



*Parish Family of
St. Francis Xavier and
St. Peter's-on-the-Thames*



Celebrating Baptism

Congratulations!

Dear Parents,

We are looking forward to sharing your joy that a child is born, not just any child, but your own child. Baptism is our parish opportunity to welcome your child into God's family. Because Baptism is such an important moment in your life as parents, we would like to help you prepare for the Sacrament of Baptism for your child. If this is your first child, and you have not attended any type of Baptism preparation, myself, or Katherine Marsh, our Pastoral Minister will meet with you to give you an even deeper appreciation of the sacrament and help you share its meaning with your child. Please review the enclosed material and bring it with you when you first meet with us. Contact Katherine Marsh kmarsh@dol.ca to begin the process or to ask for more information.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Father Christopher Bourdeau



If you have attended a Baptism preparation session, the enclosed information will reinforce your understanding of the Sacrament. The "Parents Discussion Sheet" will be helpful to you and your spouse. Please take some time to review all of the information.

After you have completed the Baptism Application form found on our [website](#), under Sacraments tab, please contact Fr. Chris or Katherine at the Parish Office at 519-682-1102. For St. Peter's, contact Anita Tourangeau at 519-436-0495

We look forward to celebrating this sacrament with you. If you have any questions please call the Parish Office.

Helpful Baptism Information

DATE & TIME: Baptism can be celebrated at any Sunday Liturgy or Saturday 5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass. You may also arrange for a Saturday.

NAME: Does not have to be a Saint's name, but should be a name chosen for Christian reasons.

CLOTHES: A loose fitting white undershirt, kimono, gown or christening dress is worn so that the anointing of the chest may be done easily.

WHO HOLDS THE CHILD: Parent(s) hold the child during Baptism

PHOTOGRAPHS: You may have pictures taken during or after Baptism

EVERYONE WELCOME: Members of family and friends are welcome.

THERE IS NO FEE FOR BAPTISM: There is no fee associated with the administration of the Church's sacraments. A stipend (monetary offering) to the priest or deacon is customary. The amount is left to your individual decision.

GODPARENTS/SPONSORS: At least one Godparent is required and must be an active confirmed Catholic over the age of 16. If there are two Godparents, one may be a non-Catholic Christian. If two Godparents, one male and one female are required.

REQUIREMENTS TO BE A GODPARENT OR SPONSOR:

Catholic Godparent or Sponsor:

- 16 years or older
- Received sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation
- Practicing their faith as a Catholic
- Cannot be parent of the child to be baptized

Non-Catholic Godparent or Sponsor:

- 16 years or older
- Received Baptism or Initiation in their church or meeting
- Practicing their faith
- Cannot be parent of the child to be baptized



What name do
you give your
child?

What do you
ask of God's
Church for your
child?



With Gratitude

Thank you for bringing your child to Baptism at St. Francis Xavier or St. Peter's-on-the-Thames. Our doors open wide at the thought of your coming.

Your baby's Baptism is a time for celebration and joy. And naturally, you want the best for your child. We want to help you plan and prepare for baptism in the best way possible.

There seems to be so much to do

You are most likely concerned about the birth of your child. Before the baby arrives there is so much to think about: where will the baby sleep, what will the baby wear, will the baby be healthy, what if the baby is twins? Then, all of a sudden there is chaos. The baby finally arrives and there is no time to think. There is so much to get done. Some people think of baptism as simply something else to 'get done'. That's very sad. Baptism is a birth into the Christian community and is in every way as solemn as the birth itself. It's an event that needs to be prepared for.

Your faith is important

Your most important preparation is to look at your own faith. Your baby will be born with your features and will pick up your mannerisms. As he or she gets older your child will also pick up your faith. That is why, when you approach the church about having your child baptized, you will be encouraged to think through your own faith and the part it plays in your life. The very fact that you have asked to have your child baptized shows that you recognize the importance of God in your life. From the earliest days of the church, children too young to answer for themselves have been baptized. The word "infant" comes from the Latin "infans" which means "one unable to speak for themselves." The church recognizes the desire of Christian parents to share the life of Christ with their children. Jesus Christ, like you, wants the best for your child.

Growing in God's love

Your efforts will help your child to grow up in the love of God. As you teach your child to pray, you also will deepen your prayer life. As you teach your child to appreciate the Mass, your own faith will be enriched. Your baby's baptism is the beginning of a new life in which the entire Body of Christ grows closer to one another and closer to God. The church welcomes your child with love and prayers for the peace and happiness of your family in the years ahead.

Rite of Baptism During Mass

Introductory Rites

Mass begins with the Sign of the Cross and Greeting. The minister then questions the parents:

“What name have you given your child?”

“What do you ask of God’s Church for your child?”

The celebrant then addresses the parents in these or similar words and concludes with the question:

“Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Then the celebrant turns to the godparents and asks:

“Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?”

He signs the child on the forehead in silence. Then he invites the parents and godparents to do the same.

Mass continues with the Opening Prayer or Collect. This is followed by the Liturgy of the Word but with the omission of the Creed as a profession of faith will be made during the baptismal rite. This concludes with the Intercessions. Following these, the rite of Baptism continues.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism

The Minister anoints the child on the breast with the oil of catechumens. All proceed to the Baptistry. A hymn, psalm, or Litany of the Saints may be sung or recited.

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

After professing the Creed, the minister asks: **“Is it your will that your child should be baptized in the faith of the Church which we have all professed with you?”**

Baptism

The Minister baptizes the child, saying.

“(Child’s name) I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”



The Christian community welcomes you with great joy. In its name, I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross.

We have been called by the Lord to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he acquired for himself.



Anointing with Chrism

Then the minister anoints the child on the crown of the head with the sacred chrism, in silence.

Clothing with the White Garment

Presentation of the Lighted Candle

The minister takes the Easter candle and says, “Receive the light of Christ.”

The Ephphetha

[Prayer over the Ears and Mouth} may now follow.

The Mass continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Following the Prayer after Communion the minister concludes the Liturgy with the blessing prayers.

The Blessing and Dismissal

The minister first blesses the mother, who holds the child in her arms, then the father, and lastly the whole assembly.



Rite of Baptism Outside of Mass

Greeting

Opening Dialogue

The minister then questions the parents:

“What name have you given your child?”

“What do you ask of God’s Church for your child?”

The celebrant then addresses the parents in these or similar words and concludes with the question:

“Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

Then the celebrant turns to the godparents and asks:

“Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?” *He signs the child on the forehead in silence. Then he invites the parents and godparents to do the same.*

Liturgy of the Word – Gospel

Homily

Intercessions

Litany of Saints

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism

The Minister anoints the child on the breast with the oil of catechumens. All proceed to the Baptistry. A hymn, psalm, or Litany of the Saints may be sung or recited.

Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water

Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

After professing the Creed, the minister asks: “Is it your will that your child should be baptized in the faith of the Church which we have all professed with you?”

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“(Child’s name) I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

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Then the minister anoints the child on the crown of the head with the sacred chrism, in silence.

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Presentation of the Lighted Candle

The minister takes the Easter candle and says, “Receive the light of Christ.”

The Ephphetha

[Prayer over the Ears and Mouth] may now follow.

The Mass continues with the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Following the Prayer after Communion the minister concludes the Liturgy with the blessing prayers.

The Blessing and Dismissal *The minister first blesses the mother, who holds the child in her arms, then the father, and lastly the whole assembly.*



Set this child free
from original sin and
make him/her a
temple of your glory
and send the Holy
Spirit to dwell within.

We anoint you
with the oil of
Salvation in the
name of Christ
our Saviour.



Godparents for Baptism

This series of articles were originally written in 2004 by Fr. Rob Waller. They are included here to help parents in the choosing of godparents who will be the sponsors in the faith for their child.

Choosing Godparents for Baptism

Parents want the best for their children: the best health, the best opportunities, the best schools, the best family...the best everything. They want the best godparents for their child. So, they want to do what the Church asks, because they know that the Church wants what is best for their children, too.

However, they also want harmony in the family, and they dearly love their siblings, among whom they look for godparents. For their first child, they choose the most faithful Catholics. When another child comes, their other brothers and sisters are waiting to be asked. They know that what makes for a good aunt or uncle does not always make for a good godparent. But even in the best of families, good godparents are difficult to find, and the choosing (and not choosing) causes some tension.

What does the Church law ask for, with regard to godparents? A Godparent must be a Catholic who is 16 years of age or older, although for a just reason, an exception can be granted by the pastor. A Godparent must be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received Eucharist.

Whether someone fulfills these requirements is easy to determine. Either someone has completed their sixteenth year or they haven't, although an exception is possible. Either someone is confirmed or they are not, for which there is no exception. If the potential godparent is confirmed but fifteen and a half years old, an interview by the baptizing minister is necessary to determine if the young person fully understands the duties and obligations of being a godparent. If the person is not confirmed, there is nothing for the parents or the pastor to do, except to invite that person to be confirmed. If the person does not have an interest in completing his own initiation into the church, then a more suitable godparent must be sought.

These two requirements are facts, about which there can be no question. The next is not so easy. A Godparent "leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on," as it is stated in the Code of Canon Law. This being a "Catholic in good standing" as some might say, is not clearly spelled out. Does that mean, if the person is married, she is married "in the church," that is, married with the blessing of the Church and is living in

a marriage recognized by the Church? I think so. Does this mean that the person attends Mass, if not always, at least most of the time? I think so.

A godparent does not promise to raise the child, if something happens to the parents. A godparent is simply a good person. The Catholic Catechism of the Catholic Church states that godparents are “firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized on the road of Christian life.” When it comes to godparents, parents want to give their children the very best!

Questions about Godparents for Baptism

“My sister is a wonderful woman, is a great aunt, and is a Catholic, but she is not confirmed, and is not interested in being confirmed.”

“Our brother-in-law is a splendid human being, an honest and generous and caring person, more Christian than any other person I know, but he is Jewish.”

“For our first child, we want someone from each of our families to be a godparent, but no one goes to Sunday Mass.”

“This is our third child, and we already asked the aunts and uncles who are married in the Catholic Church to be godparents for our first two.”

“I’d like for my close friend who is a practicing Methodist to stand up for my daughter, but she’s not Catholic.”

Families are often puzzled about godparents, even after they have carefully read the information sheets given at the parish’s preparation sessions.

What does the Church law ask for, with regards to godparents? A Godparent must be a Catholic who is 16 years of age or older – although for a just reason, an exception can be made. **A Godparent must be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has received Eucharist.** – for which there is no exception. A Godparent “leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on” – which is open to interpretation.

Only one Godparent is needed, and can be male or female, no matter what the gender of the child. If there are two godparents, one must be male and the other female (canon 873 of the Code of Canon Law).

A baptized non-Catholic may participate, together with a Catholic godparent, as a Christian witness. The non-Catholic is officially a “Christian Witness” and not “Godparent”. In our normal way of speaking, we do not usually make that distinction, although in the baptismal record and on the baptismal certificate the distinction should be noted.



We ask God to give this child new life in abundance through water and the Holy Spirit.

I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.



One of the most painful and difficult realities is that there is no provision in the law of the church for a baptized Catholic who is not fully initiated to have any title in a baptismal ceremony. Therefore, a Catholic who has not received Eucharist, or has not been confirmed, or has joined another church, **cannot be a “Christian Witness”**.

In my next article, I will discuss the last situation, and also what it might mean to be a “Catholic in good standing.” Let me simply quote Carol Luebering, who writes in her book, “Your Child’s Baptism: (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000): “Godparent is not an honorary title, but a job description. Godparents are – with you as the parent(s) – a child’s guide on the Christian life journey. They will help shape your little one’s faith by sharing their own in word and deed. You will therefore want to choose people whose own baptismal commitment is full and whose love for God and neighbour is generous.”

Godparents: Catholics in Good Standing

“My brother is Catholic, but he is not confirmed. Are you telling me that he cannot be a godparent? My brother-in-law was allowed to be a Christian witness for our last child, and he wasn’t even Catholic.”

“I don’t understand why my sister-in-law can’t be a godmother just because her husband has been married before.”

Baptism often provides the occasion for people to re-think their faith. Parents or godparents who have never been confirmed or who were married “outside the Catholic Church” often use the upcoming baptism to come closer to the Church and do some things they have wanted to do.

The number of baptisms at my parish being relatively few, I am able to call everyone who is having a child baptized, just to see if there is anything I can offer to do for them. With that call, I can say, “Would the uncle who hopes to be a godfather want my help to get confirmed? How can I make it easier for the aunt who hopes to be the godmother to return to Sunday Mass? Can I help you get your marriage blessed by the Church?”

Often the invitation is welcome. Sometimes, however, because people are just not ready yet, it becomes an issue as to why someone can’t be a godparent. It is true that a baptized non-Catholic may participate together with a Catholic godparent as a Christian witness. That being said, a painful and difficult reality is that there is no provision in the law of the church for a baptized Catholic who is not fully initiated to have any title in a baptismal ceremony. Therefore, a Catholic who has not received Eucharist, or has not been confirmed, or has joined another church, cannot be a “Christian witness.”

A godparent must also lead a “life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on.” Being a “Catholic in good standing” is not clearly spelled out in the law of the Church, but is most often interpreted as meaning that if a person is married, she is married “in the Church”, that is, married with the blessing of the Church and is living in a marriage recognized by the Church. It also means that she attends Mass, if not always, at least most of the time.

A Godparent sometimes needs to give her godchild (or her godchild’s parents) a little nudge and a great big example. That nudge and example can be given most clearly when the godparent is confirmed, and is living in accordance with the sacraments of the Church.

Godparents: Certificates and Rubbing the Wrong Way

“I have three godparents for my child. Is that okay with you, Father?”

At a recent wedding there was one maid of honour, but two best men. The groom just couldn’t make the choice between his two brothers. However, the groom could not figure out a way for both of them to stand right next to him. Obviously, one of them had to stand a bit closer. Both of the “best men” signed the civil marriage licence that was given to the newlyweds, but in our official marriage register at the parish office, only the name of the best man who stood closest to the groom was entered.

In our baptismal registers as well, we can record only one male and one female name as godparents. In some cultures, the whole family sponsors the child to be baptized. In some families, parents cannot bring themselves to choose between two uncles. In these cases, it seems necessary and pastoral to speak to the family ahead of time about which two names – one male and one female – will be recorded in the baptismal register.

Many of us priests, over the years, have done some things that have stretched the strict observance of the law. The way I often hedge a bit in this area is to say that as many people can stand around the font as the family likes, and the family can call as many people as they like godparents, but the official recording of the baptism will only note one male, one female, or one male and one female as godparents/sponsors.



As Christ was anointed
priest, prophet and king
so may you live always
as a member of his body,
sharing everlasting life.

Receive the
Light of
Christ



I do not discourage more than the official godparents from standing at the font and, certainly, do not discourage more than the official godparents from supporting the child and her parents in the living of the faith. The family can refer to these people in whatever way they like to express their spiritual relationship with the child. When all is said and done, as many good examples of good Christian men and women a youngster can see and have in his/her life, the better off that child will be.

But for the sake of the official church records and certificates, the parents must choose who will be the official godparents.

“I am not sure if my sister is taking my godson to Church every week. Is there something I can say to her without rubbing her the wrong way?”

What godparents might say to the parents of their godchildren and how they might say it depends of their relationship with the parents and the parents’ relationship to the faith. In most cases, I think any comment tends to antagonize more than help. If the parent ever raises the question, the godparent might offer to be with him/her at Mass with the child(ren). If the little child is only three, mom/dad could probably use a little help!

There are resources available to help godparents be good godparents. One such book is “The Godparent Book: Ideas and Activities for Godparents and Their Godchildren” by Elaine Ramshaw, Liturgy Training Publications, 1993. This is an idea book for godparents on ways to share faith and to be an active presence in the life of their godchildren.



Parents Discussion Sheet

Below are listed some questions that we suggest you answer individually and share as a couple. We will be discussing these questions at the Baptism Preparation sessions. If you have any questions about the program, please call Fr. Chris or Deacon Raymond.

Share these ideas with your spouse and bring this sheet with you to the Preparation Sessions

1. What does Baptism mean to me?

2. Why am I having my child baptized?

3. How am I planning to witness and live my faith for the spiritual growth of my child?

4. What are some of my fears about sharing my faith with my child as he/she grows up?

5. How will I describe God to my child?

6. How will I describe sin to my child?

7. Do you feel confident that you can show your child that God is always loving and forgiving, even when we sin? Some ways I will do this:

NOTES