



BAPTISM GUIDELINES: PARENTS

Thank you for choosing to have your child baptized! Baptism is the gift of God which makes us members of the Body of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, Baptism, like parenting, comes with some very serious responsibilities. This policy attempts to explain those responsibilities and provide guidance for arranging Baptism at St. Catherine Labouré Parish.

Please read the following guidelines and requirements thoroughly. It is our intention to make this a joyous and wonderful celebration for you, your child, and your family.

St. Catherine Labouré Parish will schedule the Baptism for the month following completion of pre-Baptism instruction and receipt of all documentation (or later, if desired). For example, if all requirements have been met in June, then the Baptism may be scheduled for the month of July or thereafter.

Please contact the Parish Office at 717-564-1321 x 132 or adultfaith@sclhbg.org if you have questions.

THE DIGNITY OF BAPTISM

Through the sacraments of Christian initiation men and women are freed from the power of darkness. With Christ they die, are buried and rise again. They receive the Spirit of adoption which makes them God's sons and daughters and, with the entire people of God, they celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection. Through Baptism men and women are incorporated into Christ. They are formed into God's people, and they obtain forgiveness of all their sins. They are raised from their natural human condition to the dignity of adopted children; they become a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. Hence they are called, and are indeed, the children of God. [Christian Initiation, §1-2]

- *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [Romans 10:9] By having your child baptized, **you make public testimony to your personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord** and (re)commit yourself to live a life of faith in Him.*

- *We treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory. [I Thessalonians 2:11-12] You agree to train your child in Christian faith and life.* This implies the following, among other things:
 - *You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. [Luke 10:27]* To teach your child to love God above all things and to love the neighbor as oneself.
 - Religious education, which begins at home. Things to do at home/as a family:
 - Putting God first in your lives and seeking first the Kingdom of God, especially through Sunday Mass *every Sunday* and active participation in the parish
 - Grace before meals
 - Prayers/Bible readings during the day and/or before bed
 - Forgiveness and charity at home
 - Religious education (when your child is old enough): Catholic School *or* PREP (Parish Religious Education Program), *or* home school.

For Parents:

1. **Parents** must be parishioners at St. Catherine Labouré Parish (they must either reside in the territory of the parish or have obtained the permission of their local pastor to register at St. Catherine Labouré). Parents who are not parishioners should refer to the non-parishioner section below.
2. **Completed [Baptism Registration Form](#)** must be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to attending the Baptism Seminar of choice.
3. **A copy** of your child's **birth certificate**.
4. **Attend a Baptism Seminar** before the Baptism is scheduled (unless they have attended one within the past 36 months). Seminars are held monthly.
5. **Parents** are to select one or two godparents (sponsors) for their child. Please see the Sponsor (Godparent) section below.
6. **Parents** may elect to make a donation to the priest, parish, or both.

Helpful notes:

- Please call during the pregnancy so that we can plan and prepare in advance for your child's Baptism.
- Unbaptized children above the age of seven (7) are to be baptized, confirmed, and receive Holy Communion in the same liturgy, preferably at the Easter Vigil [Cf. Code of Canon Law, can. 852, 866 & 891]. Two (2) years of religious education will precede their Christian initiation. If this is your situation, please contact Mr. Robert Jakielski, our Coordinator of Religious Education at rjakielski@sclhbg.org. or by phone at 717.564.1321 ext. 105
- It is recommended that you give your child a Christian name, either as a first or middle name. [Cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 855]
- Baptisms at St. Catherine Labouré Parish are currently scheduled for Saturday mornings (after COVID protocols have been lifted they may return to Sundays, either after or during Sunday Masses).
 - Certain Sundays will be unavailable due to other liturgies in the Church (for example, 1st Communion Sunday) or due to the nature of the Sunday Mass (e.g., Palm Sunday, which tends to be long and which immediately precedes Easter, the more appropriate occasion for Baptism).
 - If you wish a Baptism during a Sunday Mass (including Saturday evening), please discuss this with the pastor. In the case of multiple Baptisms in the same weekend, only one ceremony will be held so as not to over-schedule the Church.
- Parents should be present for the Baptism of their child. Other family members and friends are encouraged to attend. Someone (other than parents and godparents) may take photographs and/or videos during the ceremony (outside of Mass; it's distracting during Mass).
- It is always a good idea to see that a baby be fed before the Baptism.
- It is customary to clothe the child with a white robe after Baptism, symbolizing being clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). You may bring the child already in the robe, or you may put it on after the Baptism. If you do not have a white baptismal garment, please let us know so that we can make an appropriate

arrangement. Children who are old enough will be loaned an alb from the parish to wear; it is to be returned to the parish after the ceremony.

- Each child is given a lighted candle symbolizing that faith in Christ is the child's light throughout life; the family will also be given a baptismal certificate.
- If you plan to have a celebration (party) after the Baptism and wish to invite the priest/deacon who administered Baptism, please advise him ahead of time so that he can accommodate your invitation.

BAPTISM REQUIREMENTS: FOR NON-PARISHIONERS **(Those coming from a parish other than St. Catherine Labouré)**

For parents - St. Catherine Labouré Parish requires:

1. A signed letter from their pastor stating that pastor gives permission for the child to be baptized in another parish. Please ask for this signed letter at the office of your home parish.
2. A certificate or letter stating that the parents have been to a pre-Baptism class (unless they have attended this class through St. Catherine Labouré or have been dispensed from taking it by the Pastor of St. Catherine Labouré).
3. Completed [Baptism Registration Form](#) and a copy of the child's birth certificate submitted to the Parish Office at least a month before the chosen Baptism date.
4. Parents are to select Sponsors (Godparents) as noted below.

SPONSORS (GODPARENTS)

It is the duty of the sponsors by reason of their position ever to regard their godchild as a personal charge, and in all that pertains to his Christian upbringing to watch over the godchild faithfully, so that in the godchild's whole life the godchild may prove true to the promises which they once solemnly spoke for the godchild. [Roman Ritual: De Sacramento Baptismi Rite Administrando §38, De Patrinis, adapted]

The *Code of Canon Law* describes the role and requirements of the Godparents:

- Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for Baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with Baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.
- Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.
- Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:
 - 1° be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;
 - 2° have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or minister has granted an exception for a just cause;
 - 3° be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and **who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;** [*Pastor's note:* in addition to attendance at Sunday Mass and living by faith in Christ, if a sponsor is in a domestic relationship, that person must be **validly married in the Church. No exceptions will be made to this. If your designated Godparent is not validly married, your options are to:**
 - **Wait until the person rectifies the situation through marriage or separation from the domestic partner**
 - **Designate another person to be the sponsor.**]
 - 4° not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
 - 5° not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.

- §2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the Baptism (*note*: this person is commonly known as a “Christian witness”). However, for a just cause, an Orthodox Christian may serve as a Godparent, together with a Catholic Godparent. [cf. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norm on Ecumenism* 98b]

Furthermore:

- Please choose sponsors who will be outstanding models of Christian life for your child.
- Sponsors are to obtain a letter of good standing from their parish; they may do so using the form available [here](#). Members of other parishes may use the form provided by their parish; in either case, the sponsor is responsible for having the form signed by her/his proper pastor and sent to St. Catherine Labouré parish no later than two (2) weeks before the Baptism.
- **Christian Witnesses** are to have been baptized by water and the Trinitarian formula; they must submit a letter testifying to their Baptism and to their good standing in their ecclesial community.

CONCLUSION

Baptism is the beginning of Christian life...after Baptism you are expected to raise your child as a Christian, a follower of Jesus and heir of the Kingdom of God. Thank you for your dedication to raising your children as Disciples of Christ! If we as a parish can do anything to help you, please do not hesitate to ask. May God bless you!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. James E. Lease
Pastor