

ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH

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GUIDELINES FOR THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS

Congratulations on the birth of your child! We hope that all is well with the mother, child, and family. These guidelines are to assist you in preparing for the rebirth of your child by water and the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism. These guidelines are to be followed when baptizing infants and children who have not yet reached catechetical age. If your child is **in first grade in elementary school**, contact the Religious Education Office to register your child for the RCIA Program which is a two-year process.

The decision to have your child baptized is not something to be taken lightly; it must be made only after serious reflection. In the sacrament of Baptism, your child will begin the process of initiation into the Catholic Church, a process that continues through First Communion and is completed in Confirmation. You will be asked during the celebration of the baptism to promise God and the Church to raise your child in the practice of the faith and you are accepting the responsibility of being the first teacher(s) of your child in the ways of this faith. You will also nominate one or two other people of faith to be your child's baptismal sponsors, or godparents, and to assist you in fulfilling this obligation. Please read and follow these guidelines so that the preparation process and the baptism can both proceed smoothly. Please call the rectory a minimum of one week before your preferred date of Baptism to ensure that all the necessary paperwork has been received by the rectory.

Steps in the Preparation Process

1. **Read these guidelines.**
2. **Read the accompanying page “Some Laws of the Church Related to Baptism.”** Please use this information in deciding whether you are ready to accept the responsibility of being the parent(s) of a baptized child at this time and whether or not your proposed sponsors (godparents) are prepared and qualified.
3. **Completely fill out the Baptism Registration Form on the back of this page.**
 - a) **Call the rectory (805) 922-5826 to make an appointment for your pre-baptismal interview. Both parents** must attend the interview unless they are no longer together. Godparents do not come to the interview. Bring your completed form with you to the interview where it will be reviewed and discussed.
 - b) **If you do not live within the boundaries of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish** (south of Alvin & north of McCoy) or are not a registered parishioner, even if you attend Mass regularly in this church, you must request the **Letter of Permission to Baptize** from the parish in which you do live.
 - c) **A copy of the child's official Birth Certificate must be submitted at the interview.**
 - d) **A non-refundable processing fee of \$40 will be collected at the interview.**
4. **Parents and godparents must attend a pre-baptismal class.** You will receive a certificate of completion at the end of class. **It is the parents' responsibility** to submit all Pre-baptism Class Certificates to the Rectory before the week of the date scheduled to baptize. If you or sponsors attend this class at another parish or have attended a class within the last three years, present a certificate of attendance from that class instead of attending again. *Please do not bring children to class.*
5. **Celebrate the baptism.** Please arrive at the church 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time of Baptism.

A word on your donation: Catholics have an obligation to support their parish community with their “time, talent, and treasure.” Your donation on the day of the baptism goes *to the parish, not to the priest or deacon*. Please use the special envelope provided on the day of the baptism for your donation.

BAPTISM REGISTRATION FORM

Please do not leave questions unanswered. If a question does not apply, you may indicate that by writing N/A as an answer. If you do not understand or have doubts about any questions, please call the Rectory for assistance. It is important to provide complete and legal names of each person, please do not use nicknames or abbreviated names. Be aware that the Certificate of Baptism that you receive after your child is baptized is a legal document, therefore it is important to provide correct information.

Full Legal Name of Child _____
(As it appears on the birth certificate)

Date of Birth ____/____/____ City, State of Birth _____

Father's Name _____ Religion _____
(As it appears on your child's birth certificate)

Father's Address _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Mother's Full Maiden Name _____ Religion _____
(As it appears on your child's birth certificate)

Mother's Address(if different) _____ Zip Code _____ Phone _____

Are the parents registered members of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish? Yes ____ No ____ Envelope # _____

Full Legal Name of First Catholic Sponsor _____ Phone # _____
(Please verify spelling & legal name as this will be a permanent church record)

What Sacraments has this person completed? (Mark yes or no to the following)

Baptism (Catholic): Yes ____ No ____ Eucharist: Yes ____ No ____ Confirmation: Yes ____ No ____

Is this person married? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, is this person married in the Catholic Church? Yes ____ No ____

Is this person a **practicing** Catholic? Yes ____ No ____ Will he/she be present at the baptism? Yes ____ No ____

Full Name of Second Catholic Sponsor or Christian Witness _____ Phone # _____
(Please verify spelling & legal name as this will be a permanent church record)

What Sacraments has this person completed? (Mark yes or no to the following)

Baptism (Catholic): Yes ____ No ____ Eucharist: Yes ____ No ____ Confirmation: Yes ____ No ____

Is this person married? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, is this person married in the Catholic Church? Yes ____ No ____

Is this person a **practicing** Catholic? Yes ____ No ____ Will he/she be present at the baptism? Yes ____ No ____

*******For Office Use Only*******

Father: Class Required: _____ Excused: _____ Class Completion Date: _____

Mother: Class Required: _____ Excused: _____ Class Completion Date: _____

Sponsor 1: Class Required: _____ Excused: _____ Class Completion Date: _____

Sponsor 2: (Christian Witness) Class Required: _____ Excused: _____ Class Completion Date: _____

Preferred date of baptism: _____ Confirmed Date of Baptism: _____ Time: _____

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

Notes and Comments: _____

Amt. Paid: \$ _____ Method: _____ Date: _____ Receipt: # _____ Received by: _____

Minister: _____ Date: _____
(Print Name) (Minister's Signature)

Baptism Certificate Issued _____ Baptismal Record: Bk#: _____ Pg.#: _____ Ln#: _____ PCS _____

SOME LAWS OF THE CHURCH RELATED TO BAPTISM

To help you in making decisions related to your child's baptism and to understand the process better, please read this page before filling out the application form and having your pre-baptismal interview at the Rectory.

Canon 851. It is necessary that the Celebration of Baptism be properly prepared. Thus:

Canon 851.2 The 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; personally or through others, the pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together and where possible visiting them. This is the purpose of the pre-baptism program in each parish. The class is designed, according to the guidelines of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, to prepare parents and godparents to understand the sacraments, especially Baptism and its celebration, to understand the history and meaning of each of the symbols used in the celebration, to offer suggestions for raising children as Catholics, and for living Catholic family life.

Canon 855. Parents, sponsors and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to a Christian mentality is not given. Traditionally, children of Catholics have been given "*Christian*" names, i.e., the names of saints or Christian virtues. This law, instead, is meant to exclude names chosen deliberately by parents that are offensive to Christian belief or practice. There is rarely a problem with using a child's birth name.

Canon 856. Although baptism may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that ordinarily it be celebrated on a Sunday or if possible, at the Easter Vigil. Most of the baptisms at St Mary of the Assumption Church are on the **3rd Saturday of the month**. The schedule will be given to you at your interview. Private baptisms are permitted except in extenuating circumstances.

Canon 857.2 As a rule adult are to be baptized in their own parish church and infants in the church proper to their parents, unless just cause suggests otherwise.

Ideally, your child should be baptized in the church that he or she will be attending every Sunday with you until reaching adulthood and in which he or she will be celebrating First Communion, Confirmation, and going to confession. If you do not live within the parish boundaries of St Mary of the Assumption Church and are not registered here, you must bring to your interview a letter of permission from the parish in which you do live. We cannot baptize the children of other parishes without their own priest's permission.

Canon 867.1 Parents are obliged to see that infants are baptized within the first few weeks after birth; as soon as possible after the birth, or even before, parents are to go to the pastor to request the Sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it properly. If your child has passed the age of a few weeks and reached the age of a few months, **you are late!** Please call for your appointment as soon as possible. There are **no good reasons** to delay the baptism of the child that you love. As mentioned in the law itself, it is perfectly possible to make all the preparations for your child's baptism even before the birth. This is usually more convenient and helps to avoid unnecessary delays.

Canon 867.2 An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay.

Request that a doctor or nurse at the hospital call a priest or a deacon immediately if your baby is in danger of death. In the absence of a priest or deacon, anyone with the right intention may baptize. This includes doctors, nurses, sisters, other staff members, parents or other family members, etc.

Canon 868.1 For the licit baptism of an infant it is required that:

1. **The parents or at least one of them or the person, who lawfully holds their place, gives consent.** Normally, the "*person who lawfully holds their place*" is an adoptive parent with a final decree of adoption.
2. **That there be a founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is truly lacking the baptism is to be put off in accordance with the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason.** This is one of the reasons for the interview with the priest. A "*founded hope*" generally is based on the lives of the Catholic parent(s), that they live like people of Catholic faith and are therefore likely to faithfully pass it on to the baptized children entrusted to them by God and the church.
3. **faith and are therefore likely to faithfully pass it on to the baptized children entrusted to them by God and the church.**

Information about SPONSORS / GODPARENTS

Canon 872. Insofar as possible one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is... together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it. The role of the sponsor is not just honorary; it is an office in the church with serious responsibilities and obligations to child, family, and church. The church has established qualifications for those nominated by the parents. Your godparents' qualifications will be reviewed during your pre-baptismal interview.

Canon 873. Only one male or one female or one of each sex is to be employed (as sponsors). You may propose one or two qualified persons; if there are two, they must be one male and one female.

Canon 874.1 To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must: the word "*must*" used here does mean "*must*":

874.1.1 be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absences, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualification and intention of performing the role;

874.1.2 Have completed the sixteenth year, unless a different age has been established by the diocesan bishop or it seems to the pastor or minister that an exception is to be made for just cause;

874.1.3 be a Catholic who has been confirmed and who has already received the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and role to be undertaken;

The role of a "*sponsor*" in any organization is to present new members and to assist them in completing their initiation into the group. The sponsor is one who has completed the initiation process already. The three Sacraments of Initiation are Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation. To be a godparent, a person must have received all three of these Sacraments and be living a Catholic life. The lifestyle of the proposed sponsor(s) will be discussed in the pre-baptismal interview.

874.1.4 not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.

One of the most common penalties is that imposed on those who identify themselves as members of the Church but who choose to live lives that publicly contradict the moral teachings and laws of the Church: they may not receive the sacraments and they may not be appointed to the offices in the church (i.e., godparent) while the contradiction continues. Married sponsors **must** be married in the Church.

874.1.5 not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.

Canon 874.2 A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness and together with a Catholic sponsor. This law makes it possible for a friend and family member who is a baptized Christian, but not a Catholic Christian, to have a special role in your child's spiritual life. If there is one qualified Catholic godparent for your child, then you may propose a non-Catholic as a Christian witness, instead of having a second godparent. The Church cannot oblige such a person to make the same promise as a Catholic godparent, to help you raise your child in the Catholic faith; such a promise would violate the witness's conscience and beliefs. However, a Christian Witness can witness to the more basic truths which all Christian churches do share. Catholics are either qualified to be godparents or not, they may not act as Christian Witnesses.