

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Baptisms in the Catholic Church and at St. Paul's Parish, Berlin (Kensington), CT**

If you are consulting this page because of a new born baby in your family allow us to offer our congratulations! God has blessed you with a child, or maybe more, and we are very happy and excited for you! We welcome the opportunity to celebrate your child's Baptism here at St. Paul's.

Here are some frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church and some particulars concerning the celebration of Baptisms here at St. Paul Parish that includes St. Paul Church and Sacred Heart Church.

### **I would like to have my baby baptized. What do I have to do?**

You can begin by filling out the Baptism Request Form at the bottom of the Baptism page and submitting it electronically. Someone from our Parish Office will then contact you, likely the next day the office is open. If you prefer, you may also call the parish office at 860-828-0331 to request that your child be baptized. The parish secretary can let you know what dates are available and fill out the form for you. You could also stop by the office (Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.), find out the available dates, and fill out the form. In order to have your child baptized here at St. Paul's Parish you need to be a registered member of the parish. If, however, there is a special reason why you want your child baptized here (for example grandparents live here) you would need to request the permission of the pastor of your home parish to have the baptism here. Without that permission we are not authorized to have the baptism at St. Paul's.

If you are a first time parent, you will need to participate in our Baptismal Preparation Program designed to help parents in their role as the first and best teachers of their children. The classes take place on the last Tuesday of the month in the Parish Center at 7:00 p.m. and will be about an hour long. Call the Parish Center to schedule your participation as pre-registration is required. First time godparents/sponsors also need to participate in the Baptismal Preparation Program. *If for serious reason you cannot make the regularly scheduled Baptismal Preparation Program we will try to accommodate your schedule.*

### **I am not a registered parishioner, but would like to register. How can I do that?**

Parish Registration Nights are held every 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month in the parish hall at 7:00 p.m. All members of the family that are joining should attend. The brief welcome and orientation, along with the completion of some paperwork, normally takes about 30 - 35 minutes.

### **Are there requirements for someone to be a godparent?**

Yes. Godparents, also called sponsors, are to be practicing Catholics who are willing to assume this role in the child's life. Being a godparent is more than an honorary title. When someone agrees to be a godparent, it means that they are pledging to always play a significant and positive role in all aspects of the child's life, but especially their spiritual life. The godmother and godfather are to be firm believers who are able and ready to help the newly baptized, whether a child or an adult, on the road of living a Catholic/Christian life.

A godparent must be at least 16 years of age, baptized and confirmed, be a practicing Catholic, and if married, married by a Catholic priest or deacon. A person younger than 16 can be a godparent if they have already been confirmed and meet the other requirements. The godparents cannot be a parent of the child being baptized. First-time godparents are also required to attend the Baptism Preparation Program mentioned above.

### **Must I have two godparents/sponsors?**

No. Only one is required. If there are two, then one is to be a man who is the godfather and the other a woman who is the godmother.

### **Are there any forms that the godparents must submit?**

Yes. If the godparents are members of St. Paul Parish or another parish in the Archdiocese of Hartford, they will need to submit and sign a godparent/sponsor Affirmation Form attesting to this fact. That form is available on the previous web page. The Archdiocese of Hartford consists of these three counties in Connecticut: Hartford, Litchfield, and New Haven.

If the godparent(s) are members of a parish outside of the Hartford Archdiocese, they must contact their parish to request a Sponsor Form from their home parish. These forms must be received by our parish office before a date for your child's baptism can be finalized.

### **My best friend or a family member is not Catholic and I really would like him/her to be a godparent for my child. Is this possible?**

Yes, in a way it is. If your friend or family member is a baptized Christian, then (s)he may participate in the ceremony and act as a Christian Witness. For this to be the case there must be a Catholic godparent as outlined above. To be a Christian Witness the person must be a validly baptized Christian, at least 16 years old, living an upright life, but cannot be either a parent of the one being baptized nor a Catholic who has left the Catholic Church.

### **Can a Catholic who does not meet all of the requirements to be a godparent be a Christian Witness?**

No. However, depending on the requirement that is not being met, for example, not being confirmed, there are programs to help remedy the situation and help the person advance in their own faith life. Similarly, if a Catholic did not marry in the Church they could discuss with their parish priest how their marriage might be able to be recognized (convalidated) in the Church.

### **Can I have two Christian Witnesses if I do not have anyone who meets the qualifications to be a godparent?**

No. There must be at least one godparent.

### **Can a non-baptized person be a godparent or a Christian Witness?**

No. The role of the godparent and/or the Christian Witness is to give witness and example to the faith that the child is being baptized into. The person may be able to be a positive role model in other areas, but in this crucial area of a lived faith the non-baptized person simply cannot be that person for the newly baptized. In addition, as part of the Baptismal ceremony the godparents (sponsors) and Christian Witnesses will renew the promises made at their own baptisms. A non-baptized person will not be able to renew promises they have never made.

**What if the godparent(s) can't actually attend the baptism? Can they still be a godparent?**

Yes. If a godparent cannot attend the baptismal ceremony, a proxy can stand in the place of the missing godparent. The name of that person will be entered as "proxy" in the Sacramental Record Book, along with the name of the missing godparent.

**While we were raised Catholic we were not married in the Catholic Church. Can we still have our baby baptized?**

Yes, and we are happy that you are considering doing this for your child. It is essential though, as with all families, that the parents be models of the faith, even with our faults and failings, for their child(ren) and agree to raise their son/daughter as a Catholic and as they grow older, help them practice their faith. The example of their own life should also be in accord with Catholic practice and so they should work toward bringing consistency to these areas of their life.

**We are living together and have not yet married. Can we have our child baptized?**

Yes. See the answer above.

**When are Baptisms normally celebrated at St. Paul's Church?**

Normally Baptisms are celebrated at St. Paul's Church on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of the month at 1:15 p.m. While these are the preferred days and time, accommodations can be made if needed.

3

**When are Baptisms normally celebrated at Sacred Heart Church?**

Normally Baptisms are celebrated on any Sunday following, or at, the 9:30 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Church in East Berlin. It may not be possible to have a baptism every Sunday at Sacred Heart Church.

**I wanted to have my baby baptized on a particular date, but the parish office said the date was full. Why is that?**

Here at St. Paul, for practical reasons, we limit the number of baptisms at any one time to three children. Experience has proven that the ceremony can be challenging for the families as well as those being baptized when a larger number of children are being baptized since the ceremony will necessarily take more time. So for the good of all concerned we try to keep the number being baptized to three. We will work with you to help you find another date that is as convenient as possible for your child's baptism.

Thank you for inquiring about having your child baptized here at St. Paul Parish and congratulations. If you have other questions that these FAQs did not answer or if you would like to discuss any of these answers please contact the Parish Office and one of the Friars will be happy to meet with you. We hope to see you soon.