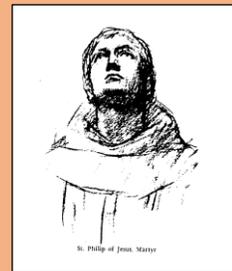


BAPTISM GUIDELINES



SAINT PHILIP OF JESUS CATHOLIC CHURCH

9700 Villita St.

Houston 77015

INTRODUCTION

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit 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."

St. Philip of Jesus Parish invites parents to attend our Initial Information Session as early as possible in the pregnancy. Participating in the preparation process during pregnancy allows appropriate time to discern whether baptism should or should not be celebrated once the child is born. Remember that the cornerstone of the Baptism process is the concept that there exists a basis of hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith. The information sessions will be held every last Sunday of the month at 12pm.

After having attended the information session, when parents want to request Baptism for their child, they must contact the Parish office and make an appointment. The primary purpose of this meeting is not only to register for the baptism preparation process, but also to determine the parents' intention to raise the child in the Catholic faith, to determine the parents' own relationship with the Catholic Church, and to answer any remaining questions or concerns.

The objectives of this first encounter are to:



- Establish a relationship family-parish
 - Share thoughts about themselves and their faith life
 - Begin to spiritually prepare for the birth to the faith of the child
 - Afford a time to answer any questions
 - Explain the program and the responsibilities of the parents as well as of the Church
- Understand the sacramental and liturgical significance of Baptism.

REQUIREMENTS FOR BAPTISM

The policy and procedure to baptize at St. Philip of Jesus Parish is the following:

- a. Be a registered member of the parish at least for six months. If you are registered at a different Parish, a letter is needed from your pastor granting permission to baptize here.
- b. Child must be under 7 years of age. If older should attend RCIA program, they have to go through 2 years of preparation to receive all three sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation and First Communion. The sacraments will be given to them on Easter Vigil.
- c. The child must have a Godparent (see Godparent's information below).
- d. Child's Parents and Godparents must attend St. Philip of Jesus Pre-Baptismal classes. (Classes can be taken in another church. They only have to bring a letter from the church where they did took the classes). Classes are the first two Fridays of every month from 7-9 pm.
- e. Baptisms are held on the first two Sundays of each month, after 1pm Mass. (No more than two children each Sunday)
- f. St. Philip of Jesus Parish does not charge any fee for the Sacraments, but we suggest a \$25 donation to the Parish. We appreciate your contribution.

g. Required documents:

- a. Birth certificate of the child. It is important that the parish be able to properly identify and verify the child's birth information when preparing the Baptism Certificate. It can take up to 3 months after the child is born to receive the birth certificate. If you do not yet have a birth certificate, please provide us with the Birth Verification Facts that you received at the hospital.
- b. Identification of the child's parents



Do we need to bring anything to the Baptism?

The child must be dressed in white or the family is to provide the child with a white baptismal bib. You will need to bring a Baptism candle and a little towel.

If the parents are not validly married in the Catholic Church, can the child be baptized?

There is nothing that prevents a child born to parents who are not validly married in the Catholic Church from being baptized provided that the parents of that child are properly disposed, have been appropriately prepared, understand the responsibilities that come with having the child baptized and are willing to fulfill the commitment undertaken to raise the child in the rich principles of the Catholic faith. St. Philip of Jesus welcomes with open arms your decision to baptize your child in the Catholic faith.

Also, at any time, if you would like to discuss preparing for marriage, as such, you may wish to discuss having your marriage convalidated (recognized) by the Catholic Church, please contact the office.

Who can be a Godparent?

When a godparent lives a Christian life in partnership with their godchild, both of them will experience the great joy of sharing a life of faith. To help ensure this, godparents must meet Canon Law requirements and Diocesan Guidelines:

1. A child must have one godparent, but can have one godmother and one godfather.
2. Any godparent must be at least 16 years of age (for maturity's sake) and be a practicing Catholic, and cannot be a parent of the child. Inspired by the Gospel and sustained by God's grace, a practicing Catholic gives sincere external expression to their interior faith through specific religious, moral, ethical behavior, which is in accordance with the teaching of Christ and the Catholic Church. Despite weaknesses and personal sinfulness, a practicing Catholic decides to make only those substantive life choices which follow the "Way, the Truth and the Life" of Christ.
3. Godparents must have received all three Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, First Eucharist, and Confirmation.
4. Godparents must live sacramental lives, i.e. attending Mass at least every Sunday, receiving Communion, making use of the sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.
5. Godparents must be registered members of a Catholic parish.

6. Godparents may not be living a life of habitual sin.
7. If married, godparents must either be in a valid Catholic marriage, or their marriage must be convalidated by the Catholic Church.
8. If single, godparents cannot be cohabitating.
9. Godparents must have the intention of undertaking the ministry of a godparent.

This may seem like a lot of rules, but their purpose is to ensure that the rich and beautiful faith of the Church is passed on to your child in the most loving and authentic way possible.

Can a non-Catholic Christian be a godparent?

No. Only a practicing Catholic who meets the qualifications can be a godparent or sponsor. However, a non-Catholic, baptized Christian who participates in the Baptism and accepts responsibility for helping raise the child to live a Christian life can participate in the Rite of Baptism as a "Christian Witness" (and so reflected on the baptismal certificate) if a Catholic godparent is also present. Likewise, a Christian, who was baptized and confirmed Catholic, and now practices in another Christian tradition, cannot be either a godparent or a Christian Witness.

The Catholic godparent's name is entered into the Parish Record Book as the "official" godparent or sponsor for baptism. Thus, if you wish to have additional persons bear witness at Baptism as Christian Witnesses and be listed as such, then you must also have one fully initiated (meaning that they have celebrated Confirmation) Catholic godparent who is not impeded from being a godparent as well.

Can a brother or sister be a godparent?

Brothers or sisters of a child to be baptized may indeed be godparents providing that they have completed their 16th year of life, have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function, be Confirmed Catholic and have celebrated their First Communion and not be bound by any canonical penalty (i.e., such as married outside the Catholic Church). It should be noted that specifics on who can and cannot be a godparent is a question that should be brought up during *your* Initial Information Session.

How to be a good Godparent?

We strongly encourage the godparents and Christian Witnesses to attend the baptism session with the parents so that they are fully formed to undertake the task ahead of them and sign a Commitment form. Being a Godparent is a lifelong privilege, and the class will help you prepare them to do the best job they can. The Christian life of the godchild is partially the Godparent's responsibility, so we want to make sure they are fully formed for the task that lies ahead.

There are many ways you can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your godchild:

- Pray for your godchild daily.
- Celebrate the anniversary of this holy day of Baptism each year with a visit or a card. As your godchild grows, listen to and share in the struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life and keep yourself informed on Catholic doctrine and values to be able to answer questions as they arise.
- Encourage a consistent life of faith through special cards, letters, or gifts, which celebrate holy events, Christmas, Easter, personal growth events, graduation, first job, and engagement.
- Participate in, or send assurance of prayer, as your godchild receives the other sacraments, particularly, First Communion and Confirmation, which complete initiation into the Church community, and Reconciliation.
- Be supportive of your godchild's parents in their role as the primary religious educators of their child.
- And most importantly, become a model of Catholic living for your godchild, through daily prayer, virtuous living and active participation in parish life and liturgy, particularly weekly Sunday Mass.

BAPTISM PREPARATION SESSIONS FOR PARENTS AND GODPARENTS

Parents need to be properly prepared for living out the commitment they are making (i.e., to raise their child in the Catholic faith) and for being able to celebrate the Sacrament with understanding as to its impact, beauty, significance, and nature. Therefore, parents are required to attend Baptism Preparation Sessions before their children are baptized. Unless of a dire emergency or grave cause, this cannot be exempted.

The role of a godparent is very valuable in the Christian formation of a baptized child. Therefore, godparents must be prepared in order to fulfill their roles in the Baptismal Rite and in assisting the parents in their duties of raising the child in the practice of the Catholic faith.

Do parents and godparents need to attend a preparation process again when another child is to be baptized? Should parents have completed Baptism preparation sessions at St. Philip of Jesus, and then within two years be blessed with another child, then the parents may not need to attend the process again. This will be determined at the Initial Information Session. Therefore, you will need to attend an Initial Information Session prior to scheduling the Baptismal Rite.



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