

Baptism 19th August

This morning we are all gathered here to baptise Eloise and to welcome her into the family of God. Parents, godparents, family, friends, and the church community are all come together to mark this special moment, and to celebrate Eloise's life. And there is quite a lot going on in this service! In a few minutes when we come to the baptism, we will say some promises together, we will make sign of the cross on Eloise's forehead, she will be baptised in water at the font, at the back of church, and finally, Eloise will be given a lighted candle. So why do we do all these different things in a baptism service? What do they all mean?

Firstly, the parents, godparents, and everyone else present are about to make some promises. When someone gets baptised, as Eloise is today, they become part of God's family, so we all promise to teach that person about God, and to be there for them as they learn and grow. And this is a big commitment. It's a big responsibility, particularly for the parents and godparents, but for everyone else here as well, the whole church community. Together, we declare that we will support Eloise as she grows in her own journey with God.

Then, Reverend Lis will use the oil in this little pot, to make the sign of the cross on Eloise's forehead. This oil has been blessed by the Bishop at a service in Bury Cathedral, especially to be used for baptisms. We make the sign of the cross, to show God's presence with the person being baptised. So Eloise will receive the sign of the cross as a symbol to show that the Holy Spirit is with her, and that she is one of God's children.

Then, the main event! The next part is where we will all make our way to the font at the back, and Eloise will be baptised by having water poured over her in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All together, the service of baptism is full of meaning, and it plays a very important role in marking the beginning of a life with Christ. And so the water which will be poured over Eloise is like a new birth. It shows that she is being brought into a new life as a Christian. And water is a sign of being clean, of being holy in the sight of God. And so Eloise will become a new child in the family of God.

Baptism is a beautiful and holy way of showing that this person already belongs to Christ. We do it because Jesus told us to, because it reminds of us his baptism, and because it shows the world that we are people of God.

And lastly, after Eloise has been baptised, she will be presented with her baptism candle. I think we will ask Mum or Dad to hold it for her, but it will be for Eloise to have as she grows up, as a reminder of her baptism today. And we give her a candle, because it symbolises the light of Christ. One of the sayings in the Bible is that Jesus is 'the light of the world'. He was like a candle in a dark room - a beautiful light of hope and joy, showing the way to God. And when we believe, when we live our lives following Jesus, we too are lights in the world.

One of my very favourite verses in the Bible says that children of God shine like stars in the world. This is what the lighted candle will symbolise for Eloise. She is a child of God, dearly loved. And everyone who knows God and shares God's love with others is like a star in the world.

So when Eloise grows up and she asks about today, you can show her photos, tell her about the water and the sign of the cross, and you can tell her about the candle, and explain that she has the light of Christ with her always.

Eloise has been loved by God from the very first moment when she came into existence, and always will be. And today as we baptise Eloise, we welcome her into the body of Christ, the family of God. We will pour water of new life over her. The sign of the cross made on her forehead will symbolise the blessing of the Holy Spirit that is with her. Together we will make promises to teach her, care for her, and show her how to live in God. And we will give her a candle to show that she carries the light of Christ within her. Today we celebrate hope and promise. Today we give thanks for the gift of Eloise, and the gift of Christ in God.

Amen.