

Sacrament of Baptism – Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto

Baptism is one of the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church; frequently called the "*first sacrament*" as it is the gateway to the rest of the sacraments. Once given, Baptism is a sacrament that cannot be repeated. Only those who have never been baptized can be baptized. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of the mystical body of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: "*Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.*" (CCC: 1213)"

In the Western or Latin Church, baptism is usually conferred by an authorized minister by pouring water three times on the recipient's head, while reciting the baptismal formula: "*I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (cf. Matthew 28:19). After receiving this sacrament, each person becomes configured to Christ as Baptism seals each Christian with the indelible spiritual mark of belonging to Christ.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

How often do Baptisms take place at St. Peter's church.

Baptisms take place once a month and the dates are predetermined. Discussion of dates will take place once all paperwork has been submitted and approval has been given.

How many infants/children are Baptized on each date.

A maximum of 10 infants/children are Baptized on each date.

What documents are to be submitted TOGETHER with the completed registration form?

Parent(s) are required to provide a copy of their recently dated (within 6 months of Baptism taking place) Baptismal certificate. A parent is required to show proof that he/she was Baptized in the Catholic church.

Godparent(s) are required to provide a recently dated (within 6 months of Baptism taking place) copy of their UPDATED baptismal certificate. An updated baptismal certificate will contain all the Sacraments received since Baptism was received (Confirmation, marriage). The Godparent(s) must have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The individual(s) may be single or married. However if married, their marriage must have taken place in the Catholic Church.

A copy of the updated baptismal certificate can only be obtained from the church where the individual was Baptized. It does not matter if the remaining Sacraments did not take place there, as the Church where your subsequent Sacraments took place notifies the Baptismal church of these details asking to have the information added to their records. The church of Baptism becomes your church of records.

Please **DO NOT** provide any outdated certificates you have at home as they will be deemed unacceptable.

Please note:

If an individual was Baptized at St. Peter's church, no further paperwork will be required from him/her. The church of Baptism keeps basic entry includes: name; date and place of birth of the baptized; minister of the sacrament; parents (including mother's maiden name); godparent(s), sponsor(s), and Christian witness(es); date and place (if outside the parish) of the conferred baptism (Canon 877).

If he/she was married at St. Peter's church, an updated baptismal is required to be provided.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We have not decided who the Godparent(s) for my child will be. Can I advise you at a later date and send my registration in order to secure a Baptismal date.

Unfortunately, a Baptismal date cannot be given prior to receiving all of the necessary information & certificates! A Baptismal date is given once all of the information and certificates have been reviewed and approval is given to proceed. Upon approval, the parish office will contact you to discuss a date that is most convenient for you.

How long after the birth of a child should the Baptism take place?

As soon as possible after the birth: 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 parish to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared for it properly (Code of Canon Law 867.1). An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without any delay (Code of Canon Law 867.2).

How do we arrange to have our child baptized in a parish other than the one where we normally worship?

If, for a good reason (for example, so extended family may attend), parents wish to have their child baptized in another parish, they need to approach the Pastor of that parish to ask if he is willing to baptize their child. A letter of permission to have the baby baptized elsewhere **must be obtained from the Pastor of the parish where the family usually worships**. Normally, Baptism preparation may take place in either of the parishes.

Who may baptize?

The ordinary minister of Baptism is a Bishop, priest, or deacon. In the case of an emergency, any person may baptize, even if not baptized him/herself. This person must intend what the Church intends, and baptize the child with water, using the Trinitarian formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

May a child be baptized if only one parent requests it?

The consent of at least one of the parents, or the person who lawfully takes their place, is required for the baptism of a child.

Can our child be baptized in a parish if we do not live within the parish boundaries?

Baptism, like all of the sacraments, is a celebration of a living relationship with God and with the local believing community, the parish. The sacraments are celebrations of our Church and, as such, are normally celebrated in the parish where the family resides or is registered and usually worships.

Who can be godparents?

Since godparents take on two roles - that of support for the parents in the Catholic upbringing of their child, and that of representing the Christian community into which the child is being initiated - they must be practicing Catholics (**fully initiated through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist**) who are mature enough (usually at least 16 years of age) to undertake this role. (Code of Canon Law, Canon 872) A godparent does not need to be the same gender as the candidate for Baptism. The godparent assumes no legal responsibility for the child.

What is meant by the term "Christian witness"?

A Christian witness is a baptized Christian and a member of a non-Catholic ecclesial community. (e.g., Anglican, United, Presbyterian, etc.) A member of the Eastern Orthodox Church may serve as a godparent if there is a Catholic godparent. A Christian witness is a witness to the Baptism, not a godparent. One Christian witness is allowed only if there is one godparent. (Canon 874) If there is a Christian witness, when his/her name is entered in the Baptismal Register the term Christian witness should be included.

It is not necessary to have a Christian witness.

Can a parent serve as a godparent?

A parent **may not** serve as a godparent because the parent already has a distinct role and relationship with the child. A godparent's role is separate from that of a parent or legal guardian. A godparent is called to model what it means to live as a Catholic Christian. The godparent is to assist the child in living a Christian life.

How many godparents are required?

The child may have only one or two godparents. If two godparents are chosen, one is to be a man and the other a woman. (Canon 873)

Can a person of the Orthodox faith be a godparent?

A member of the Eastern Orthodox Church may be a godparent together with a Catholic. "For a just cause, it is permitted to admit the Christian faithful of another Eastern non-Catholic Church to the function of a sponsor, but always at the same time with a Catholic sponsor." (Eastern Code of Canon Law, Canon 685 par. 3.) There must be at least one Catholic godparent.

My baptismal record cannot be located. What do I do?

If your baptismal record cannot be located at the presumed parish of baptism and you have been assured you were baptized within the Archdiocese of Toronto, please contact the Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto and they will conduct a search on your behalf.

Can our child be baptized if we're not practicing Catholics?

Baptism is more than a rite of passage for a child or a washing away of original sin. Baptism is a sharing in the life of the risen Christ. Baptism is also the first step of initiation into the Christian community. During the Rite of Baptism, parents promise to raise their child in the practice of the faith. Parents who are not practicing members of the community may be asked to delay the Baptism of their child until they have re-established that connection by participation in Sunday Eucharist.

Can our child be baptized if we're not married?

Not married in the Church? Your child's Baptism and your marriage are two separate issues. Your marital status may be discussed during your Baptism interview to encourage you to get married (or validate your marriage in the Church) if this is appropriate. However, as long as you are committed to raising your child as a Catholic, he/she may celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism and be welcomed into the Catholic Church.

May a child be "rebaptized" if he/she was baptized in a hospital, etc. in an emergency situation?

A person may be baptized only once. If a child is baptized in an emergency situation, once the child returns to health the parents may bring the child to their parish to celebrate the further rites as indicated in Rite of Baptism for Children. See "Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church Outside Mass" [nn. 267-287] or "Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church within Mass" [nn. 288-312].

What happens if the child is adopted?

See Rite of Baptism for Children, Appendix II: "Rite of Welcome for an Adopted Child who is Baptized" [nn. 345-363].

The baptismal records of adopted children are subject to both canon and civil law. If persons come to the parish looking for information on their birth name or parents they are to be directed to the Ontario government, which has legislation relating to adoption disclosure. Parish personnel have a legal obligation not to disclose any information that would identify or reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted (L&L p. 9, 520, 1523, 1945, 2068, letter dated January 30, 2004). For children baptized after their adoption is finalized, the following information is entered in the register: given name designated by the adopting parent(s); name(s) of the adopting parent(s); date and place of birth; sponsor(s) or godparent(s); minister performing the baptism; a statement that the child is adopted. The baptismal certificate issued for an adopted child is the same as a typical baptismal certificate. However, please note that the notation of adoption is not entered on the certificate.

For children baptized before their adoption was finalized, the names of the adopting parent(s) and the new names for the child are added to the baptismal register, but only after the adoption has been finalized. A notation is also made, stating that the child was adopted along with the name of the court or agency involved, the date of adoption and the case number.

Baptismal certificates issued by the parish for these individuals give only the name(s) of the adopting parent(s), the child's new legal name, the date and place of baptism, and the name of the priest/deacon who conferred the sacrament. The name(s) of the sponsor(s) are not given unless the adopting parents designated honorary sponsors. The notation of adoption in the register is not entered on the certificate.