

## SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

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### **ST. MARY, MOTHER OF MERCY, WELCOMES YOU TO THE WATERS OF BAPTISM!**

Congratulations on the arrival of your new baby!

St. Mary, Mother of Mercy, Catholic Church joins you in thanking God for the gift of new life.

As you are seeking the baptism of your child at St. Mary, Mother of Mercy Catholic Church, the following guidelines are presented to help you embark upon this journey of faith with Christ and his Church.

***We would love for you to be a parishioner here at St. Mary's.***

If you have relocated here and wish to join St. Mary's Catholic Church, please *click here for a parish registration form.*

***You will need to attend a parent baptism class!***

This will allow us to meet and get to know each other. Both parents are encouraged to attend the class. The class is also open for godparents and they are encouraged to attend.

If you have any questions, concerns, or for more information on how to prepare to baptize your child, please contact our Parish Priest.

***Please Note: this page is for infant Baptism, below the age of seven (7). For children older than seven (7), please contact Julie Johnson, our Director of Religious Education. Julie can be reached at (904) 710-6246.***

## BAPTISMAL PREPARATION INFORMATION

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### ***Congratulations!***

We at St. Mary, Mother of Mercy, Catholic Church are so pleased that you desire to have your baby baptized! The baptism of your child provides an opportunity to renew your own Christian life and spirituality. In bringing your child to be baptized, you are saying that you want to share your living Catholic Christian faith with your child. This is a serious commitment to raise your child within the community of believers and to educate them in the truths of the Catholic faith.

Under ordinary circumstances, parents should see to the Baptism of their infants within the first few weeks / months: "As soon as possible after birth, even before it, they are to approach the parish to ask for the sacrament for their child and to be themselves prepared for it" (Canon, no. 876). The first consideration in determining the time is the welfare of the child. If the child is sickly, the Baptism should not be unduly delayed.

### ***What if my child is no longer an infant?***

As long as your child is less than seven years of age, the process and requirements are the same. Depending upon the understanding and maturity of your child, this might be a wonderful opportunity for them to share in the preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism.

If your child is seven (7) years of age or older, we will work with you to find the best pathway that leads your child to the Sacrament of Baptism --- and the other Sacraments.

### ***Do we need to be registered parishioners?***

As mentioned above, it is presumed that you are practicing your faith and registered with the parish, if not now is the time to become a parishioner.

If you are called to worship here at St. Mary's and have a desire to be a part of our parish faith community, then you are welcome you to register with us. Once your family is registered, then we ask you to begin your journey to Baptism.

However, there are always special cases, and for good reasons we are happy to work with nonmembers to provide the Sacraments of the Church to their children. In the case of nonmembers, we ask for a letter of permission and delegation from the pastor of their home parish.

## **BAPTISMAL PREPARATION CLASSES**

### ***When are Baptismal preparation classes for parents?***

Please contact our Parish Priest to schedule an appointment to discuss Baptism of your child. At that time, Father will share information with you about Baptism that includes: the Rite of Baptism, the Responsibility of Parents, the Role of Godparents, the Symbols of Baptism, the Role of the Community, and the Church as Home.

### ***Do both parents have to attend a Baptismal preparation class?***

It is preferable that both parents attend a Baptism class if this is the first child being Baptized. If both parents have attended the Baptismal preparation class within the last three years, we would welcome their participation but do not require that they attend again. Godparents are welcome to attend and encouraged to do so, but not required.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARENTS**

### ***Are there requirements of the parents who want to have their child Baptized?***

Yes, at least one of the parents should be a practicing Catholic willing to commit to the task of rearing their child in the faith of the Catholic Church. Parents should accept that they are the first and foremost teachers of the faith.

### ***What does it mean to be a “practicing” Catholic?***

It means that not only do you hold true all that the Church teaches and proclaims, but that you are active in worship and liturgical celebrations of the Church. Oftentimes, the Baptism of a child evangelizes the parents to participate fully in the practice of their Catholic faith. The birth

of the child and the desire to have that child Baptized serves as a catalyst for the parents to return to the practice of their faith.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR GODPARENTS / SPONSORS**

### ***What is the role of the godparents/sponsors?***

Godparents need to be actively involved in the Catholic tradition because they serve as models and guides to the child and the parents. They, along with the priest and parents, welcome the child to the community and signify that welcome by marking the child with the Sign of the Cross. The godparents promise to support the parents in raising the child in the practice of the Catholic faith. A godparent is encouraged to send a spiritual card to their godchild at Christmas, Easter, and Birthday and Baptismal “birthday”.

### ***Whom should I choose as godparents/sponsors for my children?***

This is a very personal decision. However, the church does ask that certain requirements be met. In order to be a Catholic godparent, a person must be:

- At least 16 years of age
- A practicing Catholic who is Baptized and Confirmed and has received First Holy Communion
- If married, the marriage is sacramentally blessed by the Catholic Church
- Someone other than the parents of the child to be Baptized
- Leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and the role they are about to assume
- Attending weekly Mass

***How many Godparents may (must) I have?***

It is only required that there be one godparent, so you must have at least one. It is customary to have two godparents – in this case, one must be female and the other male. The church does not make provisions for more than two.

***Do both godparents have to be Catholic?***

Yes, a godparent, by definition, is Catholic – thus all godparents are Catholic. But remember that only one godparent is required. Baptized, participating Christians of other denominations may serve as a “Christian Witness” and be so designated in the Baptismal Register. If you choose to do so, you may have one Christian Witness and one Godparent. In this case, one must be female and the other male. Non-Christians may not serve either as godparents or Christian witnesses, but are always welcome to participate in the celebration.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BAPTISM CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION**

***Are there costs associated with the Baptismal preparation and ceremony?***

There are no fees for the preparation program or the ceremony. However, it is traditional to offer a stipend to the priest / deacon who perform the Baptism.

***When are the Baptisms scheduled?***

Baptisms are scheduled after you speak with our Parish Priest. We avoid the Liturgical Season of Lent except for emergencies.

***What should my child wear for Baptism?***

We ask that you dress your child in a white garment to represent the purity and new birth into their faith.