

Preparing for Your Child's

Sacrament of Baptism



St. Helen Catholic Church
5510 West Cholla Street | Glendale, AZ 85304



St. Helen Catholic Parish

5510 West Cholla Street, Glendale, AZ 85304

623-979-4202 Fax 623-412-1226

www.sthelenglendale.org

PARENT GUIDELINES FOR INFANT BAPTISM (CHILDREN UNDER 7)

Thank you for inquiring about infant baptism at St. Helen Roman Catholic Parish. Diocesan policy requires that a priest or a staff member of the Parish personally interview both parents, and that all parents and godparents prepare themselves for their child's baptism by attending Baptism Preparation Class.

Parents requesting infant baptism at St. Helen Church are expected to be registered and active in the parish. Registration forms are available in the parish office or through New Member meetings. If you are a member of another Catholic parish, yet want your child baptized at St. Helen's, you will need to obtain a letter of permission from your Pastor.

Before an infant can be lawfully baptized in the Catholic Church, there must be present the well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith. This hope is usually based on whether the Catholic parent is practicing his/her religion. In those cases where a Catholic parent has not been going to Church or receiving the sacraments, a child's baptism presents the opportunity for a caring priest or a member of the Baptism Preparation Team to help them turn things around. Infant baptism carries with it the parental responsibility of training the child in the practice of the faith. Children learn best by example, so the faith practice of the parents is essential to a child's spiritual growth.

St. Helen Parish Baptism Preparation classes are held monthly. You will be given a schedule of classes with dates, times and place. Both parents and godparents are required to attend class, or to demonstrate via certificate that they have attended the class within the past three years. If schedule conflicts occur, or a godparent lives in a different locale, class certificates from other Catholic parishes are accepted. Using video and live presentation, the class familiarizes the participants with the meaning of baptism for a disciple of Jesus and with the baptismal ceremony itself, while encouraging active parish membership and active participation in the liturgy.

A donation of \$75 is suggested to help defray the costs incurred by the parish in the class and baptismal materials.

Baptism brings new life in Jesus and fellowship into His Body, the Church. You are to be congratulated on the gift of your child. May God's blessings be upon your family; may the love of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit lead you forth to the glory of His Kingdom. Amen.

Fr. John Ssegawa, A..J

Pastor, St. Helen Catholic Parish

BAPTISM – Parent Policy Agreement Form

Name of Child _____ Parents _____

Possible Dates of Baptism: (First choice) _____, (Second choice) _____

1. Read through the infant Baptism packet thoroughly, paying special attention to the checklist on the last page.
2. Select and prepare your child's Godparents.
3. Select your intended Baptism and pre-baptismal class dates.
4. Schedule a pre-baptismal interview with the Infant Baptism Coordinator (Pete Kline).
5. Collect all requisite documentation (items required are listed on the last page of this packet) Please hold off on purchasing airline tickets and booking reception halls until all paperwork has been submitted.
6. Both parents and godparents must attend pre-baptismal class.

PARENT STATEMENT OF POLICY ACCEPTANCE

I have read and reviewed the above steps and the Infant Baptism Preparation Packet provided by St. Helen in its entirety. I am aware that unless all of the above steps are fulfilled, my child's Baptism may be delayed. I am also aware that until I have received word from the Infant Baptism Coordinator by phone or email that my child's file is complete, I should refrain from booking airline tickets and/or renting reception halls. I further realize that if the celebrant has any reason to suspect that my child's Baptism should not take place at this time, cancelling the Baptism can take place at any given moment.

INFANT BAPTISMS at St. Helen Roman Catholic Church Information & Frequently Asked Questions

1. Whom do I call to begin the process?

Call St. Helen and ask for the Coordinator of Infant Baptism (Pete Kline: 623-500-3215). You will be expected to make an appointment for an interview, and to discuss the Baptism process.

2. What if I am not a registered parishioner of St. Helen, can I still have my child Baptized here?

Canonical policy states that sacraments are to be administered in one's home parish. If St. Helen is your parish, you must be registered for at least three months. However, if you are not officially registered as a parishioner of St. Helen, the following items must be indicated in a letter from your parish:

- a. Declaring that you are an active, registered parishioner in good standing with the Catholic Church for at least three months prior to the Baptism.
- b. That the pastor gives permission for your child to receive the sacrament of Baptism at St. Helen.
- c. That the Baptism will take place at St. Helen Roman Catholic Church.

In addition to the letter, please be sure to complete all the forms in this Baptism packet, as well as collect and submit all requisite sacramental certificates.

3. How do I know what Catholic parish I belong to?

- Your physical home address constitutes the church parish you should register with. However, you can choose to register with "a Catholic Church parish" outside of your geographical area. In order to be considered a Catholic in good standing, you must be committed to a Catholic Church parish so as to ensure that you and your family members are both sharing and benefitting from reception of the sacraments and overall life of the parish community.

4. When and where will Baptisms take place?

When: Baptisms are normally held on the first and third Sunday of the month at either 12:15pm (Mass 1:30pm).

Where: In the main church.

5. Who celebrates the Baptism?

- A parish priest or deacon celebrates the Baptism.
- If you request a priest or deacon whose assignment is not the Diocese of Phoenix, a "Letter of Suitability" for the priest or deacon is required from the bishop of that celebrant's diocese, stating that the prospective celebrant is in good standing. It is the responsibility of the parents to obtain and present this letter to St. Helen Roman Catholic Church at least two weeks before the Baptism.

6. Who is required to take the Sacrament of Baptism Preparation Class?

- Both parents and godparents are required to attend.
- Baptism classes are held once a month in rooms 1/3.
- If you are unable to attend the class at St. Helen, it is the responsibility of the parent and/or godparent to arrange an alternative class at another Catholic parish. A signed official certificate of attendance from the parish where the class was taken must be turned in at least two weeks prior to the scheduled Baptism.

7. What if one parent is not a baptized Catholic?

In the event of a mixed religion marriage, the Catholic party must remember the commitment made at their wedding ceremony: to raise their children in the Catholic Church. At least one parent must be a baptized Catholic, and there must be a well founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion.

8. What if the parents are not legally married?

- If the parents are unmarried, we will not be able to list the name of the father of the baby unless we receive either:
 - A copy of the State Certificate of Live Birth listing the father's name or;
 - A legal copy defined by Canon law 877, which reads 'the name of the father is to be entered if his paternity is established either by some public document or by his own declaration in the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses.' *This sworn statement must be notarized.*
- Either one of the public documents must be provided at least two weeks prior to the Baptism taking place.

CHOOSING A GODPARENT

More from your Pastor about Baptism

Dear Parents,

At this time, I also want to impress upon you the seriousness of selecting Godparents who are rooted in their Catholic faith. Please think long and hard about who will be the Godparent(s) for your child and then PRAY for God's validation of your choice. You see, the Godparent(s) will remain an important figure throughout your child's life. They can never be replaced because their commitment is sealed in the Sacrament of Baptism.

These are the adults who your child can turn to for extra support when life experiences demand that virtuous decisions be made. These are the adults who should be there to celebrate successes and give support when your child is faced with struggles. These are the adults whose way of life will speak volumes to your child. They are the ones who walk by your side as you try to lead your child toward heaven.

The information provided below should set you on the path to the right choice! So, please read carefully and call if you have questions.

As your pastor, I join with you in prayer as you discern who will be the Godparents for your child.

Rev. John Ssegawa, A.J.
Pastor

Selecting Godparents

Information & Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many godparents can I have or do I need?

- According to Canon Law, you are required to have at least one active, confirmed Roman Catholic Godparent who is in good standing with the Church.

2. What are the requirements for someone to be allowed to serve as a Godparent/Sponsor?

Godparents officially represent the Church by witnessing what it means to live a **baptized** life, **confirmed** in the Holy Spirit and faithfully participating in the **Eucharist**, the source and summit of the Christian life. Below are the official requirements of godparents:

- Someone at least 16 years of age who is in good standing with the Church.
- This means that they have received the sacraments of **Baptism, Confirmation** and **Holy Communion**.
- If they are married, this means they are married in the Church. A "civil marriage" does not constitute a marriage for the baptized.
- Their pastor signs the **Godparent Form**, indicating that they are registered in a Catholic parish, are in good standing with the Church and actively living their faith and participating in the Sacraments.
 - **NOTE:** The **Godparent Form** must be completed and turned in at least two weeks before the Baptism.
- Must have attended a Baptism preparation class.
- If there are two Godparents, they must be of the opposite sex.
- If someone was ever baptized as a Catholic and currently claims to "...have left the Catholic Church," then he/she cannot be a Godparent or a Christian Witness.

3. What if the Godparents cannot be present for the Rite of Baptism?

- If a Godparent cannot be present at the Baptism, a proxy can be designated to witness the Baptism rite itself. They should meet the same qualifications as Godparents (refer to Question #2), but do not have to take classes. They will be listed in the baptismal record as "proxies".
- They must be designated by the godparent, and approved by the parents.

4. What is a Christian Witness?

- If there is only one Godparent, another person may serve as a Christian Witness. A Christian Witness is someone who simply "witnesses" the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism.
- The Christian Witness is an individual, at least 16 years of age, who has been baptized into Christ in a Christian community.
- His/her Baptism must be recognized and approved by the Catholic Church (i.e. with the Trinitarian baptismal formula).
- The Christian Witness is not a Godparent, and therefore does not assume the responsibilities of a godparent.
 - **NOTE:** A Christian Witness may however pledge to support the parents and/or godparents with the child's spiritual growth according to the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church.

5. Who can/cannot serve as a Christian Witness for the sacrament of Baptism?

- Only someone who is a baptized non-Catholic can be a Christian Witness for the Baptism.
- A Christian Witness cannot be listed as a Godparent because their life does not witness to the practice or support of the Catholic faith to which you, as parents, are professing to your child.
 - **NOTE:** A Christian Witness must provide some written indication of a valid Baptism (e.g. a baptism certificate) to the Baptismal Coordinator (Pete Kline) at least two weeks before the scheduled Baptism.

* **Please note:** if someone was baptized a Catholic and currently claims to "...have left the Catholic Church," and/or has not yet received the sacrament of Confirmation, then he/she cannot be a Godparent or a Christian Witness.

Serving as a Godparent comes with great responsibilities. Below are the requirements set forth by the Church in her Code of Canon Law:

GODPARENTS/SPONSORS

Can. 872 Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it.

Can. 873 There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.

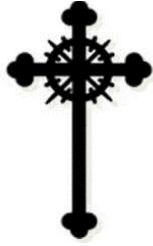
Can. 874 §1. To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must:

- *be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the person who takes their place, or in their absence by the pastor or minister and have the aptitude and intention of fulfilling this function;*
- *have completed the sixteenth year of age, unless the diocesan bishop has established another age, or the pastor or ministry has granted an exception for a just cause;*
- *be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on;*
- *Not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;*

§2. A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.

Regarding the questions:

1. **RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION:** A godparent must be a Roman Catholic because the godparent is an official representative of the Catholic Church. Christians of other denominations whose baptism is recognized as valid in the Catholic Church may serve as a Christian Witness for the baptism of a Catholic. Christians whose baptism is not recognized as valid in the Catholic Church and Non-Christians may not serve as a godparent or Christian Witness.
2. **MINIMUM AGE:** A godparent must generally be 16 by the date of the baptism. (exceptions by pastor may be made with reason.)
3. **SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION:** a godparent is a baptized Catholic who has received Confirmation and Holy Eucharist in the Catholic Church.
4. **FREEDOM TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENTS:** The godparent is a practicing Catholic who is free to receive Holy communion when he or she come to Mass.
5. **MARITAL STATUS:** A Catholic godparent who is married must be in a marriage that is recognized by the Catholic Church. Those in their first marriage must have been married either a) in a Catholic Church ceremony or b) in a church/synagogue ceremony with the permission of the Catholic Church. Catholics in second marriages must have had their first marriage annulled and their second marriage recognized or convalidated by the Catholic Church. Catholics presently in civil or common law marriages are not eligible to serve as a godparent.
6. **UNMARRIED STATUS:** If unmarried, a godparent must be living a life consistent with a single person as defined by the Catholic Church. Anyone cohabitating with another person, e.g. living in a romantic relationship or as a couple, is ineligible to serve.



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GODPARENT/SPONSOR DOCUMENTATION

(This form is to be completed by the Catholic Godparent/Sponsor)

I, _____, have been asked to stand as a godparent/sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation for _____ (Candidate's Name).

In accepting this responsibility, I truthfully state the following:

- I have received the Sacraments of Baptism , Confirmation & Eucharist in the Catholic Church
- I attend Mass on Sundays & Holy Days of Obligation: ___weekly; ___occasionally; ___ never.
- I am at least 16 years of age
- I am a registered, active member of _____Parish.
- If married, I have been married in the Catholic Church
- If not married, I am not cohabitating (living with significant other).

I recognize that in accepting the role of Godparent/Sponsor, I become responsible to be a model and example of faith to the newly Baptized/Confirmed as a committed and active Catholic and to be a support in the practice of our mutual faith.

I hereby assure that I am committed to my Catholic faith, that I am myself baptized and confirmed in it, and that I meet my fundamental obligations as a Catholic by participating in Sunday Mass, by receiving the Eucharist as often as possible and Penance as necessary, by being open to the Word of God as revealed in Sacred Scripture and taught by the Church, by witnessing to the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by seeking to be of service to others for love of Him.

(Signature of Catholic Godparent/Sponsor)

Phone Number/Email Address

Statement of a Priest

(Date)

Church

Seal

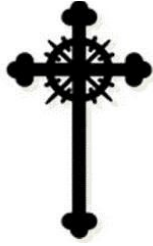
(Signature of Priest)

Parish: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____



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(Signature of Catholic Godparent/Sponsor)

Phone Number/Email Address

Statement of a Priest

(Date)

Church

Seal

(Signature of Priest)

Parish: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

INFORMATION FOR BAPTISM REGISTRATION

(PLEASE PRINT NAME CLEARLY & EXACTLY AS IT IS ON THE CHILD'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE)

Date of Baptism: _____

Presider: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____
first middle last

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____
city & state

Was the child privately baptized? _____ Where _____ Was the child adopted? _____

Father's Name _____ first middle last	Religion _____ Baptism ___ Confirmation ___ Eucharist ___
Mother's MAIDEN Name _____ first middle MAIDEN	Religion _____ Baptism ___ Confirmation ___ Eucharist ___
Address _____ (City State Zip)	Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ (please indicate: ___ Mother ___ Father)
Are you a registered member of St. Helen's? _____ Env. # _____	Email _____
Marital Status _____ Married by a Catholic Priest or Deacon: _____ If yes, write the name of the Catholic Church where you were married _____ If not, check one: _____ Civil Marriage _____ Protestant Ceremony _____ Other, please explain _____	

Godfather's Name: _____ Religion: _____
 Please check if a member of St. Helen Parish. Baptism ___ Confirmation ___ Eucharist ___

Godmother's Name: _____ Religion: _____
 Please check if a member of St. Helen's. Baptism ___ Confirmation ___ Eucharist ___

Is either Godparent represented by proxy? Godfather Godmother

If yes, name of proxy for Godfather and/or Godmother: _____ / _____
(proxy Godfather) (proxy Godmother)

Is either Godparent to be a Christian Witness rather than Godparent? (Circle as appropriate) Godfather: Y N Godmother: Y N

Remarks: _____

Baptism Preparation Class Attended (Date/Year): _____ Birth Certificate: _____

Date of Interview: _____ Interviewed by: _____

BAPTISM REQUEST FORM

Today's Date _____

Name of Child being Baptized _____

Name of Father _____ Name of Mother _____

FORMAL BAPTISMAL CLASS REQUEST

Dates Requested: (First choice) _____, (Second choice) _____

RITE OF BAPTISM REQUEST

Dates Requested: (First choice) _____, (Second choice) _____

Submitting Interviewer & Date of Interview _____

St. Helen Catholic Church

Pre-Baptism Check List

(All to be completed at least two weeks prior to Baptism)

Parents of Child

1. Registered and participating parishioner for at least three months prior to the Rite of Baptism. _____
2. Scheduled interview with Pete Kline. _____
3. Turned in completed Baptismal Registration Form at interview. _____
4. Chosen a qualified Godfather and/or Godmother (see packet for details). _____
5. Attended both baptismal preparation classes at St. Helen. _____
6. Provided a copy of baptismal certificates. _____

OR

7. Provided a copy of sacramental marriage certificate (not civil license). _____
8. Submitted a copy of child's birth certificate. _____
9. Obtained written permission to baptize outside of St. Helen. _____ (if applicable)
10. Submitted written request for visiting priest to celebrate the sacrament. _____ (if applicable)

Godparents

11. Attended baptismal preparation classes at St. Helen or at one's current parish. _____
12. Provide the godparent form (in this packet). _____ (NOTE: The original needs to be provided with a parish seal).
13. Provide a new/recent baptismal certificate from the parish where you were baptized. _____

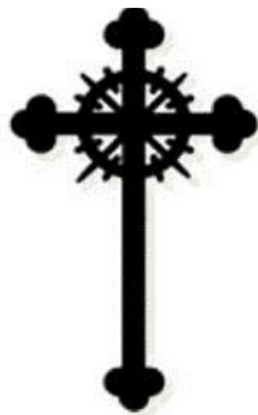
Christian Witness (if applicable)

14. Obtained a copy of baptismal certificate. _____

Baptism by Proxy (if applicable)

15. A letter from the Godparent for whom the proxy will take his/her place stating their resolve to be the active Godparent of the child. _____
16. Provided a copy of a baptismal certificate. _____

May the Lord bless you and your family as you begin this journey towards Baptism. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.



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Phone: 623-979-4202

We are praying for you!