



The Sacrament of Baptism at St. Boniface Church

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THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM CELEBRATING THE EMBRACE OF GOD

BAPTISM and INFANTS

Baptism is the commitment of a person to Christ. This process of turning to Christ through a faith conversion is essentially an adult experience, and the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults is the norm by which the non-baptized adult becomes a member of the Church. But what about infants?

Obviously, infants cannot respond immediately to the call / response aspect of the sacrament. Nor can an infant understand the change of allegiance—the putting off the old and the putting on the new, the dying and rising, the new life, or the sharing in the life of Christ. However, parents of those infants can understand and live those values and pass them on to their children. They can also experience the support of the community in living those ideals, and that is extremely important.

Infant baptism makes sense only if parents are true Christian believers. If they are not, then it makes little sense to initiate their children into a Church that calls for a commitment to living the mission of Christ.

The Rite of Baptism for Children emphasizes the importance of faithfulness on the part of parents when it says to parents: In asking to have your children baptized, “Are you accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith?” The word practice is crucial. It calls parents to be models for their children.

Considering the future orientation of Baptism and the fact that we are marked for a lifelong journey of discipleship, it is important that parents be strong role models and lead the way. It is equally important that the children’s sponsors (godparents) do the same. They are significant supporters of parents and the ones who can first begin to reveal to their godchildren the value of the Christian community.

Children learn to be Christian by osmosis, by experiencing Christianity at home. The “domestic” church prepares children for the local and world Church. It is in the home, in the domestic church, that children first learn basic trust which is the foundation of faith. Without the experience of faith, hope and commitment in the home, children will not be able to know and understand the larger Church.

Vatican Council II’s Declaration on Christian Education points this out quite emphatically: “Since parents have given children life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied by others when it is lacking from parents....It is particularly in the Christian family...that children should be taught from their early years to have knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him and so to love their neighbor.”

BAPTISM and THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Sacraments can only be spoken of in relational terms. The Rites speak of how the sacraments effect a deeper “relationship” or greater “conformity” with Christ and with the Church.

Baptism happens not only to the individual, but also to Christ’s body, the Church. That is why the Church insists that we celebrate Baptism (and the other sacraments) in the Christian assembly, with the community, families and friends, present and participating. It is the community, after all, who is welcoming the new members, journeying with them, providing models for them, supporting and nourishing them.

Baptism begins with God’s love and care revealed to us through Christ. It continues with us, the Church, living and enacting Christ’s love and care through Christ to the world. That’s a very serious commitment.

Who should be Godparents?

Only two people can be chosen as godparents; one male and one female. One does not have to choose two, but if two are chosen they must be one male and one female.

Each godparent must be Catholic in good standing with the Church and qualified to be a good role model for the child. A non-practicing Catholic or a non-Catholic cannot fill that requirement.

The Code of Canon Law (Church Law) states:

Canon Law 774 §2, "before all others, parents are bound to form their children, by word and example, in faith and in Christian living. The same obligation binds godparents and those who take the place of parents."

Canon Law 872, "in so far as possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of an infant baptism, the role is together with the parents to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfill the duties inherent in baptism."

Canon Law 873, "one sponsor, male or female, is sufficient; but there may be two, one of each sex."

Canon Law # 874 §1, "to be admitted to undertake the office of sponsor, a person must:

.1 "be appointed by the candidate for baptism, or by the parents or whoever stands in their place, or failing these, by the parish priest or the minister; to be appointed the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it;"

.2 "be not less than 16 years of age, unless a different age has been stipulated by the diocesan Bishop, or unless the parish priest or the minister considers that there is a just reason for an exception to be made;"

.3 "be a catholic who has been confirmed and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;"

.4 "not labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared;"

.5 "not be either the father or the mother of the person to be baptized."

Other Questions and Answers

Who is the Minister of Baptism?

A Priest or Deacon

Will a special white garment be provided by the Church?

Yes, however the child may wear a family baptismal gown or some other appropriate clothing suitable for the ritual.

Can the baptism be photographed or videotaped?

Yes, but please use appropriate discretion which does not interrupt the ritual.

Can we schedule a private baptism?

Even though the Sacrament of Baptism is a community celebration, private baptisms may be scheduled after consultation with the Pastor.

Is there a fee for the Baptism?

Yes, the fee is called a stole fee. The typical offering is \$40.00.

How do we set up the date and time for Baptism?

At the end of **INFORMATION FOR BAPTISM SHEET**, you may fill in the date which you have chosen. Or, if you are unable to choose a date at this time, you may contact the Parish Office at (618) 656-6450 when the date can be determined.

When does the baptism take place during Mass?

The Rite of Baptism is celebrated after the homily.

If we choose to celebrate the baptism during mass, will we have reserved seating?

Yes, when you arrange to have the baptism celebrated during Mass, ample seating near the font will be reserved.