

Q. Can I have a private or individual celebration for my child's baptism?

As stated above, Baptism, like all the sacraments, should be a celebration within the faith community, therefore private celebrations are not scheduled by the Parish clergy.

(In the case of an emergency, when an unbaptized child is in danger of death baptism can be administered immediately. If the child recovers, it is customary to bring the child to Church at a later date for a more formal celebration of the sacrament.)

Q. Can I have a priest or deacon who is a relative or family friend be the celebrant for my child's Baptism?

A. Priests or deacons who are relatives or friends are welcome to celebrate your child's Baptism. Due to the need to have a sacristan on duty to set-up and open up these would usually be scheduled in our "convent" chapel on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings during the hours that regular Masses are being celebrated in the Church. If the celebrant is from outside the Archdiocese of Baltimore, special requirements will apply. Please contact the Parish office.

Q. How soon should I have my child Baptized?

A. Usually it is best to have your child baptized within the first three months after birth. If for some reason Baptism was delayed, children who have reached school age may be required to receive instruction before Baptism.

Q. How many godparents should I choose?

A. The Church specifies up to two godparents, also called sponsors, one male and one female. Only one eligible godparent is required. One may be a baptized Christian of another faith provided they are of good moral character. These are referred to as "Christian witnesses".

Q. What is required of godparents?

A. Godparents should be models of faith who will positively influence your child's growth in faith. As such they should be at least 16 years old, strong in their practice of the Catholic faith and eager to assist you in your role as your child's primacy teacher and example of Catholic Christian living. It is more than just an honorary position. As such, godparents should be of good moral character and must be Baptized and Confirmed, regularly practicing Catholics who are in good standing in the Church.

Godparents are required to complete a form stating they are baptized, confirmed, practicing Catholics in good standing.

These forms need to be verified (signed) by the priest in their parish and returned to the IHM Parish office at least two weeks before the baptism. Christian witnesses complete and sign a similar statement. You may be asked to reschedule your child's baptism if these forms are not received two weeks in advance.

Q. Who may NOT be godparents or Christian witnesses?

A. Those who may not be chosen to be godparents or Christian witnesses are:

- the parents;
- any unbaptized person (e.g. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and others who do practice Christian baptism) and those whose baptism is not accepted by the Catholic Church (e.g. Mormons, Christian Scientist, Jehovah Witness, etc.) Please call the Parish office if clarification is needed ;
- Catholics who are not in good standing with the Catholic Church (eg.- Catholics who have married outside the Catholic Church without the Catholic Church's approval or blessing); (Eligibility may be established if the marriage is validated. Contact the Parish Office.)
- members of other Christian denominations who were formerly members of the Catholic church.

*(Above answers regarding godparents are based on Canons 872-874.)*

Q. What if the godparent(s) I have chosen is not able to attend the Baptism?

A. A godparent can be represented by a proxy provided they have verified their eligibility and submitted a letter stating that they are willing to be a godparent and are willing to be represented by a proxy.

Q. Must the parents be validly married in the Catholic Church to have their child baptized?

A. No. While it is required that godparents/sponsors who are married be validly married in the Catholic Church, it is not required for parents to be married, even civilly. However, parents (and godparents) who are married outside of the Church and therefore unable themselves to receive the sacraments (i.e. may not receive Communion, etc.) are strongly encouraged to speak to a priest about having their marriage validated so that they may return to full reception of the sacraments. This is important not only for their faith lives and their reception of the sacraments but also so that they may fully assume the role of models and teachers of the faith in both word and action for their child(ren). A father who is not civilly married to the child's mother and who wishes to have his name appear in the Baptismal registry and on the certificate will be required to sign a statement acknowledging paternity.



If you need additional information or wish to register for the Parish, for the Baptism preparation program or for a Baptism, please contact the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Office at 410-668-7935.



## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q. What do I need to do to prepare for my child's Baptism?

A. All parents are expected to attend a Baptism preparation class at Immaculate Heart of Mary. For the schedule of classes and to register to attend, please call the Parish office.

Q. If I attended the class with a previous child, do I need to attend again.

A. No.

Q. Do the godparents need to attend the preparation class?

Godparents are not required to attend but are invited to do so.

Q. When should I call to inquire about and sign-up for the class?

A. The best time is as early in the pregnancy as possible, but if that is not possible, within the first month or so after the birth. It is never too late.

Q. If I have previously attended a Baptism preparation program, how do I arrange for a Baptism.

A. Call the Parish office to obtain the necessary information and forms to be completed for the Baptism.

Q. When are Baptisms celebrated?

A. Baptism celebrates a person's entry into the Church, the Christian community so, ideally, this should take place with many of the community present for the celebration. It is recommended that, when possible, Baptisms take place within the context of the Sunday (or Saturday evening) celebration of Mass. Baptisms are also celebrated outside the celebration of Mass, usually on the second and fourth Sundays of the month.