

TOGETHER IN BAPTISM

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Dear Parents,

We welcome you to St. Catherine of Siena Parish Pre-Baptismal program. The Lord has blessed you and our Parish Community with a beautiful gift – your child – the visible sign of your love for each other. You have played a very important part in God’s plan of creation, and with Him have given life to a new member of His family. What more beautiful way can we welcome your child into God’s family than through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Throughout the history of our Church, preparation for Baptism has extended from no preparation at all to years of instruction for Catechumens. The Second Vatican Council separated the Rite of Baptism into two different rites; one for adults and one for children. Consequently, the Rite for Children calls for preparation on the part of the parent for the Baptism of their child.

Through the Pre-Baptism Program here at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, we hope to deepen your understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism and make you ever more aware of the importance this sacrament plays in your life as a family of God. We also will begin to form a basic Christian community with one another and develop a sense of celebration about your child’s Baptism.

As parents, we prepare long and well for the arrival of our baby. Now, we need to prepare ourselves to help our children for the life they will lead as a child of God – the lifetime commitment of a Catholic Christian. We look forward to sharing with you in this important and joyful time of preparation.

STEPS TO PREPARE FOR BAPTISM

You should start preparing for your child's baptism about two months before the desired month of Baptism. These are the steps that you should follow:

STEP 1:

After obtaining this instruction booklet from the Parish Office, review the scheduled dates for Baptism and select a date. Once you choose a date, you must come into the Parish Office with your child's *original birth certificate* and a *piece of identification* for yourself. We will fill out the forms to register your child for the Baptism and the Baptism Preparation Class.

STEP 2:

Attend the Baptismal Preparation Class. In this session, the Deacon or Baptism Catechist, the parents or legal guardians, and the Godparents pray and discuss topics relating to the Sacrament of Baptism, parenting and the Christian Community. We have a separate session for Spanish speaking parents. These sessions are usually offered on the first Wednesday and Thursday of the month from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. This class is Mandatory for parents and Godparents. Parents who have attended our Baptism Class within three years are able to waive this step.

STEP 3:

Participate in the Rite of Welcoming. This is held at a pre-scheduled weekend Liturgy (Saturday or Sunday), usually on the first weekend following the Baptism Preparation Class. This is a brief ceremony in which the children being baptized later that month are welcomed into the larger Parish Community. Refer to the schedule under "Parish Blessing" to determine what Mass applies to you.

STEP 4:

Celebration of Baptism. St. Catherine of Siena celebrates the Sacrament of Baptism for children under the age of seven once or twice a month at the Baptismal Liturgy. This is usually held on the second and third Sunday of the month at 2:00 pm. See the schedule for the current year for more information

GENERAL INFORMATION

Clothing

Children receiving the Sacrament of Baptism need not be dressed in white, however if not, they should have a white garment to be placed on them during the ceremony. A white shirt or sweater is sufficient.

Pictures

Pictures are not allowed during the ceremony so that the Rite itself will not be disturbed. Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony. The priest or deacons of our parish are happy to take pictures with you and help in any way they can to make this event a real celebration. The ceremony may be videotaped from a stationary position, as long as no special lights are used.

Offering

On the occasion of a Baptism, it is customary to give a donation to the Parish – usually \$75.00. Checks are made payable to the St. Catherine Parish, not to the priest or deacon performing the Baptism.

Godparents Guidelines

You are only required to have one godparent for your child's Baptism. However, it is customary to have two (one male and one female). In order to be a Godparent, an individual must be 16 years of age or older, Baptized and Confirmed, and be an active,

practicing Catholic. Godparents must provide a Certificate of Confirmation to the Parish Office prior to the Baptism Class. If you only have one “Confirmed Catholic” as a Godparent, another individual can be there as a “Witness” – however, their name will not be recorded in the church records or on the Baptism Certificate. If you select Godparents who live a great distance away, they do not have to be present at the Baptism. You may have a proxy fill in for the official Godparents. More “Godparents” may be included in the ceremony, but only two will be officially placed in the Church’s Baptismal Register as Godparents. Godparents must attend the Baptismal Preparation Class. Godparents who are unable to attend our Baptism Preparation Class due to distance, must provide a letter verifying their attendance of a Baptismal Preparation Class from their Parish.

Number of People

There is no limit to the number of people you may invite to your child’s Baptism. You are encouraged to invite relatives and friends to share your joy and welcome your child into our Christian Community.

Baptism during Sunday Liturgy

If, due to circumstances, your child is baptized during a Sunday Liturgy, the form of baptism is by immersion only.

Special Circumstances

If you do not presently live in Martinez and wish to have your child baptized at St. Catherine of Siena in Martinez, you must have a letter from the pastor or priest of the Parish where you live, giving permission for this baptism to take place in Martinez. If you wish to have a priest from another Parish perform your Baptism at St. Catherine of Siena, they must provide a “Letter of Good Standing” from their Diocese or Superior to our Parish Office prior to the Baptism Preparation Class.

Baptismal Certificate

A Baptismal Certificate will be given on the day of Baptism or mailed to you within two weeks of your child's Baptism. This will be needed when they prepare to receive their First Holy Communion or Confirmation.

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

Through the centuries, artists and craftspeople have depicted Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John; at first in mosaics and frescoes, and later in tapestries, stained glass, and paintings. The scene is familiar; Jesus is standing waist-high in flowing water. Above him, standing on dry land, John the Baptist pours water over Jesus. The first artists to depict this were sketching from memory. This is exactly how most people were baptized in the early days; as adults, standing or kneeling in the water, with water poured over their heads.

This method of baptizing, called immersion, is the favored way today. An adult enters a font, or an infant is lowered a bit into the water supported by a parent's hand, and water is poured or splashed over them. The treasures of baptistery art attest that submersion, or plunging beneath the water's surface, is not really in our tradition or that "infusion", the mere pouring of a few drops of water, yields too narrow an understanding of what it means to be plunged into Christ's life. Jesus Christ has gone before us into the water, and waits for us there with abundant gifts. No wonder the tradition calls for abundant symbols!

-James Field, @Copyright, J.S. Paluch

Important items to take care of as soon as possible:

- 1) Bring original Birth Certificate for Child and picture ID of yourself to the Parish Office as soon as possible to register your child for Baptism along with names and correct spellings of Godparent's names.
- 2) Obtain a copy of one/both of the Godparent's Certificate of Confirmation and bring to the Parish Office.
- 3) Bring donation of \$75 payable to St. Catherine Parish.
- 4) Attend Baptism Preparation Class
- 5) Attend Parish Blessing as per Baptism Schedule.
- 6) All requested paperwork must be provided to the Parish Office two weeks prior to the Baptism Preparation Class or the Baptism will not take place.

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