

Baptismal Sponsors

A sponsor assists an adult to be baptized, or assists the parents in presenting an infant for baptism. The sponsor assists the newly baptized in living the Christian life. If two sponsors are chosen, they are to be of different sexes. (Canons 872-874)

The qualifications for serving as a sponsor are:

1. designated for this role by the one to be baptized (or by the parents in the case of an infant);
2. 16 years of age or older;
3. a Catholic, confirmed and who has received the Eucharist, leading a life in conformity with the faith and the role assumed as a sponsor;
4. not bound by any **canonical penalty**;
5. not a parent of the one to be baptized.

A baptized person who is not Catholic may serve as a witness to the baptism with a Catholic as sponsor.

The primary role of the godparent is to witness to the faith of God alive in their hearts and to be willing to share that faith in a supportive way with their godchild as well as to support the faith-life of the parents.

Godparents represent “both the local Church community and the whole society of saints and believers” in welcoming this newest member of the Body of Christ and pledging the support and the prayer of all of us in living a life worthy of the dignity of the children of God.

PLANNING THE CELEBRATION

(Canons 856, 857, 860)

The celebration of baptism usually takes place on a Sunday, or in the case of adults being initiated into the Church, at the Easter Vigil. Baptism is celebrated in the **parish** church of the person to be baptized (or in the case of infants, the parish attended by the parents). In extraordinary circumstances, Baptism may take place at another parish.

Baptism may be performed by one of two ways: immersion or infusion (pouring). Immersion is the more ancient practice of the Church and was the only way in which persons were baptized until the 14th century. The practice of pouring water over the head of the individual became popular in the Middle Ages when the sacrament was seen more as a purification and washing away of sin. Since Baptism is the sacrament of initiation when we “die to self and are raised to new life” in Christ, immersion is the preferred method for baptizing in the Church today.

As Sunday is the preferred day for the celebration of baptism, the privileged time for baptisms to occur is within the celebration of the Eucharist (Mass). Since it is “the sacrament of the Church’s faith and of incorporation into the people of God” (see *Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 10), this is best exemplified by including the celebration of baptism at the Eucharist on Sunday.

Baptism is a beginning. It can happen only once in a lifetime. However, we renew the commitment made in this sacrament each and every day when we make the conscious decision to be a disciple of Christ. Your child’s baptism is an opportunity to renew the promises of your own baptism. It is an occasion to celebrate the amazing gift of life that God shares with us.

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS BAPTISM PREPARATION

In The
Diocese of St. Augustine



*Office of
Christian Formation*

Canon Law on Baptism

Baptismal Ritual (c. 850)

The *Ritual of Baptism* should be consulted for the rite that is followed for the celebration of the sacrament. In urgent necessity, all that is required is the pouring of water and the formula: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Adult Baptism (c. 851)

Adults who wish to be baptized are enrolled into the **catechumenate**. Unless a grave reason prevents it, the adult who is baptized also receives the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist at the same time.

Infant Baptism (c. 851)

For the baptism of infants (children who have not obtained the **age of reason**, considered to be the age of seven), the parents and, secondarily, the sponsor(s) have responsibility for sharing their own faith through this sacrament. The **pastor** is to make sure that the parents are well prepared through an appropriate catechesis about their important role in the spiritual formation of the child.

The sacrament of baptism invites us on a journey of faith as a disciple of Jesus. It calls us to a way of life. It is the beginning of our initiation into the Christian mystery. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation, the Source of that New Life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

In the waters of baptism we are freed from the power of sin and are empowered by the Light of Christ. In the waters of baptism, we die to the ways of sin, we are buried and we rise again to new life as children of God.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Baptism is a sign of our unity with Christ’s community, and a witness to our desire to be part of the discipleship of Christ. One’s baptismal commitment means participating in the Paschal Mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus. In baptism we become a new creation, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, sharing in God’s own life. Above all, baptism is a sacrament of faith and commitment by which we respond to the gospel of Jesus, the Christ and enter into a holy covenant with God in Jesus through His Church. We are formed into God’s people and are incorporated into the Body of Christ.

Adults and children of catechetical age make this choice for themselves; parents choose for infants.

CHOOSING BAPTISM FOR MY CHILD

When considering baptism for your child, you need to reflect on what it is you are asking of God’s Church, and you also need to reflect on your own baptism.

- What has it meant in your own life to be a member of the Body of Christ?
- How do you live out your baptismal commitment today in love and service to God and neighbor?
- Are you ready to be a Catholic Christian parent, training your child in the active practice of faith, teaching them to keep God’s commandments?

Sometimes parents ask to have their child baptized for the wrong reasons:

Fear – Fear of God, fear of what grandparents and family will say or think.

Superstition – Believing that if their child is not baptized something bad will happen to their baby, or God will punish them for not doing so.

Cultural – heritage tells them this is what you do – babies are always baptized and then you have a party in their honor.

When motivated by fear or superstition or cultural heritage, baptizing your child could be a hypocritical action.

Baptism changes us, not God. God will love our child; God will love us whether we celebrate baptism or not. But baptism, thoughtfully and reflectively celebrated, changes us and the one we bring forward for baptism.

So when we choose baptism for our child it should be because we understand what baptism is about and we fully intend to live the Christian life in such a way that our child will grow in justice and love and come to know the Lord Jesus.

When bringing your child to the Church for baptism, your parish community will want to know that you are a faith-filled member:

- ✚ sharing regularly at Sunday Liturgy
- ✚ accepting the teachings of the Creed
- ✚ committed to a way of life influenced by the Gospel of Jesus, valuing prayer and service to others.

A complete copy of the
Sacramental Guidelines of the Diocese of St. Augustine
is on the diocesan Website www.dosafll.com or
at your parish.