

Infant Baptism Policy for St. Mary's Parish, Elm Grove

Baptism is the celebration of the love of God for each of us. It incorporates us into the mystery of the person of Jesus Christ. In baptism the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Baptism is a celebration of the loving embrace of God; it is this sacrament which opens to each person the Christian life, affirming us as sons and daughters of a loving God. Baptism is, as are all sacraments, an act of God and an action of the Christian community.

Since Baptism is the means of entering and being initiated into the Christian community, it is logical and beneficial that the community be present to both witness and welcome its new members. Therefore, the preferred time for the celebration of Baptism is within the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Here at St. Mary's, generally this communal celebration is on the first Sunday of each month (except during Advent and Lent) at any of the weekend liturgies.

The baptism of an infant presumes that the faith of the parents, the family, and the godparents together with the Christian community will nurture and form the child in experiences of faith.

Parents are the first and primary teachers of faith; they help form a 'domestic' church within their home. Just as raising a child is an enormous responsibility, so is raising a child in faith. In order to help parents with this crucial responsibility from the start, the Church asks every parish to offer assistance to parents so that they might continue their own faith formation as they raise their child.

Parents are invited to affirm and strengthen their commitment to the Christian faith and the religious practices of the Church through a period of preparation which emphasizes spiritual and moral formation as well as instruction in the Scriptures. This preparation period offers parents a wonderful opportunity to assess their own understanding of the faith and to renew their commitment to our Christian Catholic way of life.

Recognizing the need for such baptismal preparation and for a greater involvement of the entire community in the faith lives of the children of St. Mary's Parish, we establish the following policy for the baptism of children:

1. Prior to the celebration of baptism, parents are expected to participate in the parish's established baptism preparation program. Parents who have participated in a parish baptism preparation in the five years prior are invited, but are not required, to re-take the preparation class.
2. Parents are encouraged to have their child baptized reasonably soon after birth. For this reason, we recommend that parents participate in the preparation program prior to the birth of their child.

3. Baptism preparation will consist of a one-session presentation, workshop, and related family materials.
4. Generally, at least one of the parents of the child to be baptized should be a Catholic member of St. Mary's Parish. Families who are not members of the parish may, with a letter of permission from their parish priest, celebrate baptism at St. Mary's.
5. At least one of the godparents must be a confirmed, practicing Catholic.
6. All registrations for baptism and baptism preparation will be made through the Parish Liturgy and Music Office.