

Frequently Asked Questions about Baptism

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
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Baptismal Preparation Class: Held at 6pm the last Monday of every month except May and Dec.

The following attempts to answer many of the frequently asked questions concerning the Baptismal Rite as it relates to children who have not yet reached the age of discretion - (physically and cognitively) - the Catholic Church determines the age of discretion is 7 years old (a point when the child is capable of making morally responsible choices). If your child is older than 7 cognitively and physically, then your child should go through the RCIA for Children process to obtain the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist). If you are an adult seeking the Sacrament of Baptism, then you will be pursuing the rewarding path yourself through the RCIA for Adults process.

1. *Can I have my child baptized if I am not a registered parishioner?*

Yes. We do not require that parents be registered parishioners at our beloved parish. However, in order to baptize your child, parents must take the baptismal preparation class; or complete one at your home parish and provide a letter of completion from the class along with a letter of 'permission to baptize' from your home parish priest.

2. *How much does it cost to baptize my child?*

The Church does not charge for the sacramental celebration. Families are welcome to give a donation to the parish on the day of their child's Baptism.

3. *When should parents contact the church regarding Baptism for their child?*

We invite parents to contact the parish office as early as possible in the pregnancy. Participating in the preparation process during pregnancy allows appropriate time to discern whether Baptism should or should not be celebrated once the child is born. Remember that the cornerstone of the Baptism Rite is the concept that there exists a basis of hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.

4. *Are parents required to attend a Baptism preparation class before their children are baptized?*

Yes. Catholic parents are to be properly prepared for living out the commitment they are making (i.e., to raise their child in the Catholic faith) and for being able to celebrate the Sacrament with understanding as to its impact, beauty, significance, and nature. Therefore, parents are required to attend Baptism preparation classes before their children are baptized. This cannot be exempted except for a dire emergency or grave cause.

5. Are both parents required to attend the baptismal preparation class?

Yes. Both parents (if they have custody of the child and/or are Catholic) are required to attend the baptismal preparation class.

6. Are godparents / sponsors required to attend a Baptism preparation class before their godchild is baptized?

Yes, godparents are required to attend a baptismal preparation class. The role of a godparent is very valuable in the Christian formation of a baptized child. Therefore, godparents must be prepared in order to fulfill their roles in the Baptismal Rite and in assisting the parents in their duties of raising the child in the practice of the Catholic faith.

7. I am to be a godparent at another church, can I take the baptismal preparation class at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church?

Yes, anyone can take the Baptism preparation class here. You will be provided with a "Letter of Completion".

8. Do parents and/or godparents need to attend a baptismal preparation class again when another child is to be baptized?

It depends on how long ago it was. Here at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, the baptismal preparation class is good for 3 years. If it has been much longer that, the class will need to be taken again.

9. Can a non-Catholic Christian be a godparent / sponsor?

No. Only a practicing confirmed Catholic, (age 16 or older) can be a godparent. However, a non-Catholic, baptized Christian who participates in the Baptism and accepts responsibility for helping raise the child to live a Christian life can participate in the Rite of Baptism as a "Christian witness".

In the event that no godparents are designated or unable to physically attend, the Baptism can and should take place. In such a situation, the minister must ensure there is at least one witness present who can attest to the actual conferral of the sacrament.

Parents/guardians are encouraged, in so far as possible, to choose at least one person (or up to two persons, one of each sex) as godparents or witnesses for the Baptism of their child. These names are entered into the sacramental record book as the official "godparent" or "[Christian] witness" for Baptism.

"Christian witnesses" are required to provide a certificate of Baptism.

"Godparents" must provide proof of Confirmation by obtaining a recently issued copy of your Baptismal Certificate which will include notations of Confirmation.

10. Can a brother or sister be a godparent / sponsor?

Yes. Brothers or sisters of a child to be baptized may indeed be godparents / sponsors providing they have celebrated their 16th Birthday, have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function, be Confirmed Catholic and have celebrated their First Communion and not be bound by any canonical penalty (i.e., such as married outside the Catholic Church).

11. How should inter-church marriages (marriage between a Catholic and a Christian of another denomination) or inter-faith marriages (between a Catholic and non-Christian) be handled during the Baptism Preparation process?

If the parents were married within the Catholic Church, it is the Catholic parent who is obligated to fulfill the promise of raising their children within the Catholic faith and our Church. The non-Catholic spouse need not be burdened with the obligation of overseeing that the child be raised in the Catholic faith. Therefore, only the Catholic parent is obligated to attend Sacramental Preparation classes. However, both Christian and non-Christian spouses married in the Church have confirmed that they understand their Catholic spouse's obligation and as such will not interfere with that most important duty.

We welcome and encourages the participation of the non-Catholic spouse in the preparation and celebration of their child's Baptism. Even though the non-Catholic spouse need not be burdened with the obligation of overseeing that the child be raised in the Catholic faith, the non-Catholic Christian spouse is certainly encouraged to participate fully, inclusive of renewing his or her baptismal promises. However, a parent unable to make the Catholic profession of faith may refrain from the profession of faith if they so wish.

The focus of this event is the Baptism of the child, not on any one parent's religious beliefs.

12. If the parents are not validly married in the Catholic Church, can the child be baptized?

Yes. There is nothing that prevents a child born to parents who are not validly married in the Catholic Church from being baptized. We welcome with open arms your decision to baptize your child in the Catholic faith. As such, you may wish to discuss having your marriage con-validated (recognized) by the Catholic Church. If so, please contact the Pastor.

13. If a godparent(s) is not validly married in the Catholic Church, can they be godparents?

No. Firstly, the chosen godparent(s) does not need to be a married person. However, if the chosen godparent *is* married (whether to another Catholic or to a non-Catholic) then they must be married in the Catholic Church in order to serve as a godparent.

14. If the parents are not married, can the child be baptized?

Yes. Nothing prevents a child born to parents who are not married from being baptized within the Catholic church provided the parent has been appropriately prepared and understands the responsibilities that come with having the child baptized and is willing to fulfill the commitment

undertaken to raise the child in the rich principles of the Catholic faith. Also, at any time, if you would like to discuss preparing for marriage, please contact the Pastor.

15. Can a child be baptized outside of Mass?

Yes. Baptisms may occur during Mass, after Mass or privately. Sacraments are by their very nature public and communal - indeed, the very name Catholic Church derives from the Greek adjective *katholikos* meaning "universal" and also has roots in the term "all-embracing" thus so are the sacraments. They are never private actions. When one is baptized, the whole Church celebrates and rejoices. Therefore, if possible, the communal nature of the sacrament should be reflected in the manner it is celebrated.

16. Can a family priest or deacon baptize our child at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church?

Yes. Please contact the Baptism Coordinator to have your Rite of Baptism scheduled.

17. May a child with a mental or physical disability be baptized?

Yes. "Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring Baptism." If the child has mentally and emotionally reached the age of discretion (age 7) and has not been baptized the child is invited to participate in the RCIA for Children process where they will prepare for all their Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist). However, if the child is over the age of discretion physically, yet their cognitive age is below the age of discretion due to a disability, then the child can be baptized without participating in the RCIA process. Please contact the pastor for help discerning this issue.

18. Why is a copy of the birth certificate necessary?

It is important that the parish be able to properly identify and verify the child's birth information (i.e. parent's names, legal name of child, etc.) for the sacramental record book and Baptism Certificate.

19. What if I don't have a birth certificate yet?

It can take up to 3 months after the child is born to receive the birth certificate. If you do not yet have a birth certificate, please provide us with a copy of the Birth Verification Facts that you received at the hospital. Upon obtaining the birth certificate, please send or email a copy to the Baptism Coordinator. A copy of a state issued birth certificate for children older than 3 months must be in the parish office prior to the baptism.

20. Do I need to bring anything to the Baptism?

There is nothing in particular you need to bring to the Baptism beyond, of course, the parties of interest such as yourself, the child, godparents and/or witnesses, and family and friends as you see fit. The parish will provide you with a white baptismal bib and Baptism candle. However, if you bring your own candle, simply inform the deacon or priest just prior to the Baptismal Rite.