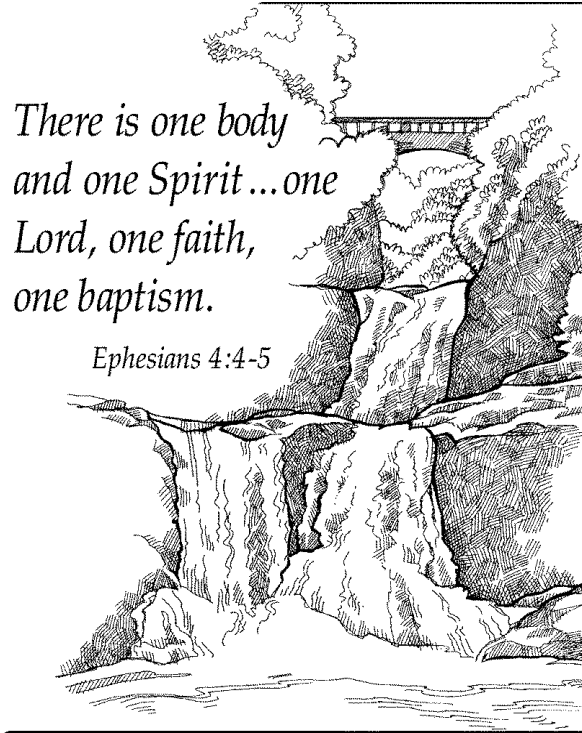


Baptism

Guidelines and Procedures

*There is one body
and one Spirit ...one
Lord, one faith,
one baptism.*

Ephesians 4:4-5



St. Francis of Assisi Parish

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Congratulations to you and your family. The birth of a child is cause for great gladness and rejoicing. The new life that has become a part of your family is the living sign of what God said at the beginning when he created us: “The two shall become one flesh.” God has created us in and through love, that is to say, the only reason God created us is because he wishes to share his love with us. God created us dependent upon him and his presence in our lives. That is why he made us in his image and likeness—so that we could love him in return. It is only when we love him and others that we will come to experience all that God wants for us and be all that God intended us to be. God also intended that our families be those special places where we learn about God’s love through the love that is shown and shared in the home. Jesus reminds us that we live out our relationships with God as members of the Church, daughters and sons of God, sisters and brothers to one another.

Baptism is a gift. In this spirit, Jesus gave us the gift of the Sacrament of Baptism. Traditionally, the main focus of the Sacrament of Baptism was that it “takes away” original sin. It is true that by Baptism we are forgiven all our sins, but to see that as the only focus is to leave out so much of what Jesus intended. With the Second Vatican Council and the renewal of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, there has been a return to the fullness of the meaning of all the Sacraments, including Baptism. Baptism is that special celebration in which we respond to God’s commitment of love to us. We say “yes” to God’s love and make our commitment of love to him and to others. We call Baptism one of the Sacraments of Initiation, that is, through Baptism we become members of the Faith Community, the Church. We are fully initiated by the celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. We might think of Baptism as the door to the other Sacraments that will be received at the appropriate time in one’s life.

Baptized into Christ. Through Baptism we are joined with Jesus in a very intimate way. St. Paul reminds us that because we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into his death so that, in one sense, buried with Jesus, we will also rise with him and share in the fullness of life now and for all eternity. It’s important to remember, as

St. Paul says, we *are* baptized. Sometimes we have a tendency to say that we *were* baptized. However, Baptism is like Marriage in that it is something that we live out every day. We normally do not say that I *was* married; we say I *am* married. Similarly, we should be saying that I *am* baptized. We live out the commitment made at Baptism everyday. We grow into the grace of our Baptism. Also, by our Baptism we *all* share in the priesthood of Jesus and, therefore, all of us are called to share in the work of ministry, each in his or her own special calling. It is obvious that the Sacrament of Baptism is so much more than just a rite or ritual that one has to go through. It is *the* most important of the Seven Sacraments and has implications that go to the core of who we are.

Baptized into the Community. Through Baptism one is received into the community of the Church. This usually happens at the *local* level—the parish. We here at St. Francis of Assisi Parish refer to ourselves as a Faith Community. Parents who ask for Baptism for their children do so as members of the Faith Community. Children are baptized into the lived faith of their family; it is an expression of the family’s belonging to the Faith Community and being active participants. Central to the life of the Faith Community is the weekly celebration of the Liturgy (Mass). There are also many other opportunities available that foster and promote one’s participation in and support of the Faith Community.

There is no rush. In the past it was taught that a baby should be baptized as soon as possible. That was because people thought that if, God forbid, anything would happen to a baby before being baptized, she or he would not go to heaven, but would end up a place called *Limbo*. This was never an official teaching of the Church; it is *not* doctrine. The understanding today is that, while Baptism on our part is necessary, the love of God is all-embracing, so much so, that God would never keep from himself any of his little ones—our God is an all-loving, kind and compassionate Father. Therefore, parents should feel free to begin the inquiry and process for Baptism by calling the parish office at a time when it is comfortable and not feel that they have to complete the process as soon possible. The initial inquiry and tentative arrangements can be made before the birth of your baby.

Dates, Times and Registration. So that the celebration of Baptism will be most meaningful, for those parents/guardians who are new to the Faith Community or those who are just returning to regular participation in the life of the Faith Community, the policy here at St. Francis of Assisi Parish is to formally register with the parish (contact the parish office) and after a period of three months of regular participation, verified by the use of the collection envelopes or our online giving program, an appointment can be made with Fr. Ross for an initial interview and “get acquainted” session at which time a date and time will be chosen for the Baptism. After that, arrangements will be made for the Baptism Preparation Session which is for both the parents *and* godparents. This session usually takes place after one of the weekend Masses. Baptisms will *usually* take place on the last weekend of the month and, depending upon the month, will be celebrated at either the Saturday 4:00 PM Mass or the Sunday 8:30 AM, 11:00 AM Mass or 6:00 PM Masses (only one Mass per month).

Godparents. The role of the godparents is a supporting role. They assist the parents in their responsibilities of raising their child in the Faith of the Church. When considering who will be chosen as godparents, it is important to remember that they will serve, along with the parents, as models of what it means to be a good Catholic and a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. They should be “All-Stars of the Faith.” Church rules state that potential godparents are required to be at least 16 years of age and have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. They should be attending the Liturgy on a regular basis, striving to live good and holy lives, and living according to God’s teaching in the area of marriage and family. They should be able to have a special and unique relationship with their soon-to-be godchild, and be willing to involve themselves in his or her life and his or her family. Letters need to be obtained from the parishes to which they belong which state that the potential godparents are members of that parish and are qualified to act as godparents. Normally for infants there are two godparents: one female and one male, but one will suffice. While the ideal is to have two Catholic godparents, in certain cases one who is a non-Catholic Christian can stand in as a Christian Witness.

***For more information, please feel free to contact the parish office.
Once again—Congratulations!***