

## **SECTION 6: RCIA/BAPTISM**

The following policies shall be followed in regard to RCIA and the Sacrament of Baptism.

### **6.1 PARTICULAR LAW ON INFANT BAPTISM**

#### **6.1.1 Regarding Baptism Preparation in Parishes**

All parishes shall provide Baptismal Preparation that at a minimum covers the following:

- Role of Parents
- Role of Godparents
- Importance of Parents as primary educators of their children in the faith
- Importance of a Christian name
- Explanation of the Rite of Baptism which, in addition to other aspects, focuses on the nature of the Sacrament of Baptism, especially as entrance into a community of faith

#### **6.1.2 Regarding Preparation for Parents who Present Children for Baptism**

With regard to Parents who present children for the Sacrament of Baptism, first time Parents shall attend Baptism Preparation. However, if the Parents have attended Baptism Preparation previously in the parish where the Baptism is to take place, then no further preparation should be required regardless of the number of children of these Parents that are presented for Baptism in that particular church parish.

#### **6.1.3 Testimonial of Parents who Present Children for Baptism**

Since the most common reason for delaying Baptism is a concern regarding the ‘founded hope’ that the child would be brought up in the Catholic faith, there is a Baptism Testimonial Form compiled for use in all parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans that asks Parents to swear to tell the truth about their intentions to raise the child in the Catholic faith and requires Parents to sign the form. This allows priests and deacons to take the Parents ‘at the word of their sworn statements’ and fulfills the requirement for a ‘founded hope’ that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.

#### **6.1.4 Children Presented for Baptism by Those Other than Parents**

That with the regard that is due for ‘Baptism in danger of death’ (Canon 866§2), there be acceptance and continuance of the current practice of NOT baptizing a child presented by anyone who is not at least a legal guardian of the child.

#### **6.1.5 Parish Registration**

That parish registration prior to Baptism only be strongly encouraged so that the needs of any future pastoral care required by the family can be given attention.

#### **6.1.6 Baptism of Children of Unwed Parents**

- That as long as all other requirements are met, children of unwed parents should be baptized without the added requirement of marriage, or even of promised marriage, on the part of the parents.

- Regarding children born to unwed parents, a certificate of birth from the State that de-clarates paternity on the part of the mother and father shall be sufficient to enter the name of both parents into the baptismal record.

### **6.1.7 Regarding Proposed Godparents for Baptism**

- First time Godparents shall attend Baptism preparation prior to serving in this role.
- Catholics who are not yet confirmed cannot serve as either a Godparent or as a Christian Witness.
- Catholics who are not practicing their faith in any manner or who are not in ‘good standing’ cannot serve as Godparents or as Christian Witnesses.
- Catholics who have rejected the faith cannot serve as Godparents or as Christian Witnesses.
- There is a Baptism Testimonial Form compiled for use in all parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans that asks the Godparents to swear to tell the truth about the information they provide, and then requires Godparents to sign the form. This allows priests and dea-cons to take the Godparents ‘at the word of their sworn statements’ and eliminates the need for any other attestations regarding their ‘good standing’ in the Church, reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, etc.

### **6.1.8 Other Concerns**

- For emergency Baptisms that may take place in hospitals, etc. the canonical requirement that the baptism be recorded in the territorial parish in which it was celebrated must be respected.
- With regard to ‘supplying ceremony’ for a child who was baptized in an emergency, a notation may also be made in the index of the baptismal register of the church parish where the ceremony is supplied indicating that only ceremony was supplied, and also stating in which church parish the baptismal record is inscribed. Only the church parish in which the baptism was actually celebrated may issue a baptismal certificate for any such baptism.
- While Baptisms during Lent should be discouraged in normative circumstances, it nonetheless remains the prerogative of the pastor after consultation with the parents to decide on celebrating a private baptism during Lent.
- With regard to the Celebration of Baptism during Mass, and the Celebration of Baptism for One Child and the Celebration of Baptism for a Number of Children, these remain pastoral decisions made solely by the pastor after consultation with the parents of the child(ren) to be baptized.

*The Sacrament of Baptism is the basis of the whole of Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other Sacraments. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1213) It is hoped that the above guidelines will enhance the joy of the celebration of the baptism of a child, bestowing God’s grace upon the child baptized as well as enriching the lives of par-ents, godparents, and all others who gather to celebrate the gift of new life offered in baptism.*

## **6.2 PROCEDURE FOR RECORDING BAPTISM IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Please see section 15.4, *Sacramental Records*, of this policy manual for instructions on recording Baptism in special circumstances.

## **6.3 BAPTISMAL GARB**

The traditional vesture for the newly baptized is a white robe and there is no tradition for vesting neophytes with a stole. The stole remains a symbol of ordained ministry in the church, not a sign of the universal priesthood of the baptized.

## **6.4 CONVALIDATION AND THE RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS**

### **6.4.1 RITE OF ELECTION**

A catechumen or candidate who is in an invalid marriage is not canonically free to be elected in the rite of enrollment of names and to proceed toward sacramental initiation.

### **6.4.2 CONVALIDATION**

Once an annulment of the previous union has been obtained and both parties are free to marry, if the catechumen or candidate's present spouse is non-Catholic, it is unnecessary to convalidate the marriage because renewal of consent is a requirement of the ecclesiastical law only. It is not required by the natural law because the consent given in the beginning of marriage and not later revoked is still effective. This is according to the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*; if the present marriage took place before 1983, the party should consult the tribunal.

Once an annulment of the previous union has been obtained, when the catechumen or candidate's present spouse is Catholic, however, it is necessary to have the marriage convalidated by means of a public renewal of consent according to the canonical form. This should be done as soon as possible after notification of the annulment or dissolution, and before the Christian initiation of the catechumen.