



# SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES FOR INFANT BAPTISM ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

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## REFERENCES

- CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition, 2000
- CIC Code of Canon Law, Latin – English Edition, Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C., 1983
- GCSPD Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, Revised Edition, USCCB, 2017
- PA *Pastorales Actio* – INSTRUCTION ON INFANT BAPTISM, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1980
- OBC Order of Baptism of Children, USCCB, 2020  
*N.B.* The bilingual edition of this Rite retains the paragraph numbers referenced in these guidelines.
- PCLT Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Vatican Dicastery, Rome
- RCIA Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, USCCB, 1988

# INFANT BAPTISM – Introduction

Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments.<sup>1</sup> Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.

From the earliest times, the Church has baptized not only adults but children as well. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, when whole “households” received baptism.<sup>2</sup> Through Baptism, an individual is configured to Christ. Baptism seals the Christian with the indelible spiritual mark or character of belonging to Christ.<sup>3</sup> No sin can erase this mark. Therefore, Baptism cannot be repeated.

The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. “Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:5) The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, for it is a grace and gift of God that does not presuppose any human merit. Such children are baptized in the faith of the Church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers.<sup>4</sup>

Parents desiring baptism for their child who receive a prenatal diagnosis of a life-threatening condition should receive the support they need to assure that their child will be baptized “without delay.”<sup>5</sup>

Pope Francis addressed the question of those who ask if it would not be better for children to grow up and then request Baptism for themselves. The Holy Father responded that, “this means not trusting in the Holy Spirit. Because when we baptize a child, the Holy Spirit enters him [or her] and the Holy Spirit fosters in that child the Christian virtues, which will later flourish... This opportunity must always be given to all children: that of having the Holy Spirit within them to guide them throughout their entire lives...Don’t forget to baptize children!”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CCC 1213

<sup>2</sup> cf. *Acts* 16:15, 33, 18:8; 1 *Cor.* 1:16; CCC 1252

<sup>3</sup> CCC 1272

<sup>4</sup> OBC 2

<sup>5</sup> CIC c.867 §2, GCSP 11

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, Catechesis on Baptism – General Audience, Rome, April 11, 2018.

## I. The One to Be Baptized

1. Since God's very nature is to share himself and his love, the Church rejoices with the presence of new life and desires that infants be brought to the sacrament of Baptism in the first few weeks after birth.<sup>7</sup> With regard to Infant Baptism, the term "infant" or "child" refers to those who have not yet reached the age of discernment (about age 7) and therefore cannot profess personal faith.
2. Children having attained the use of reason are to participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults adapted for Children<sup>8</sup> rather than the Rite of Baptism for Children. With the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual, these children should receive the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil, [or at another suitable celebration] together with the older catechumens.<sup>9</sup>

The "age of discernment" has been determined by the U.S. Bishops to be about seven years old. Therefore, under normal circumstances, children over the age of seven are to be initiated through the Christian Initiation of Children who have Reached Catechetical Age. "[T]heir formation should follow the general pattern of the ordinary catechumenate as far as possible, with the appropriate adaptations permitted by the ritual."<sup>10</sup>

3. Disability, of itself, is never a reason for deferring Baptism. "Catholics with disabilities have a right to participate in the sacraments as fully as other members of the local ecclesial community. Persons who lack the use of reason are to be baptized provided at least one parent or guardian consents to it."<sup>11</sup> Such persons are considered infants regarding the age requirements for baptism.<sup>12</sup>

## II. Parents

4. The act of requesting Baptism for a child is itself a sign of faith. As soon as possible, even before the birth, parents should approach their pastor or his delegate to request Baptism for their child.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> CIC c.867; CCC 1250

<sup>8</sup> CIC c.852 §1; RCIA 252

<sup>9</sup> RCIA, Appendix III, National Statutes for the Catechumenate, no. 18

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, Revised Edition, USCCB, 2017; See CIC, cc. 868, §1, 1<sup>o</sup> and 852, §2.

<sup>12</sup> See CIC c. 852, § 2

<sup>13</sup> cf. OBC, Introduction; 8.2, 8.3; cf. CIC c.867

5. It is the duty of Christian parents to bring the child up in the practice of the faith, “so that this divine life may be preserved from the contagion of sin, and may grow in them day by day.”<sup>14</sup> Because parents have responsibility of the Christian formation of their children, parents are to be equipped for this task through suitable preparation. The requirements for parental preparation are found in section V.
6. At least one parent or legal guardian should be a baptized Catholic in making the request for the Baptism of a child. The non-Catholic parent should be willing to have the child baptized in the Catholic faith. In cases where there is opposition from one of the custodial parents, pastoral counseling should present options for the future celebration of the sacrament. Under no circumstances may a Baptism take place if one of the custodial parents opposes the Baptism of their child.<sup>15</sup>
7. Parents requesting Baptism of their child should ordinarily be members of the parish. As a rule, infants are to be baptized in the parish church proper to their parents, unless a just cause suggests otherwise.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, all who approach the parish for the Baptism of their children are to be treated with respect, openness, and warmth regardless of their registration status or faith development. Although a person may be encouraged to become more actively involved in the parish, registration and/or financial contributions may not be used as a prerequisite for sacramental preparation or reception if the person lives within the parish boundaries. If the parents live within the boundaries of another parish, permission is ordinarily requested by the parish where the baptism will take place.
8. Parents and guardians in particular circumstances, such as those who are migrants of whatever status, families under stress, single parents or guardians, or those without a permanent domicile should expect and receive pastoral care when they approach a parish for the Baptism of a child. Such cases should be considered on an individual basis.
9. There should be a founded hope that the child to be baptized will be brought up in the Catholic faith. Great pastoral sensitivity and accompaniment must be part of this process of discernment on the part of the pastor and baptismal preparation team. When it is not possible to find the “founded hope” in the parents themselves, if it can be found in others – godparents, family members, or if the child will be enrolled in a Catholic school – this will suffice. If this hope is

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<sup>14</sup> OBC 56

<sup>15</sup> *Pastorales Actio* (Instruction on Infant Baptism) #8, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1980.

<sup>16</sup> CIC c.857 §2

utterly lacking, the Baptism may be delayed, not denied, with an explanation to the parents about the reason,<sup>17</sup> noting that baptism could be celebrated at a later date.

10. Although we share a common Baptism with other Christian communities who baptize with water and a Trinitarian formula, the understanding of Baptism differs among the various Christian denominations. It is therefore appropriate to encourage a non-Catholic Christian parent to participate in the baptismal preparation program so that they may have a better understanding of what will be celebrated with their child. However, since at the time of their wedding the non-Catholic Christian parent did not take on the obligation of raising their children in the Catholic Church, but rather confirmed that they understood their Catholic spouse's obligation to do so, participation is not required of the non-Catholic Parent. Nevertheless, the non-Catholic Christian parent should be invited to attend and fully participate in the baptismal preparation. In the celebration of the sacrament, the non-Catholic Christian spouse should be encouraged to participate fully, inclusive of renewing his/her baptismal promises. It is sufficient for the Catholic spouse to respond to the various questions.<sup>18</sup>
11. In the case of a Catholic married to a non-Christian, the non-Christian spouse similarly does not have the obligation of raising their child in the Catholic faith. However, while not being obligated to participate, this spouse should also be invited and welcomed to the Baptismal preparation so that they may appreciate and better understand what is being celebrated with their child. Whether they attend the program or not, non-Christian parents should be encouraged to attend the celebration of the rite and participate.<sup>19</sup> It is sufficient for the Catholic spouse to respond to the various questions.
12. Although we share a common Baptism with other Christian communities who baptize with water and a Trinitarian formula, Baptism is never “non-denominational” – it is into Christ within the denomination celebrating the Baptism. Thus, a priest or deacon may not baptize a child when the parents’ intention is to raise the child as a “Christian” and not as a Catholic. See no. 9 in this section.
13. There is nothing that prevents a child born to parents who are not validly married in the Church from being baptized provided that the parents of the child are properly disposed, have been appropriately prepared, understand the

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<sup>17</sup> OBC8.3; CIC c.868

<sup>18</sup> OBC 5.4

<sup>19</sup> OBC 5.2

responsibilities that come with having the child baptized, and are willing to fulfill the commitment undertaken. Every effort should be made by the pastor and parish baptism preparation team to assist the parents to participate as fully as possible in the Catholic Church. The team should see this as an evangelizing moment for the family and explore with them the possibility of validating the marriage.

14. The preparation process for a single parent is particularly significant because of the greater difficulties that are faced by single parents. The importance of support and accompaniment from other members of the Catholic community should be emphasized.
15. Persons other than the parents can bring a child for Baptism when there is a written, notarized statement from the parents giving permission for those persons to present the child for Baptism. In such a case, since the parents are not bound by baptismal obligations, those persons bringing a child for Baptism must be appropriately prepared, understand the responsibilities that come with having the child baptized, and are willing to fulfill the commitment undertaken. At least one appropriate godparent must also be chosen.
16. If parents do not have legal custody of the child, the person who has been named by the court as the "managing conservator" has the legal right to make decisions on the religious upbringing of the child and can bring the child for Baptism so long as the obligations mentioned above are met. The legal guardians/managing conservators must meet the same requirements as parents.
17. Same-sex couples can have their children baptized in the Church, so long as they comply with the requirements stated above in this section.  
For recording Data into Baptismal Register for Children of Same-Sex Couples:
  - a. Obtain a copy of the birth certificate of the child who is to be baptized. This is to be done prior to baptism.
  - b. The parish priest must record in the baptismal register the name of the natural or adoptive father and mother (man and woman) or that of the unmarried mother (woman), as well as that of the father (man), if his paternity is proven by a public document.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> CIC 877, §1-§3

- c. It is not possible to register two mothers or two fathers in the Parent column of the register. Likewise, it is not possible for a “transgender father” whose real nature is a woman or a “transgender mother” whose real nature is a man to be annotated in the Parent column along with a same-sex partner.
- d. If one of the partners is the child’s natural father or mother, he or she must be recorded in the Parent column, the other partner can be annotated in the Notations column, only if they have legally adopted the child.<sup>21</sup> Adoption information will be recorded, as in any other adoption.

If neither parent is the natural parent of the child to be baptized, only one of the adoptive parents may be recorded in the Parent column of the baptismal register. The other adoptive parent will be listed in the Notation column along with the adoption information.

*Please be sensitive when presented with this issue and minister to the family.*

### **III. Godparents (Sponsors)**

18. It is the duty of godparents to assist the parents with the all-important task of bringing up a child in the faith. Godparents are to be “firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized . . . on the road of the Christian life.”<sup>22</sup> Each child may have a godfather and a godmother. Godparents, together with the parents, present the child to be baptized, help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with Baptismal faith, and help the baptized fulfill the obligations connected with it.<sup>23</sup>
19. Only one godparent is necessary. The godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic (baptized, confirmed and received Eucharist), at least 16 years of age <sup>24</sup>, and must be leading a sacramental life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken. They also must not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized or bound by any canonical penalty<sup>25</sup>. Additionally, a stepparent may

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<sup>21</sup> PCLT Protocol No. 15986/2017, November 15, 2017; for further information, please contact the Archdiocesan Office of Archives and Record Management at [archives@archsa.org](mailto:archives@archsa.org)

<sup>22</sup> CCC c.1255

<sup>23</sup> CIC c.872

<sup>24</sup> “...unless it seems to the pastor ... that an exemption to this age is to be made for a just cause.” CIC c.874 §1.º2

<sup>25</sup> CIC c.874

not serve as godparent for their stepchild. If married, the godparent should be married in the Catholic Church. There may be only one male or one female godparent or one of each sex.<sup>26</sup> Brothers or sisters of a child to be baptized may serve as godparents providing that they meet all requirements.

20. The godparent(s), if unknown to the pastor, may be asked to provide documentation from their own parish community; often in the form of a signed statement as to their status as practicing Catholics and/or that they have attended Baptismal classes. The pastor should use discernment in this matter.

21. At the request of the parents, a baptized and believing Christian of another denomination may serve as a Christian witness along with the Catholic godparent.<sup>27</sup> A lapsed Catholic may not serve as a Christian witness.

22. Any person may serve as a proxy if a godparent cannot be physically present at the Baptism. The Church requires no specific stipulations regarding who may serve as a proxy. The proxy names will only appear in the notations with their Name and "Proxy" written afterward. The proxy names are not placed on the Baptismal Certificate, only the godparents. [See Sacramental Records Handbook, GODPARENTS/SPONSORS, pg. 28.]<sup>28</sup>

23. Godparents may only be changed in two circumstances. First, in cases of adoption, the adopting parents should be given an opportunity to change godparents, since the original godparents will not be written on the baptismal certificate. The names of godparents are omitted to ensure that there is no information released that could reveal, directly or indirectly, the fact that a person was adopted. Any change must take place only after the adoption becomes final. For updating of the record after adoption, see Sacramental Records Handbook, ADOPTION AND BAPTISM, pgs. 29 - 32.

Second, godparents may be changed if the baptized child is still in the formative period of Christian life, and the godparents have died, been impeded by serious illness, made a radical departure from the faith, or the child has been adopted. At that time, the parents may request new, qualified godparents by means of a letter of request to the diocesan bishop. If the request is approved, the diocesan

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<sup>26</sup> CIC c.873

<sup>27</sup> cf. CIC c.874 §2

<sup>28</sup> Please review complete information for Baptism in the Sacramental Records Handbook, pgs. 27-34.

bishop will authorize the new godparents be added to the baptismal register. Nevertheless, the names of the original godparents may not be removed. A notation will be made and the letter of approval from the diocesan bishop kept in the permanent sacramental file for the register. [cf. Sacramental Records Handbook, NEW GODPARENTS OR SPONSOR pg. 22.]

24. In all, godparents serve a special role in the life of the baptized child. Therefore, parents should choose a godparent not simply because of a blood relationship or friendship; a godparent should be a trustworthy witness of faith who will help the godchild to live a faithful Christian life and attain salvation.

#### IV. The Parish

25. "Before and after the celebration of the sacrament [of Baptism] the child has the right to the love and help of the community. During the rite ... the community exercises its duty when it expresses its assent together with the celebrant ... In this way it is clear that the faith in which the children are baptized is not the private profession of the individual family, but it is the common treasure of the whole Church of Christ."<sup>29</sup>
26. The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism. For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow *after* Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates the renewal of Baptismal promises each year at the Easter Vigil.<sup>30</sup>
27. The Rite of Baptism encourages parents to practice their faith and understand it more deeply. When assisting parents at the time of their child's Baptism, pastoral staff, both clergy and laity, are to be inviting and solicitous; and when necessary, assist in related matters such as helping to prepare for or convalidate a marriage.

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<sup>29</sup> OBC, Introduction; 4

<sup>30</sup> CCC 1254, 1255, emphasis in the original text.

28. The ordinary minister of Baptism is a bishop, priest or deacon. If Baptism is celebrated during Mass, the priest/bishop celebrant ordinarily confers the sacrament. "In every celebration of this sacrament they should be mindful that they act in the Church in the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. They should therefore be diligent in the ministry of the word of God and in the manner of celebrating the sacrament. They must avoid any action that the faithful could rightly regard as favoritism."<sup>31</sup>
29. Outside the case of absolute necessity, it is not lawful for anyone, without the required permission, to confer Baptism in the territory of another, not even upon his own people.<sup>32</sup> Permission to baptize in another parish must be obtained from the pastor of that parish or from the local Ordinary. The reason for this requirement is to stress the significance of Baptism as entrance into the local community that will be one's own. It also helps to assure the proper recording of the Baptism. [For details regarding proper recording of Infant Baptism, see Sacramental Records Handbook, BAPTISMAL REGISTERS pgs. 27 - 29.]
30. Although the task may be delegated to another, the pastor or pastoral administrator is personally responsible to ensure all Baptisms are duly and properly recorded in the Register of Baptism.
31. A baptismal certificate's purpose is for the recording of the sacrament and lack of documents should not deter a person from being baptized. Acceptable documents include an official birth certificate, an original hospital birth record, or a signed affidavit from the witnesses to the birth. Nevertheless, if no such paperwork is provided, a record keeper should enter the following statement in the notations: "No legal documents were presented for the circumstance of birth." A certificate should be presented to the parents at the time of baptism. [See Sacramental Records Handbook, SOURCE OF DATA, pg. 27.]

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<sup>31</sup> OBC, General Introduction; 11.1 -2

<sup>32</sup> cf. CIC c.862

## V. Preparation and Catechesis of Parents and Godparents (Sponsors)

32. "It is necessary that the celebration of Baptism be properly prepared. Thus: The parents of an infant who is to be baptized and likewise those who are to undertake the office of sponsor [godparent] 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 and where possible visiting them."<sup>33</sup>
33. Formation of the parents of the child to be baptized is essential because it leads them to understand and therefore be supported in their role as "the first witnesses of the faith to their child."<sup>34</sup> This formation is most effectively done within the parish where the child is to be received so that the family may be accompanied by their community of faith.
34. The intent of the preparation process is to prepare the parents and godparents for the Rite and accompany them, offering insights and deepening their dispositions so that the celebration will be a truly meaningful commitment on their part to raise their child in the Catholic faith. Thus, pastors should periodically remind parishioners that the preparation process should begin as early as possible (cf. II. 3). If the sessions are not taken before the birth of the child, parents should be advised that as a matter of normal practice Baptism will be postponed until the preparation process is completed.
35. Baptismal catechesis should include the following:
- An Initial Meeting with the pastor or his delegate to congratulate and welcome the new parents. This first encounter is a critical moment and could include:
    - An opportunity for the parents to complete their request for the sacrament of Baptism if necessary and have their questions answered.
    - An opportunity for parents to discuss their own faith journeys and hopes for their child.
    - An opportunity for the pastor or his delegate to explain the catechetical session(s) that follow(s) the Initial Meeting and review the requisites for godparents before they are chosen (cf. Baptism Guidelines III. 10 - 11).

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<sup>33</sup> cf. CIC c.851.2

<sup>34</sup> OBC 105

- One or more (but not more than three) catechetical sessions for parents and godparents. If the parent or godparent is not able to take part in the parish Baptismal preparation, they may attend at another parish or diocese. Along with an opportunity to reflect and discuss, the catechetical session(s) could consist of the following:
  - An opening prayer; followed by an explanation of family prayer, some examples, and a novena for parents to pray with godparents in preparation for infant baptism
  - A basic theology of sacraments in general and Baptism in particular.
  - A short history of Baptism to include Scriptural foundations.
  - Explanation of the expectation that there must be a “well-founded hope” that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith.
  - Participation in the faith community that accompanies them and are (or will be) a part of and the need for regular attendance at Sunday Mass.
  - A personal witness and reflection by parents who have had their children baptized and the significance this has made in their lives.
  - An overview of the ritual of infant Baptism with particular emphasis on the symbolism within the sacrament and promises made by the parents and godparents and their corresponding obligations.

36. Each parish will provide Baptismal preparation for their parishioners. A parish could create their own according to the criteria above or use a prepared program bearing an *imprimatur*. For some suggested parish Baptismal preparation programs, please go to [www.archsa.org/baptism-prep-resources](http://www.archsa.org/baptism-prep-resources). These preparation programs can always be supplemented if one or more of the elements mentioned in #23 are missing.

37. Effective sacramental preparation encourages parents and godparents to be informed and committed to a lifelong process of growing in faith – both for themselves and the child to be baptized. Sacramental preparation is an evangelizing opportunity to inspire and uplift the People of God in their calling to follow Christ and the living out of their own Baptismal vows.

38. “To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must later be formed in the faith in which they have been baptized. The foundation of this formation will be the sacrament itself that they have received. Christian formation, which is their due, seeks to lead them gradually to learn God’s plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized.”<sup>35</sup>
39. “After the conferral of Baptism, the parents, grateful to God and faithful to the duty they have undertaken, are bound to guide their child to a knowledge of God, now his child by adoption.”<sup>36</sup>
40. To assist parents in their post-Baptismal responsibilities, parishes should keep in touch and continue to accompany families with young children through pastoral and spiritual programming adapted to their needs and interests.

## **VI. Liturgical Celebration**

41. In all celebrations of Infant Baptism the ritual book for the Order of Baptism of Children is to be followed.<sup>37</sup> Of special note is Chapter VI, Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church. This rite is used after a child is baptized in an emergency situation, thus solemnizing the Sacrament and providing for a proper record of the baptism.<sup>38</sup> All the parts of the rite are performed with the exception of pouring water on the child. Instead, a specific prayer is recited.<sup>39</sup>
42. Of particular importance is the Appendix, not part of the previous edition of the ritual book, in which appears the Order of Baptism of Children within Mass beginning in section 250. It includes separate rituals for one child and for several children.<sup>40</sup> These are to be followed by all ministers of baptism, notwithstanding any previous customs or ritual practices.

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<sup>35</sup> OBC, Introduction; 3

<sup>36</sup> OBC, Introduction; 5.5

<sup>37</sup> USCCB, 2020. This rite may be used in the Liturgy as of February 2, 2020. It is obligatory as of April 12, 2020, Easter Sunday. The bilingual edition of this rite may also be used within these same circumstances.

<sup>38</sup> The date of the original emergency Baptism remains the same and all information from the “rites supplied” should be sent to the parish where the emergency Baptism is recorded in order to complete the record and to have a new certificate sent to the parents. [See Sacramental Records Handbook, pg. 33.]

<sup>39</sup> OBC 177. See also OBC General Introduction, VI.30.3

<sup>40</sup> OBC 257 and 296. See also OBC, Introduction; 29.1-5

43. The preferred time for celebrating Baptism is on a Sunday, the day when the Christian community commemorates the Lord's resurrection, with the full and active participation of the faithful.<sup>41</sup> This means that Baptism may be celebrated during a Sunday Mass so that the worshipping community can be present and the paschal relationship between Baptism and Eucharist may be clearly seen.
44. For pastoral reasons, a parish may need to limit the number of infants to be baptized during a particular Mass, as well as how frequently Baptisms are celebrated with the regular Sunday assemblies.<sup>42</sup> Even outside of Sunday Mass, every Baptism is to follow the principles for good liturgical celebrations, including the presence of representatives of the faith community and the full use of symbols associated with the sacrament.
45. Sacraments are by their very nature public and communal. Thus, when a Baptism takes place, the whole Church celebrates and rejoices. "[Baptism] should be conferred in a common celebration for all the newly born, and with the attendance of ... the faithful ..."<sup>43</sup>
46. When family circumstances preclude the child being baptized during the parish's normally scheduled times, Baptism may be celebrated at another time. However, every effort should be made to ensure that the celebration reflects its communal nature "with the attendance ... at least of relatives, friends and neighbors, and with their active participation."<sup>44</sup>
47. The Rite of Baptism clearly states that Baptism should not be celebrated in private homes, except in danger of death or if for a grave reason the local bishop has permitted it.<sup>45</sup> Baptism, the sacrament of the Church's faith and of admittance into the people of God, is to be "normally celebrated in the parish church, which ought to have a baptismal font."<sup>46</sup>
48. There is no prohibition to Baptisms taking place during Lent. The Code of Canon Law states that parents have the responsibility to bring their children to Baptism in the first few weeks of life. Parishes should not unnecessarily delay Baptism by making parents wait until the Easter season.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> OBC 9, CIC c.856

<sup>42</sup> OBC 9

<sup>43</sup> OBC 32, CIC c.860

<sup>44</sup> OBC 32

<sup>45</sup> OBC 12

<sup>46</sup> OBC 10

<sup>47</sup> CIC 867

## VII. Emergency Baptisms

49. An emergency Baptism is appropriate when a child is in danger of death. This does not necessarily mean that death is imminent and inevitable, but that the child is seriously ill or in need of surgery or other medical procedure that could put the life of the child at risk. An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay.<sup>48</sup>
50. When a priest is called to administer Baptism in danger of death, he should proceed with emergency Confirmation as well, unless, as an exception, prudence would indicate that the infant likely will survive, and Confirmation can be delayed until the usual age for the sacrament.<sup>49</sup> Any baptized Catholic not yet confirmed, who is in danger of death, should receive emergency Confirmation. In such a case, although delegation is not required, the diocesan bishop should be notified in writing of the circumstances of the Confirmation. Both sacraments are to be recorded in the sacramental registers of the territorial parish, see paragraph 53 below.
51. The proper place for baptism is a church or oratory; however, in a case of urgent necessity or some other compelling pastoral reason, Baptism may be celebrated in a hospital, institutional setting, or other location of emergency. In these emergency situations, when a Catholic priest administers Baptism in danger of death, it is expected that he will administer Confirmation also. When a priest is not available for an emergency Baptism, a deacon or properly catechized layperson should be sent immediately. A priest can later administer Confirmation if warranted.
52. If baptism is administered neither by the pastor of the territorial parish nor in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever it is, must inform the pastor of the parish in whose territory the baptism was administered as soon as possible.<sup>50</sup>
53. All emergency baptisms are to be recorded in the sacramental register for Baptism of the territorial parish in which the Baptism took place. The pastor must carefully and without delay record in the baptismal book the names of those baptized making mention of the minister, parents, sponsors, witnesses if any and the place and date of the conferred baptism, together with an indication of the date and place of birth.

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<sup>48</sup> CIC 867 §2

<sup>49</sup> CIC 891, 883, 3; 889

<sup>50</sup> CIC 861; **Reporting of Emergency Baptism** (Form A) and **Information on Emergency Baptism** (Form B) are to be completed by the minister of baptism and delivered as soon as possible. These forms can be found in the Appendix to these Guidelines beginning on pg. 24.

54. A partial list of hospitals and other institutions where an emergency baptism could take place in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the proper parish for sacramental recording can be found in the Appendix. If Confirmation was also administered it is recorded along with the Baptism in the territorial parish.
55. In order to ensure the accurate recording of emergency baptisms within the Archdiocese of San Antonio, a uniform document will be used to notify the proper pastor in the event of an emergency Baptism (and Confirmation, when appropriate). This document, *Reporting of Emergency Baptism - Form A* is the preferred method of notifying the pastor of the territorial parish of an emergency Baptism. A copy of this document can be found in the Appendix.
56. The *Reporting of Emergency Baptism - Form A* will be completed by the minister of baptism as soon as possible after Baptism is administered. The minister of Baptism is responsible for submitting the notice to the territorial parish in which the hospital or institution is located. If Baptism is celebrated in an emergency, outside of a parish church, it must be recorded in the Register of Baptisms at the parish within whose boundaries the place of Baptism is located. [cf. Sacramental Records Handbook, EMERGENCY BAPTISM, pg. 33.]
57. In addition, the minister of the emergency baptism is to complete *Information on Emergency Baptism - Form B* as soon as the baptism is administered and given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the one baptized. A copy of this document can be found in the Appendix
58. Once the emergency baptism is recorded in the territorial parish where the baptism took place, the territorial parish completes and sends *Notice of Emergency Baptism to Home Parish - Form C* to the home parish of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the one baptized. A copy of this documents can be found in the Appendix.
59. Following the norm of law, Catholic hospitals and other Catholic institutions are not to maintain a sacramental register for Baptism or other sacraments that take place in their facilities and do not have the authority to issue sacramental certificates intended to establish reception of a Sacrament. Such institutions

that currently maintain or store a sacramental register for Catholic baptisms or other Catholic sacraments are to deposit those registers with the Archives and Records Management Office of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. It is the responsibility of the pastor of the place where the baptism is celebrated to record the information required by law in the parish baptismal book.

60. If a child who has been baptized in danger of death recovers his or her health, then the Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church<sup>51</sup> should be celebrated. This celebration includes many of the Baptismal ritual actions: anointing with Chrism, clothing with the white garment, the presentation of a lighted candle, and the blessing of the parents. Neither re-Baptism nor conditional Baptism is to take place. The date of the original emergency Baptism remains the same and all information from the “rites supplied” should be sent to the parish where the emergency baptism is recorded in order to complete the record and to have a new certificate sent to the parents. [See Sacramental Records Handbook, EMERGENCY BAPTISM, pg. 33.]

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<sup>51</sup> OBC Chapter VI

# Appendix

1. Sample Parish Baptismal Policy
2. Sample Baptism Registration (English)
3. Sample Baptism Registration (Spanish)
4. Reporting of Emergency Baptism – Form A
5. Information on Emergency Baptism – Form B
6. Notice of Emergency Baptism to Home Parish – Form C
7. List of Hospitals & other Institutions and the Proper Parish for Sacramental Recording

# Sample Parish Baptism Policy

## Infant Baptism Policy at St. \_\_\_\_\_

The Sacrament of Baptism is the first of the three sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church. We are very happy to assist you and accompany your family in preparing for this wonderful celebration for your child.



## Requirements for Baptism

1. To register for baptism, please call the parish office to set up a meeting with our pastor or one of the deacons. Please bring the child's birth certificate and completed baptism registration form with you. The baptism registration form can be obtained online at [www.st.org](http://www.st.org) or at the parish office. The parish phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Parents must attend a baptism preparation class. The purpose of these classes is to convey an understanding of baptism in the Church, to help parents recognize their responsibility and role in the development of their child's faith, and to welcome young families into our parish family. Godparents are also encouraged to attend. Baptism classes are normally held the first Wednesday of the month in English and the first Tuesday of the month in Spanish. These classes are also offered at other local churches. If the parents take the class at any parish other than this one, they must provide proof of attendance by either in a certificate of attendance or a letter from that church's pastor. If the parents have taken Baptismal Preparation Classes within the past three years, this requirement is waived.
3. Ordinarily, children are baptized in your home parish, If you are not registered in this parish, a Letter of Permission from your home parish is necessary.

## Requirements for Godparents

1. **Must be at least 16 years of age.**
2. **At least one godparent is needed; a fully initiated (having received Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation), practicing Catholic, registered in a parish.** There may be two godparents, one man and one woman; both must be fully initiated practicing Catholics. If they are not members of this parish they must obtain a letter of Good Standing from their home parish. As long as there is one godparent who is a fully initiated practicing Catholic, a baptized practicing non-Catholic Christian can be designated as a Christian Witness to the baptism. In this case, a letter from the Christian Witness's pastor is necessary, stating that they are in good standing in his or her church.
3. **Must be someone other than the parents of the child to be baptized.**
4. **Must be leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and the role they are about to assume.**

## ***SAMPLE BAPTISMAL REGISTRATION***

- Please PRINT all information clearly
- Please print names EXACTLY how they should appear on baptismal certificate

Child's Information		
Name:		
Date of birth (M/D/YY):	Place of Birth (City, State):	
Current address:		
City:	State:	ZIP Code:
Was the child baptized at a hospital or other circumstances?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Parent Information		
Father's Name:		Religion:
Mother's Maiden Name:		Religion:
Best Phone #:	E-mail:	Fax:
Are parents married? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, married by priest? Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Godparent Information (only one is required)		
Godfather		Parish:
Godmother:		Parish:
Baptismal Classes		
Day: 1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month (English) or 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month (Spanish)		Time: 6:30pm to 8:30pm
Date of baptismal class chosen:	Number of people attending:	
Signatures		
Signature of father:		Date:
Signature of mother:		Date:

Please call the Baptismal Coordinator, as soon as possible: \_\_\_\_\_, **Baptismal Coordinator**  
**• St. Someone Parish • Main St. • Someplace, TX      Website:      • Phone:**

-----OFFICE USE ONLY-----

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Baptism Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 St. Someone Parishioner? Y  N  Other parish \_\_\_\_\_  
 Completed baptismal formation \_\_\_\_\_

## **MUESTRA - INSCRIPCION DE BAUTISMO**

- Favor de IMPRIMIR toda la información claramente
- Favor de imprimir nombres EXACTAMENTE como deben aparecer en el certificado de bautismo

### Información del Niño(a)

Nombre:

Fecha de Nacimiento (M/D/AA):

Lugar de Nacimiento:

Dirección:

Ciudad:

País y Estado:

Código Postal:

¿Fue bautizado/a en privado?

Si

No

### Información de los Padres

Nombre del Padre:

Parroquia:

Nombre de la Madre:

Parroquia:

Teléfono:

E-mail:

Fax:

¿Los padres están casados? Si  No

¿Si están casados, fueron casados por sacerdote? Si  No

### Información de los Padrinos (solo uno es necesario)

Padrino:

Parroquia:

Madrina:

Parroquia:

### Clases Bautismales

Día: 1<sup>o</sup> miércoles de cada mes (Ingles)  
o 2<sup>o</sup> martes de cada mes (Español)

Hora: 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Fecha de la clase escogida:

Número de personas que asistirán a la clase:

### Firmas

Firma del Padre:

Fecha:

Firma de la Madre:

Fecha:

Favor de llamar a la Coordinadora de Bautismos \_\_\_\_\_ lo más pronto posible

**St. Alguno Parish • Main St. • Algúnugar, TX • Sitio de Web: • Teléfono: • Fax:**

OFFICE USE ONLY

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Baptism Date: \_\_\_\_\_

St. Alguno Parishioner? Y  N

Other parish \_\_\_\_\_

Completed baptismal formation \_\_\_\_\_



# Form A

## Reporting of Emergency Baptism – Archdiocese of San Antonio

*(To be completed by the baptizing minister and delivered to the territorial Catholic parish where the baptism took place. A list of institutions in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the proper territorial parish for sacramental recording can be found in the Index of the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Infant Baptism.)*

To whom it may concern: The following emergency baptism occurred in the territory of your parish. Please record the information in your baptismal register. If this is not the home parish of the baptized, please complete and send **Notice of Emergency Baptism to Home Parish\*** (Form C) – found in the Index of Archdiocesan Guidelines for Infant Baptism.

Location of the Baptism \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Hospital, Institution, or other)

Address of the Location of the Baptism \_\_\_\_\_  
(Address of Hospital, Institution, or other)

Date of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Full Maiden Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth - City and State: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth (month, day, year): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian best Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's home parish\* : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of at least one of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the one baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Title & Signature of Baptizing Minister: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Territorial Parish where this baptism will be recorded: \_\_\_\_\_

\* The home parish is either the parish where the parent(s)/guardian(s) are registered **or** the parish within whose boundaries the parent(s)/guardian(s) home address is located. The parish map finder located on the Archdiocesan website at <https://www.archsa.org/parishmapfinder> can be used to locate the corresponding parish for any address in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.



## Form B

### Information on Emergency Baptism – Archdiocese of San Antonio

*This form is to be completed by the baptizing minister and given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a child following an emergency baptism as a record of where the baptismal information can be found and where a certificate of baptism can be issued. A list of institutions in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and the proper parish for sacramental recording can be found in the Index of the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Infant Baptism.*

To whom it may concern,

The child by the name of: \_\_\_\_\_ was

baptized at \_\_\_\_\_ (name of Hospital or Institution)

located at \_\_\_\_\_ (address of Hospital or Institution)

on \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Year.

Baptized by: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The Baptismal record will be recorded at the following territorial parish:

Name of territorial Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address, City and State of territorial parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Note to parent(s)/guardian(s): If the child is able to return home following the emergency baptism, please contact the pastor at your home parish to celebrate the *Order of Bringing an Already-Baptized Child into the Church*.

# Form C



## Notice of Emergency Baptism to Home Parish – Archdiocese of San Antonio

*To be completed and sent by the parish recording  
an Infant Emergency Baptism to the parent's/guardian's home parish\**

This is to notify the parent's/guardian's home parish\* that an emergency baptism has been bestowed on

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) on \_\_\_\_\_ (baptism date).

The baptism is recorded at

Parish Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address, City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please record a cross reference in your parishes' baptismal register index for the baptized child as to where to find their baptismal record in the future. Note: If the parent(s)/guardian(s) celebrate the *Order of Bringing an Already-Baptized Child into the Church* at this parish, please send this information to the church of baptism as mentioned above, including the sponsors, so that the baptismal record may be updated.

Thank you,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Signature, and Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish Name, Address, City, and State

\*The home parish is either the parish where the parent(s)/guardian(s) are registered **or** the parish within whose boundaries the parent(s)/guardian(s) home address is located. The parish map finder located on the Archdiocesan website at <https://www.archsa.org/parishmapfinder> can be used to locate the corresponding parish for any address in the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

## **PARTIAL LIST OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO AND THE PROPER PARISH FOR SACRAMENTAL RECORDING**

### **Hospitals:**

Audie L. Murphy VA Medical Center, STVHCS, San Antonio – St. Luke, San Antonio  
Baptist Medical Center (downtown) – St. Mary’s (downtown), San Antonio  
Brooke Army Medical Center (SAMMC), San Antonio – St. Thomas More, San Antonio  
Children’s Hospital of San Antonio-Downtown – San Fernando Cathedral, San Antonio  
Children’s Hospital of San Antonio-Alamo Ranch – St. Anthony Mary Claret, San Antonio  
CHRISTUS San Rosa –Westover Hills – St. Rose of Lima, San Antonio  
CHRISTUS Santa Rosa – New Braunfels – Sts. Peter & Paul, New Braunfels  
CHRISTUS Santa Rosa Alamo Heights – St. Anthony de Padua, Alamo Heights  
CHRISTUS Santa Rosa – Medical Center – St. Luke, San Antonio  
Connally Memorial Medical Center, Floresville – Sacred Heart, Floresville  
Frio Regional Hospital, Pearsall – Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pearsall  
Gonzales Memorial Hospital, Gonzales – St. James, Gonzales  
Guadalupe Regional Medical Center, Seguin – St. James, Seguin  
Hill Country Memorial Hospital, Fredericksburg – St. Mary, Fredericksburg  
Hondo Regional Hospital, Hondo – St. John the Evangelist, Hondo  
Kindred Hospital, San Antonio – St. Matthew, San Antonio  
Methodist Hospital, Boerne – St. Peter the Apostle, Boerne  
Methodist Hospital – Medical Center, San Antonio – St. Luke, San Antonio  
Methodist Metropolitan Hospital (downtown) – St. Mary’s (downtown), San Antonio  
Methodist Hospital North East – St. Pius X, San Antonio  
Methodist Hospital – Stone Oak – Holy Trinity, San Antonio  
Methodist Hospital South, Jourdanton – St. Matthew, Jourdanton  
Methodist Specialty and Transplant Hospital – Medical Center, San Antonio - St. Luke, San Antonio  
Methodist Texsan Hospital, San Antonio – St. Gregory the Great, San Antonio  
Mission Trail Baptist – San Juan Capistrano, San Antonio  
North Central Baptist Hospital, San Antonio – Holy Trinity, San Antonio  
North East Baptist Hospital – St. Pius X, San Antonio  
Otto Kaiser Memorial Hospital, Kenedy – Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kenedy  
Peterson Regional Medical Center, Kerrville – Notre Dame, Kerrville

San Antonio State Hospital/Texas Health and Human Services – St. Margaret Mary, San Antonio  
St. Luke’s Baptist Hospital – Medical Center, San Antonio – St. Luke, San Antonio  
University Hospital, San Antonio – St. Luke, San Antonio  
Uvalde Memorial Hospital, Uvalde – Sacred Heart, Uvalde  
Val Verde Regional Medical Center, Del Rio – Sacred Heart, Del Rio

**Texas Department of Corrections:**

John B. Connally Unit – Our Lady Queen of Peace, Kenedy  
Dolph Briscoe Unit – St Joseph Catholic Church, Dilley  
Fabian Dale Dominguez Unit – Our Lady Queen of Heaven, Macdona  
Joe Ney Unit – St John the Evangelist, Hondo  
Ruben M. Torres Unit – St John the Evangelist, Hondo