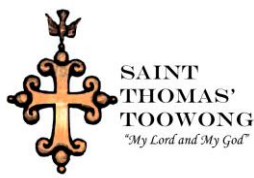
**The Baptismal Candle.** The candle is lit from the Paschal Candle, which stands near the Holy Table at Easter as a sign of the risen Christ. The baptismal candle reminds us that the light of Christ has entered your child's life; and its flame symbolizes the flame of faith, which will burn brightly throughout the life of your child. This candle is taken home as a reminder that we can bring the light of Christ to others.

**The Oil of Catechumen.** The oil is another symbol used in Baptism for healing and strengthening. We are anointed with oil to remind us that we are open to all that is holy and good. The priest or deacon makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person being baptised. A sign on something shows its origins or ownership. Jesus Christ died for us on the cross, and so Christians have adopted the cross as their sign. The sign of the cross shows that your baby belongs to Christ, who now offers his help and grace to face and overcome the sufferings of life.

**The Baptismal Garment.** The oldest special dress in the history of the Church is the white robe of baptism. The white baptismal garment symbolizes purity and freedom: the newly baptised person has "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27---28). New life from God has been given to the person who is baptised.

**Scripture.** Read the story of the Baptism of Jesus from Mark 1:9---11. In those days' people went to the river to be baptised. As a mark of obedience to God his Father, Jesus chose to be baptised by John the Baptist. At the time of his departure he then instructed his disciples to teach the world about him and baptise those who wished to follow him. We are invited to follow Jesus and be baptised in his name. (Matt 28:19)

**Baptismal Register.** Your baby's baptism will be recorded in the parish Baptismal Register and in the Service Register. You will be given a baptismal certificate and your child's Godparents will receive cards to remind them of the promises they



have made. Baptism, once begun is continued daily, like a garment we wear all the time. This spiritual calling is what distinguishes us as Christians. The faith community of St Thomas' Anglican Church intends to support you as your family continues to live out the baptismal promises.

What are the promises we make at Baptism? The Priest invites you and the Godparents to present (your child's name) for Baptism. We present (Name) to be baptised. You will be asked to make the following promises.

"Will you accept the responsibilities in bringing (your child's name) for Baptism?" I will. "Are you willing to answer on behalf of (name)?" I am. "By your own prayers and example, by your friendship and love will you encourage (name) in the life and faith of the Christian Community?" I will with God's help. You then will be asked to make the following decisions on behalf of your child.

Before God and this gathered family and friends, you affirm that you turn to Christ and reject all that is evil. "Do you turn to Christ?" I turn to Christ. "Do you renounce evil and all that leads to sin?" I do.

"Do you reject selfish living and all that is false and unjust?" I reject them all. "Do you renounce Satan and all evil?" I do.

The priest will ask God to deliver you from the powers of darkness and lead you in the light of Christ.

The priest will then say: "Will you each, by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart and your neighbour as yourself?" I will with God's help. The gathered people will then be asked to support you in this calling. They will answer: We will.

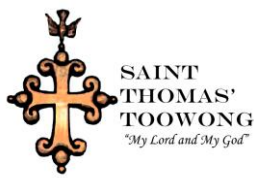
The Priest will then bless the water of Baptism. The Apostles Creed is said. The Creed is really a statement of what Christians believe. Then it is time for the Baptism.

The Priest will say, "(Name), I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." AMEN

The oil is placed on your child's head and the following words said: "(Name), I sign you

with the sign of the cross, to show that you are marked as Jesus' own forever. Live as a disciple of Christ: Fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith."

You then say together, Confess Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and look for his coming again. A candle is then lit, with the words: "God has brought you out of darkness into His marvellous light."



And everyone will say together: Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.

Your child is then received and welcomed into the Church: "God has called you into his Church."

We therefore receive and welcome you as a member with us of the Body of Christ, as a child of the one heavenly Father, as an inheritor of the Kingdom of God.

The Lord's Prayer is said. The Priest then says a prayer for your child and for your family. The grace completes the service: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with (name) and (your family) and us all ever more." Amen

As you prepare for your child's baptism, it will help you to know what to expect and the above description helps you to understand the service. Your baby's baptism is only the beginning of a new life in which you will grow closer to one another and closer to God. The Church welcomes you into its midst with love and prayers for the future peace and happiness of your family in the years ahead.

The seed of faith is watered in Baptism and needs your love and care for it to flourish. The way you live and love, your relationship as a couple, and your beliefs, will all contribute to your child's experience of what it means to be a Christian.

### Charges

There are NO charges. This is the willing act and warm welcome of a Christian community. If you wish to make a donation to the ongoing work of the church, that will be gratefully received.

May God bless you as you embark on this important journey.