

Preparation and Celebration of Infant Baptism at St. Leo

Congratulations on the latest addition to your family! St. Leo Parish Family share in the excitement of your family and friends and look forward to welcoming your baby into the Christian Catholic Community through Baptism. Soon your child will be marked with the sign of faith and welcomed as a member of God's family.

Infant Baptisms are celebrated for children who are below the age of 7. After the 7th birthday, the child should be prepared through our Religious Education program. Our Religious Education Office can be reached at (304) 229-8945.

General Guidelines for Infant Baptism:

- Infant Baptism is for children from birth through 6 years of age.
- Ordinarily, Baptism is reserved for registered parishioners of St. Leo or residents of Inwood, Gerrardstown, or Bunker Hill living within our parish boundaries.
- If you are not a registered parishioner at St. Leo or resident within our parish boundaries, a letter of permission from the Priest at your home parish authorizing/delegating the Priest/Deacon here at St. Leo to baptize your child at St. Leo is required.
- Call the Parish Office as soon as possible to schedule an appointment for initial parent meeting with the Pastor. Selection of a date and time for Baptism will be confirmed after all requirements have been fulfilled.
- Sponsors/Godparents are encouraged but not required to attend the baptismal preparation class.
- Free will donations/honorarium are accepted and very much appreciated

Baptism Preparation

For Parents:

Our parish provides a parent(s) meeting and a parent/godparent class that explains the life of Faith, the Church, and the Sacrament. To prepare for your child's Baptism, consider your position in the Christian/Catholic Community and in your own life. Do you look to the Church as your own family in Faith?

By presenting your child for Baptism, you are agreeing to raise your child in the Catholic Faith and provide for his/her education in the Catholic Faith. You are

attesting that you will help your child prepare for the reception and celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. It is your primary responsibility to choose godparent(s), who will be active in helping your child grow as a son or daughter of God.

Parents desiring infant Baptism for their child (aged birth through six years) are required to:

- Pick up from the Parish Office or read online (from our website www.stleo.com) a copy of *Preparation and Celebration of Infant Baptism at St. Leo*.
- Schedule an initial meeting with the Pastor as soon as possible by calling the Parish Office at 304-229-8945.
- Attend a baptismal preparation class with our Deacon, Brian Crim. The baptismal preparation class is an hour meeting scheduled with the Deacon. You can contact Deacon Brian at 304-229-8945 or deaconbrian@stleo.com.

The Role of Sponsor (Godparent)

To be chosen as a sponsor is a special honor because above all others, you have been entrusted with the responsibility of participating in a child's Christian life and education.

Your role is to be supportive of your godchild's parents in their responsibilities as the primary religious educators of their child. You are required to live a model life of an active Catholic adult to the child by being:

- Active practicing Catholic
- Receiving the Eucharist
- At least 16 years of age
- Baptized
- Confirmed
- If married, your marriage must be blessed and recognized by the Church through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Practicing Christians from non-Catholic traditions, who have been baptized in the name of the Trinity, may serve as Christian Witnesses. Please contact the Parish Office if you have a question about this.

There are many ways you can nourish this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your godchild. Some ideas for a godparent are:

- Celebrate the holy day of Baptism each year with a visit, a call, or a card.
- As your godchild grows, listen and share in his/her struggles and triumphs of living a Christian life. Keep yourself informed on the Church's teachings and values in order to answer questions as they arise.
- Participate and let the child know he/she is in your prayers as the godchild receives the other Sacraments, particularly First Communion and Confirmation, which complete initiation into the Church Community.
- Encourage your godchild in his/her consistent life of Faith with best wishes and prayers through special letters, cards, and/or gifts, and during some special events such as Christmas, Easter, graduation, first job, engagement, etc.
- Some gift ideas godparents like to send/give: a Bible, spiritual book, rosary, religious jewelry, gift certificate for religious goods, books, or retreat opportunities.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, become a model of Christian living for your godchild by living a Christian life in partnership with your godchild, through daily prayer, virtue, and active participation in parish life and liturgy.

If you need further information, Deacon Brian Crim at deaconbrian@stleo.com.

On the day of Baptism

Baptism ushers the baptized into the family of God and membership of the Church. To reflect this reality, the Church encourages (but not required) that the celebration of Baptism (if possible) takes place within the context of regular Sunday/weekend Mass when members of the parish community can be present. If celebrating your child's Baptism during Mass is not feasible for you and your family, please do not hesitate to let the Pastor know as soon as possible. An alternative arrangement can be made.

Pictures, including video, may be taken and are encouraged. However, we ask you to keep a reverent attitude toward the ceremony at all times.

Baptismal certificates will be mailed to the family after the baptism.

Children's Catechumenate

If your child is over 7 years of age and has not been baptized in a Roman Catholic Church, he/she would be a part of our Children's Catechumenate program. This

program has been adapted for children based on the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). This is a program based on sacrament preparation and the individual needs of each family member, so an appointment is necessary to begin.

***For more details, call the Parish Office (304-229-8945) to schedule an appointment with our Coordinator of Faith Formation.**

Frequently Asked Questions

How many godparents/sponsors can I have for Baptism?

As guided by the Catholic Church:

- Only one Catholic godparent/sponsor is required for baptism to take place.
- Two Catholic godparents/sponsors are welcome.
 - Recognizing the complementarity of masculinity and femininity and the inherent beauty of man and woman, if there are going to be two godparents/sponsors, one must be male and one must be female.
 - Both godparents/sponsors must submit Letters of Good Standing from their Catholic Parish.
- There cannot be more than two godparents/sponsors.

If the godparents/sponsors were sponsors at a previous Baptism, do they still need to get a Letter of Good Standing?

Yes, they will need to provide a newly issued Letter of Good Standing. Each Letter of Good Standing is only applicable for the original baptism for which it was issued and expires after 6 months from the date of issue.

Do the godparents/sponsors have to be physically present at Baptism?

Ideally, godparents/sponsors are required to be physically present at the Baptism since they are taking a significant role in the child's life and are supporting the parents in their commitment to raise the child in the Catholic Faith.

However, there may be unavoidable circumstances in which the presence of the godparent is not possible. As long as a sponsor has submitted the Letter of Good Standing, he/she can be recorded and serve as a sponsor. If this is the case, there will need to be someone to stand in for the godparent/sponsor and answer the

questions directed at the sponsor during the Rite of Baptism. This “stand in person” is called a Proxy.

My child is adopted; does the Church need any special documents?

Yes, a copy of the Decree of Adoption is required before scheduling a date for Baptism.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

Please contact our Parish Secretary at secretary@stleo.com or the Parish Office at 304-229-8945.