



# *St. Mary's Catholic Church*

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<https://stmarysmexia.org>

## Your Baby's Baptism



*It has been the constant practice of the Catholic Church from the earliest times to administer the Sacrament of Baptism to infants. Parents very naturally want to pass along their own Faith to their child, as well as their values that flow from that Faith. Baptism marks the beginning of this faith-life.*

*Given the fundamental importance of Baptism for salvation, the Church obliges parents to seek the Baptism of their child within the first few weeks after the birth of the child (c. 867). The Church recommends that infants be Baptized soon after they are born and permits the Baptism of infants so long as there is "a well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion."*

### **Parents**

Parents of the child to be Baptized must be registered members of St. Paul Catholic Parish for at least three months before the Baptism. If you are not already registered, please do so as soon as possible by completing a Parish Registration Form and returning it to the parish office right away.

Persons who are registered in another parish and wish to have their child Baptized at St. Mary's Catholic Church for a just cause, **MUST have the permission of their pastor and must have attended a Baptism Preparation Class** either at St. Mary's Catholic Church or at their home parish.

Parents must attend the Baptism Preparation Classes before the Baptism.

### **Selecting Godparents**

Godparents play a very important role in your child's spiritual life. They should serve as role models of the Faith. The child should be able to look to their Godparents as examples of how the Church teaches us to live our Catholic Faith. They should support not only the child but the parents, as well. Additionally, in their role as Godparent, they represent the larger Church

community. Therefore, being a Godparent is not only an honor, it is a tremendous responsibility! The Godparents should be carefully chosen. In recognizing the importance of the Godparents and their duties, the Church has provided guidelines to help parents choose the best possible Godparents for their children. **St. Mary's Catholic Church strictly adheres to Canon Law in all aspects of Baptism.**

**If potential Godparents are not practicing members of the Catholic Church or have converted from the Catholic Faith to any other faith, they should not be considered, as they will not be accepted as a Godparent nor can they be accepted as a witness.**

A Godparent must be living an exemplary life consistent with the Faith and morals as taught by the Catholic Church.

There should be **AT LEAST** one Godparent for **EACH** child who will be Baptized; but you may have two. If you have two, there must be one male and one female.

**Each Godparent must have received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation.** They should be at least 16 years old and be mature enough to understand, accept, and carry out the duties of a Godparent.

Church law requires that a Baptismal Godparent be a practicing Catholic, i.e., **one who is in full communion with the Church, attends Sunday Mass WEEKLY and other Holy Days of Obligation, who celebrates the Sacrament of Reconciliation periodically, has been Confirmed in the Church, and is leading a life of harmony in the Faith. If married, the marriage must have taken place in the Catholic Church and have been celebrated by a Catholic Priest or a Catholic Deacon.**

A non-Catholic, may be chosen as a "**Christian Witness**," but this person **MUST** be a Baptized Christian. However, one Catholic Godparent must be chosen with the witness, and one must be male and the other female.

**There may be no more than two Godparents: or no more than one Godparent and one witness.**

A Godparent may not be the father or mother of the child.

If both Godparents are Catholic, both must meet all the criteria.

When someone who does not meet the requirements is designated as a Godparent, the Pastor has a serious responsibility not to admit that person to serve as a Godparent. Nor may he give the person a certificate of eligibility to serve as a sponsor at a Baptism which is to take place at some other Catholic parish.

The reason a Godparent must be a practicing Catholic is that he or she is expected to pay special attention to the efforts of the person who is being Baptized to live a Christian life in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Godparents are also expected to assist the parents of the child in their Christian duty as parents, by offering them support through good example, encouragement, and prayer.

**Advice that will help to avoid difficulties and uncomfortable situations:** Choose Baptismal Godparents whom you know to be practicing Catholics. If you decide to choose a Godparent who has not been practicing his or her Catholic Faith, inform this person very early in the pregnancy. If that person is not restricted by a life choice to again practice their Faith, at least six months before the Baptism, this person should discuss the matter with the priest and begin attending Mass regularly and receiving the Sacraments as soon as they are in the right disposition to do so, as required by God and the Church for the worthy reception of the Sacraments. It is the priest who must make the decision to write the certificate of eligibility, and if this person is able and willing to take the steps necessary to practice his or her Catholic Faith, there is at least a possibility that he or she may be able to serve as a Godparent.

The names of the Godparents must be provided on the Baptismal Registration Form.

Both Godparents, or a Godparent and a witness, must attend the Baptism Preparation Classes before the Baptism is celebrated.

### **Godparent Documentation Requirements**

It is not required that Godparents be parishioners of St. Mary's Catholic Church. All Godparents, including those from St. Mary's, as well as a Christian Witness, must obtain a Baptismal Certificate and a letter from their own Catholic Parish or Christian Church stating that they are members in good standing, practicing their faith, and are eligible to act as a Godparent or Christian Witness for Baptism. If they belong to another Catholic Parish and are not able to participate in a Baptism Class conducted at St. Mary's, they must bring proof of their attendance of the Baptism Preparation Classes conducted in their home parish.

This documentation should be submitted to St. Mary's Catholic Church at the same time as the Baptismal Registration Form, or as soon as possible after the registration form has been submitted. Without this required information, there may be a postponement of your child's Baptism and a date will not be confirmed.

### **Baptism Preparation Class**

Parents and Godparents, or parents, a Godparent, and a Christian Witness, are ALL required to attend a Baptism Preparation Class. You can attend this class even before the birth of the child. Ideally, everyone should attend this instructional class together. The number of classes and duration will depend on the degree of instruction needed by the parents and Godparents, or the parents, Godparent, and witness.

### **Baptism Date**

Only after the completed forms and all required documents for the baby, parents, Godparents, and Christian Witness, have been submitted, will a Baptism date and time be discussed and confirmed with the Priest or Deacon. DO NOT make any plans or arrangements before a date and time have been confirmed. A tentative date may be added to the office calendar, but confirmation of a date and time can only be obtained from the celebrating clergy. Since preparations for your child's Baptism are also made by St. Paul Parish, please let the church know as soon as possible of any changes regarding your plans.

### **Naming Your Child**

The name you select for your baby, in addition to your family last name, will provide your child with a unique identity. The long-standing tradition of the Church has been to give at least one name of a saint or person from our Biblical tradition. A Christian name will provide your child with a model for Christ-centered living.

### **Pictures at the Baptism**

Photographs and video are encouraged at the Baptismal ceremony. These are excellent means of sharing the memory of this joyous and special day with your child as he or she grows in age and faith and will also turn out to be good teaching tools. Please be sure to follow the instructions of the celebrant to ensure that you will be getting the best pictures and not interfering with the ceremony. The priest and deacon are always happy to stay for pictures with your family after the Baptism.

### **Clothing and Candle**

A white Christening gown is customary but not required. Whatever clothing is worn, it should be loose enough at the neck to allow anointing of the child's breast. If a hat is worn, it should be removed for the Baptism. The church will provide a Christening garment that will be placed on the child during the Baptism. After the ceremony, the candle and garment will be yours to keep as a reminder of this joyous milestone. The candle can be burned on Baptismal anniversaries and when the child receives other Sacraments in the future.

### **Baptismal Record and Certificate**

The Baptism will be recorded in the Baptismal Register, the permanent records of the parish, from the information you provide. Therefore, please be sure of the accuracy of information and the spelling of names which you provide. A Baptismal Certificate will be mailed to you following the Baptism; or you may request to pick up the certificate at the church office. Later, whenever a certificate might be needed, it can be prepared from this parish record. **An original state-issued Birth Certificate MUST be provided to the Parish Office to avoid any discrepancy in the date of birth or to the spellings of the names of the baby or parents.** The office will make a copy from the original birth certificate which will then be returned to the family.

### **Baptismal Water**

It is a nice idea to retain a small amount of the blessed Baptism water with which your child has been Baptized. This Holy Water can be used for various blessings throughout the child's

life. The parish will provide a small bottle for this purpose. If you wish, you may bring an additional, small leak-proof container to fill with this water after the ceremony. Small Holy Water bottles can be purchased at any Catholic Store or they may be ordered.

### **Blessing during Pregnancy**

If you are a couple or individual expecting a baby, you are warmly invited to ask for a blessing for your unborn child and yourselves, which can be said either after Mass or at any time.

### **Family Donation**

While there is no fee for the Baptism, many families wish to offer a traditional offering or remuneration on the blessed occasion of their child's Baptism to the celebrant and/or to the parish. This may be given to the celebrant on the day of the Baptism, dropped by the parish office, or mailed to the parish. Please be sure to indicate that the donation is offered for the occasion of your child's Baptism. A donation to the celebrant should be made payable to the celebrant; a donation to the parish, made payable to the parish.

***In the name of the Lord Jesus, our parish community looks forward to welcoming your child as a member of our family, as a member of the Body of Christ, and as a young parishioner, and we promise to give you the support of our prayers and all the help we can offer.***

***May God bless your family!***

*Love and prayers,*

Fr. Pius T. Mathew, pastor

Deacon Dwight Mahoney

Deacon Daniel Ramirez

Deacon Gordon Lee

Deacon Richard Johnson

(NOTE: Please keep all the informational pages of this Baptismal Packet and **only return the completed forms and required documentation to the parish.**)