

# Baptism Guidelines

January, 1998

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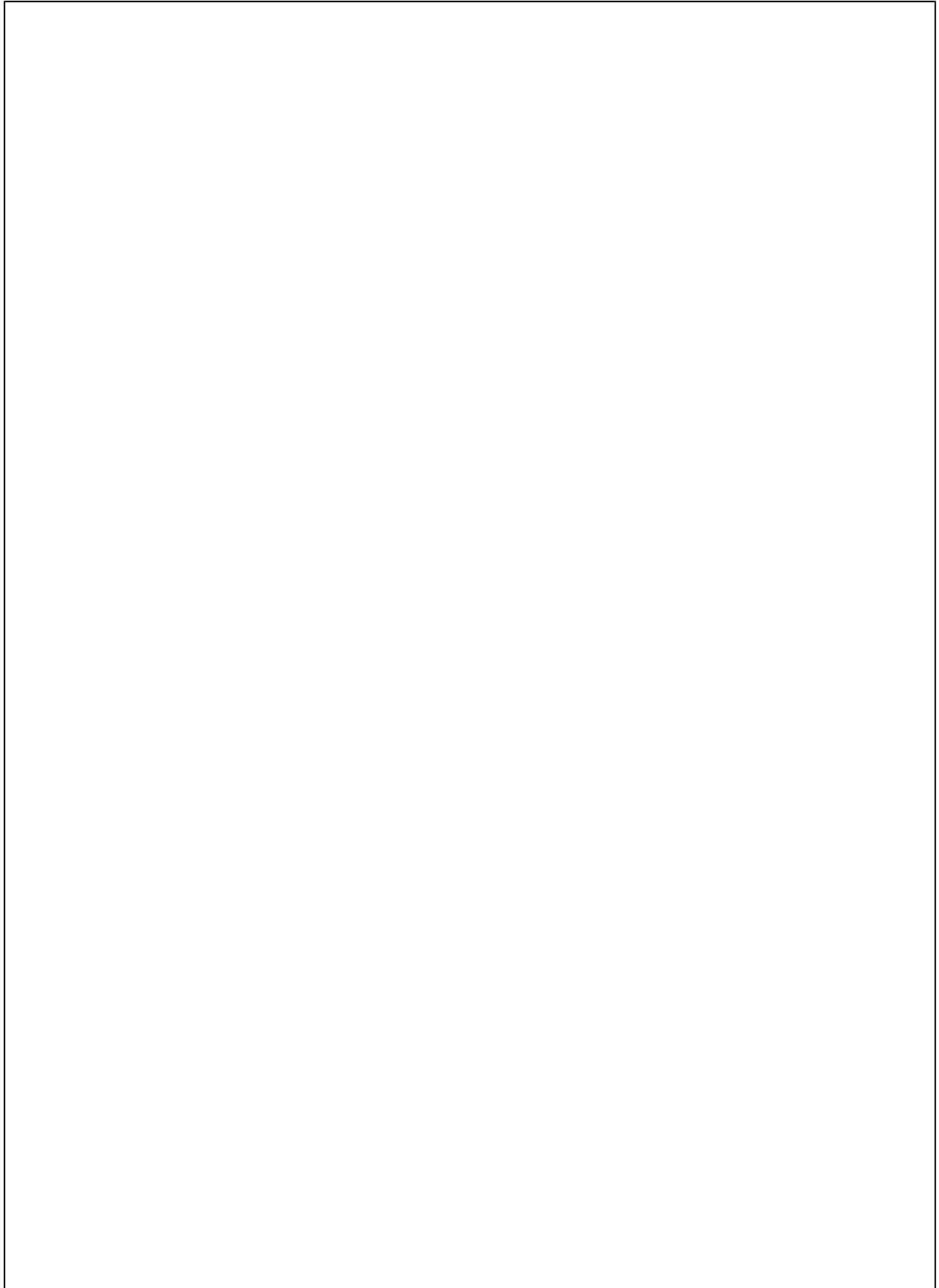
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# GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISM OF INFANTS

(And individuals who have not achieved the use of reason.)

1. Baptismal Preparation Teams are encouraged for all parishes. The Sacramental Prep Office will offer assistance if needed.
2. Pastors responsibilities include the following:
  - become a member of parish Baptismal Preparation Teams when possible
  - provide Baptismal Preparation Teams with the names of candidates for Baptism
  - provide teams with information regarding special circumstances such as single parents, blended families (re-married), divorced, widowed, special needs (disabilities) etc. so that appropriate catechesis can be given
  - determine whether repeat Baptismal preparation is necessary when there is more than one child in the family. It is, however, recommended that the Rites (see no. 6 below) be celebrated with each child
  - record the Baptism (**Canon 877**)
3. Baptism formation is to be provided for parents, the entire family, and godparents. In cases where godparents are not geographically present, they can be catechized in creative ways. (pg. A-29)
4. Formational sessions are to be held either at parish facilities or in individual homes with the number of sessions being determined by the Baptismal Preparation Teams.
5. All parents, regardless of religious affiliation, are encouraged to participate in Baptismal sacramental preparation and celebration.
6. The Rite of Blessing and the Rite of Choosing should be prayerfully prepared and celebrated between the appropriate phases.
7. **Canon 868** -  
When an infant or child is being adopted, Baptism is to be delayed until the legal process is complete.



**PREPARATION PROCESS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS**

<b>First Phase:</b>	<b>Call from God</b>
<b>Time:</b>	Ongoing
<b>Aim:</b>	Instruct the faithful on the significance of Baptism and the Community's responsibility to the newly baptized
<b>Content:</b>	Preaching; catechesis adapted to minors, youth and adults; invitation to expecting parents to contact the parish in order to begin the process of preparation for their child's Baptism.

**CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF BLESSING OF  
EXPECTANT PARENTS / NEW PARENTS**

<b>Second Phase:</b>	<b>Formation of the Individual and Family</b>
<b>Time:</b>	During the pregnancy or after the birth of the child
<b>Aim:</b>	Deepening the family's understanding of Baptism and the specific obligations of the parents, godparents and other family members.
<b>Content:</b>	Catechesis concerning the sacrament of Baptism

**CELEBRATION OF THE RITE OF CHOOSING BAPTISM**

<b>Third Phase:</b>	<b>Preparation and Reflection</b>
<b>Time:</b>	Prior to the celebration of Baptism
<b>Aim:</b>	Preparation for the liturgy of Baptism
<b>Content:</b>	Time for reflection; immediate preparation for the Celebration of the sacrament of Baptism

**CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM  
IDEALLY AT SUNDAY EUCHARIST**

<b>Fourth Phase:</b>	<b>Continuing Growth in the Faith</b>
<b>Time:</b>	Following Baptism
<b>Aim:</b>	Assist the parents in the spiritual formation of their child
<b>Content:</b>	Deepening of the understanding of the Baptismal call with emphasis on mission and discipleship

## **EXPLANATION OF THE RITES**

The celebration of the Rite of Blessing of Expectant Parents / New Parents ritualizes the desire of parents to have their children baptized in the Catholic Church. This rite involves God's blessing on these parents who seek baptism for their children.

The celebration of the Rite of Choosing Baptism ritualizes the decision of the parents to have their children baptized in the Catholic faith. This rite formally acknowledges the parents' choice to have their children baptized as Catholic Christians.

The celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism is the highpoint of the process for the sacrament of the baptism of infants. The Sacrament of Baptism is the official rite by which a child becomes a member of the Catholic Church.

# FIRST PHASE: CALL FROM GOD

**TIME:** This first phase of the preparation process for the sacrament of Baptism for infants is to be an ongoing activity within every faith community. The dignity of Baptism

**AIM:** Parish faith communities are to help their members understand the significance of Baptism and deepen the awareness of the community's responsibility to the newly baptized. In a real sense this first phase provides the "atmosphere" of a parish community that understands the dignity of Christian Baptism and takes seriously its apostolic mission to "hand on the faith" and the role of the baptized should permeate every aspect of parish life.

**CONTENT:** Those parishes which have implemented the *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults* should already be involved in the first phase. In the public rites of this process the parish community prays for and supports all those who are preparing for the entrance into the Catholic Church. The parish community surrounds these individuals with catechists, sponsors and godparents who journey with them and in this way model the initiation process that is normative in the Catholic Church.

Every parish community has many structures already in place that should be instrumental in helping to create an "atmosphere" that proclaims that baptism is central to our life in faith. Some of these structures include:

- Religious Education programs, including adult education and family catechesis programs, which provide rich opportunities to grow in one's awareness of the importance of Baptism.
- Sacramental preparation programs, especially the preparation of Baptism for infants, Confirmation, and first Eucharist, are natural occasions for discussing the significance of Baptism.
- The liturgical life of the parish must be grounded in an understanding that Baptism is central to our worship. Feasts, such as the Baptism of the Lord, are opportunities for the entire assembly to come to a fuller baptismal awareness. The celebration of the sprinkling rite on each of the Sundays of the Easter Season enhance the appreciation of Baptism. Homilies should be instrumental in helping members of the community live out their Baptism.
- Regular bulletin announcements inviting and welcoming those expecting a baby.

Perhaps the best indication that a faith community truly understands the importance of Baptism is the celebration of the Baptism of infants at the Sunday Eucharist. When a parish community continually witnesses and participates in the Baptism of its children, it is inevitable that the faith community will come to a new awareness of its own baptismal dignity.





## **RITE OF BLESSING OF EXPECTANT PARENTS AND NEW PARENTS**

Explanatory Notes:

- (1) *This rite is prayed with those expectant parents and/or parents with children who will be baptized in the parish. The Rite of Blessing of Expectant Parents and New Parents may take place any time before, during or after the second phase. This rite should take place in an atmosphere conducive to prayer.*
- (2) *This rite may be prayed individually with each family preparing for Baptism (possibly at their home) or with a group of parents preparing for Baptism (in church, in a home, or in a classroom) or during Sunday Mass with the parents preparing for Baptism. If prayed at Mass, this rite follows the Homily and includes the Prayer of Blessing and Litany.*
- (3) *A priest, deacon or lay minister may lead this rite.*

**+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Brothers and sisters, let us bless the Lord Jesus, who in the womb of the Virgin Mary became like us. Blessed be God forever.**

**RESPONSE: BLESSED BE GOD FOREVER.**

Scripture:	Luke 1: 39-45 / The baby leapt in my womb for joy. or
(Outside Mass, someone other than the lay leader can proclaim the reading)	Luke 1: 26-38 / You shall conceive and bear a son. or Luke 2: 1-14 / She gave birth to her firstborn son.

**God, the Lord of life, brings every human creature into being, and rules and sustains the life of each one of us. Bless these parents who prepare to have their children baptized in the faith of Jesus Christ. These parents are partners in God's love and seek the Lord's blessing. They await the new birth of Baptism for the child they have conceived (adoption: received). The gift of faith awaits those to be baptized.**

**LITANY:**

**Christ the Lord, the blessed fruit of Mary's womb, by the mystery of His Incarnation filled the world with his grace and goodness. Let us therefore raise our voices to praise Him, saying:**

**RESPONSE: PRAISE TO YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Christ our Lord, you bless the love of these parents as they celebrate or await to celebrate the gift of new life, we pray to the Lord..... **R.**

Christ our Lord, you assumed our nature in order that we may be reborn as children of God, we pray to the Lord..... **R.**

Christ our Lord, you give the example of Mary and Joseph to N. and N. that they may be loving parents, we pray to the Lord..... **R.**

Christ our Lord, through the ministry of parents, you fill the Church with joy by enriching us with new children, we pray to the Lord..... **R.**

**OUR FATHER:**

**Jesus Christ nourishes our faith and builds up our hope, and so we pray as He taught:**

**PRAYER OF BLESSING:**

*(The presider imposes hands [outstretched or touching those preparing for Baptism]; those present are invited to impose their hands over the parents to be blessed. The imposition of hands is a liturgical gesture found in the Old Testament, continued in the New Testament, and still used in the Church today. It expresses identity and solidarity between the one imposing hands and the one receiving the imposition. With the presider and the gathered assembly, the parents seeking Baptism for their child (ren) are blessed by the believing, baptized community.)*

**Gracious Father, your Word, spoken in love, created the human family.  
And, in the fullness of time, your Son, restored your family in friendship.  
Hear the prayers of N. and N. who gather here in the hope of baptizing  
their children into the Catholic faith. Calm their fears when they are anxious.  
Watch over and support these parents and bless their children with good health.  
As members of the Christian family, may they praise you and glorify you  
through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever.**

**R. Amen**

**+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**POSSIBLE SONGS:**

Sing a New Church  
One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism  
Be Not Afraid

Sing a New Song  
O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
The Magnificat

## SECOND PHASE: FORMATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY

**TIME:** During the pregnancy and/or after the birth of the child.

**AIM:** Deepening the family's understanding of Baptism and the specific obligations of the parents, godparents and other family members.

- CONTENT:**
- Demonstrate a spirit of acceptance and friendship to the parents on behalf of the parish where the child is being baptized. This could be accomplished at a home visit. (pg. A-35)
  - Provide an opportunity to discuss the significance of the birth and Baptism for the family and community and to reflect on the participant's hope for the child. This could be presented at a home visit (pg. A-35)
  - Baptism is to be seen as a sacrament of initiation, the first step in life-long Christian faith formation.
  - Present the baptismal process as modeled on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults.
  - Explore the faith life and practice of parents and discuss the commitment they are making to assume their responsibility for faith formation and Catholic practice. (pg. A-31)
  - Provide an overview of the history of Baptism in order to understand and appreciate its importance for individual and communal faith formation. (pg. A-30)
  - Understand the importance of the symbols (water, candle, white garment, chrism, oil, and gathered community) and ritual actions (sign of the cross, anointing, pouring, exorcism) of Baptism. (pg. A-37)
  - Present an understanding of original, personal and social sins. (pg. A-38)
  - Provide guidance and essential information on choosing godparents. (pg. A-29)
  - Explain the significance of a Christian name for the child. (pg. A-37)
  - Affirm the vocation of Christian parenting. (pg. A-31)
  - Explain the duty and responsibility of godparents (pg. A-29), family members, and the community in faith formation.



## THE RITE OF CHOOSING BAPTISM

### Explanatory Notes:

- (1) This rite is prayed with those parents whose children will be baptized. The Rite of Choosing Baptism may take place any time before, during or after the third phase. This rite should take place in an atmosphere conducive to prayer.
- (2) This rite may be prayed individually with each family preparing for Baptism (possibly at their home) or with a group of parents preparing for Baptism ( in church, in a home, or in a classroom) or during Sunday Mass with the Parents preparing for their child's Baptism. If prayed at Mass, this rite follows the Homily in which reference should be made to the Rite of Choosing Baptism. At Mass, parents are only asked the two questions and blessed.
- (3) A priest, deacon or lay minister may lead this rite.

+ **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Brothers and sisters, you have gathered in the desire of having your children baptized in the Catholic faith. As Christians, we walk in the light of Christ and learn to trust the Lord's wisdom. Commit your lives daily to God's care, so that you may come to believe in God with all your heart. As members of the Catholic family, we celebrate our faith in word and sacrament. May you find nourishment at the table of God's word and at the table of the Eucharist. Together, as family, we journey to the kingdom of God.**

Scripture:	Matthew 28: 18-20 / Christ sends his apostles to baptize
	or
(Outside Mass, someone other than the lay leader can proclaim the reading)	Mark 10: 13-16 / Jesus loves children.
	John 7: 37-39 / Streams of living water.

**Scripture proclaims that all are called to the waters of Baptism. You have accepted your role as a Christian parent with responsibility and love. And so, I ask you the following questions:**

**What do you ask of God's Church for N.?** (*Name of each child to be baptized*)  
(Each family is asked this question. The answer should ideally come from their hearts. Therefore, each answer could be different. Hopefully, the adults respond with an elaboration on such ideas as **BAPTISM, FAITH, ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH, THE GRACE OF CHRIST**, and so on. The adult response characterized by brevity and conciseness.)

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

**(Each family answers I DO.)**

**PRAYER OF BLESSING:**

**In Baptism, Christ will come to meet your children.  
In this sacrament, they will be given countless gifts:  
they will be freed from sin; they will become members  
of the Church; they will become God's own children.  
Because we are unable to accomplish such wonders,  
we must rely on God's love and pray together  
with humility and trust.**

*( The presider imposes hands [outstretched or touching those preparing for Baptism]: those present are invited to impose their hands over the parents to be blessed. The imposition of hands is a liturgical gesture found in the Old Testament, continued in the New Testament, and still used in the church today. It expresses identity and solidarity between the one imposing hands and the one receiving the imposition. With the presider and the gathered assembly, the parents seeking baptism for their child (ren) are blessed by the believing, baptized community.)*

**Gracious Father, your Word became flesh and dwells in our midst.  
Baptism introduces your children to a new life of grace in Jesus Christ.  
Keep these families under your protection and strengthen them in their  
decision to have their children baptized in the Catholic faith.  
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, for ever and ever.**

**R. Amen**

**+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**POSSIBLE SONGS:**

All the Earth ( Psalm 100, Deiss)  
Eye Has Not Seen (Haugen)  
Where Charity and Love Prevail

We Walk by Faith (Haugen)  
On Eagles Wings (Psalm 91. Joncas)  
Faith of Our Fathers

## THIRD PHASE: PREPARATION AND REFLECTION

**TIME:** Prior to the celebration of Baptism.

**AIM:** Preparation for the liturgy of Baptism.

**CONTENT:** The immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism is a reflection on the liturgical rite.

The following aspects of the baptismal liturgy will require special attention:

**The dialogues** - The parents and godparents will need to review and plan the dialogues in which they have a role. This is especially true of the opening dialogue when they are asked the name of the infant and what they are asking of the church. Parents can be encouraged to respond in their own words.

**Renunciation of sin and profession of faith** - Parents and godparents are helped to explore their own beliefs and their relationship with God.

**The baptismal life** - The consequences and expectations of the liturgy of Baptism must be considered. These are expressed throughout the rite. For example, at the beginning of the rite the celebrant tells the parents that it is their responsibility to train the child in the practice of the faith. He then asks, "Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?" This session should help parents in their understanding of what this responsibility entails.

**The theological significance** - of each of the following is also reviewed:

- Signing the child with the Sign of the Cross
- Symbolism of water
- Blessing of the water
- Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens
- Anointing with Holy Chrism
- Lighting the infant's candle from the Paschal Candle
- Presentation of the white garment
- Presentation of the child to the community

**The Sunday readings** - The group should be led in a reflection of the scripture readings for the Sunday on which the Baptism will be occurring and how they impact the life of a baptized person. If several families are present, this can be done in small groups with each family concentrating on the readings for their particular baptismal liturgy.





**AN OUTLINE**  
**OF THE**  
**CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM OF INFANTS AT SUNDAY EUCHARIST**

Explanatory Notes:

*Baptism should take place on Sunday, the day on which the Church gathers publicly to celebrate the paschal mystery. The Church directs that baptisms of infants may be celebrated during Sunday Mass so that the entire community may be present and the necessary relationship between Baptism and Eucharist may be clearly seen. (Rite of Baptism for Children, Number 9)*

After the Opening Hymn, the Sign of the Cross, and Greeting, the Presider celebrates the **RECEPTION OF THE CHILD(REN)**: the address to the parents, the godparents, and the signing of the cross on the child (ren). Ideally, this should take place at the baptismal font or at the church door. After the Rite of Reception, the Presider goes to his chair and the family with infant to be baptized return to their seats for: Opening Prayer, Liturgy of the Word, Homily, and General Intercessions.

The **CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM** occurs around the baptismal font. The presider or deacon with the family and infant process to the baptismal font as the Litany is sung.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism

(This Prayer and Anointing could possibly occur prior to Mass.)

Blessing and Invocation of Water

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

(addressed to the parent (s), godparents, the family and the entire assembly)

Baptism (followed by a baptismal hymn, ex. There is One Lord, Taize)

Anointing with Chrism

Clothing with White Garment

(The infant has thus far been clothed with diaper, undershirt, and blanket. Now the baptismal garment is placed on the baby by the mother of the child. If the child is older than an infant, an appropriate white garment is placed on the child.)

Lighted Candle

Ephphetha or Prayer Over Ears and Mouth (optional)

Following the ritual at the baptismal font, the presider may acknowledge the newly baptized to the assembly. As the presider and deacon with family return to their places for the preparation of altar and presentation of gifts, a baptismal hymn would be appropriate. Mass continues as usual.

**THE CONCLUDING RITES** include: Blessing for the Mother, Blessing for the Father, Concluding Prayer, and Blessing. These blessings may be prayed after Mass or possibly as part of the final blessing at Mass.

Ideally, baptisms at Mass should not extend the entire Liturgy beyond one hour.

**AN OUTLINE**  
**OF THE**  
**CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM OF INFANTS OUTSIDE MASS**

The priest or deacon gathers with the family and the one to be baptized at the church door for the **RECEPTION OF THE CHILD (REN)**. This rite welcomes a new member into the Church family. Questions are addressed to the parent (s), godparents. The family gathered for the baptism is invited to sign the infant's forehead with a cross.

The **CELEBRATION OF GOD'S WORD** may occur in the church body allowing the people to sit.  
Scripture Reading  
General Intercessions  
Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing Before Baptism

The **CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM** occurs around the baptismal font.  
The priest or deacon gathers with the family and those to be baptized at the font:

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water  
Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith (addressed to parent (s), godparents and all those gathered)  
Baptism (followed by baptismal hymn, ex. There is One Lord by *Taize*)  
Anointing with Chrism  
Clothing with White Garment  
(The infant has thus far been clothed with diaper, undershirt, and blanket.  
Now the baptismal garment is placed on the newly baptized by the mother of the child.)  
Lighted Candle  
Ephphetha or Prayer Over Ears and Mouth (optional)

The **CONCLUDING RITES** occur around the altar. The priest or deacon gathers with the newly baptized and parents, godparents and family at the altar.

Lord's Prayer  
Prayer for Mother  
Prayer for Father  
Concluding Prayer  
Blessing

# FOURTH PHASE: CONTINUING GROWTH IN THE FAITH

**TIME:** Following Baptism; ongoing

**AIM:** Deepening of the understanding of the baptismal call with emphasis on mission and discipleship.

**CONTENT:** The celebration of the sacrament of Baptism initiates a child into the faith life of the Church. In order for the child's own faith life to grow, it must be fully nurtured. Parents have first and foremost responsibility in this regard. The parish community must continue to support the parents in the Christian upbringing of their child according to Catholic tradition.

Some possible suggestions:

1. A parish minister or a member of the baptismal team visits the home of the newly baptized child. The purpose of this visit is to help the family reflect on the liturgy of Baptism and its importance to the family (refer to pg. A-34). A gift from the parish community could be given to the child at this time.
2. The parish community develops a quality pre-school and religious education program that assists parents in their role as primary religious educators of their children.
3. The parish community sponsor a yearly "Faith:Familystyle Workshop." This workshop, presents a simple process that helps families explore their unique holiness and helps parents form the faith of their child. (pg. A-27)
4. The parish community gathers all parents of children who have been baptized the previous year for a "pot-luck" supper and a presentation on some aspect of faith development. This group may wish to make this gathering an annual event.
5. Present parenting classes.
6. Sponsor Mom / Dad and Tots groups.
7. Keep in touch with families through regular mailings provided by the Family Life Office or "Parenting Letters" (pg. A-33 & A-34).
8. The parish community continues to implement this process of preparation with Baptisms at Sunday Eucharist which will be a constant reminder to all of the parish's support and interest in the new members of its' community.



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## **BAPTISMAL PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Preparation and Start-up**

In order to present an effective process of family preparation for Baptism, parish leaders will have to take into consideration a number of issues and take certain actions prior to actually beginning to prepare the parish families. As in any well run process, careful planning and discussion among the concerned individuals is essential. The preparatory functions can be dealt with under five headings:

1. Establish parish needs.
2. Define the goals of the baptismal process.
3. Decide on implementation for each phase of the baptismal preparation process.
4. Develop baptismal team structure and operating procedures.
5. Introduce the process to the parish as a whole.

### **1. Establish parish needs**

Each parish is unique and requires a slightly different approach. Factors such as location (rural or city), ethnic mix, economic differences, size and parish facilities will impact upon decisions made.

- The introduction of a revised baptismal process may mean a fairly drastic change that has to be handled with care and empathy for all parishioners. This may be the case where a parish approached Baptisms as strictly a private affair or where lay people were never involved in preparation.
- Another need for some parishes is an assessment of the worship space. Celebration of Baptism also encourages parishes to review their baptismal appointments: baptismal font (size and location) ; ambry (container for three oils); Easter candle; individual baptismal candle.

### **2. Define the goals of the baptismal process**

It is important for the parish leaders to enunciate just what the baptismal process is intended to do, for both the family requesting the sacrament as well as for those carrying out the preparation. The input of the pastor in consultation with the laity is fundamental in establishing the goals and responsibilities of participants on the baptismal team. It cannot be over emphasized that preparation is essential and it must take place in an atmosphere of faith and love:

- Write two or three statements of primary goals touching upon the hospitality/welcoming, the educational and communal aspects.
- Identify in general terms how the various primary parish participants (clergy, religious, lay persons) will contribute towards achieving the goals.



### **3. Decide on implementation for each phase of the baptismal preparation process**

Each parish, in reviewing the four phases of the baptismal process, must decide how best to implement its catechesis. The four phases (pgs. A-5, A-9, A-13 and A-17) are essential components for baptismal formation.

After parents contact the parish requesting Baptism, a personal home visit is appropriate in order to welcome the child and discuss pertinent information. One or two parish meetings will be needed to provide the necessary baptismal catechesis. It is important that parents, family members, and godparents feel welcomed and supported throughout all phases of the process.

### **4. Develop baptism team structure and operating procedures**

Team members have many important tasks to fulfill in the faith community during the period leading up to, during and after the Baptism. Consistency and clarity of roles for each team member is needed if the process is to take place with understanding and collaboration at all levels.

- Team Roles - Depending upon parish size and number of Baptisms, the team may consist of many individuals or a number of the roles can be combined:

Clergy, Pastoral Council Religious Education Chairperson, Baptismal Program Coordinator, and possible members to coordinate home visits, sessions, the baptismal ceremony, and continuing growth in faith .

- Team Responsibilities - A list of responsibilities for each position on the baptismal team would be beneficial in order that each member could better understand each others role and how the workload has been distributed.
- Parish Responsibilities - Team members should be aware of what role other parish groups, such as the liturgy committee, music ministry, secretary, Christian Initiation or the faith community in general have in making the process a success.

### **5. Introduce the process to the parish as a whole**

Time should be taken to make the entire faith community aware of a new baptismal process that is to be introduced so that all will feel part of it, be aware of the significance of preparation and will be encouraged to actively support the baptismal team in its ministry.

- Clergy should introduce the process during a homily relating Baptism to the dying and rising of Christ. The Easter Season is an appropriate liturgical time for this introduction.
- A written explanation of the process should be distributed to all parishioners. (pg. A-23)

**BULLETIN INSERTS EXPLAINING THE BAPTISMAL  
PREPARATION PROCESS**

**Baptismal Preparation Process**

Baptism is a parish event. We welcome an infant into the new life of the community of believers who profess faith in Jesus Christ! The family of the infant to be baptized is intrinsic to the process of forming this small child into the faith life of the Christian community. There is a process for baptismal formation in the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese. Like the process of adult initiation, preparation for the Baptism of infants is a four phase process. First the family feels a call from God to have their child baptized. Second, there is a phase of formation in understanding the sacrament of Baptism. Third, the family needs to prepare for the celebration of Baptism and reflect on its meaning. Fourth, the newly baptized and the family continue to grow in faith.

**Baptismal Preparation Process**

Each sacrament deserves catechesis. Before an infant is baptized, the parish community with its pastor assumes responsibility to prepare each family for the celebration and effects of this sacrament. Baptism is a public event. As much as possible, each parish should regularly baptize infants at Sunday Mass (but not during the Lenten Season). Preparation for the sacrament of Baptism is a serious process. Our parish will develop a baptismal preparation process for families seeking to have their infants baptized. As a parish we support all those involved in the process of preparation for the sacrament of Baptism.

**Baptismal Preparation Process**

The Baptism of an infant celebrates the faith of the Christian community (with its new member.) In order for Baptism to be a genuine celebration of entrance into the life of the Church, there is a process of baptismal preparation. Each family wishing to have their baby baptized enters into serious preparation for this sacrament. The parish will provide catechesis and prayer as each family prepares to have its infant baptized into the life of Christ. The parish community supports and prays for those preparing to have their infants baptized. The Catholic Church believes the sacraments to be the life blood of Christians. Baptism first introduces the Christian to this sacramental life. The parish will provide a baptismal preparation process so that the celebration and subsequent grace of Baptism will touch the hearts and lives of families and infants.



## CANONS

**CANON 840-** The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. Actions of Christ and of the Church, they are signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about. Thus they contribute in the most effective manner to establishing, strengthening and manifesting ecclesiastical communion. Accordingly, in the celebration of the sacraments both the sacred ministers and all the other members of Christ's faithful must show great reverence and due care.

**CANON 843- § 1.** Sacred ministers may not deny the sacraments to those who opportunely ask for them, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.

§2. According to their respective offices in the Church, both pastors of souls and all other members of Christ's faithful have a duty to ensure that those who ask for the sacraments are prepared for their reception. This should be done through proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, in accordance with norms laid down by the competent authority.

**CANON 845- §1.** Because they imprint a character, the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and orders cannot be repeated.

§2. If, after diligent enquiry a prudent doubt remains as to whether the sacraments mentioned in d1 have been conferred at all, or conferred validly, they are to be conferred conditionally.

**CANON 846- §1.** The liturgical books, approved by the competent authority, are to be faithfully followed in the celebration of the sacraments. Accordingly, no one may on a personal initiative add to or omit or alter anything in those books.

**CANON 849** Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments, is necessary for salvation, either by actual reception or at least by desire. By it people are freed from sins, are born again as children of God and, made like to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by washing in real water with the proper form of words.

**CANON 851-** The celebration of baptism should be prepared. Accordingly:

2° the parents of a child who is to be baptized, and those who are to undertake the office of sponsors, are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attaching to it. The parish priest is to see to it that either he or others duly prepare the parents, by means of pastoral advice and indeed by prayer together; a number of families might be brought together for this purpose and, where possible, each family visited.

**CANON 854-** Baptism is to be conferred either by immersion or by pouring, in accordance with the provision of the Episcopal Conference.

**CANON 855-** Parents, sponsors and parish priests are to take care that a name is not given which is foreign to Christian sentiment.

**CANON 856-** Though baptism may be celebrated on any day, it is recommended that normally it be celebrated on a Sunday or, if possible, on the vigil of Easter.

**CANON 857- §1.** Apart from a case of necessity, the proper place for baptism is a church or an oratory.  
**§2.** As a rule and unless a just reason suggest otherwise, an adult is to be baptized in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents.

**CANON 867- §1** Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks, as soon as possible after birth, indeed even before it, they are to approach the parish priest to ask for the sacrament for their child, and to be themselves duly prepared for it.

**CANON 868- §1.** For an infant to be baptized lawfully it is required:

1° that the parents, or at least one of them, or the person who lawfully takes their place, give their consent;

2° that there be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion. If such hope is truly lacking, the baptism is, in accordance with the provisions of particular law, to be deferred and the parents advised of the reason for this.

**CANON 872-** In so far as possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of infant baptism, the role is together with the parents to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism.

**CANON 874- §1.** To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:

1° be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed, the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;

2° be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the parish priest or minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;

3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;

4° not labour under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;

5° not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness of the baptism.

**CANON 877- §1** The parish priest of the place in which the baptism was conferred must carefully and without delay, record in the register of baptism, the names of the baptized, the minister, the parents, the sponsors and, if there were such, the witnesses, and the place and date of baptism. He must also enter the date and place of birth.

**§2** In the case of a child born of an unmarried mother, the mother's name is to be entered if her maternity is publicly known or if, either in writing or before two witnesses, she freely asks that this be done. Similarly, the name of the father is to be entered, if his paternity is established either by some public document or by his own declaration in the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses. In all cases, the name of the baptized person is to be registered, without any indication of the name of the father or of the parents.

**§3** In the case of an adopted child, the names of the adopting parents are to be registered and, at least if this is to be done in the local civil registration, the names of the natural parents, in accordance with **§1 and §2**, subject however to the rulings of the Episcopal Conference.

## **FAITH:FAMILYSTYLE**

### **(Phase Four)**

Faith:Familystyle is recommended for Phase Four, the continuing growth in faith, of baptismal preparation because it provides a simple process which helps families explore the unique holiness present in their lives. As parents begin the spiritual formation of their child, Faith:Familystyle help them understand the importance of daily life as teachable moments.

*Faith:Familystyle* teaches family members to find God in the ordinary ups and downs of life. It then helps them to connect their life experience with stories from Scripture, to find their faith in the teaching of the Church and to surface any new awareness this might bring. Then it boldly affirms their ability to do it over and over again on their own, in their own sacred space, as the Church of the Home.

Faith:Familystyle is a flexible two session process. The first session begins with a meal and then participants explore the deeper meaning of sharing food - as an invitation to nourish both relationships and bodies. This is then connected to the teaching of Jesus (Eucharist). The remaining six sacraments are then related to ordinary life. Those age twelve and older remain together, challenging and inviting intergenerational sharing in what is called the "Family Room." Those age four to eleven separate out for similar exploration through storytelling and creative activities for part of the evening in what is called the "Children's Room." All then rejoin for sharing, ritual and a closing "Litany of Family Saints." Childcare is recommended for those three and under.

The second session offers a time to recognize the unique spirituality of family life. Contrasted with the familiar spirituality of the liturgy, participants are affirmed and strengthened in the Church's teaching that family life *too* is holy - in a unique, ordinary, family way! The younger group discovers similarities with their life and that of the child Jesus through storytelling, drama, music and still more creative activities. All then rejoin for household and group sharing, discussion and ritual.

*Throughout the two days, the older group of participants are taught and practice the faith-awareness process and how to use it in their everyday life.*

All leave in an atmosphere of affirmation and celebration with skills to strengthen both their faith life and their family life.

A diocesan team will train parish facilitators in this process. For more information, call the Sacramental Prep Office @ 693-9605 Extension 160

## **FAMILY TRADITIONS**

Family traditions are an important aspect of faith formation and growth because it is from tradition that we learn our faith heritage.

Traditions for the Rite of Baptism:

- If the infant's baptismal garment has special significance to the family, then that is the "white garment" that should be presented. There is no need to put a bib or other white cloth over this garment.
- If there are older children in the family, they can be encouraged to bring their own baptismal candles to the Baptism and have them lit with the infant's candle as a way of renewing their own Baptism and more fully participating in the liturgy.
- The godparents can be asked to present the gifts of bread and wine at the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Traditions that encourage growth in faith:

- annual celebration of the baptismal day
- telling stories about the birth, Baptism, and significance of the name of the child
- meal and bedtime prayers
- bible stories
- seasonal celebrations for the home such as the Advent wreath or Lenten practices

\*Note: see Resources for Baptism Family Life Office (pg. A-34)

## GODPARENTS

### (Phase One or Two)

*CANON 872 - In so far as possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of infant baptism, the role is together with the parents to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism.*

*CANON 873 - One sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex.*

*CANON 874 - §1. To be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:*

*1° be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;*

*2° be not less than sixteen years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the parish priest or minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;*

*3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;*

*4° not labour under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;*

*5° not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized.*

*§ 2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the baptism.*

When the Baptism of infants became the norm in the 6th century, sponsors or godparents presented the child and recited the Creed on behalf of the child. In time, however, sponsorship became a formality and was reduced to an honor bestowed on a relative or friend regardless of church standing or practice. Vatican II restored godparenting to its rightful and honorable state. By expecting godparents to model the faith by a faith-filled life they are Christian role models as children mature. Godparents also support parents in the faith formation of their child.

Guidelines for Godparents are the following:

- attend rites and formation sessions with the parents when possible
- attend the celebration of Baptism. Agree to support the godchild by attending other sacraments that will be received
- that the godparent also be the confirmation sponsor, therefore, it is important to have an ongoing meaningful relationship with the godchild
- nurture the child's faith by both words and example
- encourage and support parents in their role as primary educator
- celebrate the baptismal day annually, if possible

Note:

When godparents are unable to attend formation sessions, materials and information should be sent to them. Books on godparenting are also appropriate (pg. A-33).



## HISTORY OF BAPTISM (Phase Two)

- Ancient Israel** - water was a powerful symbol that signified the passage from slavery to freedom (Book of Exodus, CCC 1217-1222)
- Life of Jesus** -  
- baptized by John at the beginning of his public life. “The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the 1st creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his ‘beloved Son’.” (CCC 1224)  
- in Matthew and Mark, Jesus gives the apostles the mission to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
- “In his Passover, Christ opened to all men the fountain of baptism .” (CCC 1225)
- Early Church** -  
- Baptism was offered to adults who believed in Jesus the Christ and they were incorporated into a new community and way of life  
- “From the time of the apostles, becoming a Christian has been accomplished by a journey and initiation in several stages. This journey can be covered rapidly or slowly, but certain essential elements will always have to be present: proclamation of the Word, acceptance of the Gospel entailing conversion, profession of faith, Baptism itself, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and admission to Eucharistic communion.” (CCC 1229)  
- held once a year at the Easter Vigil by the Bishop
- 2nd-3rd Centuries** -  
- a definite form for preparation emerged which included: a plan of instruction in the Creed and Christian morality, a time of fasting and prayer before the ceremony and special gestures prior to following the pouring of the water by the Bishop.  
- following Baptism by total immersion, the Bishop gave the candidates a final anointing.
- 3rd-4th Centuries** -  
- most developed structure of the catechumenate  
- initiation was at least a 3 year process  
- large increase in numbers of Christians because Christianity was legalized in 315 AD by Constantine
- 5th Century** - St. Augustine of Hippo - doctrine of original sin and beginning Baptism of infants.
- 6th Century** -  
- Baptism of infants became the norm  
- priest celebrated Baptism as soon after birth as possible  
- Baptism became a response to the faith of the church rather than to the personal faith of the recipient
- 12th -14th Century** -  
- pouring of water becomes the usual practice  
- occurs at any time of year, not just the Easter Vigil
- Post Vatican II** -  
- The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist are understood as the sacraments of initiation which incorporate the recipient into the Christian community.  
- “Where infant baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant baptism requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. Not only is there a need for instruction after baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth.” (CCC 1231)

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

**CANON 867- § 1** *Parents are obliged to see that their infants are baptized within the first few weeks. As soon as possible after birth, indeed even before it, they are to approach the parish priest to ask for the sacrament for their child, and to be themselves duly prepared for it.*

**CANON 851- §2** *the parents of a child who is to be baptized, and those who are to undertake the office of sponsors, are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attaching to it. The parish priest is to see to it that either he or others duly prepare the parents, by means of pastoral advice and indeed by prayer together; a number of families might be brought together for this purpose and, where possible, each family visited.*

By choosing to have their child baptized as a Catholic Christian, parents are stating their intention to raise the child Catholic and to provide for ongoing faith formation. Family members and godparents when possible, are to attend baptismal preparation sessions as a means of supporting the parents.

Guidelines for Parent/s are the following:

- to be full and active members of a faith community
- attend rites and formation sessions
- attend the celebration of Baptism
- nurture the faith of the child as primary educators
- celebrate the baptismal day annually, if possible

During the pre-school years parents will be expected to:

- teach basic prayers
- pass on prayer and faith traditions at home
- be a model of worship during liturgical services
- worship regularly as a family with the child at Sunday Liturgy whenever possible.

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**CANON 97 - § 1.** *A person who has completed the eighteenth year of age is an adult, below this age, a person is a minor.*

**§2.** *Before the completion of the seventh year a minor is called an infant and is held to be incompetent (non sui compso); with the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason.*

**CANON 852 - § 1.** *What is prescribed in the canons on the baptism of an adult is applicable to all who are no longer infants but have attained the use of reason.*

**§2.** *One who is not of sound mind (non sui compos) is equated with an infant so far as baptism is concerned.*

*Catholics with (mental) disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as full functioning members of the local ecclesial community. Ministers are not to refuse the sacraments to those who ask for them at appropriate times, who are properly disposed and who are not prohibited by law from receiving them.*

*Because it is the sacrament of universal salvation, baptism is to be made available to all who freely ask for it, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving it. Baptism may be deferred only when there is no reason for hoping that the person will be brought up in the Catholic religion. Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring baptism. Persons who lack the use of reason are to be baptized provided at least one parent or guardian consents to it.*

*So that baptism may be seen as a sacrament of the church's faith and of admittance into the people of God, it should be celebrated ordinarily in the parish church on a Sunday, or if possible at the Easter Vigil. The church, made present in the local community, has an important role to play in the baptism of all of its members. Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the baptized have the right to the love and help of the community.*

*Either personally or through others, the pastor is to see to it that the parents of an infant who is disabled, or those who take the place of the parents, are properly instructed as to the meaning of the sacrament of baptism and the obligations attached to it. If possible, either the pastor or a member of the parish community should visit with the family, offering them the strength and support of the community which rejoices at the gift of new life and which promises to nurture the faith of its newest member. It is recommended that preparation programs for baptism gather several families together so that they may commonly be formed by pastoral direction and prayer, and so that they may be strengthened by mutual support.*

**GPD - 2, 9, 10 and 11**

The above guidelines clearly state that a disability "is never a reason for deferring baptism." However, there should be reasonable assurance that the child will be raised Catholic.

Persons with a mental or physical disability should be included in regularly celebrated parish Baptisms. It is important for both the families and the parish community to embrace and nurture all its members.

Parents and godparents are to follow all the guidelines for the Baptism of infants. Those preparing them should be sensitive to any special needs.

**RESOURCES FOR BAPTISM**  
**(Education Office)**  
**BOOKS AND PERIODICALS**

Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 1212-1284

Code of Canon Law, Canon 840-878

ACTA Publications, The Gift of Baptism, Tom Sheridan  
The Gift of Godparents, Tom Sheridan

Ave Maria Press, Together at Baptism, Robert Hamma, 1994

Archdiocese of Ottawa, Baptism Preparation Book, November 1995—Phone: ( 613-738-5025)

\* Center for Learning, Parent Meeting Models I, Karen Jessie, Kimberly Langley, Robert Meany, 1989

\* Brown-ROA, Welcome New Life, Sr. Mary Bernard Potter, SP and Nigel Boridge, 1996

\* Journal Press II Resources Inc., Baptismal Preparation and Baptismal Program Master Set, 1991

LTP, The Godparent Book, 1993  
Baptism is a Beginning, 1994

\* Ligouri Publications, Your Baby's Baptism

National Conference of Catechetical Leadership, Keepers of the Promise— A Parent's Guide to Handing on the Faith-  
Vol 1— Phone: 202 636-3826

Our Sunday Visitor, \*Parents Letters, Beth Branigan McNamara, Joan Ensor Plum, and Paul S. Plum, 1994-ongoing- Birth-Age 3  
\*The Most Precious Gift, Beth Branigan McNamara, 1996  
\* My Baptism Memory Book, Beth Branigan McNamara, 1996

\* William Sadlier, Inc. Celebrating Baptism, Monsignor John F. Barry, 1990

St. Anthony Messenger Press, Catholic Updates—C0595 “Infant Baptism, Gift to the Parish”  
CU0389 “The Sacrament of Baptism— Celebrating the Embrace of God”

Twenty-third Publications, The Total Parish Manual, William Bausch, 1994

USCC, National Catechetical Directory, 1979  
Beginning the Journey from Infant Baptism to First Eucharist, 1994

**AUDIO - VISUALS**

**ADULT**

Brown-ROA, Lord of Life: Baptism

Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, The Symbols of Infant Baptism

Don Bosco Multimedia, The Sacraments, “Baptism I & II”

Franciscan Communications, Baptism, Sacrament of Belonging  
Baby's Baptism, Sacrament of Welcome

Ligouri Publications, Your Baby's Baptism

St. Anthony Messenger Press, Catholic Update, Adult Baptism

Tabor Publications, At Home With the Sacraments  
Celebrating the Sacraments Series— Baptism-Welcome to the Christian Community

University of Dayton, Baptism—A Promise to Disabled People  
January, 1998

**CHILD**

Don Bosco Multimedia, Sacred Heart Kid's Club Series  
- Jesus Shares His Life With Us  
- We Belong to God's Family

\* **Primary Resources**

## **RESOURCES FOR BAPTISM**

(Family Life Office)

### **EVANGELIZATION:**

Family Life Office, Parent Mailings for Baby's First Year order form

Liturgical Training Publications, The Godparent Book, 1993

Tabor Publishing, The Catechism of the Catholic Church: Family-style, 1994

### **CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM IN PARISH AND FAMILY**

Family Life Department-Diocese of Green Bay, Original Blessings: Baptism Stories and Family Faith Celebration Ideas Gathered from the Families of the Diocese of Green Bay, 1994

### **PRAYER**

Forest of Peace Books, Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook of Worship for the Home, 1979

USCC, Catholic Household Blessings and Prayer, 1988

### **RELIGIOUS RITUALS IN THE HOME**

Family Life Office, Holiday Spirituality Books "Holiday Spirituality in the Home"  
"A Change of Heart"  
"Ordinary Times: Rituals and Traditions for Families"

## SESSIONS

### A. HOME VISITS - PHASE TWO

#### 1. Objectives

- a. To demonstrate a spirit of acceptance and friendship to the parents on behalf of the parish where the child is being baptized.
- b. Explain the purpose of baptismal preparation, stressing the need and opportunity for reflection the commitment involved.
- c. To provide guidance and essential information for choosing godparents.
- d. To help parents understand the importance of naming their children.

#### 2. Meeting Objectives

(The following points are in a suggested order only - as you gain experience, you will adapt the points to your personality and the family you are visiting.)

- Introduce yourselves, talk about the baby, their family, your family, etc. to put the family at ease.
- Talk about the birth of the baby and the changes it has brought.
- Extend a welcome to the newest member (or expected member) of the parish community on behalf of your parish.
- Leave reference material with them (information sheet, bible, parish bulletin, baptism pamphlet, prayer book, etc. as your parish allows).
- Explain the mechanics of the preparation based on a Christian Initiation format, including family involvement, date/time/place of Baptism etc.
- Inform parents about requirements for godparents and the possibility of them being present at baptismal sessions (pg. A-29).
- Invite parents to general meeting/s and mention the need to have both parents attend as a family unit; godparents and family are welcome; mention childcare, if available.
- Stress the importance of selecting a Christian or family name for the child. (pg. A-37)

#### Pastoral Notes:

- These meetings provide an opportunity for the parish to reach out in love and welcome, and to help parent/s see where they are in their relations with Christ and his Church.
- A personal visit is essential: introducing parents to a process of baptismal preparation cannot be done by mail or only by one or two public meetings.
- The tone of the visit should be informal, friendly, and non-threatening. The parish representative/s are there to **EXTEND THE CONGRATULATIONS** of the community and help parents begin baptismal preparation.
- The team members should take time to explain that choosing to have a child baptized is an important decision.
- Be sensitive to single parents, blended families, special needs, or a parent who is not Catholic.
- Invite any help that the parish can offer. Some things might be babysitting, introducing them to parishioners in the immediate vicinity, a ride to church . . .

## SESSIONS

### B. PARENT MEETING /S - PHASE TWO

#### 1. Objectives

- a. To help parents examine their faith life as foundational to the faith of their child.
- b. To understand Baptism as a sacrament of initiation and a call to holiness.
- c. To emphasize the importance of the baptismal commitment being made for the child.
- d. To explore and understand the symbols and rituals of Baptism.

#### 2. Meeting/s Objective/s

- Extend a welcome to all present.
- Provide an opportunity for parents and families to get to know each other.
- Assist parents in reflecting on their hopes, dreams and values for their child.
- Explore family traditions and their importance for faith formation and understanding of the sacrament.
- Discuss the meaning of Baptism.
- Present Baptism as a sacrament of initiation into the Christian community.
- Discuss Baptism as a call to holiness as a child of God through the forgiveness of sin.
- Present a brief history of Baptism in order to understand and appreciate its importance.
- Stress the importance of parental responsibility for faith formation as part of the baptismal commitment being made by the parents.
- Explore and discuss the significance of the symbols and ritual actions of Baptism.

#### Pastoral Notes:

- The parish is providing hospitality and welcome to parent/s, family members and godparents.
- This may be an opportunity to welcome parent/s into fuller church participation.
- Babysitting should be provided for small children.
- Be sensitive to single parents, blended families, special needs or a parent who is not Catholic.
- Invite any help a parish can offer. Other young families and school age children could be involved by sending cards and praying for the baptized.

\*Material on resource list (pg. A-33) would be helpful in planning these sessions.

## **SYMBOLS - RITUAL**

**Anointing with Holy Chrism** symbolizes a calling to and strengthening in the power of Christ to serve in God's name.

**Anointing with the Oil of Catechumens** used in the first part of the baptismal rite, is a sign of healing and a sign that the child will be open to the life of the church. When Baptism is celebrated at Sunday Mass this anointing could possibly occur before Mass begins.

**Blessing of the Water** helps us to reflect on the saving mystery of God's love within our tradition and in our lives.

**Candle** stands for Christ, the light of the world. It is lighted from the Paschal Candle, used during the Easter Season.

**Chrism** expresses the child's call to live as a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. This is the same oil used in Confirmation and Ordination.

**Exorcism** is the prayer, delivering children from original sin, that strengthens them in the Spirit of Christ.

**Gathered Community** welcomes the baptized into the Christian family.

**Name** is important and says who we are as special and unique. The name chosen should have Christian and/or family significance.

**Pouring of the Water or Immersion** in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit represents a rebirth to new life in Christ.

**Profession of Faith** is said by the parent/s, godparents, family members, and the entire assembly as they renew their own baptismal vows stating their own beliefs and relationship with God.

**Signing the Child** with the sign of the cross is a symbol of the salvation brought about by the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. It also symbolizes the Christian faith that we share and into which the child is being initiated.

**Water** is the primary symbol of Baptism, the symbol of life and death. Water is necessary for life and changes everything it touches. But water can also bring destruction and death. It is, therefore, a basic element in our lives and is one of the oldest religious symbols. In Baptism, the baptized dies to sin and death and is reborn into the life of Christ.

**White Garment** recognizes the new life in Christ of the baptized. The baptismal garment should be placed on the infant at the appropriate time of the rite. There is no need to put a bib or other cloth over the white baptismal clothing.

**Word of God**, the Scriptures, is the focal point for all Christian celebrations. Listening to the Word proclaimed, reflecting on its meaning and renewing our acceptance of God's word as a guiding force in our lives, is central to the Christian journey begun at Baptism.



## **THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM**

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made shares in her mission: ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.’ ” (CCC 1213)

In the Book of Genesis the world as created by God was good and humanity was created in God’s image. To call people into relationship, God established a covenant with our ancestors in faith. This loving relationship (covenant) with God has been established for Christians by the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus and is accepted and ritualized by the individual through Baptism.

For the Christian, sin is discussed in the context of our covenantal relationship with God and the salvation through the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Sin has no place in its own right, but is properly understood in relation to the ongoing conversion in grace, the very life of God freely offered to everyone. “Only in the knowledge of God’s plan for man can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.” (CCC 387)

The first abuse of freedom is original sin. Original sin is “a deprivation of original holiness and justice” through which human nature has become “subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin.” (CCC 405) Baptism cleanses people from original sin and gives rebirth as a child of God.

The second abuse of freedom is personal sin, sin committed by the individual, and “is the willful rejection, either partial or total of one’s role as a child of God and a member of His people.” (NCD 98) It is the ultimate choice of something other than God as our ultimate goal. Personal sin is also cleansed by Baptism and the baptized is restored as a child of God, incorporated into the church and sanctified with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (NCD 116)

The church has attempted to address the question of the relationship of an unbaptized child to God by speaking about a place on the edge, limbo. “As regards *to children who have died without Baptism*, the church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,’ allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church’s call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy of Baptism.” (CCC 1261)

The newly baptized is welcomed and received into the community of faith and accepts the mission of the church, which is to proclaim the Good News announced by Jesus Christ. The community through word and action lives out the Christian imperative, “Go out to all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Mt. 28:19 Baptism “incorporates us into the Church” . . . “makes us sharers in God’s life” . . . “is the door to life.” (RBC - Christian Initiation 3, 4, 5)

Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation. Eucharist and Confirmation will complete the Christian’s initiation into the Catholic church.