



Congratulations!

The Catholic family of St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church rejoices with you as you happily prepare for and celebrate the arrival of your child! May the Lord continue to bless your lives with the assurance that this child will be held dearly in the palm of God's hand.

This brochure outlines our Parish's approach to the baptism of infants. The first consideration is also the most important: making the decision to baptize your child and what this decision signifies.

Q: *What do you ask of God's Church for your child?*

A: The first question of the Baptism ceremony is addressed to parents and reflects the fact that infant baptism is a decision of the parents. This decision arises out of serious reflection about your commitment to the Christian life. Why? Because Baptism is not an isolated event, it is your expression of your faith and the commitment on your part to raise your child in the family of the Roman Catholic Church. The focus is as much on *you* as it is on the child.

The Baptism of your child is also an event of the Church. As the above question indicates, you are requesting Baptism from "God's Church." "Church" in this sense refers not just to the priests, but also to the entire Christian community, manifested locally in the parish of St. Andrew the Apostle.

Through communal celebrations of infant baptism, St. Andrew the Apostle Parish expresses its joy in welcoming a new member, as well as its commitment to provide support and a community of faith for you and your child as you undertake the mission of living as a Christian family.

Q: *What is the Catholic understanding of “godparent” (i.e. sponsor)?*

A: The Church views the “godparent” at a baptism as the one who assumes responsibility for the **spiritual** growth and development of the child in the Catholic faith. This does not necessitate that they take responsibility for the physical or temporal raising of the child should the parents be impeded from doing so. Their duty and responsibility relates primarily to the FAITH!

Q: *How do I select godparents?*

A: Godparents must be **confirmed Roman Catholics in good standing** (e.g. valid marriage, regularly practicing the faith) and **at least 16 years of age**, who (if outside our parish) have written testimony to these facts from their pastor. The godparent takes on the responsibility to be a role model and teacher to the child in the practice of the Catholic faith. **NON-PRACTICING CATHOLICS ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO FULFILL THIS ROLE, AND THUS SADLY DISQUALIFY THEMSELVES FROM SERVING AS GODPARENTS.**

Canon law requires only one godparent; two are customary. If you choose two, one must be male and the other must be female. Please understand that the Church does not permit more than two sponsors to serve at Baptism

Where the decision is made to have only one Catholic godparent (of either sex), a second person, of the opposite sex, may be designated as a “CHRISTIAN WITNESS.” A “Christian witness” is a person who has been baptized into a Christian denomination (Protestant, Orthodox, etc.) but is not and has never been a Catholic. This person should also be a faithful, practicing Christian, and must provide written proof of their Baptism (e.g., a photocopy of their Baptismal certificate or letter from the church in which they were baptized). He/she serves as a witness to the event of the Baptism, but does not take the responsibility or title of “godparent,” since it would be unfair and unrealistic to expect a non-Catholic, no matter how worthy a person, to take responsibility to raise a child in a **Faith** they do not profess, or know much about.

Q: *How shall I prepare for my child’s Baptism?*

A: The best way to prepare for the Sacrament of Baptism is through prayer, reflection and study. To assist parents, **the parish requires attendance at a preparation session prior to the ceremony.** Our Baptism class is generally held the third Friday evening of each month at 7:30 pm in the Padre Pio Room. Please call the Parish Office (703-817-1770) to register.

Q: *Who may be baptized at St. Andrew the Apostle?*

A: The child (or, with permission, grandchild) of any registered member of the parish.

Q: *Whom shall I contact about having my child baptized?*

A: Call the Parish Office at 703-817-1770.

Q: *What is necessary before a date for the Baptism can be set?*

A: Before you can be assured of the date of Baptism, you must first provide the Parish Office with the following:

❖ If this is your first child, you must enroll in a Baptism class either at St. Andrew's or another parish. If you participate at another parish, a certificate from that church must be presented with your other paperwork. If this is not your first child and you have been to a baptismal preparation class, here or elsewhere, **within the prior 2 years** you do not have to attend again.

❖ Baptismal registration information (form found on website) given to Parish Secretary either in person, mailed to the Parish Office or faxed. **The information on this form must be clearly written**

or printed, as it is recorded on the baptismal certificate and in the parish record book. Please write the information exactly as you wish it to appear on the certificate.

- ❖ Letters from the pastor of each godparent testifying to their qualification to serve as sponsor for Baptism (this does not apply to godparents who are registered members of St. Andrew's parish) or proof of Baptism for one chosen to be a "Christian Witness."
- ❖ If a grandchild does not reside in our parish, a letter of permission is required from the pastor of the parish in which the child and his/her parents actually are registered.
- ❖ Please bring original paperwork to the Parish Office no later than the Wednesday prior to the Baptism date. Faxed sponsor letters are acceptable in order to schedule a baptismal date; originals must be brought on the day of the Baptism.

Only after all the above (registration form and godparent letters and letter from a pastor, where appropriate) are submitted to the Parish Office can we set the date for the Baptism!

Q: *How soon after birth should the Baptism take place?*

A: It is never prudent to delay the Baptism of a child. Canon Law (i.e., 867) certainly encourages you to have your child baptized within the “first weeks after birth” (i.e., no more than six weeks). Social reasons (e.g., availability of godparents, presence of family members) should never be allowed to cause the baptism to be postponed for several months. Godparents may be represented by proxy, if necessary, rather than delaying the baptism. Your most important consideration above all else should be to have your child baptized!

Q: *When can we have our child baptized?*

A: Baptisms are generally scheduled every first and third Sunday of the month with some exceptions due to the Church’s liturgical calendar. **All Baptisms begin at 2 pm in the Holy Family Chapel.** It is not unusual for several children to be baptized during each celebration. Baptisms are not scheduled at other times, except in cases of emergency.

Q: *Is there a fee for Baptism?*

A: As Baptism is a sacrament, no fee is ever charged. Many couples, however, wish to make the **customary donation to the church**, and such a voluntary donation is greatly appreciated. Should you wish to make a donation to the priest or the parish, donation envelopes are available in the Parish Office or the Holy Family Chapel.

It is Diocesan policy that a priest may *personally keep* only those gifts **clearly designated as intended for him**; for example, a check specifically made payable to him (by name) or cash gift in an envelope bearing his name. *All other* amounts he receives are handed over to the Church.

Q: *What should our baby wear?*

A: In accord with tradition, babies must be dressed in white garments, which usually become a keepsake of the baptismal ceremony.

Q: *May photographs be taken?*

A: Photographs may be taken before or after the baptism. We ask you to refrain from flash photography during the ceremony for the comfort of the baby.