



saint francis of assisi catholic church

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Infant Baptism Procedures

Congratulations!

Congratulations on the birth or adoption of your infant. God has given you the gift of this child. Now, in baptism, you give the child back to God, and God becomes the adoptive Father of your child!

Sacrament of Baptism

Baptism is the first of the three sacraments of Christian initiation, along with confirmation and first Holy Communion. Through baptism, we are freed from sin, reborn as children of God, and incorporated into the Church, the body of Christ. Once received, baptism is a definitive gift from God that never needs to be repeated. Through baptism, we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and receive the promise of eternal life (see Romans 6:3-11).

Bringing Children up Catholic

Because of the importance of baptism, there must be a founded hope that an infant will be brought up in the Catholic faith (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 868, §1). Parents are obligated, after baptism, to bring their children to Mass each week, to make sure that their children are educated in the faith, and to make sure that they receive the sacraments of first penance, confirmation, and first Holy Communion.

Parish Membership

To give a reliable indication of their intention to bring their infant up Catholic, parents are required to be registered in the parish, attending Mass, and practicing their faith prior to baptism.

Children 7 Years of Age and Older

For children 7 years of age and older, please contact the Faith Formation Office for enrollment in the children's catechumenate.

Baptism Preparation Class

Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith (canon 774, §2). Therefore, parents are required to be instructed on the meaning of the sacrament of baptism and the obligations that come from it (canon 851, 3°). To fulfill this requirement, parents are asked to attend a baptism preparation class held ordinarily on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. (Check the bulletin for date.)

Appointment with a Priest

Following the class, the parents are asked to make an appointment with one of the priests through Debbie Ely at the parish office.

Advance Planning

Parents are obligated to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks after birth (canon 867, §1). Therefore, they should register with the parish well in advance of a desired baptism. They are encouraged to attend the preparation class and to make the appointment with a priest even before the child's birth.

Copy of Birth Certificate

A copy of the birth certificate (or finalized adoption papers) are to be submitted in advance of the baptism.

Subsequent Children

If parents attended the baptism class previously at St. Francis of Assisi and are married in the Catholic Church, it is not necessary to attend the class again and have another appointment with the priest. Submission of the birth certificate and documents for the godparents are still required for subsequent children.

Marriage in the Catholic Church

Since marriage is a sacrament that enables parents to represent Christ to their children, parents should be married in the Catholic Church (canon 835, §4). Parents married outside of the Church (either in a civil ceremony or in another religion) should speak with a priest about the possibility of validating their marriage.

Choosing a Name

Parents are to choose a name for their children that is not contrary to Christian sensibilities (canon 855). The choice of a saint's name or a name from the Bible is encouraged.

Godparents

Parents may choose godparents for their children from among family and friends qualified to serve in that capacity. Parents may choose a godfather and a godmother or just one godparent (canon 873). If two godparents are chosen, proof that godparents meet the qualifications is required for both godparents.

Godparents not only serve as a witness at the ceremony of baptism but also assist the baptized in leading a Christian life (canon 872). Therefore, Church law requires that godparents be people who are living the Catholic faith and meet the following qualifications (canon 874, §1):

1. They should ordinarily be at least 16 years old.
2. They must be Catholics who have received baptism, confirmation, and first Holy Communion.
3. They must lead a life in harmony with the Catholic faith, including attendance at weekly Mass.
4. If they are married, they must be married in the Catholic Church. They may not be divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church.
5. Parents of the child to be baptized may not serve as godparents.

Proxies for Godparents

If godparents are not able to be present in person for the baptism, proxies may be designated to stand in for them at the ceremony.

Non-Catholic Witnesses

If only one godparent is chosen, parents may ask someone validly baptized in a non-Catholic community to serve as a witness to the ceremony, along with a Catholic godparent (canon 874, §2). The purpose of permitting a non-Catholic witness is to promise ecumenism. Fallen away Catholics may not serve as non-Catholic witnesses. No documents are required for a non-Catholic witness.

Scheduling the Date

The baptism can be scheduled by contacting Debbie Ely at the parish office once the parents have:

- attended the baptism class
- met with the priest
- filled out and signed the parental consent form
- turned in the godparent affidavit(s)
- turned in the birth certificate

Sunday Celebrations of Baptism

Sunday is the preferred day for baptism, since it is the day that Jesus rose from the dead (canon 856). At St. Francis of Assisi, baptisms are celebrated on the second and fourth Sunday of most months at 1:00 p.m. The infant should be dressed in white in preparation for the ceremony.

Offerings

It is customary to make an offering to the parish on the occasion of a baptism (e.g., \$50-100). However, this is not required, especially for families in need. Offering envelopes are available for this purpose and may be given to the sacristan assisting with the baptisms on the day of baptism.