

FACTS ABOUT BAPTISM

Rev. William C. Wagner, Pastor

Why do we have to attend a class before our child can be baptized?

Church law directly states: Canon 851.2. “the parents of an infant to be baptized and likewise those who are to undertake the office of sponsor are to be properly instructed in the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it; personally or through others the pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together...”

As a matter of fact, all the sacraments are accompanied by instructions, even the sacrament of Matrimony (pre-cana programs). The only exception is the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick or Baptism when administered in an emergency situation (i.e. danger of death).

The way pastors accomplish this is by having these preparation classes. It would be impossible for us to meet with each and every family individually for every sacrament.

Why must we be going to Sunday Mass in order to have our child baptized?

Again, the canon law is specific: For the licit baptism of an infant it is necessary that:

Canon 868.2. “there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such a hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off... and the parents are to be informed of the reason.”

The sacraments are vital parts of our living faith. They are, frankly, somewhat meaningless if celebrated without any real faith. The minimal requirement that the family at least attend Sunday Mass is hardly a burden but a privilege and a duty to God. There is also the danger of reducing the meaning of the sacrament to being a kind of superstition as if it somehow exists apart from a Christian life lived in faith. The sacraments are an expression of our relationship with the Lord. It is very difficult to imagine celebrating the sacraments with people who are not participating in the prayer life of our Catholic community.

Why do the sponsors have to be active Catholics?

Actually, one sponsor must be a confirmed, active Catholic and the other sponsor has to be a baptized Christian. The sponsor’s role is to help the baptized lead a truly Christian and Catholic life. It is only common sense that one of the sponsors be a practicing Catholic. We cannot show the way if we have not been there ourselves.