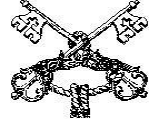




Saint Peter Roman Catholic Church

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The Sacrament of Baptism

The Duty of the Parents

Why are you here?

Why do you want your baby to be Baptized? Most likely, it is because 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 the immortal soul of your baby!

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 Mass, if we are rarely present to the Church, then we are turning this sacrament into “magic” or “superstition.” The Church is very clear in its 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 of carrying 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 their 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 promises of your own baptism. Reject sin. Profess your faith in Jesus Christ. This is the faith of the Church. This is the faith in which the child is about to be baptized.

Choosing the God Parents

This single question is addressed directly to godparents during the baptismal ceremony and underlines their roles: *Priest*: Are you ready to help these parents in their duty as Christian mother and father? *Godparents*: We do.

Are you really? 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—and so are rightly called sponsors of the child.

Before someone can be considered for the role of godparent, the Church is obligated to determine whether or not that person is truly ready and capable of assisting the parents in their own responsibilities. To be a godparent, one must be sixteen years of age and Confirmed in the Catholic Church, have already received the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, if married, following the marriage laws of the Church, and leading a life of faith. A baptized person who is not a Catholic is unable to participate as a godparent except a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.

Since godparents are envisioned in 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.

Godparents should live the Catholic faith in a visible fashion by faithfully attending Mass every Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation, regular use of the sacrament of Confession, and calling on a priest for the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick when seriously/gravely ill and before any surgery. If married, the godparent is to be in a valid sacramental marriage blessed by a priest or deacon.

At least one godparent should be present for the celebration, with another person—of proper age and faithfulness—“standing in” for the godparent who is unable to attend.

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 the 11:00am Mass every second and fourth Sunday. We encourage you to attend this Mass so as to avoid late arrivals.

Please remember the sacredness of the ceremony by the manner in which you are dressed and present yourselves in church. This is especially the case regarding the parents and godparents. No gum chewing, shorts, etc.

Photography—Feel free to take pictures at any time during the ceremony, keeping in mind the importance of not disturbing the prayer of the congregation.

Candle / White Garment—A special candle is used in the ceremony and will be provided by the Church and given to the family. We do not give the white garment here at St. Peter Church. We kindly ask that you dress your child in white clothes (gown, suite, etc.) and this will be blessed during the ceremony. If you choose to bring a separate white garment to place on your child at this time in the ceremony, you are most welcomed to do so.

Fee—There is no fee for a baptism. If you would like to make a donation to the Church and/or celebrant of the Baptism, you may do so. The amount is of your own choosing.

Celebrant—Ordinarily the priest or the deacon of St. Peter Church will officiate at the Rite of Baptism. However, any priest or deacon in good standing with the Catholic Church may officiate with the pastor's permission.

The birth of a child for any parent is a time of grace, a wonderful opportunity to grow in holiness. We hop that this catechetical handout has helped to clarify the Church's teaching on the sacrament of Baptism and the importance and serious role the parents and godparents play in it. Appropriately we conclude with the Word of God. These words from Sacred Scripture are strong, and invite all of us to reflection. They are from 1 John 2:3-5:

The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Christ is to keep his commandments. The man who claims, "I have known him," without keeping his commandments, is a liar; in such a one there is no truth. But whoever keeps his word, truly has the word of God been made perfect in him. The way we can be sure we are in union with him is for the man who claims to abide in him to conduct himself just as he did.

If we say we love Jesus, but do not keep his commandments—you shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole mind, and love your neighbor as your self—we are liars. That's strong, yet it is the revealed Word of God. The third commandment comes to mind: *Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day*. Why is this so important? Weekly Mass attendance prepares the immortal soul for its personal encounter with God, this is what Baptism is all about—loving not only the body of your child, but also the immortal soul of your child!

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

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 accomplish the sacred duty:

Begin by choosing a Christian name for you child

Then teach him/her about his/her patron saint throughout his/her life. Celebrate the saint's feast day with your child—this is his/her “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 part of every Catholic's home education. The Rosary is a wonderful prayer with children because they learn through repetition. They also feel important if they have their own rosary beads.

Celebrate special anniversaries.

Like baptism, First Penance, First Communion, and Confirmation. Make a big deal out of these days. They have a special meaning for the children.

Use sacramentals in your home.

Display a crucifix prominently, a picture or a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a crib scene at Christmas. Emphasize penance and fasting during Advent and Lent. Use blessed candles and holy water in your home. Have your home and 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 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, Lent, and 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 material.

From the Church bulletin to the Bible. The Bookstore—located in the Parish Office—has a selection of good reading material for all age groups. If you never read Catholic literature, or speak positively about your Church, your faith, and your priests, your children will absorb negative values. *Count on it!*