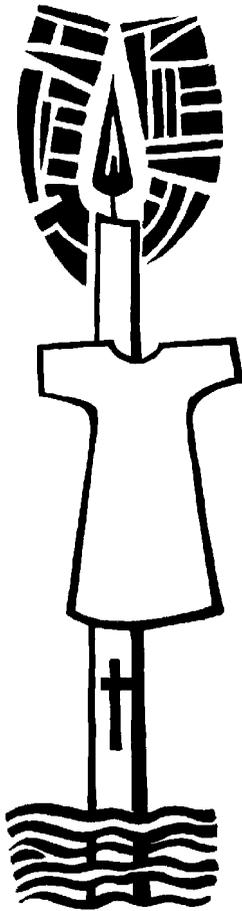


# St Dunstan's Parish

## INFORMATION FOR THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS



### A NEW BABY? CONGRATULATIONS!

If you have just had a baby or are expecting one, the Parish Community at St Dunstan's, Woking offer you their congratulations.

No doubt you have been making preparations to give your child a warm welcome into your family and, as a gift from God, your child should also be welcomed into His family - the Church.

## INFANT BAPTISM

### The programme is founded on the following principles:

1. This programme is for parents of children under 5 years old. If your child is over 5 years old, please contact the Parish Office (760652) to discuss alternative arrangements to prepare for your child's/ children's Baptism. It is likely that they will be asked to join one of the Parish Catechetical programmes.
2. As a Christian and welcoming community, we welcome any parents who seek Baptism for their child/children. At least one parent must be a Roman Catholic, as must Godparents (see separate page).
3. Our first responsibility is to parents who reside within the geographical boundary of the parish: parents who are active in the life of the parish and parents who live in the parish but who are not presently active in parish life and may have fallen away from regular attendance at Mass. (See 5 below for additional comments)
4. (a) Those who live outside the parish boundary but have adopted St Dunstan's as their "home" parish and regularly attend Mass here, and are active in the life of the parish.  
(See 5 below for additional comments)  
  
(b) Parents who have a connection with the parish through their family, for example, their own parents live here and are active in the parish through some ministry or regular Mass attendance.  
(See 5 below for additional comments)  
  
*(c) Those who do not reside in the parish, nor have any commitment to or connection with the parish, should refer to their home parish for the celebration of their child's Baptism.*
5. Following Baptism of their children we would expect parents to demonstrate the commitment they have made on behalf of their child/children by attending Mass regularly and taking part in the life of the parish.
6. Seeking Baptism for a child is a serious matter and should not be

undertaken lightly. There are obligations. Children cannot undertake these obligations alone. In the Rite of Baptism, parents state that they “are accepting the responsibility of training the child/children in the practice of the faith.” (From the Rite of Baptism)

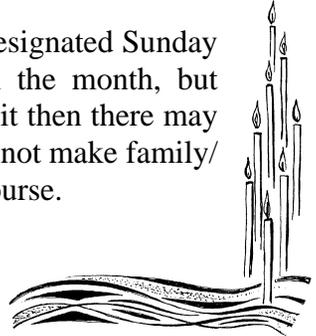
7. Baptism is about community, and as members of that community parents and their children should take an active part in parish life. Children learn through example and the most obvious way for parents to demonstrate their commitment is frequent attendance at Mass with their children, and active participation in the life of the parish.
8. In order to prepare for the Baptism of their children, parents must attend a course over three Tuesday evenings in order to discover what Baptism is and to understand the commitment they are about to make on their child's/children's behalf.
9. The first two evenings are concerned with exploring Baptism. We ask: “What is Faith? What is Religion? What is Baptism? Why Baptise Infants? What responsibilities do parents undertake?” – and more questions, discussion and explanation. At the end of the second evening parents will be asked to make a commitment on behalf of their child/children during the Rite of Welcome before progressing to the third evening.
10. The third evening is a practical session when parents will prepare, with other parents, the celebration of Baptism. Parents, as a group, will choose the Readings, the hymns and the prayers; they will also decide who will proclaim the Word of God in the Readings and who will lead the prayers.
11. All enquirers are most welcome to join the first two evenings but we would ask parents only to proceed to the third evening if they accept the commitment they are making on behalf of their child.
12. Celebrations of Baptism are communal. Ideally we would prefer a maximum of 4 children or a number of children from 4 families to be baptised at any celebration, but the very large number seeking Baptism often prevents us keeping to this limit.

## GODPARENTS

- At baptism our parish community welcomes a young child and accepts that, alongside the parents and godparents, we will share in their responsibility to be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith, and as the child grows older, to prepare him/her to celebrate the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- Your child is utterly dependant on you and his/her Godparents to lead by example.
- Choosing Godparents can be a sensitive issue but a greater understanding of the role of a Godparent may help in this matter. Godparents help the child's parents in living their example of faith, and they join with the parents in making the act of faith on behalf of the child. Since Godparents have such an important responsibility it would be beneficial for them to attend the meetings. We strongly suggest that at least one Godparent is local to your family and is someone who is likely to keep in touch with you.
- Godparents must be confirmed, practising Catholics. The child to be baptised must have at least one Godparent who meets this criteria. A baptised Christian of another denomination, who would be a good example of Christian living, may act as a 'Christian Witness' alongside the Godparent(s).

***Baptism is an important community event.  
It will usually be celebrated in two stages:***

- A 'Rite of Welcome' which takes place at the beginning of the Sunday Mass you and your family would normally attend. This will usually be arranged at the second or third preparation evening.
- The actual celebration of Baptism on the designated Sunday at 1.30pm - usually the second Sunday in the month, but check the programme. (If numbers require it then there may be a second service at 2.45pm.) Please do not make family/social arrangements before attending the course.



**What do we do now?**

- Complete the enclosed form and return it to the Parish Office.
- Receipt of your form will be confirmed, probably by email, and then, before your course begins, you will be contacted by a member of the parish baptism team who will answer any questions you may have and help you to make preparations to celebrate your child's welcome into the family of the Church.

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