

Policy for Baptism Diocese of Stockton

Instruction

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 the sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it; the pastor is to see it, personally, or through others, that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer.

Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth. As soon as possible after birth, or even before, parents are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child.

Involved and active Roman Catholics

Sufficient instruction on the nature of the sacrament; other topics included are: prayer, parenting skills in religious education, information on preschool, Religious Education programs, Church community building. No further instruction required if subsequent children are somewhat closely spaced.

For the baptism of an infant it is necessary that there be a well founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is 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.

Non-active parishioners

The non-activity needs to be addressed with honesty and sensitivity. A trial period ought to be agreed upon with the family, during which time, they attend Mass regularly on Sundays, receive the sacraments if possible, pray at home, celebrate popular religious practices, read the bible, etc. After this period the parents re-contact the pastor and discuss the matter of the Baptism.

“Out of parish”

Requests for baptism should be sent to the proper parish. Pre-baptismal instruction and preparation is the responsibility of the property parish. Parishioners who request a baptism outside their property parish should still fulfill the preparation program in their proper parish.

Godparents

The Diocese of Stockton has a separate Policy Regarding Sponsors for Baptism.

Practical Suggestions

1. The baptismal policy appears periodically in the parish bulletin.
2. Being married in the Church should not be a necessary prerequisite for infant baptism. However, all efforts should be made to rectify invalid marriages at some future date so that the couple can more fully practice the faith by receiving the sacraments.
3. Teams of couples who are actively involved in the parish could be trained to help with instruction and visitation.
4. Names of the newly baptized should be included in the bulletin at regular intervals.
5. Liturgically:
 - Occasional celebrations of the sacrament of baptism should be done during Sunday Liturgy.
 - Individual “private” baptisms “just for the family” are to be discouraged. If a particular priest is requested, he can be present, concelebrate and formally baptize the infant in question.