



Congratulations!

You've been asked to be a Godparent!

This will feel like a great honour, but at the same time, you may be feeling a sense of unworthiness and self-doubt. You may be wondering do you have to have a personal faith to take on the role of a Godparent.

The celebration of baptism is a social occasion, but also a sacrament of the Church. The words, symbols, questions and actions of the baptism service which have been passed down through the centuries all speak of God and his relationship with us.

Jesus welcomed children, the Church, in the name of Jesus offers that same welcome. As a Godparent you commit yourself to helping your Godchild grow in their understanding and relationship with God.

In the service as Godparents – usually three for each child – you make a profession of your own Christian faith – Believing and Trusting in God. On behalf of the child(ren) you promise to pray for them, provide and example to them, and care for them. As Godparents you also make a profession of faith on behalf of the child being baptised.

The symbols of Baptism

Water

Water is a symbol of life, and of the new life of forgiveness which is ours in Christ.

Baptism is a celebration of the gift of life and new life given to us by God. It is not deserved or a right, but a gift.

The life that God gives us in the Church is always an invitation to grow and nurture the seed of faith that is planted in our lives. There are many obstacles for the seed of faith to encounter in our world today. We all need the “water” that God gives to nurture the seed of our own faith, and as a Godparent you share with God and your godchild’s parents in “watering” the faith of your Godchild. This will involve praying for your Godchild, which is one of the greatest gifts that you can offer them. Through prayer we can become more aware of the spiritual side of life, this can open us up to appreciating that there is more to life than material things and that there is a beginning and ending to everything and a meaning and a purpose to our existence. Through prayer you will help to “water” your own life, and that of your Godchild.

The sign of the cross

At an early stage in the Baptism service, the child being baptised is marked with the sign of the cross.

The cross is the central symbol of the Christian faith. Although a symbol of torture and death, it marks the passage to new life and forgiveness. It is supremely a sign of God’s love for us.

Through Christ's death on the cross, God identified with all human suffering and death; through his resurrection he shows us that death is not the end, but a new beginning; that love is stronger than hate; that truth is stronger than lies; that forgiveness is stronger than revenge. In baptism, the child is marked with the cross and Christ calls all of us to "take up your cross and follow me". In this call we are challenged to live a way of life, that brings life, love, truth, and forgiveness. This is a life choice.

Shell

"Shell" petrol is probably the most common place to see the symbol of a shell, apart from the Baptism service. What Shell petrol and being baptised have in common is the idea of "travelling" or "pilgrimage"

For centuries pilgrims travelling to Santiago del Compostella in Spain, have worn a shell badge; it is the symbol of pilgrimage, "holy travelling".

In baptism we set out on a journey, in the company of God and his Church. Travelling involves food for the journey, part of a Godparents task is to provide "food", nourishment and encouragement as your Godchild journeys through life. This will mean not only remembering birthdays, but their baptism anniversary too; perhaps accompanying your Godchild to church, ensuring they have access to books, puzzles, games, badges, that all help them to learn about the Christian faith into which they have been baptised and to have fun in doing so.

Light

Each person baptised is given a lighted candle, often lit from the Easter candle. They are told to "shine as a light in the world, to

the glory of God the Father”. Lights make a difference, they illuminate dark places; they act as guides; they are used to celebrate. Jesus described himself as “the light of the world”, and his life sets an example for us to follow. His way was a way of acceptance of all people whatever their condition or need; a way of compassion and care; a way of forgiving and working for reconciliation. This is the way of life that we are baptised into. Your life as a Godparent acts as a light to your Godchild, as Jesus can act as a light for both of you.

For a child candles are often associated with birthdays and birthday cake, and baptism is like a birthday; it is a new birth, a new beginning and it is good to be a part of that.

If you have any questions that you would like to talk through about being a Godparent, please talk to the clergy person taking your Godchild’s baptism .

- Enjoy being a Godparent
- Enjoy the pleasure of watching your Godchild grow up and grow in faith
- Be there for them when they need you
- Pray for them
- Play with them
- Encourage them