

# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Baptism of an Infant: Requirements for Parents and Sponsors

### I. Sacramental Sign and Symbol:

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God; we members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word.’” (CCC, #1213).

The sacrament of Baptism is rich in sign and symbol. A sign is something visible which points to an inner reality.

In Baptism, the signs are water and oil. Water symbolizes a rebirth, a cleansing of sin. It is a symbol of grace. Sacred oil is used to anoint the child. This symbolizes that “The child is incorporated into Christ who is anointed priest, prophet, and king.” (CCC, 1241)

The white garment symbolizes that the baptized person has “put on Christ” and the candle symbolizes that Christ has enlightened the child and in Christ the baptized are the “light of the world.”

Baptism also imparts an indelible mark or character on the soul of the child. This means that the sacrament can only be administered once.

### II. Canonical Requirements and Criteria:

Parents and sponsors (or godparents) have certain responsibilities, which must be followed. According to the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church, there are certain **parental prerequisites** for an infant to be baptized:

“For an infant to be baptized licitly (legally):

1. the parents or at least one of them or the person who takes their place must consent
2. there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion: (CIC, canon 868)

A sponsor together with the parents presents the child for baptism and helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life.

**“There is to be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each.”**( CIC, canon 873).

The Code of Canon Law has set certain criteria, which must be met in order for a person to be a sponsor. They are:

1. The person must have **completed the sixteenth year** of age.
2. The person **must be a Catholic** who has been confirmed, has received the sacrament of the Eucharist (fully initiated in the faith), and who leads a life of faith.
3. The sponsor **may not be the father or mother** of the one to be baptized.

“A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism.” (CIC, canon 874).

As Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation into the Catholic Church, the Church takes its responsibilities and those of the parents and sponsors very seriously.

The religious formation of our children has been entrusted to us by the Lord and should be performed with diligence and reverence.

Here at St. John’s, we are always ready to assist you in the Catholic formation of your child. Don’t hesitate to call on us for help in exercising your role as primary educators of your child in the faith. Additionally, if you have any questions regarding requirements or policies, please do not hesitate to contact us at 978.251.8571.