


# Church of Saint Patrick

53 St. Patrick's Place, Staten Island, NY

## Baptism Guide



*Let the Children  
come to me, and do not  
hinder them; for such  
belongs the kingdom of heaven*



Dear Parents:

We share your happiness in the birth of your child and pray that your joy will continue to grow as you share your lives together as a family. We want to help you prepare for the Baptism of your child; therefore, we have planned a series of steps which make up what is known as the “Baptismal Catechism” in our Parish.

This booklet is part of our Baptism-preparation program for parents and sponsors. It contains up-to-date teachings of our Church concerning Baptism, as well as, information about the important and necessary preparation for Baptism.

Included in this booklet is the Request by Parents for the Baptism of their Child form on Page 11 which you are to complete and present at the Baptism meeting you are scheduled to attend. We look forward to meeting with you and helping you prepare for the Baptism of your child – a very special event which is his/her initiation into Christ, into the Church, and into the parish community.

In Baptism, Christ will come to meet these children. He entrusted this sacrament to His Church when He sent forth His apostles with these words: “Go, make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

As you know, these children will be given countless gifts in this great sacrament: they will be freed of sin; they will become members of the Church; they will become God’s children.

May God our Father see in the fellowship of our community the faith of His Church, and hear in our prayer the voice of Jesus His Son. As He promised us through Christ, may He bless these children by the power of His Holy Spirit.

*A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans (6.3-5)*

**W**hen we were baptized we joined Jesus in death so that we might walk in the newness of His life. Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Through baptism into His death we were buried with Him so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with Him through likeness to His death, so shall we be through a like resurrection.

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# Christian Initiation

## *Church Teaching Concerning Baptism*

### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Through the sacraments of Christian Initiation men and women are freed from the power of darkness. With Christ they die, are buried and rise again. They receive the Spirit of adoption which makes them God's sons and daughters, and with the entire people of God, they celebrate the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection.

Through baptism men and women are incorporated into Christ. They are formed into God's people, and they obtain forgiveness of all their sins. They are raised from their natural human condition to the dignity of adopted children. They become a new creation through water and Holy Spirit. Hence they are called, and are indeed, the children of God.

Signed with the gift of the Spirit in Confirmation, Christians more perfectly become the image of their Lord and are filled with the Holy Spirit. They bear witness to Him before the entire world and eagerly work for the building up of the body of Christ.

Finally, they come to the table of the Eucharist to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man so that they may have eternal life and show forth the unity of God's people. By offering themselves with Christ, they share in His universal sacrifice; the entire community of the redeemed is offered to God by their high priest. They pray for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of God's family.

Thus the three sacraments of Christian initiation closely combine to bring the faithful to the full stature of Christ and to enable them to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the Church and in the world.

### II. DIGNITY OF BAPTISM

Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God. Christ offered this first sacrament of the new law to all men that they might have eternal life. He entrusted this sacrament and the Gospel to His Church when He told His apostles: "Go, make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Therefore Baptism is, above, all, the sacrament of that faith by which men and women, enlightened by the Spirit's grace; respond to the gospel of Christ. That is why the Church believes it is her most basic and necessary duty to inspire all, catechumens, parents of children still to be baptized, and god-parents, to that true and living faith by which they adhere to Christ and enter into their commitment to the new covenant. To accomplish this, the Church prescribes the pastoral instruction of catechumens, the preparation of the children's parents, the celebration of God's word, and the profession of baptismal faith.

Further, baptism is the sacrament by which men and women are incorporated into the Church, built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit, into a holy nation and royal priesthood. It is a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been signed by it. Because of that unchangeable effect (signified in the Latin liturgy the anointing of the baptized person with chrism in the presence of God's people) the right of baptism is held in highest honor by all Christians.

Baptism, the cleansing with water by the power of the living Word, makes us sharers in God's own life and His adopted children. As proclaimed in the prayers for the blessing of water, baptism is a cleansing water of rebirth, which makes us God's children. The blessed Trinity is invoked over those who are to be baptized. Signed in this name, they are consecrated to the Trinity and enter into fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are prepared for this high dignity and led to it by the scriptural ratings, the prayer of the community, and the threefold profession of faith.

Far superior to the purifications of the old law, baptism produces all these effects by the power of the mystery of the Lord's passion and resurrection. Those who are baptized are engrafted in the likeness of Christ's death. They are buried with Him, they are given life again with Him and with Him they rise again. For baptism recalls and affects the paschal mystery itself, because by means of it men and women pass from the death of sin into new life. Its celebration therefore, should reflect the joy of the resurrection, especially when it takes place during the Easter vigil or on a Sunday.

### III OFFICES AND MINISTRIES OF BAPTISM

It is a very ancient custom of the Church that an adult is not admitted to baptism without a godparent, a member of the Christian community who will assist him at least in the final preparation for baptism and after baptism will help him persevere in the faith and in his life as a Christian.

In the baptism of children too, godparents should be present to be added spiritually to the immediate family of one to be baptized and to represent Mother Church. As occasion offers, he will be ready to help the parents bring up their child to profess the faith and to show this by living it.

At least in the final rites of the catechumenate and in the actual celebration of baptism, the godparent is present to testify to the faith of the adult candidate or together with the parents, to profess the Church's faith, in which the child is being baptized.

It is the duty of parish priests to assist the bishop in the instruction and baptism of the adults entrusted to his care, unless the bishop makes other provisions. It is also their duty, with the assistance of catechists or other qualified lay people, to prepare the parents and godparents of children with appropriate pastoral guidance and to administer baptism to the children.

Other priests and deacons, since they are cooperators in the ministry of bishops and parish priests, also prepare candidates for baptism, and with the invitation or consent of the bishop or parish priest, confer the sacrament.

In imminent danger of death and especially at the moment of death, when no priest or deacon is available, any member of the faithful, indeed anyone with the right intention, may and sometimes must administer baptism. If it is a question only of danger of death, then the sacrament should be administered by a member of the faithful if possible.

All lay persons, since they belong to the priestly people and especially parents and, by reason of their work, catechists, obstetricians, women who are employed as family or social workers or as nurses of the sick, as well as physicians and surgeons, should know the proper method of baptizing in case of necessity. They should be taught by parish priests, deacons, and catechists. Bishops should provide appropriate means within their diocese for such instruction.

## IV SPONSORS (GODPARENTS)

According to the requirements of the Catholic Church sponsors must be Catholics who, generally, are fourteen years of age or older, must be confirmed and have received the Most Holy Eucharist, must lead in a life in harmony with the faith and the role to be undertaken; must not be bound by any canonical penalty; must not be the father or mother of the person to be baptized. Unbaptized persons because they do not share belief in Jesus as Christ, may not be sponsors of the person to be baptized.

## V. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

The water used in baptism should be true water, for the sake of the authentic sacramental symbolism. It should be clean for reasons of health. Outside the Easter season, it is desirable that the water be blessed for each occasion, or order that the words of blessing may clearly express the mystery of salvation which the Church recalls and proclaims. The words for baptism in the Latin Church are "I baptize you in the name of the "Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

A suitable place for celebrating the liturgy of the word of God should be provided in the baptistery or in the Church. The Baptistery is the area where the baptismal font has been placed. It should be reserved for the sacrament of baptism, and should be a worthy place for Christians to be reborn in water and the Holy Spirit. It may be situated in a chapel either inside or outside the Church, or in some other part of the Church easily seen by the faithful: it should be large enough to accommodate a good number of people. After the Easter season, the Easter candle should be given a place of honor in the baptistery, so that when it is lighted for the celebration of baptism, the candles of the newly baptized may easily be lighted from it.

The celebration of baptism is greatly enhanced by the use of song. It stimulates a sense of unity among those present, it gives warmth to their common prayer, and it expresses the joy of Easter. Conferences of bishops should encourage and help musical specialists to compose settings for texts suitable for congregational singing at baptism.

*A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (10,13-16)*

### **Jesus Loves Children**

*People were bringing their little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples were scolding them for this. Jesus became indignant when he noticed it and said to them:*

*"It is just such as these that the Kingdom of God belongs. I assure you that whoever does not accept the Kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter into it.*

*then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them."*

# Baptism for Children

## I IMPORTANCE OF BAPTIZING CHILDREN

Children or infants are those who have not yet reached the age of discernment and therefore do not have or profess personal faith. From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized children as well as adults.

Our Lord said: "Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. "The Church has always understood these words to mean that children would not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church. This faith is proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: "The Church is at once the mother of all and the mother of each."

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, which they have already 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.

## II ROLES IN THE CELEBRATION OF BAPTISM

Because of the natural relationships, parents have a more important role in the baptism of infants than the godparents. Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is of great importance that parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community, should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding. They should be provided with suitable means such as books, instructions and catechisms written for families. It is very important that the parents be present in the celebration in which their child is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit.

In the celebration of baptism, the father and mother have special parts to play. They listen to the words addressed to them by the celebrant, they join in prayer along with the congregation, and they exercise a special function when: They publicly ask that the child be baptized, they sign their child with the sign of the cross after the celebrant; they renounce Satan and make their profession of faith, the (especially the mother) carry the child to the font; they hold the lighted candle, they are blessed with the special prayers for the mothers and fathers. If one of the parents cannot make the profession of faith (for example, not a Catholic), he may keep silent. All that is asked of him, when he requests baptism for the child, is that he should make arrangements, or at least give permission, for the child to be instructed in the faith of its baptism.

After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents to enable the child to know God, whose adopted child it has become, to receive confirmation and participate in the Holy Eucharist. In this duty they are again to be helped by the parish priest by suitable means. Each child may have a godfather and a godmother; the word "godparents" is used in the rite to describe both. In addition to what is said about the ordinary minister of baptism in the general introduction, the following should be noted: it is the duty of the priest to prepare families for

the baptism of their children and to help them in the task of Christian formation which they have undertaken.

### III TIME AND PLACE FOR BAPTISM FOR CHILDREN

As for the time of baptism, the first consideration is the welfare of the child, that is may not be deprived of the benefit of the sacrament, then the health of the mother must be considered, so that, as far as possible she too may be present. Then, as long as they do not interfere with the greater good of the child, there are pastoral considerations such as allowing sufficient time to prepare the parents and for planning the actual celebration to bring out its paschal character; if the child is in danger of death, it is to be baptized without delay.

In other cases, as soon as possible and even before the child is born the parents should be in touch with the parish concerning the baptism, so that proper preparation may be made for the celebration. An infant should be baptized within the first weeks after birth. The conference of bishops may, for sufficiently serious pastoral reasons, determine a longer interval of time between birth and baptism. When the parents are not yet prepared to profess the faith or to undertake the duty of bringing up their children as Christians, it is for the parish priest, keeping in mind whatever regulations may have been laid down by the conference of bishops to determine the time for the baptism of infants.

### IV STRUCTURE OF THE RITE OF BAPTIZING CHILDREN

The rite begins with the reception of the children. This is to indicate the desire of the parents and godparents, as well as the intention of the Church, concerning the celebration of the sacrament of baptism. These purposes are expressed in action when the parents and the celebrants trace the sign of the cross on the foreheads of the children. Then the liturgy of the word is directed toward stirring up the faith of the parents, godparents and congregation and praying in common for the fruits of baptism before the sacrament itself.

This part of the celebration consists of the reading of one or more passages from Holy Scripture, a homily, the prayer of the faithful and finally a prayer, drawn up in the style of an exorcism, to introduce the anointing with the oil of catechumens.

The celebration of the sacrament is immediately preceded by: The Solemn prayer of the celebrant, who, by invoking God and recalling his plan of salvation, blesses the water of baptism or commemorates its previous blessings, the renunciation of Satan on the part of parents and godparents, and their profession of faith, to which is added the assent of the celebrant and the community; and the final interrogation of the parents and godparents.

The celebration of the sacrament is performed by pouring of water and by the invocation of the Blessed Trinity. The celebration of the sacrament is completed first by the anointing with Chrism, which signifies the royal priesthood of the baptized and enrollment in the fellowship of God's people; then by the ceremonies of the white garment and lighted candle.

After the celebrant speaks of the future reception of the Eucharist by the baptized children, the Lord's Prayer, in which God's children pray to their Father, is recited. Finally a prayer of blessing is said over the mothers, fathers, and all present to ask god's grace for all.



# Christian Initiation

## *And the Parish Community of Saint Patrick*

The Sacrament of Baptism is the first stage of a person's initiation into Christ and the Church. Other Sacraments—Confirmation and Holy Eucharist—Complete the process of initiation.

In the early Church of the first few centuries, these three Sacraments were celebrated together during the Vigil of Easter. The union of these Sacraments and the time of their celebration encouraged Christians to appreciate and experience more fully their entrance into the mystery of the Lord Jesus, who died and had been raised from the dead. Once baptized, confirmed, and nourished at the Table of the Lord, they took their place with the Christian community. They were initiated into the Assembly of the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Church.

The Parish is the local presence of the Church of Jesus, the Christ and Son of God. It is a people called together by God to hear the Word and to respond with praise, worship—and service of God and people. “As a community, the parish discloses Christ's enduring, loving, presence (and)...fosters personal relationships among its members; these relationships are necessary if parishioners are to become brothers and sisters of the Lord: (NCCB, 1980).

The baptism of your son/daughter initiates his/her into the parish community of St. Patrick. It is here that your child will experience the other stages of the Christian initiation. It is where you as a family will profess your Faith in the Lord Jesus and celebrate the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist every Sunday.

Your love and care for your children are evident in the many ways that you act toward them and for their welfare. You provide a home, food, clothes, protection, medicine, recreation, and education. These and many other loving experiences are all signs of your caring relationship. As parents of a baptized child, you acquire another relationship—one that is born of water and the Holy Spirit. Your son/daughter now shares the very life of the Most Holy Trinity and he/she has a special relationship with Jesus, Son of God. Truly your baptized child is a brother/sister of Christ and you, parents are special cooperators with God whom your family addresses as “Our Father...”

Your faith and the way that you live as Christians will have a great effect on your child whom God also looks upon as His son/daughter. The way you practice your faith will have great importance in relation to your child's growth as a Catholic Christian. The way you live the Gospel of Jesus—the way you pray—the way you worship God faithfully, especially every Sunday during the Mass—all this and more will influence the way in which your child, initiated into Christ and the Church will grow and develop as a Catholic Christian.

Try to keep this in mind and heart when you ask for Baptism for your child. Remember that you as parents are also making a promise—a commitment—to cooperate with God in raising your family as Catholic Christians within the parish community of St. Patrick. We will help you in every possible way.

The following information is intended to help you to prepare for the baptism of your child with understanding and appreciation of this Sacrament of Initiation. Parents are asked to read the contents of this booklet to develop greater understanding and appreciation of Baptism and its celebration in our parish community.

Sponsors (Godparents) should be chosen with great care because they are intended to be role-models of faithful living of the Catholic faith. Please read and think about the require-

ments for sponsors found on Page 6 of this booklet. Your child deserves the best available Catholics for his/her Sponsors. Be sure to select the best!

Special forms for Sponsors are attached to this booklet they are to be filled in by the persons you select for your child. Sponsors who are parishioners of St. Patrick's Parish are to present themselves and their Sponsor Form to a priest for signature. Sponsors who are not parishioners of St. Patrick's Parish are to present the Sponsor Form to a priest of their parish for signature.

The forms are to be returned either the night of your meeting or at least two weeks prior to the baptism date. The form may be dropped off at the Parish Office Monday – Friday between the hours of 9am and 4pm or at the Rectory.

Each family will receive a candle which will be lit from the Paschal (Easter) Candle toward the end of the Baptismal liturgy. It is a gift which, in your home, will continue as a reminder that your child has been "enlightened by Christ." On special days, such as the anniversary of the Baptism, it will teach your son/daughter that he/she is a child of light" who is Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord.

Each family received a special certificate, signed by the priest, to commemorate the important day in the life of your child and family, Sponsors names will also appear in the appropriate place. Framed, this certificate makes a beautiful addition near your child's bed or in the family's favorite room.

Pictures are permitted during baptism but may be taken only from the seats. The use of flash bulbs or other lights is not permitted because of the distraction and interference they cause during the sacred celebrations. Video-taping is permitted from the balcony of the Church, or a permanent position in one of the seats, without additional lighting. No movement of photographers is permitted during the entire celebration of baptism. After the Baptism, families are invited to remain and pose for pictures near the Baptismal font or in front of the Altar, always observing the reverence required within the Church.

## Request by Parents for the Baptism of Their Child

This request is an important exercise of your Christian faith. It is a sign of your willingness to introduce your child into the intimate life of the Most Holy Trinity + Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is also a commitment that you will fulfill your privilege and responsibility to educate your child in the Catholic experience of the Christian faith through your own example.

This form must be completed and returned to the Church on the evening of the Baptism Meeting, along with the Sponsor Forms.

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

Name of your Child \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Religion \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST MAIDEN

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Place in which you were Married \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have other Children?  YES  NO How Many? \_\_\_\_\_ List Their Names and Dates of Birth Below:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Were any/all of these children baptized in St. Patrick's  YES  NO When? (Dates) \_\_\_\_\_

Are you registered Parishioners?  YES  NO When did you Register in St. Patrick's \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSORS (GODPARENTS) SHOULD BE CHOSEN BECAUSE OF THE EXEMPLARY LIVING OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.**

**PLEASE READ PAGE \_\_, PARAGRAPH \_\_**

GODFATHER'S NAME: (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Is he a believing, practicing catholic?  YES  NO His Parish \_\_\_\_\_

GODMOTHER'S NAME: (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Is she a believing, practicing catholic?  YES  NO Her Parish \_\_\_\_\_

You have been chosen to be a special person in the life of a very special person—a little child who will be baptized soon. Congratulations!

Baptism will make this child a brother or sister of Jesus forever. Your role will be to help this boy or girl to be the best possible son or daughter of God and relative of Jesus in the community of the Church. Your example will have an influence on this child for the rest of life. The kind of Catholic you are will have an effect on the kind of Catholic this child will be through childhood and into adulthood.

The parents who have invited you to be their child's Sponsor have extended a wonderful privilege to you. They have given you also a serious responsibility—to share with them in the Catholic faith-development of their child. That privilege and responsibility are yours for the rest of your life!

The requirements for being a Sponsor are printed in the booklet entitled Requirements for Sponsors that the parents have received (see Page 6). Please read them carefully.

Long before your God-child comes to know you personally, and begins to look to you, hear your words, and observe your actions, you will want to decide what kind of Christian role model you will be for him/her. May I invite you to take some time to pray...to think...to decide...  
What kind of person am I really? – What kind of Catholic am I really? – What kind of Sponsor will I be for this child really?

Name of Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child to be Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_

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

For the Sponsor – I have considered my life as a Catholic Christian; I think that I fulfill the requirements to be a sponsor because I am living my faith as a practicing Catholic. It will be a privilege for me to be a witness of living Christian faith for this child.

Sponsor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR THE PASTOR OR ASSOCIATE**

I know the above Catholic who is a member of this Parish. I believe that he/she is well-suited to be a Sponsor for Baptism.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(SEAL)



*We believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth;  
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended into hell;  
The third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
Seated at the right hand of God,  
the Father almighty  
From thence He shall come to judge the  
living and the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins.  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting. AMEN*