

Celebrating Infant Baptism at Sacred Heart Church

As dry flour cannot be united into a lump of dough, or a loaf, but needs moisture; so we who are many cannot be made one in Christ Jesus without the water which comes from heaven. And as dry earth does not produce fruit unless it receives moisture; so we, who are at first “a dry tree”, would never have yielded the fruit of life without the “willing rain” from above. For our bodies have received the unity which brings us to immortality, by means of the washing; our souls receive it by means of the Spirit. Thus both of these are needed, for together they advance people’s progress toward the life of God. – St. Irenaeus of Lyon, Third Century

No one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again... no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. John 3:3-5

As you approach the Catholic Church to have your infant baptized, we are looking forward to welcoming your child into the Christian community of faith. As you prepare for this very special moment in your child’s life, it is very important for you to understand what the Church asks of parents who want their child baptized, as well as, what is asked of the godparent you choose for your child.

For the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that... 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. Canon 868 – Code of Canon Law

The *founded hope* required for infant baptism in the Catholic Church will be determined by the faith life of the parents wanting their child baptized. A Catholic who is actively living their faith is someone who keeps the precepts of the Church in a parish community:

- 1) *You shall attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.*
- 2) *You shall confess your sins at least once a year.*
- 3) *You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter Season.*
- 4) *You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.*
- 5) *You shall help provide for the material needs of the Church.*

These positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the very necessary minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor. Catechism of the Catholic Church 2042-2043.

This is the bare minimum the Church asks of Catholics in living their faith to receive the grace of salvation and grow in loving God and others. If the minimum is not being lived by the parents then there is doubt whether there is a *founded hope*. Yet, there is so much more to a life of faith, such as our spiritual life, a life of prayer, developing our relationship with God, reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures, learning the teachings of Christ, worshiping God in a community of faith and living a moral life according to God’s will. Faith encompasses one’s whole lifestyle: what we believe, say and do. Children learn primarily from their parents: the example they give, the values they embrace, the life they model. This is why the Church requires there be a *founded*

hope so the child being presented to be baptized will learn the faith in which they are being baptized.

*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
Matthew 16:18-19*

*All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son, and the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. I am with you always, until the end of the age.
Matthew 28:19-20*

Our Lord Jesus entrusted to Peter and the apostles, and to their successors, the Gospel and the grace of salvation given through the sacraments. We are bound as Catholics to follow the positive laws established in the Church to foster and nurture a life of faith. Not living the faith as defined by Peter and his successors means a *founded hope* is lacking and infant baptism will be postponed, safe in the situation where there is danger of death.

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 872 – Code of Canon Law

Qualifications of a Sponsor (Godparent) for infant baptism:

- 1) *Must be chosen by the parents.*
- 2) *Must 16 years old or older.*
- 3) *Must be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist and leads a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.*
- 4) *Must not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared.*
- 5) *Must not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized.*

*** A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community may not be admitted except as a witness to baptism and together with a Catholic sponsor.*

Canon 874 – Code of Canon Law

To be eligible as a sponsor (godparent) for baptism one must be a Catholic living the precepts of the Church and a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken.

The parents of an infant who is to be baptized and likewise those who are to undertake the office of sponsor are to be properly instructed in the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it. Canon 851 – Code of Canon Law