

# BAPTISMAL PREPARATION



## WHAT OUR FAITH TEACHES US:

If someone were to ask you “*What is one of the most important things in life for everybody without exception?*” the response would hopefully include “*Baptism.*” Not only do we obtain salvation by Baptism, but it is through Baptism that we are made into a new creation and the door to life and to the Kingdom of God is opened to us. We also know that our Christian duty is to go and make disciples of all nations through the grace bestowed on us at our Baptism. As parents, you will have the great joy of creating and forming a new disciple of Jesus Christ. May the Lord uphold you as you answer His call.

If we look at the Rite of Baptism, we find that the Church has given us a beautiful description of what the Sacrament of Baptism is; what it means for us as Catholics.

“Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God’s people. This first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit...Baptism is therefore, above all, the sacrament of that faith by which, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we respond to the Gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes that it is its *most basic and necessary duty to inspire all, catechumens, parents of children still to be baptized, and godparents,* to that true and living faith by which they hold fast to Christ and enter into or confirm their commitment to the New Covenant. In order to enliven such faith, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, *the preparation of the children’s parents,* the celebration of God’s word, and the profession of faith at the celebration of baptism” (*Rite of Baptism*).

Sometimes the question of why the Catholic Church baptizes young children and infants arises. It is important to understand this particular practice in the Church and why we encourage parents to baptize their children as soon as possible. (From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*): “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, **children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God,** to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation **is particularly manifest in infant Baptism.** The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.”

## FOR THE PARENTS:

Before coming to the baptismal preparation class you should spend time reflecting on the following questions:

- *What reasons do you have for wanting your child baptized in the Catholic Church?*
- *In your own words, what do you believe Baptism means?*

During the Rite of Baptism you will, as the parents of the child being baptized, have the following paragraph directed towards you: “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. ***It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us***, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you ***clearly understand*** what you are undertaking?”

Spending time reflecting on these important questions before having your child baptized will help you as parents fulfill the great responsibility of raising your children in the Catholic faith. Please know that you will not undertake all of this on your own, but do so with the support of your child’s godparents along with the support of our parish community and the Catholic Church.

Speaking of godparents, it is also important for you to spend some time reflecting upon who will be a fitting godparent(s) for your child. The godparents share in the responsibility of raising the newly baptized child in the Catholic faith, so you should choose someone who you feel will be able to fulfill this role.



### CHOOSING A GODPARENT:

A godparent should be:

- A firm and enthusiastic believer, ready, willing, and able to help his or her godchild live a Christian life.
- At least sixteen years old.
- A member of the Catholic Church in good standing (Here at Saints Francis & Clare we require a letter from the godparent’s parish stating that this is the case).
- Have received all three of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation, and be living a life consistent with the faith.

At the request of the parents, a baptized and believing Christian not belonging to the Catholic Church may act as a Christian witness along with a Catholic godparent.

### WITH THE HELP OF GODPARENTS:

The role of godparents is to support parents as they raise their child in the faith and to help their godchild lead a Christian life. Traditionally, the godparents are the ones who ensure that their godchild is given a Christian upbringing if the parents are no longer able to fulfill that responsibility. But they also help the parents in the ordinary circumstances of daily life – by their special concern for their godchild, by their example, and by whatever assistance they can provide in raising the child.

The godparents should be present at the Baptism to profess their faith as representatives of the whole Church and of the local community of believers. During the liturgy, they declare their readiness to help the parents “in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers.”

### FOR REFLECTION:

- What made you choose the godparent or godparents that you have chosen for your child?
- How do you think they will help you hand on the Catholic faith to him or her?