

INFANT BAPTISM

From the earliest time, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized children as well as adults. Our Lord said: “Unless a man is reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:50) The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church. This faith is proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: “The Church is at once the mother of all and the mother of each.” [Saint Augustine, Epistle 98, 5: PL 33, 36]) (Introduction to the RITE OF BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN, #2)

- 1 By definition infants are those who have not yet reached the age of reason (7 years old) and cannot have or profess their own faith. (CIC 97, §2; c. 852, §1; RITE OF BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN, # 1). All others are to be considered minors or adults, and the rites and policies of the RCIA must be followed.
- 2 The current liturgical rites approved for the baptism of infants are to be used.
- 3 Parents are to be encouraged to have their children baptized within the first weeks after birth, following the prescriptions of universal law. (CIC 867, §1)
- 4 A child of parents who belong to the Latin church is ascribed to it by reception of baptism, or, if one of the parents does not belong to the Latin church, both parents agree in choosing that the child be baptized in the Latin church, the child is ascribed to it by reception of baptism; but if the agreement is lacking, the child is ascribed to the ritual church to which the father belongs (c. 111, Oriental Code canon 29). Notification of the proper rite of the child in inter-ritual baptism is to be made in the baptismal register.
- 5 In the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, at least one of the names given to the baptized must be a saint's name. (CIC 855)
- 6 For the licit celebration of infant baptism it is necessary that there be:
 - 6.1 Consent of at least one of the parents, or the person who lawfully takes their place. (CIC 868, §1, 1^o)
 - 6.2 Founded hope that the infant would be brought up in the Catholic religion. The proper persons to present an infant for baptism are the parents. However, the founded hope of raising the infant in the faith could be given by another member of the family as long as the parents allow it and promise not to interfere with the person making the promise in his/her efforts to raise the child in the faith.¹
 - 6.3 If the hope does not exist, the baptism is to be delayed following the prescriptions found below. (CIC 868, §1, 2^o)
 - 6.3.1 Baptism may be delayed for a period of time so that the practice of the faith may be encouraged, ordinarily not beyond three months.

¹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pastoralis Actio, Oct. 20th, 1980, No. 28.2: Assurances must be given that this gift will be able to grow through a genuine education in faith and in Christian living, that the sacrament may attain its full “truth.” as a rule, these assurances are to be given by the parents or relatives, although they can be supplied in various ways within the Christian community. If, on the other hand, these assurances are not in reality serious, that fact can be reason for postponing the sacrament. Finally, if it is certain that there are no assurances, the sacrament must be denied.

- 6.3.2 Baptism is not to be delayed because the parents are not married in the Church.² Each case must be examined individually. The ordained ministers and those assisting are not to give any indication of forcing the couple to be married before the baptism is celebrated.³ However, some efforts should be made to catechize the parents who are presenting a second, or third, child for baptism and have not done anything to rectify their situation.
- 6.3.3 Baptism is not to be delayed because only one of the parents is a practicing Catholic.
- 6.3.4 Registration or monetary contributions to the parish community do not solely determine the parents' practice of the faith.
- 6.4 Proper instruction of parents and godparents in the meaning of the sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it. The instructions are to include the scriptural foundation for the sacrament, the sacramental life of the Church, the Rite of Baptism.
 - 6.4.1 The requirement of instruction may be fulfilled anywhere in the Archdiocese for those who have a domicile in its jurisdiction. Proof of instructions must be shown.
 - 6.4.2 At the end of the instructions a certificate is to be issued by the parish to those who attended the classes. The certificate is to be signed by the one authorized to give the instructions, dated, and the seal of the parish is to appear on it. This certificate may be lawfully used for a period of two years.
 - 6.4.3 Parents are to be encouraged to prepare for the baptism of the child during pregnancy

² E.g., those who are living together, or were married in a civil ceremony or in the presence of a non-Catholic minister without proper permissions having been obtained.

³ This may constitute enough grounds for a nullity of marriage under force and fear, and/or simulation of consent.