

In this package you will find:

1. Welcome letter
2. Belonging to a Parish Community
3. Mother's Baptismal Questionnaire
4. Father's Baptismal Questionnaire
5. Questionnaire for a parent from another tradition (should this apply to either parent).
6. A Child's Baptism Registration Form
7. "A Case to Think about Before Baptism."
8. Thinking about Baptism and Godparents
9. Forms for Godparents
10. Sheets for Godparents "Godparents for life"
11. Baptismal Application Check List-*see below*

**Please return following completed sheets
to the parish office.**

A member of the parish team will be contacting you.

- Completed Baptismal Registration Form
- Father's Baptismal Questionnaire
- Mother's Baptismal Questionnaire
- Questionnaire for Parent from Another Tradition (where applicable)
- Administrative Fee of \$50.00
- Forms for Godparents

Dear Parents,

Congratulations! We join with you in thanking God for the gift of your child. This is indeed a busy and wonderful time in the life of your family.

We, the people of God, the church look forward to joining you on this journey of preparation. Preparing for the celebration of a sacrament is a time of joy and anticipation in the life of the church and in the life of the family.

The Baptismal preparation process at our parish includes the following:

- Reading the Baptismal Preparation Package.
- After prayer and discussion, if you feel ready to begin the preparation, please return the **Baptismal information form, Baptismal questionnaires** and the **Godparent forms** to the parish office. You are asked to provide the godparents with the other material written for them and to keep the remainder of the package.
- Shortly after returning the forms, you will be contacted by a member of the pastoral team and you will have a conversation regarding your desire to have your child baptized. If appropriate, this person will assist you in registering for a Baptismal preparation session. The member of the pastoral team will explain when Baptism is normally celebrated and how a date is selected.
- The preparation session will be held in the parish and you will be given the details during this conversation – sessions are on weekday evenings. If you are able to leave the baby at home this is much appreciated. Godparents are welcome to attend this session. The member of the pastoral team will assist you in registering for a session.
- We celebrate the sacrament of Baptism on Sunday afternoons, dates and times will be given at the same time.
- During the session you will receive instructions regarding the day of the Baptism.
- Although the Church does not charge a fee for the sacraments; we are requesting the donation of a \$50.00 administrative fee to defray the cost of materials and facilities for baptism preparation. The administrative fee is due with the return of the application package which can be transferred using the email address admin@sjocross.org.

Baptism is the first sacrament of initiation; Confirmation and Eucharist are the other two. Baptism leads the newly baptized person to the table of the Lord. Weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist is a valuable sign that a person is disposed to celebrating the sacrament of Baptism and being open to the wonder and grace of God.

If you have been away from the weekly Sunday Eucharist, this is a wonderful time to return to the Sunday celebration. It is Jesus who desires to nourish and feed us each Sunday through the Scriptures and the table of the Eucharist.

We pray that God will bless you and your family as you continue to grow in faith.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joyson George, O. Carm.
Pastor

Belonging to a Parish Community

We welcome you to our parish of St John of the Cross. Baptism initiates a person into the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. When Baptism is celebrated in a Church, the person is also initiated into that particular believing community and he or she assumes the rights and privileges of being Catholic, Lutheran, United, Anglican, etc.

Belonging is important. From the moment of birth, children seek to belong. When a person comes seeking Baptism into the life of the Church, he or she is asking to belong. Although through the sacrament of Baptism one is initiated into life in Christ and the Church, there is another important way to belong.

We state our desire to belong to a parish community by formally registering in the parish. Registering is a rather simple act that brings responsibility and commitment. Registration means that we want to gather each Sunday with our brothers and sisters in Christ to worship God and that we want and intend to support the work of the Church.

In practical terms, the registration form allows the parish to know how many families live in the parish and it allows parish staff to contact families when this is deemed necessary. The parish roster is developed from the registration forms.

Supporting the work of the Church is the responsibility of all registered members. We support the work of our parish by sharing our time, talents and monetary resources. A weekly offering assists with the Church's ministry needs, provides a suitable location for liturgical celebrations and assists with the living accommodations of our priests. Using offertory envelopes assists everyone and it allows the church to provide a yearly receipt for income tax.

Although a parish is busy with many activities, the primary works of the Church are to worship God, to proclaim the gospel and initiate new members. All these are the work of the entire parish community (all registered members).

When someone is seeking to celebrate a sacrament, it is only natural for the Church to inquire if the family is registered with the parish. Registration is a concrete sign that the family is involved in the life and work of the Church.

Father's Baptismal Questionnaire

Please take some time to reflect and complete the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers. These sheets are to assist the parish in meeting your particular needs.

Baptism is initiation into the Christian Community. It is important to me that my child become a member of this community of Saint John of the Cross because _____

My understanding of Church is _____

My understanding of faith is _____

I am Catholic because _____

The things I like about being a Catholic are _____

The things I dislike about being a Catholic are _____

My belief in Jesus makes these differences in my personal and family life: _____

Baptism will make my child's life different because _____

How did you choose these Godparents? How do they fulfill the criteria offered in "Thinking about Baptism and Godparents"? _____

Please continue on other side →

The following questions refer to “A Case to Think About” (Father’s..., continuation)

1. What was your initial reaction to this case? _____

2. What validity do you see in the priest’s decision to delay Baptism? _____

3. What is your reaction to the priest’s statement that “belief in God is not sufficient cause for Baptism?” _____

4. Having read this case study, in what ways do you feel ready to take on the commitment of Christian parenting? _____

5. Where would you need help with this commitment? _____

Mother's Baptismal Questionnaire

Please take some time to reflect and complete the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers. These sheets are to assist the parish in meeting your particular needs.

Baptism is initiation into the Christian Community. It is important to me that my child become a member of this community of Saint John of the Cross because _____

My understanding of Church is _____

My understanding of faith is _____

I am Catholic because _____

The things I like about being a Catholic are _____

The things I dislike about being a Catholic are _____

My belief in Jesus makes these differences in my personal and family life: _____

Baptism will make my child's life different because _____

How did you choose these Godparents? How do they fulfill the criteria offered in "Thinking about Baptism and Godparents"? _____

Please continue on other side →

The following questions refer to “A Case to Think About” (Mother’s continuation)

1. What was your initial reaction to this case? _____

2. What validity do you see in the priest’s decision to delay Baptism? _____

3. What is your reaction to the priest’s statement that “belief in God is not sufficient cause for Baptism?” _____

4. Having read this case study, in what ways do you feel ready to take on the commitment of Christian parenting? _____

5. Where would you need help with this commitment? _____

FOR A PARENT FROM ANOTHER TRADITION

PLEASE TAKE SOME TIME TO REFLECT AND COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. THESE SHEETS ARE TO ASSIST THE PARISH IN MEETING YOUR CHILD'S PARTICULAR NEEDS.

Baptism is initiation into the Christian community. I support the decision for my child to become a member of this community because:

My understanding of church is:

My understanding of faith is:

The faith of my spouse makes these differences in our family life:

Baptism will make my child's life different because:

Why did you choose these Godparents? How do they fulfill the criteria offered in "Thinking about Baptism and Godparents."?

What is your reaction to "A Case to Think about Before Baptism."?

As a spouse from another tradition what reservations do you have about the Baptism of your child?

BAPTISMAL REGISTRATION FORM

Family Name _____
Address _____ Postal Code _____
E-mail _____ Home Tel. _____
Father's Work Tel. _____ Mother's Work Tel. _____

Child's Full Name _____
Date of Birth: Year _____ Month _____ Day _____
City of Birth: _____
Father's Name _____
Mother's First Name and Maiden Name: _____

Father's Religion: _____ Mother's Religion: _____
Parish where you normally worship: _____
Were you married in the Roman Catholic Church? _____ yes _____ no
Were you married in another Christian Tradition? _____ yes _____ no
Name of Church where married: _____
Were you married in a Civil Ceremony? _____
Please list names, ages and religion of other children: _____

(Godparent must be Roman Catholic and only one is necessary)
Name of Godmother _____
Name of Godfather _____
Name of Christian Witness (if baptized Christian in another tradition): _____

Parish Use Only
Date Returned: _____ Payment rec'd (cash/cheque/Etransfer/POS) Rec'd by: _____
Baptism Class: _____ Baptism Date: _____

THINKING ABOUT BAPTISM AND GODPARENTS

Having made the decision to bring your child to the Church for the sacrament of baptism, you are now faced with another important decision, the choice of your child's godparents.

In recent years, in many instances, the role of the godparent has been distorted and the choice of people to fill this role has been made for reasons other than those, which ideally should dictate the choice. Only too often, we approach someone to be a godparent to satisfy a social or family obligation, to say "thank you" for past favours, because they expect it or for quite material benefits which may ensure for the child. At the risk of hurting someone's feelings, we should make our choice of godparent with the following in mind.

Inviting someone to be a godparent implies the following:

- **A request** by the parents for the assistance of the Christian community in general and the individual godparents in particular in raising their child in the Catholic faith.
- **An admission** by the parents of their awareness that they need this assistance.
- **An affirmation** of the faith of the individuals invited to be godparents and a challenge to them to witness their faith.
- **A statement** by the parents that they want their child to be positively influence by the faith and lives of the people they have invited.
- **A reminder** to the entire community that it has a shared responsibility to support each of its members.

We suggest the following guidelines in making your choice of people to invite to be godparents:

1. The person chosen must be mature enough to carry out the responsibilities of godparent.
2. The person must be one of strong living faith; a good Catholic person who gives witness of his/her own life to Gospel values in a friendly way.
3. The person must be willing to profess his or her faith with the parents immediately prior to the actual pouring of baptismal water and should have no reservations about so doing.
4. The person should have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
5. The person must be willing, in whatever way he or she can, to actively cooperate with the parents in helping to bring the child up as a Christian.

For obvious reasons, only a member of the Catholic Church may be a godparent, although a member of a non-Catholic Christian community may serve as a Christian Witness. When a member of the Eastern Orthodox faith is chosen together with a Catholic, that person also becomes a Godparent. The godparent is presumed to profess the faith in which the child is to be raised and members of non-Catholic churches, although good Christians, do not share sufficiently in our belief to be committed to rearing another in the Roman Catholic faith. The child must have at least one Roman Catholic godparent. Where the parents choose two godparents, one must be male and one female.

Unlike the old rite of baptism which required godparents to answer for the child in renunciation of Satan and profession of Christ, the rite currently in use reflects the reality of the situation more accurately in asking parents and godparents to renew their own rejection of evil and acceptance of Jesus that they may offer these to nurture the faith in/of the growing child from the seeds planted at Baptism.

In reflection upon the responsibilities of godparenthood, it becomes apparent that what is asked of the godparent is really the mission each of us as Christians accepted as a part of our own Baptism to nurture the faith and reach out to others in faith throughout our lives.

CASE TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE BAPTISM

Kevin and Joan's eyes flamed with anger when they heard my words: "No, I don't think I will baptize your baby this month." Experience had prepared me for their anger and resentment, but I knew this storm had to be confronted.

"But you've got to ... that's unfair!" objected Joan.

"What's unfair?" I questioned.

"You're a priest ... you can't refuse to baptize a baby. That's unethical.

You're cheating our little girl."

A sharp answer would have destroyed everything. Now would I be able to salvage the wreckage of hurt feelings.

"Give me a chance and I'll try to explain," I cautioned.

"But I never heard of this before – a baby being refused baptism!" said Kevin painfully.

"Let me try to explain," I calmly began. "I do not want to baptize your baby now because I do not think that you as parents really want to have your baby baptized."

This couple, whom I had never met before, had telephoned in the early afternoon to make arrangements about having their baby, a bright-eyed, seven-pound girl, baptized. Usually I cannot tend to the matter immediately, but since today was a very light day in the parish, I made the appointment for the early afternoon. Kevin and Joan were both in their early twenties. He worked for one of the engineering firms as a draftsman. Joan worked as a legal secretary for one of the law firms downtown. They were very friendly and polite. Offering me a glass of tea, they spent a few moments discussing their planned holidays in the mountains. Joan then raised the reason for the appointment. Their situation presented three difficulties. First, Joan and Kevin no longer prayed or really considered it an important part of their married life. They both had stopped joining in Sunday Mass two years prior to their marriage. Nor did they feel the Church had all that much to offer their lives as adults. But this seemed the proper thing to do as new parents: to have your children baptized. This couple could not at first understand my reason for delay. They had been brought up with a clear understanding that all Catholic parents have a duty to present their children for baptism. Without baptism a child would certainly be lost for all eternity! Now here was a Catholic priest doing exactly the opposite of what they had been taught!

IS YOUR FAITH REAL? A very small child cannot speak for itself. But the parents, on the strength and convictions of their own faith, ask the Church to baptize their child. At this moment they promise to raise their child as a Catholic. Kevin and Joan did not seem to be aware of the commitment that baptism demands. Baptismal promises are only the beginning of life as a Catholic. These promises are made to God, to the Catholic community, and to the child itself. It is a long-range commitment of eighteen to twenty years wherein the parents help the child become a faithful follower of Christ. If the parents do not nourish their child spiritually, the child can come back and rightfully ask why these promises made to him or her were broken. The promises are also made to the community of the Church. As individual parents, we promise our fellow believers to raise our family according to the values and outlook of the Church. At the same time, by accepting these promises, all our fellow Catholics accept the obligation to help these parents in the difficult task of raising a Catholic family today. The members of the Church should also demand that the baptismal promises be faithfully kept. Almost always in the past, what the parents promised at their child's baptism was actually carried out as they raised the family. They did bring their children up to be faithful Catholics. Of course, there were a few parents who did not remain faithful to their promises, but not enough to lead anyone to seriously question the matter. Infant baptism was a good practice, for the children, the parents, and the local parish community. Kevin and Joan's situation, and

hundreds like it, force us to re-think the practice of the Church. Many parish priests have concluded that indiscriminate baptism does more harm than good. The sacrament of baptism is actually being abused!

A new rule? Kevin framed his question with a deep frown. “But why have things changed so quickly? Why this about face?”

“We have to come to realize in the past decade (so it is not sudden) that what parents say at the time of baptism is not what they actually intend,” I replied. “In the past we could rely – to a great extent – on what the parents asked for in baptism as being what they planned to do in the future. Today, we have so many young parents who have literally dropped out of the Church. Any type of faith that they might have can only be classified as minimal. How can they promise to bring up their children as Catholics when they do not believe in it themselves?” Joan objected quickly. “What do you mean – ‘don’t believe?’ We believe in God. We haven’t rejected that.” “The majority of people claim to believe in God today, but not too many are really serious about it. Somehow, faith in God does not take root in their lives,” I returned.

Even though Kevin and Joan have been brought up Catholic, they have not made a definite decision to follow the faith of their parents. When I hold their description of their own religious faith against the Gospels, I know it would be wrong to meet their request by baptizing their baby. We must have assurance that the life of God that has been planted in baptism promises not be allowed to die in the germination stage. It’s like planting a garden, but never bothering to water it. When all these implications are understood, baptism cannot be received lightly.

CONFRONTING THE IMPLICATIONS: As parents, how can you convey to your child a sense of God when prayer does not find a place in your daily life? How can you want to have your child become a member of the Catholic Church when as parents you have dropped out of the Church? How can you strengthen the faith commitment of your children when you never join a praying community at Sunday Mass? How can you bring your children to be sensitive to the needs of others (as Jesus was) when you avoid hearing God’s Word proclaimed today?

“So you see, Joan and Kevin, the issue is not that the Church no longer believes and practices infant baptism. We still firmly believe in this tradition. But we now see that if we continue to baptize whenever a request is made without some assurance that the parents will try to nourish their child’s spiritual life, then we are being unfaithful to the commands of baptism which is the child’s initiation into the Christian way of life.

“Parents can only give what they possess themselves. They cannot lead their children to a true following of the Christian faith if they ignore it themselves or do not consider it useful for their own lives. That is why I said at the beginning that I do not think you really want your child to be baptized!”

The discussion had come to a subdued end. The faces of Joan and Kevin were covered with questions, which they would now have to seriously look at together.

FORM FOR GODPARENTS

Congratulations! The relationship between a godchild and godparents is unique and lifelong. You are embarking on a special journey, one that will last years.

On the day of the Baptism, the Church asks the godparent if he or she is ready to assist the parents in raising their child in the practice of the faith. The Church invites you to be an active presence in the life of your godchild.

The Church requires that a godparent be a practicing Catholic (fully initiated through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, and mature enough, usually at least 16 years of age) to undertake this role.

The godparent is expected to attend the Baptism Class to help prepare you in this special role.

Please complete this form and return it to the parents or to the parish where the Baptism will be celebrated.

PLEASE PRINT.

Name _____
First Surname

Address _____
Street
City Province Postal Code

Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

Church of Baptism (Enter the Name and Town/City of the Church where **you** were baptized)

Church of Confirmation (Enter the Name and Town/City of the Church where **you** were confirmed)

Parish where you normally worship _____

Name of child to be baptized _____

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GODPARENTS FOR LIFE

To be given to the godparent

Some Suggestions

The following suggestions may assist you in your role as godparent:

- ✓ Pray for your godchild each day
- ✓ Regular visits with your godchild are encouraged
- ✓ Write a letter to your godchild telling him or her how you felt on the day of the Baptism. Keep the letter until the child is older.
- ✓ Whenever possible, the godparent and the godchild should participate in the Sunday liturgy and other liturgical celebrations together.
- ✓ It is important for the godparent to continue to grow in his or her faith and therefore take advantage of retreats, special workshops or presentations.

As you journey with your godchild, may both of you discover more and more about the mystery of God's abiding love.

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