

**ST. MARGARET MARY CHURCH
LOWER BURRELL, PA**

GUIDELINES FOR INFANT BAPTISM

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a beginning.

Baptism is the first of three sacraments of initiation in which a child is incorporated into Christ, becoming a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. It is just the beginning of the lifelong journey of faith. Baptism is sealed by Confirmation and completed in Eucharist.

After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive Confirmation, and to participate in the Holy Eucharist. In this duty they are again to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means.

Introduction to the Rite of Baptism for Children



Infant baptism is an act of worship



Like all sacraments, baptism is an act of worship in which the whole Church turns their hearts and minds and bodies toward God. Through the Rite of Baptism parents present their child for initiation into the Church. Together with the parish community, they offer praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of salvation. They ask God to raise their child from the natural human condition to the dignity of an adopted son or daughter of God. By becoming one with Christ in baptism, the child is freed from original sin and united with the Christian community.

Baptism is a communal event

Like all sacraments, baptism belongs to the entire Church. It is celebrated in the midst of the community as a sign that baptism calls all of us to nurture and care for the child and to support the parents in their crucial task of handing on the faith.

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community. ... It is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family, but is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ.

Introduction to the Rite of Baptism for Children

Baptism requires the faith of parents, godparents and the entire Church

For an infant to be baptized, it is necessary that:

- ◆ at least one of the parents consents to it, or the person who lawfully takes their place
- ◆ there is a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion

WHEN AND WHERE IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?



Children should be presented for baptism as soon as is practically possible after birth taking into consideration the health of both mother and child and the readiness of the parents and godparents to accept the demands that baptism places on them. Parents and godparents must ask themselves if they are ready to accept the responsibility of handing on the gift of faith to their child, since this task is primarily theirs. (In the case of adoption, regardless of the age of the child, a certificate issued by a court in the United States must be presented to verify that the adoption is formal, final and irrevocable.)

Baptisms should normally be celebrated in the parish of the infant's parents by the one of their parish priests

Because baptism binds a child to the universal Church through a local community, at least one parent should be an active member of Saint Margaret Mary Parish. For those who are not members of the parish, a letter of permission is required from the pastor of the Church where the parents are currently registered.



Active participation means, at a minimum, weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist, support of the Church according to one's abilities and active participation in the ministries of the Church.

Baptisms are generally celebrated at Saint Margaret Mary Parish on the weekends as follows, except during Lent:

- ◆ At 3:00 PM on Saturdays
- ◆ At noon on Sundays

In some cases, special events may necessitate changes to this schedule. Before making plans for the celebration, it is advisable to check with the parish office to verify the availability of a specific date or time.

HOW IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

Contacting the parish.



Because sufficient time is needed to prepare parents to undertake the duties of raising a child in the faith, parents should contact the parish office at 724-335-2336 to discuss the date and time of the baptism.

Naming the child.

Traditionally, Catholic children are given a saint's name. This is an outward sign that links the child to the communion of saints. Church law does not require that a child be given a saint's name. It does, however, forbid a name that is offensive to Christians, our beliefs or way of life.

Parent preparation.

In order that parents and the parish community might celebrate fully, careful planning and thoughtful preparation is needed.





First-time parents and those who last had a child baptized three or more years ago, are expected to participate in the **Infant Baptism Preparation process**. Baptism Preparation is scheduled through the parish office at 724-335-2336. At SMM, it is an on-line

experience offered through Dynamic Catholic's - Starting Point. Starting Point is a flexible, relevant, entertaining and comprehensive Baptismal Preparation program designed to help parents.

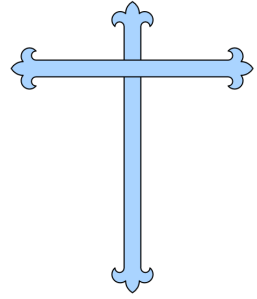
Godparents.

Parents are assisted in their preparation and in raising their child in the faith by godparents. During the Rite of Baptism, godparents promise to help the parents in their duty as Christian parents. Because of this special relationship, parents should consider seriously the persons they ask to be godparents, remembering that their primary role is in relationship to the parents. Godparents should be chosen because they are willing and able to assist in the faith formation of the child, not simply because of familial or social relationship.

Church law requires that there be one godparent. The following are requirements for this important role. The individual must be:

- ◆ an active, regularly participating member of a Catholic parish
- ◆ a fully initiated Roman Catholic (having received Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation)
- ◆ at least 16 years of age
- ◆ in good standing with the Church and, if married, having done so in the Catholic Church

There may be one additional godparent, but it is not necessary. If there are two godparents, one must be male, the other female, and both must meet the requirements listed above. All godparents, are required to provide a sponsor form of eligibility from the parish in which they are registered and participate.



Christian witness

The Church also provides for an active member of another Christian church to stand as witness to the baptism when only one godparent is chosen. Christian witnesses can play an active role in supporting the parents as they teach their child the Christian way of life. Christian witnesses should understand the role of godparent and be able to fill a similar role in their Church. *Catholics who have left the Catholic faith and have joined another Christian church are NOT eligible to serve as Christian witnesses.*

The parish Community



Because baptisms are normally celebrated during regularly scheduled Sunday Masses, the parish community is well represented by the assembly. This is an important sign that baptism, like all sacraments, belongs to the whole Church and that the parents and child can expect the support and care of the parish community. A priest of the parish will normally preside at the liturgy and baptize those children who will become members of the parish at their baptism.

The Liturgical Celebration

Before the Liturgy

On the day of baptism, parents and godparents need to arrive approximately 30 minutes before Mass begins. If Mass will not be celebrated they should arrive 15 minutes early. The infant does not need to be in church until just before the beginning of the liturgy.

Opening Rites

Liturgical Procession

In order to emphasize their important role in the Rite of Baptism, parents and siblings, baby and godparents may join in the Entrance Procession. Family members and friends may be seated in specially reserved seats at the front of the Church.

Greeting

Reception of the Child

Here the presider questions the parents and godparents about what they seek for their child and about their readiness to accept the responsibility of raising the child in the practice of the faith. He then welcomes the child on behalf of the Christian community and claims him or her for Christ by tracing the cross on the baby's forehead. Parents and godparents do the same.

Liturgy of the Word

Scripture Readings and Homily

Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions)

Prayer of Exorcism



Celebration of the Sacrament

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
Parents, godparents and all present renew their baptismal promises.

Baptism

Anointing with Chrism

Clothing with the White Garment
(omitted when the infant is already wearing a white garment)

Presentation of the Lighted Candle

Ephphetha (Prayer over Ears and Mouth)

Liturgy of the Eucharist*

Preparation of the Altar and Gifts

Eucharistic Prayer

Communion Rite

Concluding Rites

Blessing and Dismissal

Recessional

**When Mass is not celebrated, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is omitted.*

