

# St. Mary, Mokena Parish Baptism Handbook

## ***Congratulations on the (coming) birth of your child!***

Our parish staff and our baptismal preparation team are here to help you get ready for this great sacrament of our Catholic Christian faith!

## ***The Parish of Baptism***

Infants are to be baptized in the parish church of their parents within the first few weeks after their birth. This is an important religious responsibility. As parents, you have shared the gift of life with your child. In Baptism, you bring them to a spiritual rebirth that makes them a Catholic Christian and grants them the gift of eternal life in Christ.

At least one of the child's parents should be a practicing Catholic and a registered member of our parish community. As you prepare for the Baptism of your child, this is also an opportunity for you to recommit your life to Christ as well. In the later section of this parish handbook, there are some examples of how your parish can help you be the best Christian parents for your child.

We also celebrate Baptisms for grandchildren of our registered parish members. After parents complete the Baptism preparation class at their own parish, they must obtain a pastoral letter from their parish stating their attendance at the class. Once this letter is received at our parish office, we can discuss a date for the Baptism at our church. Please note that certification for the godparents is also required (see page 4).

## ***Making Arrangements for Baptisms***

In order to make arrangements for the Baptism of your child, you must first attend a baptismal preparation meeting held for (expectant) parents. These classes are held on Sunday afternoons beginning at 1:00pm in the Church Hall and are two hours in length. Please call the parish office to register for one of these special classes held once each month.

Ideally, both parents will attend this meeting and babies are most welcome, too. Since the Catholic baptismal ceremony is explained in detail at these meetings, a non-Catholic parent would especially benefit from attendance. Parents may attend even before the birth of the child.



Active parishioners who have previously attended this class since May 2018 are required to complete a review phone call with a staff member to meet the class requirement. Otherwise, there are very few exceptions to the requirement of attending this important sacramental preparation program.

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### ***Responsibilities of Christian Parents***

In presenting their child for Baptism, parents make the commitment to raise their child in the Catholic Christian faith. The best way to fulfill this duty is for parents to already be practicing their faith conscientiously each and every day.

It is the duty of Christian parents to share their faith with their child by word and example, and to enroll their children in a Catholic school or a Religious Education program. They should have their children complete all of their sacraments: Confession, Eucharist, and Confirmation.

Here are some further thoughts about Christian parenthood to prayerfully consider:

- ✘ We hope that you are regularly attending Mass each Sunday. If not, we encourage you to begin attending Mass regularly again, bringing your baby with you to church.

- ✘ We hope that you are practicing your Catholic faith fully. If not, we encourage you to go to Confession, and to make a fresh start on living well as a Catholic Christian.

- ✘ We hope that you are married in the Catholic Church. If not, we encourage you to contact the Pastor after the Baptism, to discuss how your marriage can be blessed in the Church.

- ✘ We hope that you as adults have received all of your sacraments too. If not, we encourage you to complete them now by enrolling in our adult programs for these sacraments.

- ✘ If one of you is not a Catholic Christian, we encourage you to consider becoming one. Our adult RCIA programs are designed specifically for you!

- ✘ We also encourage you to explore the many benefits of Natural Family Planning as an effective and ethical way to be responsible parents. Please contact the Diocesan Family Ministry Office at 815-838-5334 for the times and places where these classes are offered.



Please feel free to contact the Pastor to discuss any of these important spiritual issues. You may also bring them up to one of the members of our baptismal preparation team. The more faithfully we follow the teachings of our Catholic Christian Faith, the more truly blessed we will be, both in this life and in the life to come.

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### ***Choosing a Christian Name***

The child shall be baptized with the name of a saint or a holy person from the Bible, a name derived from a saint, or a name based on a Christian mystery or virtue. Please learn something about the significance of this Christian name, and share that meaning with your child when they are old enough to understand and appreciate the virtues exemplified by that patron saint.

This baptismal name can be either your child's first or middle name. When in doubt about Christian names for Baptism, please ask a member of our baptismal preparation team, or refer the matter to the Pastor for his guidance in this regard. The choosing of a Christian name is an important part of your child's identity as a baptized Catholic Christian.

Finally, it is recommended that you observe the traditional custom of Catholic name-days. That is, you find out the feast day of the saint after whom your child is named, and honor your child on that day with a special remembrance that will help your child identify with their patron saint.

### ***Celebrants for Baptisms***

Deacons of our parish officiate Baptisms in our church.

If you have a preference for a certain deacon, please speak with the parish office. We will do our best to coordinate, though it may not always be possible to fulfill your request due to the availability of our parish clergy.

For personal or family reasons, another priest or deacon may sometimes be invited by the Pastor to come to our parish to celebrate a Baptism. If you have such a request, please bring it to the parish office's attention after you have attended the baptismal preparation class.

Also, please make note of it on the baptismal arrangements form.

Once an outside priest or deacon is approved, the office staff will schedule the Baptism ceremony at a special time that is usually different from the parish celebration of Baptisms. Please work out all these details with the parish office staff as soon as possible.

### ***Baptismal Dates and Times***

Baptisms are celebrated every Sunday, unless it's a holiday or special event, starting with the 11:00 A.M. Mass. Attendance at this Mass is requested because your child is publicly acknowledged in the prayers of that Mass. The rest of the baptismal ceremony begins after the closing hymn of the Mass. Feel free to sit wherever you'd like for Mass, the Deacon presiding will instruct you where to move upon the conclusion of Mass.



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Please continue to bring your child with you to Mass each weekend as well. During the school year, we have a special Children's Liturgy of the Word during the 9:30 A.M. Mass for children ages 4 through Grade Two.

In some rare cases, Baptisms may be scheduled at times other than at the regular Sunday time. However, all Baptisms are to be celebrated in the church building. To apply for any of these special exceptions, please consult the parish office staff in advance. These special situations are always contingent on the availability of the parish clergy.

### ***Choosing Qualified Godparents***

Each child may have one official godfather and one official godmother, or just one person as the official godparent, according to church law.

The godfather is a man, and a godmother is a woman. Just as each child has only one father and one mother, there is only one godfather and one godmother.

Each godparent will need to fill out and sign a Sponsor Form and turn it in at least one week prior to the baptism date. By means of these forms, the godparents certify that they fulfill all the requirements for their role as a Sponsor for the Catholic Sacrament of Baptism.

***Qualifications for Godparents:*** The qualifications for Catholic Sponsors are:

- They are a baptized and confirmed Catholic
- They are at least sixteen years of age
- They cannot be a parent/guardian of the child
- They lead a Catholic Christian lifestyle

If a godparent cannot actually be present at the Baptism, they may be represented by a proxy. This circumstance should be noted when the Sponsor Certification Form is turned in to the parish office.

Parents should provide the Sponsor Forms to each proposed sponsor. The completed Sponsor Forms must be returned to the parish office, either by the Sponsor or through the parents, at least one week prior to the baptismal date. By means of these forms, the godparents certify that they fulfill all the requirements for their role as a Sponsor for the Catholic Sacrament of Baptism.

If a designated godparent does not fulfill all the requirements for being a qualified sponsor, this is an opportunity for them to come back to church, to reconnect with their Christian faith, and to join their local parish community. That situation, in itself, can be a great blessing.

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**Christian Witnesses:** If there is already one qualified Catholic Godparent for the child, the second sponsor may be a non-Catholic Christian, with the following qualifications:

- ✘ They are a validly baptized Christian
- ✘ They are at least sixteen years of age
- ✘ They cannot be a parent/guardian of the child
- ✘ They lead a Christian lifestyle



If the Catholic sponsor is a godfather, then the Christian witness would be a godmother; and vice-versa.

Technically the non-Catholic sponsor is called a Christian Witness, because they cannot really promise to help the parents raise their Godchild in the Catholic faith if they themselves are not actually members of the Catholic Church.

Even though Christian Witnesses are allowed, two Catholic godparents are preferred. Finally, some families and cultures designate several additional honorary godparents. These people do not have a role in the baptismal liturgy, their names are not recorded in the parish register of Baptisms, and their names do not appear on baptismal certificates issued by the parish.

### **Spiritual Duties of Godparents**

The spiritual duties of the godparents are as follows:

- ✘ To make the baptismal vows along with the parents on behalf of their godchild and to pray regularly for their godchild.
- ✘ To be a good example for their godchild of how to live faithfully as a Catholic Christian and to assist the parents in their religious obligations toward their godchild.
- ✘ If necessary, to take the place of the parents in fulfilling their religious obligations toward their godchild, especially in regard to the reception of the three important sacraments of Confession, Eucharist, and Confirmation.
- ✘ Several years later, when the child is confirmed, the preferred sponsor for Confirmation is usually one of the Catholic godparents from Baptism.
- ✘ All godparents are encouraged to remember the anniversary of their godchild's Baptism, and to celebrate it appropriately.

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### ***Special Situations***

There are certain situations in which Baptisms may be celebrated separately from the regular Sunday afternoon group ceremony:

- Children who were baptized in the hospital due to danger of death, or children who were baptized by a non-Catholic minister, are not to be re-baptized as such. Instead, they are to be formally received into the Catholic Church in ceremonies that are similar to the baptismal rite, but without the pouring of water.
- Older children, who understand what is going on, must be properly catechized for this sacrament.
- The official rite of Baptism often refers to both parents, with special blessings for each, and single parents may want to request a private ceremony where the references to the other parent may be politely omitted.
- In rare circumstances where the godparents or relatives are traveling from a great distance, some special considerations of scheduling may be considered. Please consult with the parish office staff regarding these special requests right away.

### ***The Baptismal Liturgy***

Here are just a few reminders for the day of the Baptism:

- Please come and invite your family and friends to join you at 11:00 A.M. Mass.
- Your child is publicly remembered during the prayers of the faithful at that Mass.
- Sit near the Baptismal Font after the conclusion of Mass.
- The priest or the deacon will give instructions regarding the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism.
- As part of the baptismal ceremony your child receives a white baptismal bib and a candle, both of which your child will keep.
- During the baptismal ceremony, one of the parents holds the child while the water is poured. Please hold the back of your baby's head, over the font, with your bare hand.
- The godparents may hold the child during the other parts of the baptismal ceremony.

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### ***Certificates of Baptism***

A Baptismal Certificate will be mailed to you shortly after the Baptism. Please check it for accuracy, as this information will become part of the permanent church sacramental records for your child.

You will need to present a Baptismal Certificate for First Communion and Confirmation. When you get married in the Catholic Church, you need a newly issued Baptismal Certificate from the parish of Baptism.

***Congratulations once again on the birth of your child!  
God bless you for baptizing your child in the Catholic Church,  
and for raising your child in the Catholic Christian Faith!***

### ***General Parish Information***

Saint Mary Catholic Church – 708-326-9300 – [www.StMaryMokena.org](http://www.StMaryMokena.org)  
19515 South 115th Avenue, Post Office Box 2, Mokena, Illinois 60448-0002

### ***Weekend Mass Schedule:***

Mass on Saturday evening is at 5:00 P.M., with Confessions from 3:30 P.M.- 4:30 P.M.  
Masses on Sunday are at 8:00 A.M., 9:30 A.M., 11:00 A.M., and 6:00 P.M.

***Weekday Mass Schedule:*** Mass or a Communion Service is celebrated on Monday through Saturday mornings at 8:00 A.M. in church, except Wednesday mornings September-May when Mass is at 7:30 A.M.

For the Mass schedule on holy days, please consult the parish bulletin.

***Parish Office Info:*** The main phone number is 708-326-9300, and the fax number is 708-326-9301. The office is open Monday through Friday, from 8:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Evening and weekend hours are by appointment. The parish office entrance is Door #3, near the school office entrance. The entrance faces east on the circular drive, and has a semicircular glass atrium.