

Frequently Asked Questions From Parents

Can our baby be baptized if we're not married? No married in the Church?

Your baby's Baptism and your marriage are two separate issues. Your marital status may be discussed during your Baptism class, to encourage you to get married (or validate your marriage in the Church) if this is appropriate. However, as long as you are committed to raising your child as a Catholic, he/she may celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism and be welcomed into the Church.

Can our baby be baptized if we're not practicing Catholics?

Baptism is more than a rite of passage for an infant, or a washing away of original sin. Baptism is a sharing in the life of the risen Christ. Baptism is also the first step of initiation into the Christian community. During the Rite of Baptism, parents promise to raise their child in the practice of the faith. Parents who are not practicing members of the community may be asked to delay the Baptism of their child until they have reestablished that connection.

Who can be godparents?

Godparents take on two roles: that of support for the parents in the Christian upbringing of their child, and that of representing the Christian community into which the child is being initiated. Godparents must be practicing Catholics (fully initiated through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) who are mature enough (usually 16 years of age) to undertake this role. [*Code of Canon Law, Canon 872*]

Can a person of the Orthodox faith be a godparent?

A member of the Eastern Orthodox Church may be a godparent together with a Catholic. "For a just cause, it is permitted to admit the Christian faithful of another Eastern non-Catholic Church to the function of a sponsor, but always at the same time with a Catholic Sponsor." (*Eastern Code of Canon Law, Canon 685 par. 3.*) There must be at least one Catholic godparent.

How many godparents may we have?

One godparent is sufficient, but there may be two. When parents choose to have two godparents, one must be male and one female. It is not permissible to have two godmothers or two godfathers. [*Code of Canon Law, Canon 873*]

What is a Christian witness?

A Christian witness is a person baptized in another Christian denomination. They are a witness to the Baptism, but not a godparent. A Christian witness is allowed only when there is a Catholic godparent.

Can our baby be baptized in this parish if we do not live within the parish boundaries?

Baptism, like all of the sacraments, is a celebration of a living relationship with God and with the local believing community, the parish. The sacraments are celebrations of our Church and, as such, are normally celebrated in the parish where the family resides or is registered.

Continued over

How do we arrange to have our baby baptized in a parish other than the one where we normally worship?

If, for a good reason (for example, so extended family may attend), parents wish to have their baby baptized in another parish, they need to approach the Pastor of that parish to ask if he is willing to baptize their child. A letter of permission to have the baby baptized elsewhere must be obtained from the Pastor of the parish where the family usually worships. Normally, Baptism preparation may take place in either of the parishes.

Is there a fee or stipend? If so, what is it?

There is no charge to receive the sacrament. Sacraments are gifts of God, freely given. However, as Christians we have a duty to support our Church and the Christian Mission to evangelize. The duty is all the more important now given that the parish has a debt of over three and a half million dollars after the recent Church expansion. Families usually make an offering to the church at the time of Baptism. If God has blessed you with employment and you have been supporting the Church already over the last year, we suggest an offering of between one and two hundred dollars. If you have not been supporting the church prior to the Baptism, we suggest at least \$200.

Does our baby have to be dressed in white? Is a stole appropriate?

Clothing the child in a white garment has traditionally been a sign of purity in the newly-baptized. It is suggested that you bring something white (a bib, shawl, blanket) to place on the child at the appropriate time during the Rite of Baptism. A stole is not an appropriate symbol for the child to wear. It is a sign of ordination as a deacon, priest or bishop.

Does our child have to be baptized in order to attend a Catholic school?

It is important to check with the School Board that has jurisdiction where your child will attend school. Each Board interprets the admission requirements in their own way. Some School Boards require proof of a *parent's* Catholic baptism, especially if the child has not been baptized. This establishes their eligibility to direct their taxes to the Catholic Board. If the child is not baptized, the parents are usually encouraged to meet with the pastor of their parish (or his delegate) to discuss this issue.

What happens to children who are not baptized if they die?

God knows and loves us from the moment of conception. We commend these children to God's loving mercy, and remembering Jesus' words, "Let the children come to me," trusting that they too will be saved.

May a child be "rebaptized" if he/she was baptized in a hospital, etc. in an emergency situation?

A person may be baptized only once. However, parents should bring their child to complete the welcoming ceremonies (which are part of the Baptismal Rite) in their own parish.

Who may baptize?

The ordinary minister of Baptism is a bishop, priest or deacon. In the case of an emergency, any person may baptize, even if not baptized him/herself. This person must intend what the Church intends, use the Trinitarian formula (*in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*) and pour water.