

The Sacrament of Baptism
St. Mary Magdalen Church
Oakville, Connecticut

Note to Parents

Congratulations on the expected or recent birth of your child. You have been blessed by God with a precious gift... the privilege of being a parent and the responsibility of caring for a child. This responsibility includes the nourishment of your child's spiritual life. In the Sacrament of Baptism, your child is reborn spiritually as a Christian. The people of St. Mary Magdalen Church celebrate this occasion with you and welcome this new member within our midst. We pray that your family will always know the warmth of God's blessings

Overview of the Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism is a spiritual rebirth. It is the first step in a life-long journey of faith for a new member of the church. **This journey begins with an invitation, a call to live the gospel as a committed Christian and an active member of our parish.** For infants, this commitment is made by the parents who, in turn, commit themselves to the job of fostering the spiritual welfare of their child. It remains for the newly baptized to become what we already are – children of a loving God.

In the traditional teaching of the church, Baptism brings with it a cleansing of sin... liberation from original sin. But to think of Baptism only in those terms would greatly diminish the sacrament. The essential effects of Baptism require that the family have a good understanding of the nature of the sacrament before it is administered. Baptism makes a person a child of God; it also makes the person a brother or sister to all baptized believers throughout the world. Clearly, the family's commitment to an on-going practice of the faith is important.

Baptism is the beginning of an initiation process, which includes the sacraments of First Eucharist and Confirmation. It is this entire process, extending throughout the early years, that brings a person into full membership in the church. When we say "Yes" to Baptism, we publicly acknowledge that we have been chosen, cleansed, marked and set on our way to a lifetime mission... a permanent vocation.

Expectations and Responsibilities of Parents

It should be clear that the nature of Baptism and its importance in the life of the child and the church place a great responsibility on the parents. Their personal commitment to the faith must be well founded. And they must be prepared to guide and support their child in the practice of the faith throughout the early years, until the child is fully responsible for his/her actions and decisions.

The parent's commitment to the faith should be obvious in their participation in the life of the parish, including regular attendance at mass and other parish functions. Parents are expected to insure that their child participates in programs of religious education and sacramental preparation at St. Mary Magdalen to the fullest extent possible for the family.

Qualifications of Sponsors (Godparents)

The role of the sponsor (godparent) is very important because he or she **represents the parish and the entire church in the Rite of Baptism**. Baptism is a celebration not only for the family but of the entire church. Additionally, sponsors will serve as models in the practice of the faith for the child. They are expected to support the parents in raising the child to become a committed Christian and parishioner. Sponsors should be selected with these thoughts in mind.

One sponsor is required. There may be two sponsors; if so, one male and one female are required. The Baptism is not scheduled until the Sponsor Certificate(s) are provided.

The Archdiocese of Hartford has defined specific requirements for sponsors. To be a sponsor, one must provide a Sponsor Certificate which states that he/she meets the minimum requirements given below. The person chosen to be a sponsor should contact the pastor of his/her parish for assistance in securing a Sponsor Certificate.

The Certificate verifies that the Sponsor (Godparent):

Has attained the minimum age of sixteen years.

Has received the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Is a registered member of a parish and participates regularly at Sunday Mass.

Lives in conformance with the church's teachings in regard to faith and morals.

If married, in a marriage that is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church (married before a priest or deacon).

Understands the responsibility of a Sponsor and is prepared to accept this responsibility.

Schedule for Baptism

After the Sponsor Certificates have been received, a Baptism Preparation Session and the Baptism will be scheduled. The Preparation Session is attended by parents and sponsors.