



BAPTISM OF INFANTS TO 6 YRS OLD

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

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Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

We give the warmest welcome to all parents who wish to profess their faith and seek baptism for children, approaching the Church and requesting the baptism of their children.

Our mother Church teaches us how to love, serve and teach the faith to our children. Every Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a “*domestic church*.” It is a community of faith, hope, and charity¹. Parents educate their children in the Christian faith by example, prayer, family catechesis and participation in the life of the Church²

As parents we love and respect our children as children of God, and we provide, as much as possible, their material and spiritual needs, choosing a suitable school for them, and helping them with prudent advice in the choice of profession and state of life. We have especially the mission of educating them in the Christian faith.

Education in the faith by parents must begin from the earliest childhood. This education is already done when the members of the family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of a Christian life in accordance with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of teaching the faith³. For children 6 years or younger, the parents or legal guardians must ask for the baptism of the child. A priest may delay the baptism of a child if he believes that he/she is unlikely to be raised in the Catholic faith.

If a person has been validly baptized in another Christian community, the Catholic Church recognizes the baptism. Such people become Catholics by making a public profession of faith, stating that they believe in everything the Catholic Church believes and professes as it has been revealed by God.

Documents needed to Baptize:

- Parents must be registered as members of Sacred Heart Church. If you are a member of another parish, a letter from the parish authorizing the baptism of the child at Sacred Heart is required.
- Child's birth certificate
- Certificate of having taken baptism classes from parents and potential godparents (not expired)
- Baptism application. We will not process an application unless all supporting documents have been received.

Steps to follow to baptize at Sacred Heart Catholic Church:

If the parents and potential godparents of the child have completed pre-baptismal preparation, please contact baptism coordinator.

- 1) **Register for an orientation date.** Attendance to the orientation is required by parents baptizing at Sacred Heart and godparents who will baptize at another parish.
- 2) **Register for a pre-baptismal class.** Parents are required to attend preparation classes (Theology and Symbols of Baptism & Ceremony). We encourage that godparents attend classes with parents if they have not completed a course before. (The certificate is valid for 3 years)
- 3) **Apply.** At the end of the class, we will announce available dates for a baptism ceremony. We do not offer private ceremonies.
- 4) The application and supporting documents will be reviewed. If approved, an email will be sent to confirm the date established. No changes will be made.

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church #2204

² Compendium of the Catholic Church #461

³ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church Lumen Gentium



The requirements for being a Catholic godparent are: According to the Canon Law of the Catholic Church #872-874

1. Must be Catholic. Have been baptized, confirmed and received Holy Communion.
2. Must be 16 years old or older
3. Must be living a life consistent with their own baptismal vows.
This means that they must be practicing the catholic faith, cannot be engaging in notorious sins, and cannot have taken public positions in opposition to catholic faith or morals. If a sponsor is married, their marriage must be recognized by the Catholic Church. If living with someone in a relationship, but not married, he/she cannot be godparent.
In general, if a potential sponsor is not a member of the parish where the baptism is to take place, he or she must obtain a letter or certificate from their own pastor which affirms that they meet the above requirements.
4. Must not be a parent (natural or adoptive) or a spouse of the person to be baptized.
5. Must live a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken. This includes regular mass attendance, living in accordance with their marital state, and agreement with all the Church's teachings.
6. Must be 1 man and/or 1 woman. There cannot be two men or two women, three or more people, etc.
7. Must be familiar with the faith to catechize the baptized person and ensure their spiritual well-being.
8. Must intend to fulfill the role of the godparent.
9. Must intend to stay in regular contact with the baptized person throughout their life.

Note: Those who have been baptized in the Catholic faith and do not meet the requirements listed above cannot be Godparents or Christian Witnesses. Christian Witnesses are people baptized in another Christian faith tradition, who practice their faith and believe in the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

It is not a requirement of the godparents to physically adopt the baptized person if the parents die, though that is sometimes also asked of the godparents. Such a commitment should be discussed thoroughly and specifically if it is to be asked of the Godparents.

Godparents are not merely gift-givers. Giving gifts may be done at the will of the Godparents, but it is not a requirement of the role. Choosing godparents should be done based on their spiritual maturity and holiness, not their financial situation.

Godparents can be confirmation sponsors for their godchildren. This is encouraged strongly, but it is not a strict requirement. If a godparent has fallen out of a child's life, then a separate confirmation sponsor should be chosen

Proxies for the godparents are acceptable when the sponsors cannot be physically present on the day of the baptism. The name of the designated sponsor is entered in the register. The name of the proxy is entered under the name of the sponsor with the remark "proxy."

Requirements for a Christian Witness

A **non-Catholic** person can be chosen for a "witness", but there must be at least 1 Catholic Godparent.

1. At least sixteen years old
2. A validly baptized Christian
3. Living an upright life
4. Cannot be either parent
5. Cannot be a Catholic who has left the Church. A Catholic who has "left the Church" is still considered as a Catholic under the penalty of excommunication. (Such a person is no longer bound by the canonical form of marriage, however.)
6. The notation "Christian witness" is placed under the name of the non-Catholic Christian witness in the baptismal registry.

To understand the Church's position, concerning the requirements for a sponsor, several points must be kept in mind.

A Baptism is not a private act. It is a public, official liturgy of the Church that welcomes someone into the Catholic Church. Therefore, the Catholic Church has the duty and obligation to require reasonable criteria for being a sponsor. The sponsor is to assist the parents and the child in living a Catholic life. To do so, the sponsor needs to provide good example of living the Catholic life. The role of godparent is a role of service done in the name of the Church, and the person who is a sponsor should be capable of performing that service.