

Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish
A Parish of the Diocese of Greensburg • A Pennsylvania Charitable Trust
300 N. Main Street, Greensburg, PA 15601

GUIDELINES FOR INFANT BAPTISM ISSUED JANUARY 12, 2011

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:

- the parents, or at least one of the parents consents to it, or the person who legitimately takes their place must consent
- there is a founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such hope is lacking, the Baptism is to be delayed according to the precepts of particular law after the parents have been advised about the reason

WHEN AND WHERE IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

An infant should normally be Baptized in the first few weeks or so following birth, with the following considerations:

In setting the time for Baptism, the first consideration is the welfare of the child and that it is not deprived of the benefit of the sacrament. In danger of death the child should be baptized immediately. The second consideration is the health of the mother, so that if at all possible, she too may be present. When the health of the child is not a factor, another consideration is the readiness of the parents to accept the responsibility of bringing their child into the faith. Sometimes parents are not ready for the celebration of Baptism, or they ask for their child to be baptized, although the child will not afterward receive a Christian education and will even lose the faith. Since the rite itself does not allow enough time to resolve these dilemmas or train the parents in the faith, Baptism may be delayed until proper commitment and catechesis on the part of the parents is ascertained.

In the case of adoption, a certificate issued by a United States' court must be presented to verify that the adoption is formal, final and irrevocable. Parents and Godparents must ask themselves if they are ready to accept the responsibility of handing on the faith to their child since this task is charged primarily to them.

Thus children should receive Baptism as soon as is practical 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.

Baptisms should normally be celebrated in the parish of the infant's parents by one of their parish priests. Because Baptism binds a child to the universal Church through a local community, at least one parent should be a registered, active member of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish for at least three months prior to setting the date of Baptism. This means, at a minimum, regular participation in the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation, regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, financial and service based support of the Church according to one's abilities, and active participation in the apostolic work of the Church. If the parents wish to have their infant baptized at another Catholic church other than their home parish, permission for Baptism from their pastor is required.

Baptisms are generally celebrated at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish on weekends as follows:

Within Mass: *(Baptism will be celebrated at only one mass time per weekend.)*

5:30 PM	Sunday Vigil
9:00 AM	Sunday Mass
11:30 AM	Sunday Mass

Outside Mass:

1:00 PM	Immediately following the 11:30 AM Mass
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Baptisms are not celebrated during the season of Lent, i.e., from Ash Wednesday until the Easter Vigil except on Latare Sunday. (The fourth Sunday of Lent)

HOW BAPTISM IS CELEBRATED

Contacting the parish: Because sufficient time is needed to prepare parents to undertake the duties of raising a child in the faith, parents must contact the Director of Faith Formation at 724-834-3710. This should occur approximately three months prior to their baby's due date. Although families do not need to set the date of Baptism this early, the parish staff will begin to assist with necessary preparations before the birth of the child. The date of Baptism should be fixed at least one month in advance of the desired date.

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 five or more years ago are expected to participate in Infant Baptism Preparation Sessions scheduled by the Director of Faith Formation. These sessions include discussion about the meaning of Baptism, the signs and symbols used in the Rite of Baptism, and conversation about the responsibilities of parents and Godparents in teaching the faith. Both parents are expected to attend. We ask that Godparents attend when possible.

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. Another important role of the Godparents is to represent the church community in which the Baptism is being celebrated. Each child may have a Godfather and a Godmother. Church law requires that there be at least one Godparent but two are chosen in most cases.

The following are requirements for this important role. The individual **must** be:

- at least 16 years of age
- a registered member of a Roman Catholic Parish in communion with Rome.
- an active supporter of their parish shown by their presence at Sunday Mass each week and the fact that they have made my their Easter Duty yearly.
- someone who has received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and First Eucharist in the Roman Catholic Church.
- someone who has not joined another faith or denomination nor professed allegiance to any faith or denomination other than the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

- **If married:** Someone who was married by a Roman Catholic Priest or obtained the correct canonical dispensations otherwise. If divorced, someone who has not remarried or attempted marriage a second time without an annulment of the first marriage.

Note Bene: A baptized Roman Catholic who is married outside of the Church, or who has left the faith may not stand as a Godparent/sponsor or a Christian Witness.

Additionally, the mother or father of the infant being baptized cannot serve as Godparent. If there are two Godparents, one must be male, the other female, and both must meet the requirements listed above. All Godparents who are not active members of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish are required to provide a sponsor form of eligibility from the parish in which they are registered and participate. A member of an Oriental Rite of the Catholic Church may serve as Godparent for an infant who is baptized in the Latin Rite. An Eastern (Orthodox) Christian may be appointed as Godparent as long as a Catholic Godparent is present.

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. **A person who has been baptized a Catholic but joined another denomination or faith may not be selected either as a Godparent or a Christian witness.** The Christian witness plays an active and important role in supporting parents as they teach their child the Christian way of life. The Christian witness should understand the role of godparent and be able to fill a similar role in his or her church. All Christian witnesses are required to provide a letter of eligibility from the church in which they are registered and participate.

The parish community: To bring out the paschal character of Baptism, it is recommended that the sacrament be celebrated during the Easter Vigil or on Sunday when the Church commemorates the Lord's Resurrection. Baptisms may be celebrated during regularly scheduled Sunday Masses where the parish community is well represented by the gathered 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.

THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

BEFORE THE LITURGY:

On the day of Baptism, parents and Godparents need to arrive 30 minutes before Mass begins. If Mass will not be celebrated (e.g. the 1:00 PM ceremony), everyone should arrive 30 minutes early. The infant does not need to be in church until just before the beginning of the Liturgy.

OPENING RITES:

- **Greeting** (*Parents, Godparents and the newly baptized infant gather with the ministers and Presider at the front entrance of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish just prior to the beginning of the Mass.*)
- **Reception of the Child** (nos. 33-43)

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 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.

- **Liturgical Procession**

In order to emphasize their important role in the Rite of Baptism, parents, baby and Godparents will all join in the Entrance Procession. Family members and friends may be seated in especially reserved seats at the front of the church.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- Scripture Readings and Homily
- Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions) (nos. 47-48)
- Invocation of Saints

(At this time the whole family and the Presider process to the font.)

- Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT (NOS. 49-66)

- Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water
- Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith (by all)
- Baptism
- Anointing with Chrism
- Clothing with the White Garment
- Presentation of the Lighted Candle
- Ephphetha (Prayer over Ears and Mouth)

(At this time the family and the Presider return to their seats in procession.)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

(When Held Outside of Mass the Liturgy of the Eucharist is omitted.)

- Preparation of the Altar and Gifts
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Communion Rite

CONCLUDING RITES

- Blessing (no. 70 or 247- 249) *(mother, father and child come to entrance to sanctuary)*
- Dismissal
- Recessional *(Parents, Godparents and the newly baptized infant recess with the ministers and Presider to the front entrance of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish.)*

**Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Parish
Baptism Check List**

_____ If this is your first child, or if it has been five or more years since you last had a child baptized, contact the Director of Faith Formation at 724-834-3710 to register for Infant Baptism Preparation. You should plan to call at least three months before your baby is due.

_____ Carefully read these guidelines. Consider your own attitude as a prospective parent, reflecting on your own commitment to the faith, your practice of it, and your desire to raise your child as a Catholic Christian.

_____ Before choosing a Godparent or Godparents, read about their role and responsibilities and review the list of requirements on page 3 and 4 of these guidelines. Additional information will be available at the preparation session.

_____ Contact the Director of Faith Formation about two months prior to your baby’s due date to schedule the Baptism itself and complete any necessary paperwork. Note the parish Baptism schedule on page 2.

_____ Familiarize yourself with the flow of the liturgical celebration on page 4. Call the parish pastoral minister with any questions or concerns.

_____ Parents and Godparents should meet in the back of church **thirty minutes** prior to the beginning of Mass on the day of Baptism. At that time, you will be guided through the **Rite of Baptism**, and given any final directions for the celebration.