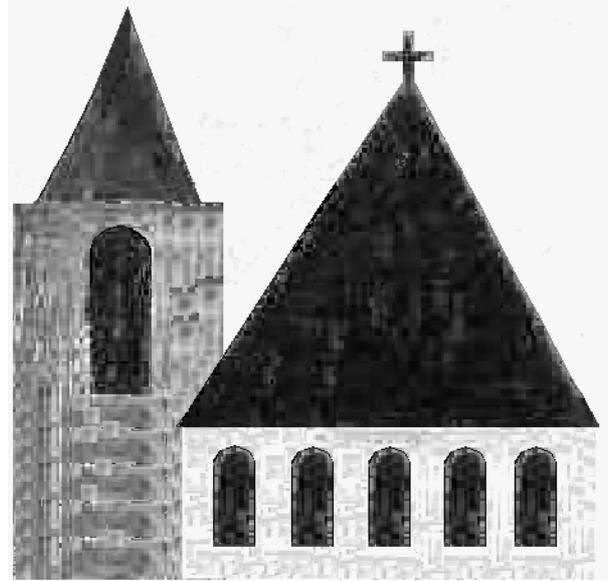


BAPTISM IN CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHURCHES

Some interchurch couples have strongly desired that their child's baptism should be registered in both their churches, as a sign that both communities are involved in nurturing their child's life in Christ.



Where Anglican/Roman Catholic families are concerned, the experience of the Association of Interchurch Families has been that the most likely way to obtain such dual registration is if the baptism takes place in an Anglican church with the Catholic priest as the minister of baptism. The latter can register it as the officiating minister, and the Anglican minister (who can take a large part in assisting with the baptism) can register it as having taken place in his/her church. This fits in best with the usual pattern of registering baptism in the two communities. Canon law of the Church of England makes it clear that a person is baptised 'into Christ's Church' (canon B21), not into the Church of England nor any other Christian Church.

Many baptisms celebrated by Catholic priests have taken place in Anglican churches. However, an Anglican incumbent may be unwilling for this to happen in his/her church. He/she may even be under the impression that it cannot happen unless the parish church is within a Local Ecumenical Project, but in fact, this is not the case.

The relevant canon is B43 para. 9. This allows the incumbent of a parish, with the approval of the PCC and the bishop of the diocese, to invite members of another Church to which the canon applies (this includes the Roman Catholic Church) to take part in joint worship with the Church of England, or to use a church in the parish for worship in accordance with the forms of service and practice of that other Church on such occasions as may be specified in the approval given by the bishop.

This canon can apply to baptism, and in fact there are innumerable cases now in which a Roman Catholic priest has officiated at a baptism in a Church of England church with the assistance of the Anglican priest.

(See *Ecumenical Relations: Ecumenical Canons B43 and B44: Code of Practice*, General Synod of the Church of England, 1989)

It should be stressed however, that Anglican canon law on this point is *permissive*, but not *prescriptive*: i.e. an Anglican incumbent may permit it, but she / he is not required to do so.