

# Questions and Answers about the Sacrament of Baptism

**Q: Who may have their children baptized?**

A: Parents alone have the responsibility to present their children for baptism. (Normally it is inappropriate for grandparents, non-custodial parents, or other parties to present children for baptism.) Parents should be Catholics practicing the faith and either registered in St. Aloysius parish or presenting a letter of introduction/permission to baptize from their own pastor in the parish where they live.

**Q: How do I arrange to have my baby baptized?**

A: Parents should contact the parish office (544-4554), either before or shortly after a child's birth. The Church expects that all parents receive appropriate instruction in preparation for the baptism of their children. This instruction can take place any time—even before the birth of your child. Normally at the time of this preparation class will the date and time of the baptism be set in the parish calendar.

**Q: When do baptisms take place?**

A: Typically baptisms take place on Saturdays and Sundays after the main Masses of the day. Occasionally baptisms may take place during Mass itself. Other dates and times may be possible by mutual agreement. Baptisms are not strictly forbidden, but as a rule, do not take place during the Season of Lent (this year, March 9 - April 21, 2011). The Easter Vigil (April 23, 2011), Easter Sunday (April 24, 2011), and the rest of the Easter Season are preferred, *privileged* times for baptism. Baptism should take place in a Church only once on a given day; when multiple baptisms are requested on one day, there is a single, common celebration for all who are present.

**Q: Do we need godparents?**

A: Yes. By the ancient tradition of the Church, all candidates for baptism (children and adults) must have at least one sponsor or two godparents. These persons must be 1) baptized, confirmed, and practicing Catholics, 2) at least 16 years old, and 3) should not be related to the child in the first degree (parents, grandparents, etc). If there are two godparents, one must be a godfather, the other a godmother. There are no provisions for more than two godparents in official records or in Church Law, although sometimes 'honorary' or godparents may be appointed for the ceremony itself.

**Q: Do godparents need to be Catholic?**

A: To be a godparent, technically, yes. But, if one godparent is fully qualified as an active, practicing, baptized and confirmed Catholic of at least 16 years of age, a second person who is not Catholic (but is otherwise baptized in another Christian tradition) may serve as a "Christian witness" to the baptism.

**Q: My child is preparing to receive First Communion. May he/she be baptized?**

A: Absolutely. A child *must* be baptized to receive the other sacraments. After about the age of 7, children and adults must receive age-appropriate instruction before their baptism. This is arranged on a case-by-case basis for children of catechetical age (K-12) and all others are directed to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes.

**Q: My grandchild has not been baptized and his parents will not bring him to church. May I baptize him myself?**

A: Technically, anyone can baptize in a life-and-death emergency by simply using clean water and the Trinitarian formula: "*I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" This privilege should not be abused in cases where an emergency is not present. Baptism by persons other than priests or deacons outside an emergency usually inappropriate because 1) it usurps parental rights to choose baptism freely for their children, 2) it deprives (otherwise-disinterested) parents of the opportunity to reconcile with the Church and return to the practice of the faith on the occasion of their child's baptism, 3) ongoing Christian formation, a presumptive requirement before baptizing any child, is not assured, 4) it often does not result in the appropriate record-keeping which will allow the Church to verify the baptism of a child when time comes for First Communion, Confirmation, or even a Catholic wedding. While a noble desire on part of a grandparent or family member, this action can have serious, unintended negative consequences.

**Q: My unbaptized child (or another unbaptized person) is seriously ill. Should he/she be baptized?**

A: Absolutely. When an unbaptized person is in danger of death, they should be baptized. If there is time, please contact the parish office (and use the emergency voice-mailbox, if necessary) or contact any other priest or deacon. If time does not allow, any person can baptize with clean water, the intention to do what the Church does in baptizing, and by reciting the Trinitarian baptismal formula. When a baptism takes place in this manner, those involved are required to inform the parish office as soon as possible so that appropriate records of the baptism and follow-up pastoral care can be made.

**Q: My child was baptized at the hospital. Is it still possible to have a church ceremony?**

A: Yes it is. After an emergency baptism, there is a "Rite of Welcoming Baptized Children to Church" which supplies all the other rituals of baptism: a baptismal candle, the anointings, etc. The child is not baptized again in this ceremony, as once baptized, a child cannot be baptized again. The ceremony is otherwise identical to a regular baptism service.

**Q: I am an adult (over 16) and would like to be baptized. What do I do?**

A: Please contact the parish office. An unbaptized adult is invited to learn about the faith and choose baptism after a period of formation, education, conversion, and election. Typically baptism of adults is done with the other Sacraments of Initiation (Confirmation and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil. The process for this is called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

**Q: Is there a fee for baptism?**

A: No, there is never a fee for administration of any of the sacraments themselves. It is, however, expected that parents of children who are baptized are active, contributing members of the parish. The parish and/or the minister of baptism may receive a gift from the family or the baptized, but this is not required.

