

CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA

HOLY BAPTISM

A Word to Parents from the Bishop

God has blessed you with the gift of a child, and you are now rightly considering his Baptism.

It is by Baptism that we are brought into the Christian Church; but Baptism is not merely a formal enrolment, the writing of a child's name on the membership roll of the Church. Baptism is a sacrament and therefore its most important effects are spiritual. Through this Sacrament God gives the baptized child a great gift and blessing.

What is this gift and blessing? In the Gospel we read that mothers brought their children to Jesus Christ and that He took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them. At every Baptism Jesus Christ, acting through the human hands of the priest, is the Baptizer. He receives the child into His kingdom, and unites him to himself, so that His life may begin to flow into the child, just as the life of the vine flows into the branches of the vine. Just as a branch is grafted into a vine so by Baptism we are joined to Jesus Christ.

God's great gift in Baptism then, is the life of Jesus Christ, and that is what we mean when we say that in Baptism a child is made 'a member of Christ.'

In the Baptism Service, water which has been blessed is poured upon the child in the Name of God, the Father, the congregation of Christ's flock,' and signed with the sign of the cross; and then the priest declares that he is now regenerate, or born again. He has been born again of water and the Holy Spirit'. He is 'the child of God' (Catechism).

Washing with water signifies cleansing from all sins. When adults are baptized, they often go down right under the water and then come up to be clothed in a new white robe. This means a death to sin and rising again to a new life of righteousness, even as our Lord died, and was buried, and rose, again, that He might save us from sin and from the power of sin, and might give us new life in union with Himself.

Every human being inherits a sinful nature from his parents, and is born into a world which is tainted with sin. By Baptism a child is cleansed from sin, is joined to Christ, receives the Holy Spirit, and is born into the new life of grace in the Catholic Church. He is made 'an inheritor of the Kingdome of heaven'. Here is the wonderful blessing given by God in Holy Baptism.

Such a great blessing is naturally accompanied by a great responsibility. What is this?

The responsibility is expressed in the promises made on behalf of the child by his godparents: (1) They renounce the devil, all kinds of sin, and worldliness; (2) They promise to believe the full the full Christian Faith; (3) They promise obedience to the law of God.

This is a most serious undertaking. Its meaning for the child is shown by the signing with the sign of the cross immediately after he is baptized, 'in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.

Why do we do all this for a mere infant? Firstly, because God cares for all His children; and then, because the blessings of His Covenant are for all' and they are freely given – no one could possibly earn them. So God first gives His great blessing to the infant, and then accepts our promises (particularly the godparents') that the child will be taught his responsibility as he grows up.

You see how much depends on you? In Baptism a seed of spiritual life is sown. You naturally feel responsible for your child's healthy development in body and mind; but you are also responsible for his spiritual growth, at least until he is old enough to take on himself the solemn promises made at his Baptism; and this he will by at his Confirmation.

He has therefore, to learn from you what to believe, what to practice, and what to shun. For the best lesson is your own good example; but he needs also to learn how to say his prayers how to read the Bible, and how to worship in church. If he sees that you are careless about these things, who can blame him if he too is careless- But God will not hold you guiltless.

I trust you intend to fulfill your part faithfully, and to model your home on that blessed home in Nazareth; so that, like the Child Jesus, your child too may grow 'in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man'.

NOTICE OF HOLY BAPTISM

To the Parish Priest of

1. Name of Child in Full
2. Boy or Girl
3. Date of Birth
4. Father's (a) Name in Full
 (b) Religious denomination
 (c) Parish
 (d) Profession
5. Mother's (a) Name in Full.....
 (b) Religious denomination.....
 (c) Parish.....
6. Address

GODPARENTS

All Godparents must have been baptized and confirmed and must be communicants of the church of North India, (or of a Church officially in communion with it e.g. the Mar Thoma Church, the Godmother, and a girl one Godfather and two Godmothers. Parents, If needs be, may act as Godparents provided there be one other Godparent besides themselves. An adult candidate for Holy Baptism shall choose three, or at least two, persons to act witnesses.

	Are they baptized,	
Godparents Name	Confirmed and	Parish
	Communicants-	
1.
2.
3.

Parents Signature

Date

(This form should be returned at least a week before the Baptism to the Parish Priest.)