

PREPARATION FOR AND CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES:

“...the parents of an infant who is to be baptized and likewise those who are to undertake the office of sponsor are to be properly instructed in the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it; personally, or through others, the pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together and where possible visiting them” (Code of Canon Law #851).

“Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is of great importance that the parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community, should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding” (Rite of Baptism for Children Introduction Article 5).

“By its very nature infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth” (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1231).

“Much importance is given to the presence and active participation of the parents in the celebration. The parents now have priority over the godparents, although the presence of the latter continues to be required since their assistance in the child’s education is valuable and can sometimes be essential” (Instruction on Infant Baptism #29).

“For the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion, if such a hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason” (Code of Canon Law #868.2).

THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY RECOMMENDS:

1. Parishes will regularly provide preparation session(s) on the meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism and its obligations. Parents are required to attend these sessions. Godparents should also attend if possible.
2. The pastor or his delegates will encourage the parents to re-examine the meaning of faith in their own lives before participation in baptismal preparations.
3. Parishes will provide opportunities for continued education for parents and young children.
4. The Office of Faith Formation and Lay Ecclesial Ministry will have available resources for review to assist parishes in planning the baptismal preparation session(s).

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GUIDELINES

- The initial interview between the pastor or his delegate and the parent(s) will include a discussion of the following:
 - o Participation of the parent(s) in the life of the Church
 - o Willingness to raise the child in the Catholic faith
 - o Qualifications of godparents, namely, that they be designated by the parents, are 16 years old, a practicing Catholic (confirmed and received Eucharist), not bound by canonical penalty. The godparents cannot be the parents themselves. There may be one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex may be employed. In the case of one qualified godparent, a second witness may be a baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community. These stipulations are mandated by Canon Law #873 and #874.
- A delay may be necessary to allow the parent(s) the opportunity to grow in faith or to become more aware of their responsibilities.
- Parishes are encouraged to form a Baptismal team to assist in planning and implementing the preparation session(s).
- When possible, the preparation session(s) will be held in a small group setting at the parish or in a home.
- The preparation session(s) will include a discussion of history and theology of the sacraments of initiation, the rite of Baptism, communal and family dimension of sacraments, role of godparents, and rights and responsibilities of parent(s).
- Efforts will be made by the parish, (e.g., Family Life Committee, Adult Education Committee, Baptismal Team) to maintain supportive contact with the parent(s) of newly baptized children.
- Parents will be encouraged to participate in opportunities for faith enrichment at the parish and/or in the wider Church community.