

# Baptism

at

Dundonald Parish Church



"See how much the Father has loved us!  
His love is so great  
that we are called God's children"  
1 John 3:1

## **What is baptism?**

Baptism is a wonderful gift from God marking the love that He has for His children. It signifies the beginning of a journey of faith, which will hopefully deepen throughout the person's life. It is not a 'magic spell' that separates the loved from the unloved, or gives special protection for their life. God does not discriminate in this way. Baptism is something which needs to be taken seriously because it is tied up in our relationship with God.

Baptism does not make someone a Christian just as school enrolment does not make someone educated. Instead baptism says that God welcomes us into His family, the Church. On our part it involves faith and long term commitment.

When a child is baptised, we look for this response of faith firstly from the parents for they have the biggest influence in a child's life. It is normally because the parents have found their place in the community of faith, the Church, that their child becomes part of it also.

In baptism, the parents declare their own belief and trust in Jesus as their Saviour and their determination to live God's way. They bring the child, as a member of their own family, to be received into the family of the Church. The parents and the Church promise to pray for the child and teach her God's ways in the hope that, when old enough, she can declare her faith for himself.

Imagine that a kind person gives you a token that entitles you to a free car. In order to get the free car you have to take the token along to a car showroom and hand it over. Until you exchange the token for the car, all you have is a token.

Baptism is like a token, which God has graciously given to us. However, it needs to be followed up by a personal commitment to God. We are not Christians because of our baptism or our parents' faith, but because we have put our faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son.

Jesus said: "Full authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples: **baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit** and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you. I will be with you until the end of time." - Matthew 28: 18 -20

## **What are the questions that will be asked?**

Two questions are asked during the baptism to which the answer is 'I do'.

The first question is in relation to your own faith:

- 1. In presenting your child for baptism, desiring that he/she may belong to Jesus as a member of His body the Church, do you receive the teaching of the Christian faith which we confess in the Apostles Creed?**

## **The Apostles' Creed**

We believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day He rose again;  
He ascended into heaven,  
He is seated  
on the right hand of the Father,  
and He will come to judge  
the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

*If there is any part of this creed, which you are unsure  
about, please feel free to ask our Minister.*

The second question asks you to promise to bring your child up in the Christian faith in the hope that one day she will make her own commitment to God:

**2. Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to live your life so that your child will be surrounded by love and goodness and to teach him/her about Jesus Christ, and by your own prayer and example bring him/her up in the life and worship of the people of God?**

The congregation will then be asked to make their commitment to welcome your child into God's family and to share with her God's love:

**You who are gathered here, represent the whole Church, the Church catholic. Word and sacrament bring you the joy of Christ's presence. They also bring you responsibilities as God's people in this place.**

**Do you welcome this child and do you renew your commitment, with God's help, to live before all God's people in a faithful and Christian way, and to share with them the knowledge and love of God?**

The congregation will then say:

**We do.**

**We will nurture one another in faith,  
encourage one another in service  
and uphold one another in prayer.**

## What happens after the baptism?

After your child has been baptised, you will receive a Certificate of Baptism, an age-appropriate Bible and a letter for your child to read when reaching the age of 12.

The letter explains what happened when she was baptised, and tells her that she needs to decide for herself whether or not to trust Jesus.

A copy of the letter is given below:

Dear ..... ,

This letter was given to you on the day you were baptised in Dundonald Parish Church. Your parents were asked to keep it for you to open on your twelfth birthday.

I'm very happy that I was allowed to share in a really precious moment in your life by baptising you. Since you were too young to be aware of what was going on, this letter is to tell you about it.

Your family brought you to the church, where we said thank you to God for you. It was a happy occasion for everybody, because we were celebrating your birth.

When you were baptised I put some water on your head, and said "..... , I baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." That is a really special sign for Christians, because it is a way of saying that God loves you and wants you to be His follower and His friend.

You are so special to God that He sent His son Jesus into the world to die on a cross for you. He took the blame for all the things we do that are wrong, so that we can be forgiven and be God's friends forever. It's the best gift He could possibly give us.

Baptism also says that you belong to the family of God, which is the Church, and I want you to know that God's church always has a place for you, wherever you may be.

But the service in which you were baptised was just the start of the story. Your parents, in their promises, said they wanted you to be part of the Church, and declared their own faith in God, and they promised to bring you up to know about the Christian faith, so you could make your own choices when you were older.

It's up to you to choose for yourself whether to trust Jesus and to ask Him to be your friend. I hope and pray that you will. Also, the members of the church promised to welcome you, and to help you to know how much God loves you.

I hope when you get this you are growing strong and healthy. At your age you will have all sorts of choices to make now and in the years ahead. When you need to decide what's right and wrong I find this helps - "WWJD?", which stands for "What Would Jesus Do?". If you can imagine what He would do and you do the same, then you won't go far wrong in life.

It was great to share in your baptism, and I hope this letter helps you to feel it was special too. If you want to talk about this letter, you can contact me (if I am still around!) or speak to a minister or another Christian you can trust.

God bless you, and I hope you will always remember how special you are to God and your family.

Yours sincerely,

*Lynsey Brennan*