

What happens when we are baptized?

Contemporary Catholics spend a great deal of time preparing for their own or their child's Baptism. There are new clothes to buy, and classes to take, and godparents to select, all leading up to that moment at Mass when the waters of Baptism touch the new initiate. But Baptism—and all sacraments, for that matter—are much more than the moment of celebration.

The ritual of Baptism does not bring God's love into being as if that love did not exist before the ceremony. Baptism is the Church's way of celebrating and enacting the embrace of God who first loved us from the moment of our conception. Baptism celebrates a family's and a community's experience of that love in the baptized.

Children under the age of 8 can be baptized through the Infant Baptism Rite.

Older children will be baptized through the Rite of Initiation For Children.

Signs and Symbols at Baptism

There are other life experiences—birth, death, washing, growing and so forth—that are celebrated in Baptism.

- The water represents life, death, cleansing and growth, and it recalls the flood waters of Noah's day and the saving waters of the Red Sea parted by Moses.
- The candle symbolizes our status as an "Easter people" and signifies the way that the Church "passes the torch" of Christian commitment to those being baptized.
- The white garment represents the Church's belief that Baptism sets us free from Original Sin.
- The chrism oil is used to make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of the person signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized. They are a new Christian anointed by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.

Why do we baptize at the Mass? Why not private?

Baptism happens not only to the individual, but also to Christ's body, the Church. That's why the rite insists that we celebrate Baptism in the Christian assembly, with the community present and actively participating. It is the community, after all, who is welcoming the new members, journeying with them, providing models for them, supporting and nourishing them. Baptism begins with God's love and care revealed to us through Christ. It continues with us, the Church, living and enacting God's love and care through Christ to the world. That's a serious commitment.

I was asked if I go to church, why does this matter?

The *Rite for Baptism of Infants* includes questions to the parents about their readiness to raise this child as a Catholic. The priest or deacon asks two questions: What name have you given the child? What do you ask of God's Church for this child?

After the parents give the child's name and respond, "Baptism," the priest or deacon says:

"You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of raising him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

What are the requirements for godparents?

To be a godparent--sponsor, a person must be chosen by the person to be baptized, or by the parents or guardians of a child, or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister of the sacrament. The godparent must not only have the intention of being a sponsor but also meet proper qualifications.

- At least sixteen years
- Fully initiated-- received the sacraments of holy Eucharist and confirmation,
- And "leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken."
- They cannot be impeded by some canonical penalty--if married, married in the Catholic Church.

The mother and father of the child cannot be sponsors. These are the same requirements for confirmation sponsors. (Cf. Code of Canon Law, No. 874.1).

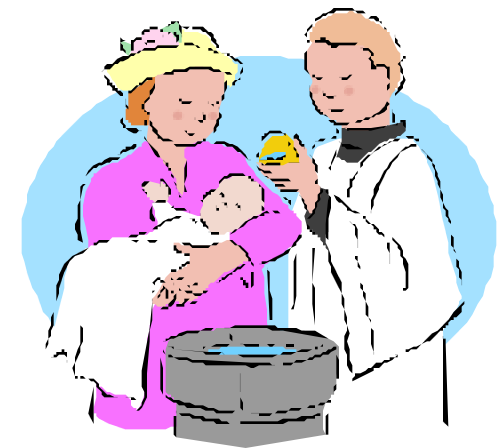
**Note Non-Catholic Godparents are identified as Christian Witnesses on church records.*

How can I apply?

- Call to 310-216-114 X 20 or email mjrodrick@hotmail.com
- Complete the Applications (Both for family and the Godparent (Sponsor))
- Church and class fees paid
 - Parishioner for at least 6 months \$75.00 (If parents are not registered a letter from current parish is required. If parents are not active in a parish, please discuss this with the Director.)
 - New parishioner \$100.00In this time of economic turmoil, we understand that this may put a burden on some of our families. If there is a concern, please notify the director and arrangements will be made. There is never a charge for the sacraments of the church.
- Mass attendance at Visitation for at least 3 months prior to the Baptism
- Complete the Basic Faith Session (can be taken within 1 year prior to Baptism)
- If Godparents are local they are expected to also attend this class or provide proof of attending a class at another location.

CHURCH OF THE VISITATION

Baptism 101



Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19