

Church of the Holy Family **Sacrament of Baptism Guidelines**

The birth of a child is a most beautiful and wonderful event. Needless to say, you have been preparing in many ways for this event from the moment you learned of the expected birth. Most likely you have been in close consultation with your medical doctor and with the hospitals that provide various classes in preparation for your child's birth. This is as it should be because a child changes its parents' lives. You will never be the same again as you welcome with love this new life into your lives.

Baptism is an important event for you in the life of your child. The people of God, the Church, made present in the local parish have an important part to play in the baptism of children. The priests at Holy Family Parish represent that community and we wish to assure you that we will do all that we can to help make your child's baptism a meaningful celebration. These guidelines are intended to explain what preparation is required and, hopefully, answer some questions you might have. Please feel free to ask any questions if they are not addressed.

Preparing for the Celebration of Baptism

According to the law of the Church the parents of a child who is to be baptized are to be suitably instructed on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. Certainly it is a timely opportunity for parents to review their own faith, especially regarding Baptism, and to consider the responsibility they have in handing that faith on to their children. Parents requesting the baptism of their first child or families new to Holy Family are asked to first make an appointment with Father Hughes. In addition, no baptism will be administered at Holy Family until parents have met the obligation of attending a Baptism Preparation session. These sessions are held on the second Tuesday of the month (please check with the Parish Office to confirm dates) in the Aquin Center at 7:30 PM. The following is a list of requirements particular to Holy Family Parish.

1. Parents must be registered and practicing members of the parish (exceptions are the sole prerogative of the pastor and require his permission).
2. Pre-registration for a Baptismal Preparation Session is necessary and is expected at least two weeks prior to the session. Couples do not have to wait until the baby has been born to attend a session.

3. No baptism will be administered at Holy Family until parents have attended the Baptism Preparation session (out of town parents coming home to Holy Family must have a letter from their local pastor stating they are registered and practicing members of his parish and that they have met all of the requirements for baptism in that parish.)

It is expected that both parents attend the class.

Scheduling the Baptism

In making arrangements with the parish office, please call during regular office hours (9:00 am to 12 Noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, Monday thru Friday). You will be asked to supply the following Information needed for our church records:

- a. Baby's Name
- b. Date of Birth
- c. Place of Birth
- d. Father's name
- e. Mother's maiden name
- f. Information pertaining to your marriage
- g. Names of sponsors and their parish affiliation

The times for baptisms are:

- a. At any weekend Mass
- b. At 1:00 PM on Sundays (some exceptions apply)

Please contact the parish office before making any restaurant or catering arrangements. Other days of the week may be requested for pastoral reasons and are subject the pastor's approval.

Stipends for Baptism

In thanksgiving for the gift of faith and the reception of a sacrament, parents may wish to make a donation to the Church on the occasion of their child's Baptism. In general, a gift of \$75 is recommended to assist the parish in the work of the Church.

What if I Am Single or We Are Unmarried?

Holy Family Parish is happy to welcome all who wish to receive the sacraments of the Church as they seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. If you are a single parent, you may wish to make an appointment with one of the priests to discuss the last name your child will carry and to learn how the parish can be of assistance to you. If you are married outside of the Catholic Church due to a previous marriage and divorce or other circumstances or if you are an unmarried couple, you should meet with one of the priests to discuss your relationship and the possibility of celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church. The grace of the Sacrament of Marriage is fundamental to a good and holy family life.

What if I Do Not Practice My Faith?

Even though you don't participate in Sunday Mass now, perhaps "now" is a great time to begin! You are most welcome! If you have issues with the Church or your faith, please feel free to contact one of the priests to discuss these issues. He can assist you in any way needed by answering questions, providing proper information and by the healing that comes through prayer and the Sacrament of Penance.

At the celebration of Baptism you will promise to raise your child according to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Living the faith is the best way to teach your child. You will hear: "...you are accepting the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith...do you clearly understand what you are undertaking..." If you can honestly answer the question in the affirmative, that is, "I do," your child can be baptized. By virtue of those words you make an oath before God to deepen your child's appreciation of the Catholic Faith.

Sponsors/Godparents

Since Baptism is the initial, foundational Sacrament in the life of a Catholic, great care must be taken in deciding who will serve as a Godparent. The decision as to who should be a Godparent should be based upon who would provide the best example of Catholic living for the child and not merely for reasons of maintaining family harmony. A Godparent is chosen not primarily to honor the Godparent, but for the well-being and faith development of the child.

Godparents must meet all of the following criteria, which are established by universal Church law and which do not vary from place to place. Godparents must:

- a) be a practicing Catholic (registered in a Catholic parish and able to obtain from his and her parish priest a letter of eligibility to be a Godparent)
- b) at least 16 years of age
- c) received the Sacraments of Initiation (i.e. Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation)
- d) if this person is married, then the marriage must be a valid, sacramental marriage (i.e. one recognized and blessed by the Catholic Church)

Only one Godparent is required by Church law. This Godparent may be a man or a woman. However, if two Godparents are selected (the more common practice), then there must be one man and one woman chosen. In other words, a child cannot have two men or two women as Godparents.

If two Catholic Godparents cannot be found, Church law does permit, the appointment of one 'Christian witness' to the baptism ceremony. This witness must be a baptized, upright, non-Catholic Christian (i.e. Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian). This 'Christian witness' takes part in the ceremony but is not a godparent. A former Catholic, a non-baptized person, or someone who does not live a virtuous Christian life can never be a Christian witness.

Choice of Baptismal Name

The Rite of Baptism begins with a simple question, "What name do you give (or have you given) your child?" Our names become the main symbols of our identity. The Catholic Church has a tradition of naming children after saints or virtues. Today, the law is very specific. The Church prohibits only those names that are foreign or contrary to our Catholic Faith.

However, the name you give your child can impact their future. Please exercise good judgment, as "trendy" names and spellings quickly become passé and can burden a child. Remember that your son or daughter must live with the name you give them throughout their lives and into eternity.

Photography at the Ceremony

Please feel free to take pictures and/or video during the ceremony. The priests and deacons simply ask that you not obstruct the ceremony or enter the sanctuary in order to get the perfect shot. The church is open to you after the celebration of Baptism for additional pictures.

Adoption

Children who are in the process of being adopted may be baptized at Holy Family with the consent of their natural parents. If that cannot be obtained the baptism must be postponed until the adoption has been finalized, except in the danger of death. Foster parents do not have the authority to present a foster child for Baptism.

Record of Baptism

You will receive a Certificate of Baptism on the day of your child's baptism. Your child's permanent record of Baptism will always be kept here at Holy Family. Before your child enters Catholic School, Religious Education, confirmation, marriage, religious life or ordination, they will be asked for an updated copy of their Baptismal Certificate. It will always be issued from this parish. Don't hesitate to contact us for these copies as needed.

Thank You

Thank you for welcoming Christ into your child's life. May God bless you in your role as a parent, raising and caring for your child. Remember that you are the first teachers they will encounter. They will learn many things from you and others throughout their lives, but none as important as lessons of faith. As you live your Christian life so will your children. Please take the opportunities presented to you here at Holy Family to deepen your own faith and in turn the faith of your child.