

**COMMON POLICY FOR BAPTISM
SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
MECHANICSBURG, PA**

PREPARING FOR THE BAPTISM OF YOUR CHILD

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD MARKS AN EXCITING, BEAUTIFUL AND CHALLENGING TIME IN THE LIVES OF PARENTS. THE PARISH FAMILY OF ST. JOSEPH IS HAPPY TO BE SUPPORTIVE OF PARENTS AS THEY PREPARE FOR THE BAPTISM OF THEIR CHILDREN. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES ARE INTENDED TO HELP PARENTS BY PRESENTING INFORMATION ABOUT THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM, ITS IMPORTANCE IN OUR LIFE AS CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS AND HOW THE SACRAMENT IS CELEBRATED AT ST. JOSEPH PARISH.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that “sacraments are ‘power that come forth’ from the Body of Christ... they are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church... they are ‘the masterworks of God’ in the new and everlasting covenant” (#116). Thus, when people are baptized, they are baptized into Christ Jesus as Jesus is lived in the church. For that reason parents must understand the importance of nourishing the faith of their baptized children within the community of the Catholic Church by active participation in the life and liturgy of the local parish. During the baptismal ceremony they promise to be the “prime teachers of their children in the ways of faith”. As in all things, it is by their own example of a lively faith that parents teach children the meaning of living the “newness of life” that is Baptism. Before the actual Baptism, parents are reminded of their duty to bring up their children as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. While Baptism is a beautiful gift that parents offer their children through the action of the church, it is also an awesome responsibility. Parents must, therefore, consider carefully this important moment in the faith life of their children, and consider carefully their own faith commitment to Jesus Christ and his Catholic church.

WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS

Parents are required to attend a workshop prior to the Baptism of their child. The workshop is intended to prepare parents for the ceremony of Baptism, and also to provide information and support to parents in their role as Christian mothers and fathers. The workshop consists of presentations by experienced parents and the clergy of the parish, and includes information about the ceremony, godparents and suggestions for sharing faith with children. The workshops are held five or six times a year on Thursday evenings. Call the parish office (766-9433) for specific dates. PARENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND THE WORKSHOP PRIOR TO THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILDREN. A SPECIFIC DATE FOR BAPTISM CANNOT BE MADE UNTIL PARENTS HAVE ATTENDED A WORKSHOP. BOTH PARENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE WORKSHOP.

WHO MUST ATTEND THE WORKSHOP?

The workshop is required for parents -- 1) before the Baptism of their first child; and 2) parents who are new to the parish who have not attended a workshop at St. Joseph.

Other parents are strongly encouraged to attend the workshop because there is a special part of the evening designed for parents who have attended a previous workshop.

TIME AND PLACE OF CEREMONY

Generally, Baptisms are held at 12:30 p.m. on the last Sunday of the month, unless there is a conflict in scheduling (e.g., Easter, Christmas, First Eucharist, etc.). Exact dates are available from the parish office.

WHO MAY SERVE AS GODPARENTS?

For infant Baptism, godparents are selected by parents and appointed by the church. A godparent MUST be:

- 1) at least 16 years of age;
- 2) be a Catholic who has been baptized and confirmed and who lives a life of faith according to the teachings of the church. This includes living a sacramental life and being married according to the laws of the church (married by a priest or deacon or other minister with proper dispensation, had the marriage validated by the Catholic Church).

Parents of the child may not serve as godparents. There must be at least one godparent. If there are two godparents, they are not to be of the same gender, i.e., one godmother and one godfather.

Because godparents speak for the church and represent the church (not parents) at the ceremony, each godparent must present a certificate of eligibility from his/her respective parish. **THE CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE PARISH OFFICE AT LEAST ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE OF THE BAPTISM.** Forms are available from the parish where the godparent is registered.

If a godparent cannot be present for the ceremony he/she may be represented by a proxy. The godparent must present a letter stating his/her intention to be the godparent and name the proxy. The proxy must also present a certificate of eligibility. A proxy is subject to the same requirements as a sponsor (i.e., must be a baptized, confirmed practicing Catholic, etc.).

If parents choose to have one Catholic godparent they may have a Christian of another denomination serve as a Christian Witness. **However, a Catholic who has left the Catholic Church and now belongs to another Christian denomination may not serve as a Christian Witness.**

PARENTS WITH UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR ADDITIONAL
QUESTIONS MAY CALL THE PARISH OFFICE – 766-9433.