

New Kensington Catholic Community (NKCC)
St. Joseph • St. Mary of Czestochowa • Mt. St. Peter

GUIDELINES FOR INFANT BAPTISM



WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a beginning.

Baptism is the first of three sacraments of initiation in which a child is incorporated into Christ, becoming a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit. It is just the beginning of the lifelong journey of faith. Baptism is sealed by confirmation and completed in eucharist.

After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation, and to participate in the holy eucharist. In this duty they are again to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means.

Introduction to the Rite of Baptism for Children

Infant baptism is an act of worship.

Like all sacraments, baptism is an act of worship in which the whole church turns their hearts and minds and bodies toward God. Through the Rite of Baptism parents present their child for initiation into the Church. Together with the parish community, they offer praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of salvation. They ask God to raise their child from the natural human condition to the dignity of an adopted son or daughter of God. By becoming one with Christ in baptism, the child is freed from original sin and united with the Christian community.

Baptism is a communal event.

Like all sacraments, baptism belongs to the entire church. It is celebrated in the midst of the community as a sign that baptism calls all of us to nurture and care for the child and to support the parents in their crucial task of handing on the faith.

Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has a right to the love and help of the community.....It is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private possession of the individual family, but is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ.

Introduction to the Rite of Baptism for Children

Baptism requires the faith of parents, godparents and the entire church.

For an infant to be baptized, it is necessary that:

- at least one of the parents consents to it, or the person who lawfully takes their place
- there is a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion

WHEN AND WHERE IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

An infant should normally be baptized in the first weeks following birth.

In the past, there was a popular belief that unbaptized children who died would spend eternity in limbo, a place of unending happiness, but not in heaven. Although this was never a doctrine of the church, in many places infants were baptized almost immediately following birth, often before the mother's health permitted her to attend. There is no such urgency in the church today.

Children should be presented for baptism as soon as is practically possible after birth taking into consideration the health of both mother and child and the readiness of the parents and godparents to accept the demands that baptism places on them. Parents and godparents must ask themselves if they are ready to accept the responsibility of handing on the gift of faith to their child, since this task is primarily theirs. **(In the case of adoption**, regardless of the age of the child, a certificate issued by a court in the United States must be presented to verify that the adoption is formal, final and irrevocable.)

Baptisms should normally be celebrated in the parish of the infant's parents by one of their parish priests.

Because baptism binds a child to the universal Church through a local community, at least one parent should be an active member of the NKCC Parish where the baptism will be taking place. For those who are not members of the parish, a letter of permission is required from the pastor of the Church where the parents are currently registered. For those who are new members of the parish, a three month period of participation is required before the baptism may be scheduled. Three months after a registration is received in the parish office, and after active participation in the parish is evident, parents may schedule a baptism for their child. An exception to this may be made if the family has recently moved and can demonstrate active participation in the parish to which they formerly belonged. *Active participation means, at a minimum, weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist, support of the Church according to one's abilities and active participation in the ministries of the Church.*

Baptisms are generally celebrated at the NKCC parishes on weekends before or after the scheduled weekend Mass times (except during Lent). Please contact the parish office for specific available times for each NKCC parish. Before making plans for the celebration, it is advisable to check with the parish office to verify the availability of a specific date or time.

How IS BAPTISM CELEBRATED?

Contacting the parish

Once the child has been born, please contact the Parish Office to schedule a date for Baptism. The Sacrament is conferred on Saturday afternoons at 3:00 PM or Sunday mornings after the 9:30AM Mass at St. Joseph, 10:30 AM Mass at Mt. St. Peter, and 11:30 AM Mass at St. Mary.

Naming the child

Traditionally, Catholic children are given a saint's name. This is an outward sign that links the child to the communion of saints. Church law does not require that a child be given a saint's name. It does, however, forbid a name that is offensive to Christians, our beliefs or way of life.

Godparents

Parents are assisted in their preparation and in raising their child in the faith by godparents. During the Rite of Baptism, godparents promise to help the parents in their duty as Christian parents. Because of this special relationship, parents should consider seriously the persons they ask to be godparents, remembering that their primary role is in relationship to the parents. Godparents should be chosen because they are willing and able to assist in the faith formation of the child, not simply because of familial or social relationship.

Church law requires that there be one godparent. The following are requirements for this important role. The individual must be:

- an active, regularly participating member of a Catholic parish
- a fully initiated Roman Catholic (having received Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist)
- at least 16 years of age
- in good standing with the Church and, if married, having done so in the Catholic Church

There may be one additional godparent, but it is not necessary. If there are two godparents, at least one should be a practicing Catholic. If godparents are active members of Mount Saint Peter, Saint Joseph, or St. Mary, no sponsor form is needed. Godparent(s) from a parish other than the three named above must submit a sponsorship form from their parish of which they are registered and participate.

Christian witness

The Church also provides for an active member of another Christian church to stand as witness to the baptism when only one godparent is chosen. Christian witnesses can play an active role in supporting the parents as they teach their child the Christian way of life. Christian witnesses should understand the role of godparent and be able to fill a similar role in their church. Thus, they need a letter from their pastor saying that they are members and active in their church.

The parish community

Because baptisms are normally celebrated during regularly scheduled Sunday Masses, the parish community is well represented by the gathered assembly. Baptisms are scheduled on Saturday afternoons at 3:00 PM and on Sundays after the 9:30AM Mass at Saint Joseph, 10:30 AM Mass at Mount Saint Peter, and 11:30 AM Mass at St. Mary. *A priest of the parish will normally preside* at the liturgy and baptize those children who will become members of the parish at their baptism.



THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATION

BEFORE THE LITURGY

On the day of baptism, parents and godparents need to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled time. The infant does not need to be in church until just before the beginning of the liturgy.

OPENING RITES

Liturgical Procession

In order to emphasize their important role in the Rite of Baptism, parents and siblings, baby and godparents will all join in the Entrance Procession. Family members and friends may be seated in specially reserved seats at the front of the Church.

Greeting

Reception of the Child

Here the presider questions the parents and godparents about what they seek for their child and about their readiness to accept the responsibility of raising the child in the practice of the faith. He then welcomes the child on behalf of the Christian community and claims him or her for Christ by tracing the cross on the baby's forehead. Parents and godparents do the same.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Scripture Readings and Homily
Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions)
Prayer of Exorcism

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water
Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith
Parents, godparents and all present renew their baptismal promises.
Baptism
Anointing with Chrism
Clothing with the White Garment (*omitted when the infant is already wearing a white garment*)
Presentation of the Lighted Candle
Ephphetha (Prayer over Ears and Mouth)

CONCLUDING RITES

Blessing and Dismissal
Recessional
Parents, godparents and the newly baptized infant recess with the ministers and presider to the vestibule.

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