

SACRAMENTAL PROTOCOL: INFANT BAPTISM

Infant baptism is the normative way to begin the initiation of children (defined as 6yrs of age and younger) into the Church.

Preparation sessions for parents and godparents provide a great opportunity for evangelization and/or continued conversion. In order that the parish may succeed in activating effectively the mission of evangelization, adult catechesis must be given priority and the proclamation of the Gospel to those alienated or who live in religious indifference must be planned. In this task, pre-sacramental gatherings can be fundamental (GDC 258).

It is the responsibility of the pastor to provide proper catechesis for the parents and godparents of the child.

Preparation sessions may be formatted as a single session or multiple sessions with a minimum total duration of 3 hours. There are resources available from various publishers to assist parishes with their programs and are listed as an addendum to this protocol.

Baptism Preparation includes the following topics:

1. Theology of Baptism
 - a. Baptism is the journey into Christ's death and resurrection, the foundation of our hope and our Christian life
 - b. Baptism gives us God's life in sanctifying grace
 - c. Baptism makes us children of God and temples of the Holy Spirit
 - d. Baptism cleanses us from original sin and all personal sin
 - e. Baptism incorporates us into the Church and calls us to serve
 - f. Through Baptism we are priest, prophet, and king
 - g. Baptism, the gateway to life in the Spirit, is necessary for the other sacraments and imprints an indelible mark on our soul that consecrates us for Christ
 - h. Who can minister this sacrament?

2. Roles of Parents and Godparents in Faith Formation
 - a. The Church obliges parents to seek the Baptism of their child within the first few weeks after the birth of the child (Canon 867)
 - b. Godparents/Sponsors are to be selected by the parents according to the requirements found in Canon 872 which states that at least one sponsor is required.
 - c. Godparents must meet the qualifications stated on the Diocesan Sponsor Covenant: age minimum of 16yrs, chosen by the parent, fully initiated, married in the Catholic Church, living out their faith, and not be the parent of the one to be baptized.
 - d. Godparents must fully complete and sign the covenant form and attend preparation sessions per parish policy.



- e. Baptism preparation completed at another parish may be submitted for approval.
 - f. If the marital status of the parents is not in accordance with the laws of the Church, they should be invited to begin the process toward convalidation. Their children are welcomed for Baptism regardless of marital status if the parents accept their responsibility to assure their faith formation. Where faith practice is lacking, Baptism preparation is an opportunity to invite parents into greater communion with the Church and to foster their own spiritual growth.
 - g. The parents and godparents must help the grace of Baptism to unfold & to grow. They and the whole ecclesial community bear the responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.
3. Responsibilities of Baptism
- a. Baptism is the source of new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth (CCC1254).
 - b. Sanctifying grace enables belief and hope in God, living under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and growing in goodness through virtue
 - c. Baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers.
 - d. Baptism implies two things: communion in and with the Church, and mission to the world.
 - 1. As a member of the Church, the baptized person is called to be subject to others, to serve the Church and to obey Church leaders.
 - 2. The baptized participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God.
4. Familiarization with the Rite of Baptism
- a. A thorough explanation of the Rite of Baptism
 - 1. Signs & Symbols
 - 2. Prayers
 - 3. Spoken responses & ritual actions
 - 4. Form and Matter
 - b. Promises made by Parents and Godparents

