

Guidelines for the celebration of Baptism

(as of July 1, 2009)

St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church
Gueydan, LA
(337) 536.9258

Jesus said, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Baptism Appointment

This sheet is to be brought to the Pastor at the time you come for your appointment with him. Please note that regardless of who is baptizing your child, you must meet with the Pastor. There is no instructional class to attend, but a 30 minute interview with the Priest in his office is required. **BOTH** parents are to attend this meeting; godparents **DO NOT** have to attend this meeting. Please be attentive to the requirements that follow below. No exceptions are given. Thank you.

NOTE: If you not a registered member of St. Peter the Apostle Church, Father cannot baptize your baby without written permission from the Pastor of the Church in which you are registered or attend. This is in accordance with the Church's Canon Law. The written permission is to be presented to Father at the time of your interview.

Please place a check by each of the following if they apply to you:

- We (I) have not been going to Mass on Sunday.
- We (I) go to Mass regularly, but not every Sunday.
- We are married, but not by a Priest.
- We are not married; we are living together.

Choice of Godparents

The choice of Godparents is a very important one. They must not be chosen simply because of familial or friendly ties. Rather, they are to chosen to fulfill their important role in regard to the baptized person. The Godparents you choose must actively practice their Faith, (which means):

- They attend Mass every Sunday (not just sometimes)
- They must be Confirmed Catholics who are able to receive Holy Communion (that is, living in a state of grace).
- If married, he/she must be in a valid Sacramental Marriage (blessed by a Priest).
- Only one Godparent is required by the Church, but most couples choose a second Godparent. If your choice of a second Godparent does not fit the above criteria, he/she will be regarded as a Christian witness and the name will not appear on the baptismal record.

NOTE: At times, a couple will often say that they do not have a family member who practices their Faith. If this is the case, please look for good friends or acquaintances; we all know someone who has an exemplary faith practice. If it is discovered that your choice of Godparents does not meet **ALL** of the requirements given above (Sunday Mass every week, etc.), then the baptismal date of the child may be postponed until the requirements are met.

The Duty of Parents

Why are you here?

Why do you want your baby baptized? Most likely, it is because Our Lord Jesus commands us to be baptized, “Unless you be born of water and the Spirit, you will not have eternal life...”(John 3:5). Baptism is a Sacrament that deals with Eternal Life, with loving not just the body of your baby, but also his/her immortal soul!

Not “magic” or “superstition”

With the sacrament of baptism comes a way of life, a creed by which to live. It makes no sense to have a child baptized if we have no intention of teaching the child the ways of Jesus and of His Church. If we never or rarely attend Holy Mass or if we are rarely present to the Church, then we are turning this holy sacrament into “magic” and “superstition”. The Church is very clear in Her teaching: Baptism is not an isolated event or a one-time ceremony!

A Promise to God

These are the sacred promises that you will make to Almighty God during the rite of Baptism, for which you will have to answer to God at the end of your life. Ponder these promises. Begin now to prepare your heart to make them- and to live them. Do not promise to God something you have no intention to carry out.

Priest: You have asked for your child to be baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us by loving God and our neighbor. *Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?*

Parents: We do.

Later in the ceremony, the Priest will again direct his attention to the parents. Baptism is not just about a little baby; it is also about the faith of the parents!

Priest: Parents and Godparents, you have come here to present this child for baptism...On your part *you must make it your constant care to bring him/her up in the practice of the faith...*If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, renew now the vows of your own baptism. *Reject sin.* Profess your faith in Christ Jesus. This is the faith of the Church. This is the faith in which this child is about to be baptized.

Living Our Catholic Faith in the Home

The Second Vatican Council strongly reminded us that the primary responsibility for the Christian education of children rests upon the parents. These suggestions will help you to accomplish this sacred duty.

Begin by choosing a Christian name for your child.

Then teach him/her about his/her patron saint. Celebrate the saint’s feast day with your child- their “name day”

Encourage family prayer at a young age.

The blessing before meals, prayers at bedtime, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be, and a simple Act of Contrition should be a part of every Catholic’s home education. The rosary is a wonderful

prayer with the children because they learn by repeating. They also feel important if they have their own rosary beads.

Celebrate special anniversaries.

Make a big deal out of the anniversaries of Baptism, First Holy Communion, First Penance and Confirmation. They have special meaning for our lives, and especially for children.

Use sacramentals in your home.

Display a crucifix prominently in every room, a picture of Our Blessed Mother Mary, a crib scene at Christmas. Emphasize penance and fasting during the holy season of Lent. Use blessed candles and holy water in your home. Have your home/car blessed. These sacramentals are a way of “absorbing” Catholic values and practices and retaining a sense of the sacred all around us.

Worship as a family.

Go to Mass together as a family and receive the sacraments together, including the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession). Try to avoid choosing Mass “cafeteria style”. Consider going to daily Mass during Advent or Lent or the Easter Season. It’s tough, but that’s what our children will remember. The old adage is true: ***the Family that prays together, stays together!***

Speak about your faith and encourage the reading of Catholic materials.

Read as a family from the Bible or church bulletin. The literature rack in the entrance of the Church or at the office has a selection of good reading material for all age groups. If you never read Catholic, literature, or speak positively about the Church, your faith, and your Priests, your children will absorb negative values. Count on it!

Choosing the Godparents

This single question is addressed directly to the Godparents in during the baptismal ceremony in the Ordinary Form: “*Are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers?*” Godparents respond: *We are.*

Godparents are called to represent what ought to be the concern of the whole Church: that the child to be baptized is brought up in the ways of the Faith.

Requirements

One of the Godparents must be a fully initiated (Confirmed) Catholic; if the other person is not Confirmed, he/she is called a Christian witness and is listed in this manner on the baptismal certificate.

Godparents should live the Catholic Faith in a visible fashion by the faithful Sunday Mass attendance, regular use of the sacrament of confession, etc. If married, the Godparent is to be in a valid Sacramental Marriage blessed by a Priest or Deacon.

Since Godparents are envisioned by the rite as helping the parents fulfill their duty in nourishing the spiritual growth of the child, it is inappropriate to have a child undertake this role.

At least one Godparent should be present for the celebration, with another person “standing-in”: for the Godparent who is absent.

At a future date, when the child celebrates the rite of Confirmation, he/she is encouraged to retain one of the baptismal sponsors as a Confirmation sponsor, especially if that person has played a significant role in the child’s growth in the Faith.

The Baptismal Ceremony itself

The sacrament of Baptism is celebrated immediately following Holy Mass on Sunday, or if need be, on Saturday. The family should attend the Mass.

Please remember the sacredness of the ceremony by the manner in which you are dressed and present yourself in church. This is especially the case regarding parents and Godparents (no shorts, gum chewing, etc.)

Photography- Pictures may be taken at any time during the ceremony, keeping in mind the importance of not disturbing the prayer of the congregation. For this reason, we ask that only one photographer per family be allowed to walk about.

Candle/White Garment- The child is to be clothed in white for the ceremony. A special candle is also used in the ceremony and will be given to the family.

Fee- There is no fee for a baptism. If you would like to make a donation to the church, you may do so.

Celebrant- Ordinarily, the Pastor will officiate at the Rite of Baptism. However, the deacon of St. Peter Church may be asked to administer the sacrament, as well as any Priest or Deacon in good standing, with the Pastor’s permission.

Conclusion

The birth of a child for any parent is a time of grace, a wonderful opportunity to grow in holiness. We hope that this catechetical handout has helped to clarify the Church’s teaching about the sacrament of Baptism and the important and serious role the parents and Godparents have in it. Appropriately, we conclude with the Word of God. These words from Sacred Scripture are clear and strong, and they invite all of us to reflection:

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide in him ought to live just as he lived. (1 John 2:3-5)

Let’s return to the original question: ***Why are you here?***

Please fill out the following information in full.

NAME OF PARENTS: _____

FULL NAME OF CHILD TO BE BAPTIZED: _____

Information of Godparents

Full name (first, middle, last) of Godfather: _____

Is the Godfather Confirmed?	YES	NO
Will the Godfather be present at the ceremony?	YES	NO
If not present for the ceremony, who will be proxy?	_____	
	first, middle, last	

Full name (first, middle, last) of Godmother: _____

Is the Godmother Confirmed?	YES	NO
Will the Godmother be present at the ceremony?	YES	NO
If not present for the ceremony, who will be proxy?	_____	
	first, middle, last	

Promise of Godparents

I promise to God and His Holy Catholic Church that I meet all the requirements regarding the role and duty of the Godparents, so help me God.

NOTE: If the Godparents you have chosen live out of town, please do your best to get the signatures.

Signature of Godfather

Signature of Godmother

Having completed this sheet, you are now ready to make your interview with the Pastor. Call the office (337.536.9258) to set up an appointment with Father directly. Your interview will last about 30 minutes.

If you do not adhere to these guidelines IN FULL, which are in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, your child cannot be baptized at St. Peter the Apostle Church.

Church Seal

For office use only: Date of Appointment _____

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)