

Guidelines for Baptism in the Roman Catholic Church

The Sacrament of Baptism takes place in the parish church, except in case of grave necessity.

It is necessary that at least one parent consent to the baptism of the child into the Catholic Faith. It is preferable that both parents regardless of their religion consent to the baptism of the child. At least one of the two parents must be a baptized Catholic who actively practices his or her faith.

There must be reasonable hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Faith.

A child being baptized can only have one or two godparents; if two are chosen they must be male and female. In order for someone to be eligible as a godparent they must be chosen by the parents, have the ability and the intention to fulfill the role, be at least 16 years of age, and be a confirmed Roman Catholic, who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist, is leading a life in harmony with the Catholic Faith, including Marriage, and will be a good role model for the one being baptized, and be neither the father nor the mother of the child. A baptized person who belongs to another Christian community may be admitted only as a "Christian witness" not a godparent provided that there is at least one Roman Catholic godparent who fulfills the above criteria. A non-baptized person cannot be a witness nor a godparent.

Parents of a child to be baptized must be registered members of a parish. Children of parents registered in a parish other than the parish where the baptism is to take place must have a letter of permission from the pastor of the parish where they are registered granting permission for this baptism to take place outside their parish church. This letter should also testify that the parents are participating members of their parish and that they have completed required the baptism preparation program of their parish.

Marital Status. Ideally the mother and father of a child should be married to each other. This marriage should have taken place in the Catholic Church. If a couple has been divorced both parents should agree to the baptism if they have shared custody of the child. If a couple has not been married in the Catholic Church or is not married at all this is serious state of affairs which must be addressed. At the time of baptism parents solemnly promise to raise their child in the Catholic faith. This promise will be difficult to keep if parents themselves are not living according to the teachings of their faith. Baptism will not be denied but may be postponed until serious matters are set aright. It goes without saying that parents need to be practicing Catholics themselves before asking for the baptism of their child.

These guidelines apply to children under the age of seven years old. Children seven years of age and older will require further preparation before their baptism can take place.