

Frequently Asked Questions about Baptism

The following section 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 that 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.

Note, these are merely those questions which get asked most frequently. While great care was taken to address the various questions below, it is by no means comprehensive.

Can I have my child baptized if I am not a registered parishioner at the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church?

Yes. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church does not require that parents be registered parishioners at our beloved parish. However, in order to baptize your child at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, parents must complete the Baptism preparation process (one class – held the last Monday of every month except May and December) here; or complete a Baptism preparation class 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.

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.

When should parents contact St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church about baptism for their child?

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church invites 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 process is the concept that there exists a basis of hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.

Are parents required to attend Baptism preparation classes before their children are baptized?

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. Unless of a dire emergency or grave cause, this cannot be exempted.

Are both parents required to attend the Baptismal preparation class?

Both parents (if they have custody of the child) are required to attend the Baptismal preparation class.

Are godparents / sponsors required to attend Baptism preparation classes before their godchild is baptized?

The role of a godparent / sponsor is very valuable in the Christian formation of a baptized child. Therefore, godparents / sponsors 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. Godparents are required to attend the Baptismal preparation class.

I am to be a godparent at another church that requires classes. Can I take godparent classes at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church?

Yes, anyone can take the Baptism preparation class at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church; after which you will be provided with a "Letter of Completion." **Contact Judy, Baptism Coordinator, in the parish office at (719-599-5031 ext. 100 parish@stfrancis.org).**

Do parents and godparents need to attend a preparation program again when another child is to be baptized?

Should parents have completed Baptism preparation classes at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, and then within three years be blessed with another child, then the parents will not need to attend the program again. After the three years – the class will have to be taken again. (Our classes are the last Monday of each month at 7 p.m.- except May & Dec.)

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

No. Only a practicing confirmed Catholic can be a godparent or sponsor. 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" (and so reflected on the baptismal certificate) if a Catholic godparent is also present. Likewise, a Christian who was baptized and confirmed Catholic and now practices in another Christian tradition cannot be either a godparent / sponsor or a Christian witness.

The church requires at least one godparent who is a practicing, confirmed Catholic age 16 or older. That godparent's name is entered into the sacramental record book as the "official" godparent or sponsor for baptism. Thus, if you wish to have additional persons bear witness at Baptism as Christian witnesses and be listed as such, then you must also have one fully initiated (meaning that they have celebrated Confirmation) Catholic godparent who is not impeded from being a godparent / sponsor as well.

Godparents are required to provide a certificate of Confirmation, from the church they were confirmed in, dated within the last six months.

Christian witnesses are required to provide a certificate of Baptism.

Can a brother or sister be a godparent / sponsor?

Brothers or sisters of a child to be baptized may indeed be godparents / sponsors providing that they have completed their 16th year of life, 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).

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.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church welcomes 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.

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

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

There is nothing that prevents a child born to parents who are not validly married in the Catholic Church from being baptized. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church welcomes with open arms your decision to baptize your child in the Catholic faith. As such, you may wish to discuss having your marriage convalidated (recognized) by the Catholic Church, **please contact Fr. Ken Przybyla (719-599-5031 ext. 101 or kprzybyla@stfranciscs.org).**

If the godparents are not validly married in the Catholic Church, can they be godparents?

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 be chosen as a godparent.

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

Nothing prevents a child born to parents who are not married from being baptized within the Catholic church provided that the parent(s) of that child is/are properly disposed, has/have been appropriately prepared, understand(s) the responsibilities that come with having the child baptized and is/are 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 Jennifer Lehrman, Director of Faith Formation (719-599-5031 ext. 110 or jenniferk@stfranciscs.org).**

Can a child be baptized outside of Mass?

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, the communal nature of the sacrament should be reflected in the manner it is celebrated. Baptisms may occur during Mass or outside of Mass. **Please contact Fr. Ken Przybyla (719-599-5031 ext. 101 or kprzybyla@stfranciscs.org)** to discuss a baptism outside of Mass.

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

Because this option requires coordinating with the facility scheduler to "reserve" the church space, and needs the permission of Fr. Ken Przybyla please contact the Baptism Coordinator before beginning any other portion of the Baptism Preparation process. If you have completed the Baptism Preparation requirements and you can provide documentation proving such, please have your family priest/deacon contact Fr. Ken Przybyla (719-599-5031 ext. 101 or kprzybyla@stfranciscs.org). After approval of all documentation, The Baptism Coordinator or Fr. Ken will contact you - either by email or phone - to have your Rite of Baptism scheduled. **Contact Judy, Baptism Coordinator, in the parish office at (719-599-5031 ext. 100 or parish@stfranciscs.org) for the appropriate paperwork and more information.**

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

"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 Fr. Ken Przybyla (719-599-5031 ext. 101 or kprzybyla@stfranciscs.org)** for help discerning this issue.

Why is the presentation of a birth certificate important for the issuing of a Baptism Certificate?

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.) when preparing the Baptism Certificate.

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 the Birth Verification Facts that you received at the hospital. Upon obtaining the birth certificate, please fax or email a copy to the attention of **Judy, Baptism Coordinator, in the parish office at (719-599-3360 or parish@stfranciscs.org)**. A copy of a state issued birth certificate for children older than 3 months must be in the parish office prior to scheduling the baptism.

Do I need to bring anything to the Baptism?

There is nothing in particular that you need to bring to the Baptism beyond, of course, the parties of interest such as yourself, the child, sponsors, godparents, any Christian 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.