

Frequently Asked Questions about infant baptism at Our Lady of Perpetual Help

What are the requirements for baptism?

For a child to be baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, there must be a basis for hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith. In practice, this generally means that at least one parent is Catholic. If you wish to have your child baptized at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, you must be a registered member of the parish. Many dioceses in the United States require parents to participate in some preparation before the baptism of their children; we offer a baptism preparation session here at OLPH. Each child brought forward for baptism must also have at least one godparent who is a confirmed, practicing Catholic over the age of 16.

At what age are children usually baptized?

There is no age limit, but at OLPH, infants are generally baptized between three and six months old. We offer baptismal preparation designed to meet the needs of older children and their parents. Please contact the Director of Children's and Family Catechesis, Megan McDonald, if you would like to have your child over age seven baptized at OLPH.

What about single parents or parents who weren't married in the church?

OLPH welcomes every parent to bring your child forward for baptism, no matter what your circumstances may be. Parents who were not married in the Roman Catholic Church might consider the possibility of having your marriage convalidated in the church; parish staff will gladly assist you in that process, though it is not necessary for baptizing your child.

What are the requirements for godparents?

We hope that parents choose godparents who will take an active role in the faith formation of their child.

The church requires at least one godparent who is a practicing, confirmed Catholic age 16 or older. That godparent's name is entered into the parish record book as the "official" godparent or sponsor for baptism.

If you choose more than two godparents, one or two may have their names entered into the book as "official" godparents, and the others can be "honorary" godparents. You don't have to tell them which is which.

If you choose two godparents of the same sex, one can be the "official" godparent for the record book, and the other can be the "honorary" one. (Just as above, you don't have to tell anyone which is which except us.)

Baptized non-Catholic Christians may not be "official" godparents for the record book, but they may be Christian witnesses for your child.

People who are not baptized Christians also may not be "official" godparents for the record book. However, you may certainly invite non-Christian friends or relatives to attend the celebration and to have a special place in your child's life, sharing with your child their own faith traditions.

When will we receive the baptism certificate?

The priest or deacon performing the sacrament will give you one baptism certificate on the day of the baptism. If your child ever needs a copy of the baptism certificate later, perhaps for school registration or for marriage, please contact the parish office.

Is there a fee?

Many parents like to give a "thanksgiving offering" at the time of the child's baptism. No fee is required, but we suggest an offering of \$50 or more, if that feels right to you. Contributions help fund the preparation program, as well as the paperwork and supplies involved. You may make your offering on the day of the baptism or mail it in to the church office. The offering goes to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, not to the celebrant of the sacrament.

Can we have the baptism celebrated in another church but do the preparation here?

That can certainly be done; it just calls for a little simple paperwork, primarily from the parish office. Be sure to check with the other parish for their requirements, and let us know the other parish's mailing address so we can send the official letter (it states that you have participated in preparation and we offer jurisdiction for the baptism to be celebrated elsewhere). Please let us know the baby's name, date of birth, and date of baptism, so that we can add it to your family's records here at OLPH.

What happens during the preparation sessions?

A couple from the parish's Baptism Preparation ministry hosts an informal gathering at their home or at the parish. The sessions are designed to help you reflect spiritually on being new parents and how this great change has affected your own relationship with God. We also reflect together on the faith you desire for your child. It is a great way to meet other parents in the parish and to answer any questions you may have. We will discuss the theology of the sacrament of baptism, as well as practical aspects of the ceremony itself.