

Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken:

- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared;
- not be the father or the mother of the one to be baptized.

§2: A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial (*protestant church*) community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor.

It is our aim that by your understanding what Baptism is, and what are your responsibilities as a parent, that we can help you to fulfill the Lord's intention to make your children saints, and to help you to be a saint as well. WE all have the gift of grace and the calling from God to be Holy and pleasing in His sight all the days of our lives. Living our Faith Boldly in the confines of our homes and in the marketplace can help to move the world from the godless direction it is heading to its original goal as God made it. It begins with you and your family.

Lord, Send out Your Spirit and Renew the Face of the Earth. Amen



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SERVING THE PEOPLE
OF GOD

Baptizing Your Child in the Arkansas Valley Parishes

St. Peter's in
Rocky Ford,
St. Peter's in Ordway,
Mary Queen of
Heaven in
Fowler



Theology, Policies and
Practices

Requirements of the program

To baptize your child in the Catholic church is more than an event, it is the beginning of your commitment to your child to teach him or her to grow into a saint. The following requirements are intended to help you as parents to instill and nurture the Roman Catholic Faith in your child. The parents and godparents have certain requirements which we enumerate below:

- Register for the parent formation, and pay the \$30 class and materials fee at the first class. One fee is needed per family, no matter how many children are being baptized.
- Choose godparents according to the guidelines found in this policy. Being a godparent is a responsibility, not just an honor and the Church has rather stiff requirements.
 - Sponsors must be practicing Catholics, if married, be married in the Catholic Church, at least 16 yrs old and confirmed, have made their first communion.
 - Bring a new copy of the godparent's baptismal certificate with notes on the back to verify that their current marriage is blessed by the Church.
- Attend and participate in all four of the classes. (NB: godparents attend the last of the four classes). To be a godparent elsewhere, the class fee is \$10.
- Choose Baptismal name that is a Saint's name if your child's name isn't a Christian name already. Check with the catechist for valid Christian names.
- Infant Baptisms are held on the **last full weekend** of the month. Please plan your celebrations and invitations for those weekends! They can be during a Saturday anticipated Mass or during the regular Sunday Masses. If you have your child baptized at a Weekend Mass, the priest will do it. If you don't want to have the baptism during the Weekend Mass, a deacon will be assigned to baptize your child.
- You will need to provide a white baptismal garment. If you don't want the candle we provide, you will also need to provide one for each child to be baptized. Candles can be bought at a religious goods store, or ordered at the parish (give adequate time for delivery).

Baptism is a whole community celebration

Understanding Baptism: What is it?

The most important gift you can give your child is the gift of eternal life. Baptism, for Catholics, is the gateway to the Spirit-filled life that brings us eternal salvation. In a very real way, the Graces received through the Sacrament of Baptism give salvation, unearned, to the person being baptized. We also need to keep in mind that we can lose our salvation by willful inattention to the gift of Baptism and by willfully sinning. That is why it is so important to teach your children by word and deed how to preserve the gift of eternal salvation, so that they will not lose it and be consigned to Eternal Destruction.

This gift of eternal life is a precious treasure and is not often appreciated by Catholics today. In earlier ages, when there was a deeper awareness of sin and its effects on society's cohesiveness as well as how it affects the relationship of the human person to God, Baptism and the gift of eternal life took on greater meaning. Unfortunately, because we are so convinced by the world that material things are the only things that are real, the reality of the spiritual realm has been lost. There are many reasons for this, but suffice it to say, we have lost a sense of the Holy, and a sense of reverence and even fear for things unseen and spiritual.

Yet, in this decidedly material world, we encounter the very human need to understand the spiritual world and the meaning of human existence through the plots of many stories, movies and songs. These encounters are proof that in the face of materialist and secular propaganda that people still notice the hole in their lives left by ignoring their souls.

Chief among the questions unanswered by science and modern thought are questions of who made the universe, and why; what is love, what is evil, and why do these have the power to motivate us to action. Our Catholic Religion is the only place where the answers have objective and real Truth to them. But when religion is shown in the media, it is usually ridiculed or sensationalized.

The world says religion must change and adapt to the world, not the other way around. In answer to these assertions and our hungers hunger, our Catholic Faith responds that Truth is unchanging precisely because it come from eternal and unchanging God who is THE TRUTH.

What does Baptism do for us?

Through Baptism Catholics become a member of a people, a people chosen by God to be His own. This means that once a person is baptized, they belong to a people and have both rights from that people (the Church) and responsibilities to the Church. Remember, the Church is not some shapeless, abstract thing; it is everyone who is baptized, no matter what their role in the local parish or the international church or the communion of saints. By baptizing your child, you are fulfilling part of your responsibility to the rest of us, and to your child, as well as to God. And, in addition to the gift of eternal life and becoming a member of this Church, you are giving them all the rights of Catholics and the responsibilities to us as well. Because this chance at eternal life changes us at the deepest levels, it changes every human being from a mere creatures of God to a Child of God and a co-heir to Heaven with Christ the Risen Lord.

What every parent should know

The Catholic Church has existed for almost 2,000 years by now, and its leaders have continued to contemplate the best ways to ensure us of how we can enter eternal life in the best possible way and with the best possible outcome for each of us. The Church leadership offers guidance to all the members of the Church, not because they want to control you, but because they want you to go to heaven. You need to know that because of our unique relationship to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the way we have jealously guarded His teachings against dilution, that we have the surest path to salvation of any other group of Christians. Protestants, though well-intentioned, have rejected significant parts of Catholic teaching, thus abandoning fidelity to the total Tradition that He left us through the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops. In point of fact, it is not men who are calling us all to obedience to this Tradition, it is the Son of God calling us through his Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Catechists to obedience. We at St. Peter's are just the guardians and messengers of that Truth.

It is in this spirit of fidelity to Christ, and to the revelation He has given us that we make our policies and teach what we teach. We offer them. We cannot make you do them. But neither will we squander the great gifts we have been charged with dispensing by Christ.

Parents are the first teachers of the Faith to their children

When God gave you your children, he charged you with making them saints. Just as you teach your children about who they are by your example first and then by words later, your infant child is already "taking in" your attitudes and feelings about the world around them from the very beginning of their conception. Everything you do, feel, and say tells your child how they should act and feel and think. Everything you say becomes part of the mental furniture of your children's mind. As your lives prepare your child for life, so your lives also prepare your children for eternal life.

To help your child fulfill their potential in this life and the next the Church encourages parents to live their faith in a strong way, so that their children will be strong Catholics too, and thus be able to go to Heaven at the end of their lives, as well as to cope with the world as a person of faith would. There are many helps for parents to prepare their children for eternal life.

They include:

- Praying at home in the morning and the evening and at meals and praying the Rosary.
- Reading bible stories at home.
- Going to church every Sunday.
- Using the Sacraments frequently and regularly.
- Talking about your faith and reflecting on everything that happens in the context of your relationship to God.

Parents who do these things give their children a wealth of tools to cope with life and to become the saints that this world so sorely needs. Unfortunately, many parents choose to short-change their children. Often parents have mis-placed priorities or they are just lazy about the faith and are too selfish to see the damage that they do to their children.

Church Law and the Baptism of Infants

The Code of Canon Law is the book of the laws of the Catholic Church governing the practice of the faith and the rights of Catholics in the Church. The laws are quoted here to help parents understand what is required of them and of the Church for their children whom they want to baptize.

Parent's responsibilities

Canon 867 § 1: Parents are obliged to see to it that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth; as soon as possible after the birth, or even before it, parents are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it properly.

§ 2: An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without any delay.

Canon 868 § 1: For the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that:

- the parents or at least one of them or the person who lawfully takes their place gives consent;
- there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reason.

§2: The infant of Catholic parents, in fact of non-Catholic parents also, who is in danger of death is licitly baptized even against the will of the parents.

Sponsors

Canon 872: Insofar as possible, one to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it.

Canon 873: Only one male or one female sponsor or one of each sex is to be employed.

Canon 874 § 1: To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

- be designated by the one to be baptized, by the parents or the one who takes their place or, in their absence, by the pastor or minister and is to have the qualifications and intention of performing this role;
- have completed the sixteenth year...
- be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the