

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHURCH

4954 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90029
Tel. (323) 660-0034 Fax (323) 660-0047

REQUIREMENTS FOR BAPTISM

Introduction

WELCOME to Immaculate Heart of Mary Church! Your parish priests and staff are ready to assist you in preparing for the Baptism of your child. This information sheet is meant to help answer some of your questions as you get ready for the Baptism of your child.

What is the Sacrament of Baptism?

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word." (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1213)

Requirements for Baptism at IHMC

- Submit the child's Birth Certificate. If the child is 7 years old or older, a special preparation is required through our RCIA Program for Children.
- Attend a Baptismal Preparation Class. This is required for both parents and Godparents. If you have attended already the same within the year, you need to submit a letter that certifies your attendance of that class with the name of the Parish conducting the class, location, time and date. Do not bring your child to the Class.
- A donation in the amount of \$50.00 per child is required (*non-refundable*). If you cannot afford this amount the Priest will help you ensure that your child will be baptized. Cash and checks payment only are preferred.

Choosing Godparents

From time to time questions and controversies arise as to who may serve as a Godparent for the Sacrament of Baptism. Please take some time to review the guidelines established by the Catholic Church concerning Godparent eligibility. These regulations should be considered before the parents of the child ask someone to be a Godparent for their son or daughter:

1. The decision as to who should be a Godparent should be based upon who would provide the best example of Catholic living for the child and not merely for reasons of maintaining family harmony. A Godparent is chosen not primarily to honor the Godparent, but for the well-being and faith development of the child.
2. In order to be a Godparent for Baptism, an individual must be a practicing Catholic, at least **16 years of age** and have received the Sacraments of Initiation (*i.e. Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation*). Furthermore, if this person is married, then the marriage must be a valid, sacramental marriage (*i.e. one recognized and blessed by the Catholic Church*).
3. For ordinary situations, the potential Godparent must be registered in a Catholic parish and able to obtain from his and her parish priest a letter of eligibility to be a Godparent. Baptized Catholics not registered to a Parish Church can be a Godparent provided he/she has complied with requirement #2.
4. Only one Godparent is required by Church law. This Godparent may be a man or a woman. However, if two Godparents are selected (*the more common practice*), then there must be one man and one woman chosen. In other words, a child cannot have two men and two women as Godparents.
5. In cases when a single parent presents his or her child for baptism, we require them to have two Godparents, a man and a woman to act as second parents to the child to be baptized.
6. In extraordinary situations when two Catholic Godparents cannot be found, then a baptized person who belongs to another Christian denomination (*e.g. Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian*) may serve as a Christian Witness. However, former Catholics who have left the Catholic Church for another Christian denomination are not permitted to serve as Christian Witnesses.

Since Baptism is the initial, foundational Sacrament in the life of a Catholic, great care must be taken in deciding who will serve as a Godparent. The guidelines above are meant to assist parents in making a reasonable and secure decision as to who will fulfill this critical role for their child. Since they are provided by the universal Church and individual priests are not vested with the authority to dispense from them, these guidelines are strictly followed at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.