



## **GUIDELINES AND POLICIES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

Baptism is your child's first step on their faith journey! The greatest gift you can give to your child is the gift of Baptism – claiming them for Christ from the beginning of their lives! Just as you would make necessary preparations for a long trip or maybe just as you have prepared for the arrival of your child, you must now prepare for the most important journey in your child's life. Baptism is not merely something for the baby or a family celebration; it is a sacrament. As the Church teaches, sacraments have three functions: "to make people holy, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally to give worship to God."

### **BAPTISM PREPARATION**

1. Families participating in any sacramental program must be registered at St. James the Apostle Parish for at least 3 months or have your pastor's permission. If you are not registered, please do so as soon as possible by completing a Parish Registration form and turning it in to the Parish Office.
2. Parents must complete the Belonging on-line course through Ascension Press as preparation. The cost is \$9.95 Both parents and Godparents are required to take the on-line course. **To access the Belonging, Certification Course please use this link**  
<https://ascensionpress.com/products/belonging-baptism-in-the-family-of-god-certification-course>. Once you have completed the course you will be sent a certificate. Please forward that certificate to [smajor@stjamesapostle.com](mailto:smajor@stjamesapostle.com) and I will reach out to you to arrange the date and time for your child's Baptism. Baptisms are normally celebrated on the **first Saturday** of the month at 10:30am, however there may be exceptions during certain times of the year.
3. Once we receive the following documents and you have attended the parent class, we can schedule you for a Baptism date:
  - Baptism Registration Form (included in this packet)  
Parents are asked to choose a Saint Name for their child, which will be used during the celebration. If your child is named after a saint, you may use that name or kindly choose a valid saint name and indicate that on the registration form.
  - Verification letters for Godparents (please refer to the section on page 2 - Basic Church Guidelines Concerning Sponsors or Godparents)
4. After completing the on-line course and emailing the certificate to [smajor@stjamesapostle.com](mailto:smajor@stjamesapostle.com), **families must call the Parish Office to schedule the Baptism Celebration.** Baptisms are normally celebrated the first Saturday of the month at 10:30 am, however during certain times of the year, there may be exceptions. Under special circumstances, Baptisms can be scheduled at another time. If the Baptism will take place at another Church, please provide the name and address of the Church along with the date of the Baptism and we will gladly send a letter of permission to that Church for you that will confirm your completion of our Baptism Preparation Class, as well as your registration status at our parish.

### **CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM**

The celebration of the sacrament of Baptism normally takes place on the first Saturday of the month at 10:30 am. For valid reasons, Baptisms may be arranged at another time. This can be done by calling the Parish Office.

If the Baptism will take place at another Catholic Church, permission from the pastor of St. James the Apostle is needed. This permission includes verification of your registration status at St. James and your attendance at the Baptism Preparation class. Please call the Parish Office to request this letter of permission.

Families not registered here at our parish requesting the sacrament of Baptism at St. James the Apostle Parish must secure a letter from their pastor testifying to the fact that a) they are registered members of that parish, b) they have attended a Baptismal Preparation program, and c) have their pastor's permission to celebrate the sacrament of Baptism here at our parish.

Photos and videos may be taken during the Baptism, but care should be taken that the solemnity of the occasion is not disturbed.

There is never a fee for the celebration of the sacraments, however a stipend to the priest or deacon is appropriate.

During the celebration of the sacrament, while in the Church, kindly ensure that your children and other relatives stay in the pews.

#### **BASIC CHURCH GUIDELINES CONCERNING SPONSORS OR GODPARENTS**

It is the very ancient custom of the Church that at the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation, a sponsor is present. The function of the sponsor is: a) together with the celebrant who baptizes or confirms, to represent the Church in receiving the person into the communion of the Church; and b) to assist the person in Christian initiation and formation.

In accord with Canon 874 of the Code of Canon Law, the Church can admit a person to the role of sponsor if, a) he or she is not less than sixteen years of age; b) is a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Holy Eucharist and lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken, and c) is not either the father or the mother of the person. Additionally, the maximum number of godparents is two, one male and/or one female.

Given the functions and role a sponsor exercises, a non-Catholic Christian cannot be admitted as a sponsor; however, he or she can be a witness. A non-Christian cannot serve in this latter capacity but is welcome to be present at the ceremony.

Note that the Catholic seeking to be admitted as a sponsor "lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken." This phraseology means that the candidate for sponsor: a) sincerely believes and strives to put into practice the Word of God as taught by the Catholic Church; b) regularly takes part in the Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and c) if married, was married in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church and is not in an invalid marriage.

Consequently,

Those Catholics who are not actively affiliated with a Catholic Church,

Those Catholics who are invalidly married, as for example, before a Justice of the Peace, or without proper dispensation, before a minister of a Protestant denomination or before a rabbi, and who did not validly contract marriage according to the "form" of the Catholic Church,

Those Catholics who are divorced and invalidly remarried, and

Those Catholics who have not received Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist; do not qualify to be admitted as a sponsor.

If a godparent is a member of another parish other than St. James the Apostle Parish, we require a letter from their parish stating they are a practicing Catholic who seeks to be admitted as a sponsor and solemnly affirms that they fulfill the requirements of the Catholic Church for this role. This letter must be received prior to the Baptism Preparation Class.

Godparents should make every effort to attend the celebration of the Baptism; however, proxies may represent godparents or witnesses who cannot be present on the day of the baptism.

Should you have any questions regarding these guidelines and policies for the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism, please contact the Parish Office at (770) 957-5441.

*May God bless your child and your family, as all of you continue  
to grow deeper in your knowledge of the Catholic faith and love of our Lord!*



**PLEASE REMEMBER TO SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING FORMS PRIOR TO  
SCHEDULING A BAPTISM:**

**1. Baptism Registration Form**

- See on Website

**2. Verification letters for Godparents and/or sponsors**

- have Godparents/sponsors contact their parish of registration