

**THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**  
**FOR CHILDREN**

From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the Gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized not only adults but children as well. Our Lord said: "Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (Jn 3:5) The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local church and the whole society of saints and *believers*.

To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized. The foundation of this formation will be the sacrament itself that they have already received. Christian formation, which is their due, seeks to lead them gradually to learn God's plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized.

**GUIDELINES**

- A. The term "children" or "infants" refers to those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore cannot profess personal faith.
- B. Infant Baptism is the normative way to begin the initiation of children into the Church. Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth.
- C. Parents should be instructed in the following topics.
  - a. Theology of Baptism/Initiation
  - b. Role of the parents and godparents in the faith formation of the child
  - c.. Preparation for the Celebration of Baptism

**Canon 849**

*Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments and necessary for salvation by actual reception or at least desire, is validly conferred only by a washing of true water with the proper form of words. Through Baptism men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God and configured to Christ by an indelible character, and are incorporated into the Church.*

**Canon 850**

*Baptism is administered according to the order prescribed in the approved liturgical books, except in case of urgent necessity when only those things required for the validity of the sacrament must be observed.*

**Canon 851**

*The parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible, visiting them.*

**Canon 853**

*Apart from a case of necessity, the water to be used in conferring baptism must be blessed according to the prescripts of the liturgical books.*

## THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

### GUIDELINES

It is recommended that baptism be celebrated on Sundays, or at the Easter Vigil.

### Baptismal Sponsors/Godparents

#### GUIDELINES

- A. Sponsors must have completed the sixteenth year.
- B. Sponsors must be practicing Catholics who have been confirmed and have already received the Sacrament of the Eucharist and lead a life in harmony with faith and the role to be undertaken.
- C. Sponsors cannot be the father or mother of one to be baptized.

### Baptismal Register

#### GUIDELINES

- A. The Church of Baptism is the Church of record for the child who is baptized.
- B. Prior to the date of baptism, the parents should bring the birth certificate to the parish office.
- C. Parents must reside within the boundaries of the parish where the baptism is to take place. If they do not reside within the parish boundaries a letter of permission is required from the pastor of the territorial parish. (See Canons 107, 528, §2 and 530)
- D. No change may be made in the Baptismal Register without first consulting the Chancery office

#### **Canon 855**

*Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.*

#### **Canon 854**

*Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring; the prescripts of the conference of bishops are to be observed.*

#### **Canon 872**

*Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents, presents an infant for Baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.*

#### **Canon 873**

*There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.*

#### **Canon 874**

*A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.*

#### **Canon 877**

*The pastor of the place where the baptism is celebrated must carefully and without delay record in the baptismal register the names of the baptized, with mention made of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses, if any, the place and date of the conferral of the baptism, and the date and place of birth.*