



INFORMATION FOR THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN *St. Mary Church, Mokena, Illinois*

Congratulations on the (coming) birth of your new child! Thank you for inquiring about baptizing your baby!

1. **Parish of Baptism.** Infants are to be baptized in the parish church of their parents within the first few weeks after their birth. At least one of the parents should be a practicing Catholic and a registered member in good standing with this parish. Where neither parent is a member of this parish, a letter from their pastor should be obtained which attests to their parish membership in good standing and attendance at their own parish's baptismal preparation program. If there is no such baptismal preparation meeting in their home parish, it may then be possible to arrange for attendance at a baptismal preparation meeting in this parish.

2. **Arrangements for Baptism.** Arrangements for the baptism of infants are made at monthly baptismal preparation meetings for parents. Both parents should attend this meeting. Since the ceremony of baptism is explained at these meetings, a non-Catholic parent would especially benefit from attendance. Godparents are also welcomed and encouraged to attend this baptismal preparation meeting. Attendance at this program before the birth of the child is also both encouraged and recommended. Finally, parents may be excused from this meeting only if they have attended it within the past two years at this parish.

3. **Responsibility of Parents.** In presenting their child for baptism, parents make the commitment of raising their child in the Catholic Faith. It is their duty to share their faith with their child by word and example, and to enroll their children in the religious education programs of the parish, especially in preparation for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Confirmation, which complete their child's Christian Initiation.

4. **Name of the Child.** The child shall be baptized with the name of a saint or a holy person from the Bible, a name derived therefrom, or a name based on a Christian mystery or virtue. This baptismal name can be either the child's first or middle name. When in doubt, please ask beforehand.

5. **Times and Dates for Baptism.** Baptisms are celebrated most Sundays of the year, immediately after the 12:00 Mass. Attendance at the 12:00 Mass is required because the ceremony begins promptly at the conclusion of the Mass. Also, your child is publicly honored and acknowledged at the 12:00 Mass. If you are unable to attend the 12:00 Mass, please let us know in advance, so that we can make other arrangements. Please note that your presence at just the baptismal ceremony does not substitute for your regular obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Please continue to bring your baptized child to worship each weekend at Mass.

It is the duty of the priests and deacons of this parish to officiate at baptisms in this parish. If you have a preference, you can make it known, but it may not always be possible to fulfill your request. However, for personal or family reasons, another priest or deacon may sometimes be invited to celebrate the baptism. In such a case the baptism would be scheduled at a time separate from the regular parish celebration of baptisms. For other serious reasons, baptisms may be scheduled at times other than the regular Sunday time. But in every case, all baptisms are to be celebrated in the church building.

6. Godparents. According to Church Law, each child shall have either one official godfather and one official godmother, or just one official godparent. Because so many people have asked, it has become necessary to point out that, by common-sense definition, a godfather is a man, and a godmother is a woman.

Additional honorary godfathers and godmothers may be privately designated according to family custom, but there is no particular role for these additional godparents in the baptismal ceremony, and their names are not recorded in church books as such. Only the names of official sponsors are recorded in the church books.

The duties of the godparents are: to make the baptismal vows along with the parents on behalf of the child; to pray for the child; to give the child a good example of how to live as a Catholic Christian; to assist the parents in their religious obligations toward the child; and, if necessary, to take the place of the parents in fulfilling their religious obligations toward their child, especially in regard to the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation. Also, a baptismal godparent is the preferred sponsor for the later Confirmation.

The qualifications for being such a godparent are: to be a baptized and confirmed practicing Catholic who is at least sixteen years of age. Parents cannot function as godparents for their own child. As already stated above, by definition the godfather is a man, and the godmother is a woman. Also, there really cannot be two official godfathers or two official godmothers, only one godfather and one godmother for baptism. When either godparent cannot actually attend the ceremony of baptism, a proxy may be designated to represent the godparent who is not in attendance. Anniversaries of baptism should be commemorated by godparents.

Exception: for family or personal reasons, it is permitted that one of the sponsors may be a validly baptized, practicing member of another Christian church. Such a non-Catholic person is technically a "Christian Witness" to the baptism, instead of a Godparent as such, because they cannot really promise as such to help raise the child in the Catholic Faith if they themselves are not practicing members of the Catholic Faith.

7. Baptismal Ceremony. For the baptismal ceremony, the child should be clothed in a white garment. You are encouraged to use a family heirloom for this purpose, or even to begin a family heirloom with the garment used at this baptism. A simple white garment is also provided by the church as a keepsake. Also, a candle will be presented to the child as part of the ceremony, or it can be furnished by the family. It is now the custom that one of the parents should hold the child during the actual baptism. The godparents may hold the child during the other parts of the ceremony. Photographs and videos are allowed, following the instructions of the celebrant of the baptisms that day. Photographers, please do not walk up on the steps of the altar area.

8. Special Situations. There are certain situations in which the baptism may be celebrated apart from the regular Sunday afternoon group baptism ceremony. First, 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. Second, older children, who understand what is going on, must be properly catechized for this sacrament, and often prefer not to be baptized with the babies. Third, since the official rite of baptism often refers to both parents, with special blessings for each, single parents may want a private ceremony where the references to the other parent may be omitted. Finally, in rare circumstances where the godparents or relatives are traveling from a great distance, some special considerations of scheduling may be in order.

9. Certificate 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 record.

10. Further Questions. If you have any further questions concerning baptisms, please do not hesitate to ask. This baptismal information sheet was developed on the basis of the most frequent questions that people generally ask, and will be updated when new questions and clarifications are brought forward for consideration. This baptismal preparation document was last revised on November 25, 2007.