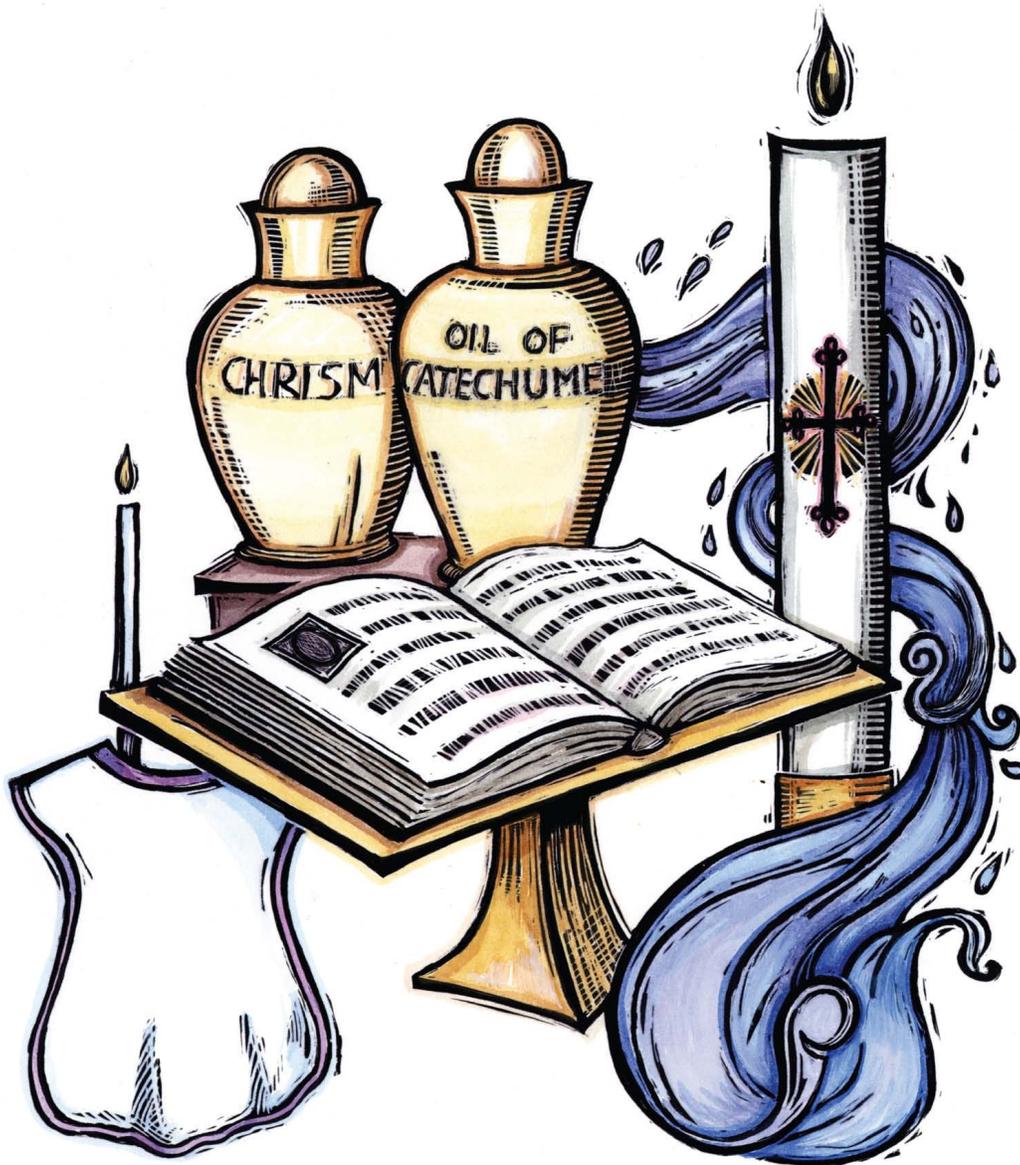


# PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S BAPTISM



SAINT PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH  
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Baptism is the first of the Sacraments of Initiation and as such it is a necessary requirement for the reception of any other Sacrament. It is through Baptism that we are reborn as children of God and incorporated into the Church of Christ thereby receiving the rights and obligations associated with that membership. Through Baptism we become shares in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ and we are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world. Baptism is a time for celebration and a time for joy. It is a birth into the Christian community and is, in every way, as solemn and important as physical birth itself. The community of Saint Patrick Catholic Church presents this set of guidelines to help you plan and prepare for Baptism in the best possible way and with as much ease and convenience as possible.

### MINISTER OF BAPTISM

The Church requires an ordained cleric (bishop, priest, or deacon) to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism except in the case of an emergency. Normally, this is the pastor, one of the associate pastors, or one of the deacons of the parish. At times, however, it may be desired to invite another priest or deacon to minister the Baptism. Archdiocesan policy recommends that such permission be given only to a priest (or deacon) who has served in the parish before or who is a relative of the person being baptized. Permission may be given for a priest or deacon who is a personal family friend to celebrate the Baptism. If this is desired, the pastor should be notified well in advance. In cases of emergency (imminent danger of death) anyone may administer the Sacrament of Baptism as long as they desire to do what the Church does, and the correct form of words and pouring water is observed. In this case, if the person lives, the ceremonies of Baptism must still be performed by an ordained cleric at an appropriate time, although the actual Baptism itself is not repeated.

### CHILDREN

In ordinary circumstances, the Baptism of children seven years old or older is administered through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC). Please contact the pastor for more information. Exceptions to the requirement are generally not available.

### INFANTS

The vast majority of Baptisms performed at Saint Patrick Church involve children under the age of seven. Therefore, the remainder of this document deals exclusively with this case. The custom of baptizing children in their infancy in the Catholic

Church is ancient, going back to the early days of the Church during the time of the Apostles. The Baptism of children under the age of seven requires the consent of at least one of the parents (or guardians). It also requires a well-founded expectation that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith.

### SPONSORS (GODPARENTS) AND CHRISTIAN WITNESSES

The role of Sponsors is to help their Godchild lead a Christian life. Traditionally, the Sponsors are the ones who ensure that their Godchild receives a Christian upbringing if the parents are no longer able to fulfill that responsibility. They also help the parents in the ordinary circumstances of daily life - by their special concern for their Godchild, by their example, and by whatever assistance they can provide in raising the child. The Sponsors should be present at the Baptism to profess their Faith as representatives of the child's extended spiritual family and of the whole Church. During the liturgy, they declare their readiness to help the parents join their duty as Christian mothers and fathers".

What are the qualifications of the Sponsor?

A Sponsor must:

- Be designated by the child's parents.
- Have the intention of performing the role of Sponsor to the child.
- Be a member in good standing of the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Catholic Church.
- Be at least 16 years old.
- Have received First Communion and Confirmation.
- Not be the child's parent.
- Lead a life in harmony with the Faith and the role of Sponsor.

Sponsors are to certify in writing that they meet these requirements using the form provided.

### PROXY AND CHRISTIAN WITNESS

In some cases, a desired Sponsor is unable to be present for the Baptism ceremony itself. In this case, it is allowable to have a proxy for the actual Sponsor. The proxy must meet the same requirements as a Sponsor. Christian witnesses are baptized non-Catholics who have been validly baptized in their Christian religion. A Christian Witness is excused from the written certification requirement of the Sponsors.

## SPONSOR COMBINATIONS

You may choose any of the following combinations of Sponsors and Christian Witnesses:

Godmother and Godfather, or  
Godmother, or  
Godfather, or  
Godmother and male Christian Witness, or  
Godfather and female Christian Witness

Church law specifies one male or one female sponsor or one of each. We do recognize, however, that in some cultures families have a tradition of naming a large number of Godparents for their children. The pastoral staff here at Saint Patrick Church encourages these families to continue this tradition; but, the parents will be asked to name the two primary Godparents whose names will appear in the official records.

Parents who are unable to find a suitable Sponsor should discuss this with the Pastor. He may suggest a parishioner who would be willing to stand as a Sponsor.

Saint Patrick Parish expects these requirements to be met before Baptism:

- One or both parents must be a practicing Catholic.
- The family must be registered members of Saint Patrick Parish.
- One or both parents must have attended a Baptism Preparation Class within 3 years.
- Completed paperwork must be submitted at least one week before the Baptism.

If you have difficulty with any of these requirements please speak with the Pastor.

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS/PAPERWORK

The following paperwork must be complete and be submitted to the Parish Office at least one week before the Baptism:

- Parish membership registration form (if not already submitted).
- Completed Sponsor Certificates
- Baptism preparation class attendance certification if attended at another parish.

- Permission letter from home parish to perform Baptism at Saint Patrick Church for non-parishioners. (Requires prior approval of Pastor).

## BAPTISM PREPARATION CLASS

Baptism preparation classes are held individually with the Pastor. If you have attended an equivalent class at another parish within the past three years, you should provide written confirmation from that parish.

## ACCEPTABLE NAMES

The Church places very few restrictions on the choice of the child's name. It is not required, for example, that the child has a Saint's name, although this is certainly a good practice. The Church only requires that the child's name not be offensive to the Christian faith.

## OFFERING

In the Catholic Church, there is a long-standing tradition of a voluntarily offering to the Church on the occasion of the celebration of Sacraments. These offerings help to offset the operating expenses of the church, the materials used during the administration of the Sacrament, and the time and effort of the celebrant. The customary occasions for offerings are: Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, and Funeral. The recommended offering for Baptism at Saint Patrick Church is \$50.00.

## TIMES OF BAPTISM

Most infant baptisms here at Saint Patrick Church are celebrated individually, usually on Saturday mornings or afternoons (before or after the 12:10 p.m. Mass) or in between the Masses on Sunday (Mass times: 8:00 a.m.; 10:00 a.m.; 12:00 p.m). All baptisms must be scheduled by calling the Parish Office at 202-347-2713.

In general, Baptism is unavailable during Lent, Easter Sunday, and certain other Sundays as deemed necessary by the Pastor.

## CONTINUING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Parents and Sponsors should be aware that, by presenting the child for Baptism, they are undertaking an obligation of continuing religious education of the child. It is certainly true that the largest part of the child's religious formation will take place at

home, but this is not a reason to discount the importance of formal religious education and attendance at Mass as a family. While Saint Patrick Church does not have a formal religious education program for children, the Pastor will work with you to find the right religious education program for your child.

## CONCLUSION

We hope this document has provided adequate information to help you plan your child's Baptism. If you have any further questions, please contact the Pastor or the Parish Office at 202-347-2713 or [office@saintpatrickdc.org](mailto:office@saintpatrickdc.org).