

An Important Decision

Congratulations on the birth of your child. Even before your baby is born, the whole family has been preparing. There is a name to choose and siblings to prepare if you have other children.



You want to be sure that everything is ready for the new life that will come to your family.

At baptism, with the support of godparents and the Catholic community, your child enters a community of people dedicated to living according to the

message of Jesus as found in the scriptures. At the celebration of baptism, you promise to raise your child in the Catholic faith and making the world the way God says it ought to be.

The decision to have your baby baptized must come after serious reflection. Why? Because baptism does not end once the liturgy is over. Nor is baptism something which pertains to the child alone: you have a pivotal role.

Having your child baptized expresses your commitment to raise your child in the Christian faith. Your faith also needs to be strengthened and further developed as your child matures. To present your child for baptism is to accept responsibility for the growth of that faith.

Parents who ask that their child be baptized into Christ have the most significant part to play in the passing on the Christian life to their children. It is through them that the child will come to

know the love of God. It is through them that the child will learn to be beyond the family circle and become involved in the larger community in which he/she lives.

Christian parents do not force their faith upon a child but teach by example. Parents should baptize their child not because it is the custom, but because they sincerely desire the Christian life for the child. Parents who value their own faith and baptism will want to share the life of Christ they have inherited. Later, the child's faith will be based on what he/she has learned and experienced in the home and community from the very first days of life.

Because the responsibility of Christian parents is such a serious one, and often difficult, it is very understandable that they should invite family and friends to assist in the responsibility of raising a child in the Christian life. It is the godparents who most explicitly assumes the responsibility with the parents and will be ready to help the parents raise their child in the knowledge of the Lord.

Frequently Asked Questions About God Parents

Who Can Be a God Parent?

- ❖ A child must have one practicing Roman Catholic godparent in good standing with the Church.
- ❖ Catholic godparents must be at least 16 years old.
- ❖ A godparent must have received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- ❖ A godparent must be actively practicing the faith.
- ❖ A non-Catholic, baptized Christian may be chosen as a Christian Witness, as long as one godparent is a practicing Catholic.

What is a Sponsor Certificate?

All godparents (including Christian Witnesses) other than those from St John of Rochester must obtain a certificate/letter from their own parish stating that they are members in good

standing and are eligible to act as a godparent/Christian Witness for Baptism. These certificates should be submitted to the Pam Sikora as soon as possible.

What Does the godparent do at the baptismal ceremony?

The godparents will stand with the parents and publicly acknowledge their commitment to support the child's parents in raising him/her in the faith. With the parents, they will trace the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.

During the baptism itself, the godparents will place a hand on the shoulder of the parents symbolizing their support and commitment in their role as Christian godparents.

What if a godparent can't be present at the baptismal ceremony?

A family member or friend can stand in at the ceremony as a proxy for the absent godparent, but the godparent's name will appear on the baptismal certificate.

Frequently Asked Questions About Baptism

The grandparents really want our child to be baptized, but we don't attend mass regularly and aren't even sure what we believe anymore. Is it right for us to through with the baptism?

As the parents, this is solely your decision. Baptizing a child initiates him/her into the Christian community, as well as publicly stating that you want your child to share in the life and beliefs of the community. It may not mean that you agree with everything in the Catholic Church, but it does mean that you want your child to be part of this faith.

To help you discern where you are on your faith journey, please feel free to use the ***Faith Journey Self-Assessment***. If you are questioning your own faith or Catholic identity, it would be wise to honestly discuss your questions and doubts with Fr. Bill. You won't be the first!

When do Baptism take place at St. John of Rochester?

Baptisms at St. John of Rochester take place at a weekend Mass, the day on which the Church gathers to witness as a community. All sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) are communal events meaning that these celebrations occur in the presence of the faithful who promise to take an active part in the faith life of the child.

The Baptism liturgy begins with Reception of the Child in the back of the church as the parents, accompanied by the godparents, present the child for baptism. The child is claimed for Christ Jesus and invited to come closer to the sanctuary as a symbol of the beginning of a new faith journey.

The Rite of Baptism takes place after the homily. The child, parents, godparents will be invited into the Sanctuary and to the Baptismal font.

Is Photography allowed during Mass?

Photographs and video are excellent means of sharing the memory of this joyous and special day with your child as he/she grows in age and faith. Your photographers and videographers are welcome if they respect the sacred nature of the Mass. Photographers may not enter the sanctuary, and flash photography is prohibited during the ceremony as they are very distracting to the celebrant and the congregation. Father is always happy to stay for pictures with your family after the baptism.

Is there a fee for a Baptism?

There is no fee, however many families wish to offer a donation on the occasion of their child's Baptism. This may be placed in an envelope and given to Fr. Bill or Pam on the day of the Baptism.