

Guidelines for the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism

Saint Louis de France Parish

Swansea, Massachusetts

Word of Welcome:

We extend a very warm word of welcome to you during this wonderful time in the life of your family. The gift of God's love is seen so beautifully reflected in the birth of your child. Through the sacrament of baptism, your child will share in the new life of Jesus. This union of love incorporates the person into the very death and resurrection of Jesus and so initiates the person into the Church, God's Family. Your child is welcomed into the family of the Church and entrusted with the promise of eternal life. We share your joy and wish to offer our support and assistance in the great joy and challenge the sacrament of baptism brings.

Invitation:

1. It is our sincere hope that the parents who seek the sacrament of baptism for their child, are faithful to the weekend celebration of the Eucharist (*Mass*). Since this is a new beginning in the lives of families, we invite those who do not regularly attend the weekend Eucharist to make it a regular part of their lives.

Making arrangements for the baptism:

1. Parents are asked to see Father Dave after the celebration of a weekend Mass. Parents may also contact our parish office by calling 508-674-1103 or email at sldfo@comcast.net. **Please do not hesitate to speak with Father Dave personally to assist you in arranging the sacrament.** Father will do all that he can to support and help you in any way.
2. Families are required to be registered members of the parish to receive the sacrament of

Baptism. For those who are not, a letter of permission from their proper pastor is required.

Securing the date:

We will be able to secure a date for the Baptism once we receive the necessary documentation for the approval of the sponsors (*godparents*). Please note that only **one approved sponsor is necessary for the celebration of the sacrament.**

Securing approved Sponsor(s):

1. For those seeking to be sponsors that belong to another parish, it is required that we have a recently dated **sponsor certificate** from their parish priest. Please note that a sponsor certificate is different than a baptism or confirmation certificate. A sponsor certificate specifically states that the person is approved to function as a sponsor.
2. Those who belong to Saint Louis are asked to meet with Father Dave after whatever Mass they normally attend on the weekend to secure a sponsor certificate.
3. When either of these has been received or completed, the Baptism date may then be scheduled. Completed sponsor certificates are to be sent or dropped off at our parish office located in the rectory.

Sponsors/Godparents

The introduction to the Rite of Baptism speaks about the role of a Sponsor,

"In the baptism of children the godparent is to be present so as to represent the Church. The sponsor is to be ready to help the parents bring up their child to profess the faith and to show this by living it...Pastors are to see to it that the godparent, chosen by the family, is qualified to carry out his/her proper function".

Qualifications required to be a Sponsor(*Godparent*)

The selection of sponsors should be done with careful thought. The following requirements are universally required by the church. The qualifications are:

1. They are required to be **at least 16** years of age.
2. They are required to have received **all the sacraments of initiation** in the Catholic Church. *[A Catholic who has not been Confirmed is not eligible to be a Sponsor/Godparent]*
3. They are required to **attend weekend Mass on a regular basis** and receive the sacraments of the Church.
4. If married, a person is required to have **celebrated their marriage by the Roman Catholic Church**. *[A person who is divorced is eligible to be a sponsor. A person who is divorced and has remarried outside the Catholic Church is not eligible to be a sponsor]*

What is a Sponsor/Godparent, really?

The role of a Sponsor/Godparent is primarily that of being an **example** of the faith. In that regard **Sponsors are personal representatives of the Church** and are meant to reflect the community of faith to their Godchild in the way that they live their lives. They are to assist and support the parents in their serious responsibility of teaching and handing on the faith to their child. Also in the event that the parents are no longer able to carry out this responsibility (*ie. no longer practicing their faith.*) the Sponsor, to the extent possible, is expected to assume this role. This is how the Church envisions the role of a Sponsor/Godparent for the sacrament of baptism as well as for the sacrament of confirmation.

Sponsor designation and approval

Those whom you select as Sponsors are required to be approved by the Church in order to be officially designated as a Sponsor/Godparent.

The parish of the one seeking to be a Sponsor

Please remember that the person seeking to be a Sponsor is to approach their parish for a sponsor certificate. This means the parish they are **presently attending** (*ie. Where they go to Mass each week and not where they received a Sacrament some years back.*) Many people find this confusing but please remember receiving a Sacrament in any Church does not constitute membership. Anyone can receive a sacrament in any parish, but it is the person's **present** participation that is at issue.

What is a Christian Witness?

The Church requires that there be one approved sponsor for the celebration of either baptism or confirmation. However, it has become a traditional practice to have two sponsors (*a male and a female*) at baptism, commonly referred to as Godparents.

If there is a couple that you would like to have as the godparents of your child, even though one person is a non-Catholic it may be possible. Provided that there is **one approved Catholic Sponsor**, the other Godparent may be considered as a Christian Witness. It is only required that they be baptized Christians and will be designated as a "witness" to the Sacrament. There will be no distinction made during the celebration of the Sacrament and so both will be seen as Godparents.

In conclusion

We hope that this pamphlet has helped to explain some of the particulars involved in making arrangements to have your child baptized. **Again, please do not hesitate to approach Fr. Dave with any questions or problems that may arise.** Father will do

whatever he can to help you be able to celebrate this beautiful sacrament for your child. We very much look forward to celebrating this very special gift with you. May God bless you and your family in His great love and mercy!

Celebrating The Sacrament of Baptism at Saint Louis de France Parish



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