

# **ST. MARTIN DE PORRES CATHOLIC CHURCH**

## **BAPTISM GUIDELINES**

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This booklet has been provided to help parents understand the process of having their child baptized in the Catholic Church. We have included guidelines, which will be helpful with the preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism here at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church. Please read these guidelines carefully and notify the Parish or Religious Education Offices at 773-287-0206 with any questions or concerns, and we will be glad to assist you as best we can.

## BAPTISM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Dear Parents:

The responsibility and wonder you sense is something we want to celebrate with you as you bring your child to the Church for the Sacrament of Baptism. Our parish family is very happy to have a new member. Through Baptism your child will have new life and bring new life to our Church.

Baptism is a sacrament of initiation, which brings a person into union with Christ as a member of the Catholic Church. Parents who are seeking Baptism for their children are asking that their son or daughter be initiated into the larger Catholic Community and the local Church Community of St. Martin de Porres. The Church baptizes infants and children on the faith of their parents. The ideal is that parents have a deep faith, which they actively live out in the experience of the Catholic Church and as a result, the child's faith is first learned from their parents.

The Sacrament of Baptism marks the beginning of the journey of faith. For all Christians it is the defining moment that reflects a deep union with Jesus Christ. It is most fitting that a significant moment like this be celebrated within the context of the Eucharist.

We believe that Baptism is a sacrament, an action of Jesus Christ through his Church. A sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, instituted by Jesus Christ. By the carrying out of the sacramental rite, grace is given to the soul of the person who receives the sacrament.

In this sacrament, Jesus Christ:

- forgives original sin and opens the gates of heaven for us
- welcomes us into his Church
- makes us the sons and daughters of God

The day of Baptism is a great day for your child and your family. Your child joins a larger family of faith which stretches back to the Lord Jesus and his early followers. The word that comes to mind when thinking of you and your child is "gift." The Lord shares the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through the living waters of Baptism. Your child is also given the power to believe, to hope, and, above all, to love. Baptism occurs only once in the life of a Catholic Christian. It is the beginning of the journey that leads towards everlasting life with God.

The Lord delights in your choice to share the gift of divine life with your child. As parents you are simply irreplaceable. Your role in sharing and cultivating the life of Jesus with your child is a great privilege and opportunity. Studies have shown that the parents have a major role in cultivating the faith life of their children. Know that your efforts to share your faith are incredibly important. Parents are partners with the Lord in the journey of believing. We, too, wish to work with you as your Church family, as partners in your child's faith development, assisting you in any way we can. We hope that you will find St. Martin de Porres a parish where we can all grow together in faith, hope, and love.

## **BAPTISM SYMBOLS**

Before we begin to discuss the baptismal process, we would like you to have an understanding of the symbols of baptism: water, a white garment, oil and fire, so that when the time comes for the actual baptism to take place, you will have a better understanding of how these symbols relate to this very important sacrament of initiation.

### Water:

Water is a symbol of both life and death. "For surely you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life." (Romans 6: 3-4) As Jesus is raised from the dead by the Father and given new life, through the waters of baptism, we are raised to new life in Jesus Christ. The waters of Baptism wash away original sin and make us a new creation in Christ.

### The White Garment:

Once we have been claimed for Christ through the water of life, we are clothed in a white garment. This white garment, the Church tells us is an outward sign of our Christian dignity. Once we have put on Christ, we are called to always walk as His followers.

### Chrism:

Chrism is a perfumed olive oil consecrated by the bishop during Holy Week at what is called the Chrism Mass. This oil is used to anoint the crown of the head of the person being baptized. In ancient times, men and women were anointed to be proclaimers of God's message to the world. We are anointed to bring the good news to others by the way that we live our lives. We are anointed priest, prophet and king just as Christ was two thousand years ago.

### Candle:

The Light of Christ is passed on to us in the form of a candle, which is lit from the Paschal Candle that was blessed at the Easter Vigil. We are called to be the light of Christ in the world, and we are asked by the Church to keep that light burning brightly.

Now that you have a basic understanding of the symbols associated with the Sacrament of Baptism, we would now like to discuss the guidelines necessary for a baptism to take place here at St. Martin de Porres Parish.

## **Place and Time of Baptisms (Baptismal Rehearsal and Baptism Ceremony)**

**The Sacrament of Baptism will be celebrated two to three times a year. Please call the Parish Office for dates or speak to Christine Riley, Director of Religious Education.**

### **Dress for the Child**

There is no specific dress required for your child, as a baptismal garment is presented to him or her at the Baptism, but he or she should be appropriately dressed.

### **Requirements for Godparents and Christian Witnesses**

The choice of Godparents is important. Ideally, a Godparent represents the Catholic Church at Baptism, and then serves as the role model for the child by living a fully Christian life, providing a life-long example of Christian living and encouraging your child in the experience of our Catholic Faith. The Godparents should be people whose faith lends itself to this living example.

There are usually two Godparents, but there must be at least one (1), and no more than two (2) will be permitted. If two Godparents are desired, one must be male and the other female. It is customary to choose a Godfather and a Godmother, although there is no requirement that there be two Godparents. Regardless of whom you choose as sponsors, at least one of the sponsors must be a Catholic, meeting the above mentioned requirements. Neither the Godparent nor the Christian Witness can be the father or mother of the child. One non-Catholic Christian is permitted to serve as the Witness provided they are not a former Catholic.

According to Canon Law, the law governing the Catholic Church, Godparents should be at least 16 years of age, practicing Catholics and should have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation, meaning they are fully initiated into the Catholic Church, and be living a life in harmony with the Catholic Faith. They are asked to obtain a letter stating they are active members of their church community. This means regular attendance at Mass is expected and regular participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is encouraged.

If a Godparent is a baptized, practicing member of another Christian denomination, this person is referred to as a "Christian Witness," and his or her role in the Baptism ceremony is the same as the Catholic Godparent. Likewise, the expectation is that the Christian Witness will be a Christian role model for the child.

Any Godparent who is unable to attend the Baptism should have a proxy be present at the celebration to take his or her place. The name of the Godparent, however, not the proxy, will appear on the child's baptismal certificate.

### **Role of Parents and Godparents during the Celebration**

The Second Vatican Council of the Church called for the full, conscious, and active participation of the assembly in the liturgy. This participation is important, in fact essential, at the celebration of Baptism. Parents and godparents are invited to profess their faith and renew their own baptismal commitment as they pledge to model and pass on their faith to their children.

There are also specific roles to be carried out by individuals during the rite. To allow for the Baptism to proceed smoothly, it should be decided in advance who will hold the child, who will receive the baptismal candle, and who will receive the baptismal garment and place it on the child.

### **Paperwork and Preparation Meeting**

It is important that all documents and the attendance at the Baptismal Preparation Meeting are completed prior to the baptism. Your child's baptism may be postponed if the necessary items have not been completed and on file in the Parish Office.

### **Your Duties**

The ceremony of Baptism assumes a well-founded hope that you will bring your child up in the practice of the faith. This means:

- You teach your child to pray
- You teach your child to lead a good Christian life
- You come to Mass on Sundays
- You teach your child the Catholic faith

Every effort will be made to ensure your child's baptism is a special moment in your lives, as well as the lives of other family members. Therefore, please call the Parish Office at 773-287-0206 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday – Friday with any questions or concerns regarding this process, and we will be glad to assist you.

On behalf of the St. Martin de Porres Parish Community and Staff, we would like to congratulate you on your child's baptism and welcome him or her with "open arms" into the Catholic Faith.

The SMDP Baptism Committee:

Liz Becnel  
Adrienne Curtis  
Deacon William Pouncey  
Julie Richardson  
Christine Riley