

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

1. How old should my child be to be baptized?

Any child not yet baptized is always welcomed for baptism, given a commitment to raising the child according to the Catholic faith. Although the Church recommends that a child be baptized within a few weeks after birth, factors such as the health and well-being of the mother and/or of the child, the time it takes for preparing and planning the baptismal celebration, allowing the parents and other family members time to adjust to the new arrival, and scheduling the participation of extended family and friends who may have to travel some distance, are also factors that need to be taken into account.

After the age of reason (age 7), children of Catholics personally profess their faith after receiving an appropriate instruction for Baptism. If there is any question about baptism for your child, or if there is a special situation, please contact the Pastor so that we may do all we can to help you.

2. Can we have our child baptized if we are not married, or were married outside the Church, or if I am a single-parent?

Your child is always welcome to baptism, given a commitment to raising him/her according to the Catholic faith. Holy Mother Church recognizes that, for whatever the reason, people will make choices in life that led them in many different directions. The fact that you are here, reading this, demonstrates that God is at work in your life. We would be most pleased to have the opportunity to discuss with you how we may be of assistance in facilitating your child's baptism and if there are other ways in which we may help bring you and your family into full communion with the Catholic Church.

3. Must I be a member of St. John's Parish in order to have my child baptized here?

Generally speaking, a child should be baptized in the parish where the family is registered as parishioners. Sometimes, families request that a baptism be held at a particular parish due to some family tie to that parish. If you are attending Mass regularly at our parish, we strongly encourage you to formally register as parishioners by calling the parish office.

4. Whom should I choose to be godparents for my child?

Whether you select very close friends or family members as godparents for your child is a very personal decision. The Church does, however, expect that a person chosen to be a godparent will support you spiritually (by prayer) and morally (by their example of word and deed) in your duty as Christian mothers and fathers as you raise your child in the Catholic Church. As such, the Church places the following eligibility requirements on persons desiring to be godparents:

- a. they must be at least 16 years of age;
- b. they must be Catholics who are baptized, confirmed, and have received First Holy Communion;
- c. they must be someone other than the parents of the child to be baptized;
- d. they must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and the role they are about to assume.

5. How many godparents may I have or must I have?

Strictly speaking, you are required to have only one, who must be Catholic. As is the current custom, most people have two, who must be of different sexes (i.e. one godfather and one godmother). The Church offers no provision for more than two godparents.

6. Does that mean that I can't have a non-Catholic serve as a godparent?

Technically, a non-Catholic may not serve as "godparent." However, a baptized non-Catholic Christian may serve as a "Christian Witness" to the baptism as long as the godparent is Catholic.

7. Must I attend a Baptism Preparation Program?

The Church believes it is her duty to offer you, as parents, the opportunity to fully understand the commitment you are undertaking for your child and yourselves through the Sacrament of Baptism. Attendance at the baptism preparation session is also an excellent time for you to ask any questions you may have and to discuss any special circumstances surrounding your child's baptism.

8. When should I attend the Baptism Preparation Program?

For practical reasons, we encourage you to attend a baptism preparation session before your baby is born. Once your baby is at home, we are guessing that you will probably have a lot on your mind and be pretty busy caring for the newborn child. Should you decide that it is better to wait until after the baby is born, or if you are parents of an older child, you may, of course, attend any session at your convenience.

9. When is the Baptism Preparation Program offered?

The parish secretary can offer you that information.

10. Is there anything that I need to bring for the Baptism?

In the Rite of Baptism, a "white garment," traditionally a white linen cloth, is placed on the the child to signify the purity in which the child is now clothed. Also, the child is also presented a white "baptismal candle" in the ceremony. Some families may wish to use a baptismal candle or white garment that has some sentimental value--perhaps it was used by one of the parents, or is a family heirloom that has been used for the baptisms of several children, possibly spanning generations within a family. If you would like to use your own baptismal garment and/or baptismal candle, please let the celebrant (priest/deacon) know beforehand so that he can prepare accordingly; otherwise, the parish will provide both the candle and the linen garment.

11. Is there a "stole fee" for the priest/deacon performing the Baptism?

There is no fee charged for the baptizing of your child. The gift of sanctifying grace given your child in Baptism is God's free gift.