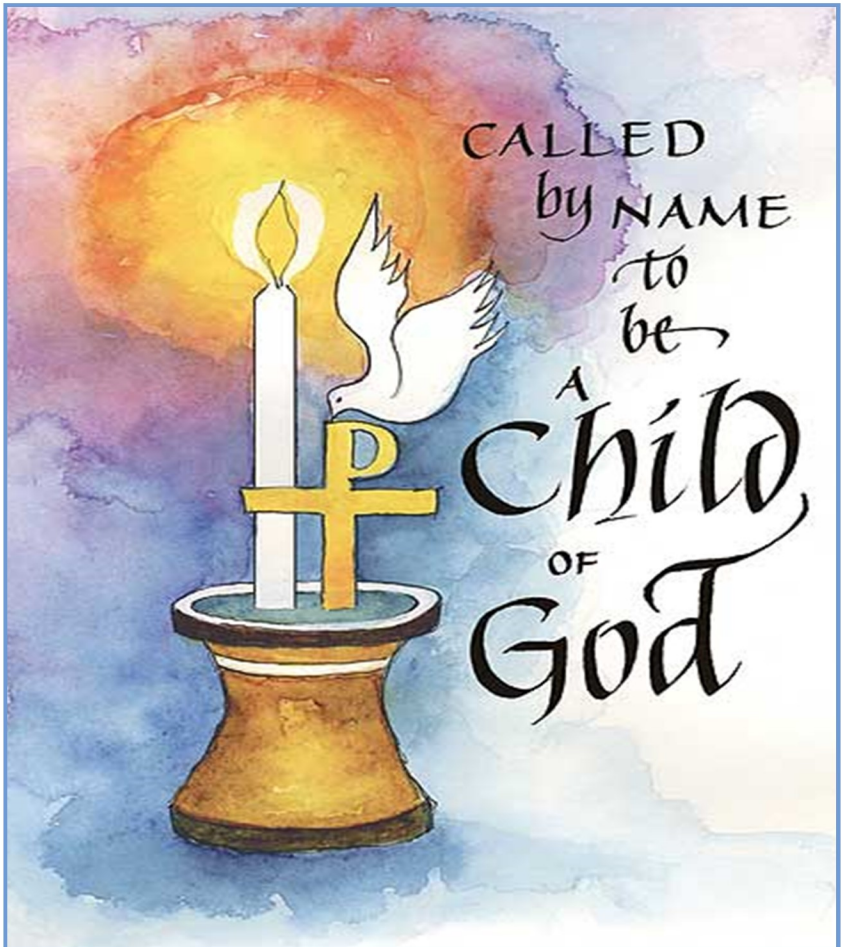


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BAPTISMS ARE ON SUNDAYS AT
1:00 PM

CONGRATULATIONS

You have recently experienced a truly magnificent event...the birth of your child. By now you have felt the tremendous sense of joy, love, pride, and wonder that comes from being a parent. So, too, after sleepless nights, bouts of colic, and very normal feelings of anxiety, you have come to realize what a great responsibility a child can be.

Now, as you prepare to bring your baby to be baptized, it is important for you to recognize that not only will you be responsible for the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth of your baby, but also the spiritual development as well.

Be assured that the Parish staff, as well as the whole community of St. Thomas the Apostle, are here to assist you in any way we can.

We have a very active Parish with many opportunities to grow on your own spiritual journey.

Our Sunday 9:00 a.m. Family Liturgy is a wonderful way to introduce your child to liturgy and celebration as they grow. Our Religious Formation Director and her team are here to help assist you in the spiritual growth of your child.

The stress of raising a family can sometimes seem overwhelming. It's a consolation to know you don't have to do it alone.

Belonging to a Church is more than just belonging to a certain building or filling out a registration card. It's being part of a supportive community where we gather each week to pray for one another, to be nourished and strengthened on God's Word and the Eucharist, and where we can truly be companions for one another on this incredible journey of faith.

By Baptism, all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God. (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Baptism – Celebration of New Life

Through the waters of Baptism, your baby will be born again. Just as Jesus died and rose to a new life, so every Baptism is a Death/Resurrection experience. In the case of adult Baptism, the individual dies to sin and evil and becomes a “new creation”. You may rightly wonder to what your innocent child must die. Actually, all of us are born selfish with a tendency to want our own way. This is a result of original Sin which will be washed away through Baptism. By the time your child enters the “terrible two’s” this will become evident.

Most of your parenting years will be spent helping your child learn to share and to consider others.

Thus, the focus in Baptism will be your child’s dying to selfishness and rising to a new life. Your child is to be rooted in God who calls your child by name to become one with Jesus in the family of faith called the Church and to be strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Your family will be given a candle whose flame comes from the Paschal Candle to remind you to keep the light of Christ shining in your child’s life. Your child will be dressed in a white robe which symbolizes the “new life in Christ” in which your child now lives. These two gifts from your parish family can be used by you to explain to your child later on why you chose Baptism. These gifts plus pictures or video of your child’s baptism can make for a powerful, teachable moment as you prepare them for First Communion and First Reconciliation.

Your baby’s Godparents will be asked to pledge their spiritual support as you raise your child in the faith. They must be one male and one female, at least 16 years old and have been confirmed. Because they will represent the Church to your child, they will be asked to get a “sponsor certificate” from the Catholic Church which they attend to verify they are active, participating members of their parish. Ordinarily, a Godparent should be Roman Catholic because they are asked to

represent the Roman Catholic Church and each child being baptized must have at least one Godparent. But, because a family might wish a non-Catholic Christian relative or friend to have a role in their child's baptism, a non-Catholic Christian can participate as a "Christian Witness" and would now have the obligation to be a role model of the Catholic faith. Orthodox Christians may act as Godparents.

The following is an outline of the Ceremony of Baptism. Please read it over so you will be familiar with what is to take place:

Sacraments – Signs of God's Presence

The seven official sacraments of our church – Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Marriage and Holy Orders – can only be appreciated and truly celebrated when we realize that we must have a sacramental mentality. It is the awareness of God's presence in all areas of our life. God's mysterious creative power is everywhere, if only we can learn to observe life with a "listening heart". The sacraments are profound

expressions of the living presence of God very much in our world.

Before we can meet the Lord in the pouring of water, the anointing of oil, or the breaking of the bread in the Eucharist, we must be able to experience God's presence in a beautiful sunset, the sharing of a family meal, and the touch of a caring friend.

The seven sacraments of our church can be defined as meetings or encounters with Jesus, the Christ, through which we grow in God's life and love. A faith response is essential for the reception of a sacrament, otherwise, it becomes empty ritual.

Since, in the sacrament of infant baptism, the response of the baby will be to cry or sleep through the whole event, the parents, with the support of the godparents and the whole community, must make the response.

Hopefully, after prayer and reflection and with a renewed understanding of sacraments, your presence will be – *"Lord, my faith is important to me, I want my child to share in your life and love. Thus, I profess my own faith and make a*

commitment on behalf of my child until my child is old enough in Confirmation to say "yes". As I have come to know and follow you in my life, so I will help my child come to know and love you as well.

Remember that Jesus is the first and greatest sacrament. The Church (all of us) is the sacrament of the visible presence of Jesus in the world today and that we are all called to be sacrament for one another.

The seven official sacraments of the Church recall the actions and values of Jesus and mark very special passages and moments in our life journey.

In preparation for the Day of Baptism, you are asked to attend a pre-baptismal class. The Godparents are invited as well, because sacraments are communal rather than private encounters.

RITE OF BAPTISM

I. The Reception of the Children

Greeting: The celebrant welcomes everyone to this very special celebration.

Questioning: The celebrant will ask three questions of the parents:

"What name do you give this child?"

"What do you ask of God's Church for (name of child)?"

"Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

The godparents of each child will be asked, "Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?"

Marked With the Sign of the Cross:

The celebrant traces the cross on the child's forehead and invites the parents and godparents to do the same.

Celebration of God's Word:

One or more scripture readings may be used.

Homily: The celebrant gives a short homily to lead those present to a deeper understanding of the mystery of Baptism and the responsibilities of the baptismal commitment.

Intercessions: The Prayer of the Faithful is a prayer of petition for the concerns for the world.

Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing before Baptism:

The celebrant will offer a short

prayer of exorcism and anoint the child's breast with the oil as a sign of strengthening.

II. Celebration of the Sacrament: The celebrant moves to the baptismal font.

Blessing and Invocations of God over the Baptismal Waters: The celebrant blesses the water with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Baptism: After the Profession of the Faith, the celebrant asks the parents and godparents one last time if it is their will to baptize the child. The celebrant then baptizes the child.

Anointing With Chrism: The child's head is anointed with Chrism as a sign of the child being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Clothing With White Garment: The celebrant clothes the child with a white garment as a sign of becoming a new creation and being clothed with Christ.

Lighted Candle: The parents are handed candles lit from the paschal candle.

Conclusion of the Rite: The celebrant welcomes the newly Baptized child. Everyone present joins the celebrant in praying the Lord's Prayer.

Blessing: The celebrant first blesses the mother, the father, the child, and lastly all others present.

The rite concludes as it began, tracing the Sign of the Cross, this time on oneself.

Goals of Religious Training

According to Church teaching, parents are the prime religious educators of their children. On hearing this, many parents are overwhelmed since they feel their own knowledge of theology and the Church is lacking. Actually, "Christianity is more a way of life to be lived than a set of truths to be learned." A parent who lives a Christian Lifestyle, who sees the sacred in every person of justice, compassion,

Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ: "Therefore... we are members of one another." Baptism incorporates us into the Church.

From the baptismal fonts is born one People of God of the New Covenant, which transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races and sexes: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

understanding and forgiveness and who looks at life with a sense of wonder and joy is the single most positive influence on the religious and moral development of their child.

While an infant and young child cannot know any specific religious subjects, this early period may determine whether or not the child will be able to believe in God when older. The most important task of the infant is to learn to trust. Every time you respond to your baby's cries in the night or cries for food, you contribute to your child's growing ability to trust. It is love you are teaching.

Certainly, a goal of religious training will ultimately be that your child will come to know, love and serve God. But before your child can love a God never seen, your child must be able to love others. And further, before your child can love others, your child must experience love of Self. Love of Self comes about by being loved. Look what a beautiful chain of events you begin when you love your child.

Psychologists tell us that a child's first image of God is how they see their parents. In the way that you are "seen" by

your child is the way your child will "see" God. The images of God that you have and share with your child will also teach your child something about God. If you "see" God as a stern judge, a punisher or a policeman you will pass on those images to your child.

Spend some time getting in touch with your own image and relationship to God. The many different ways you help your child "see" God - creator, parent, protector, friend, forgiver, Teacher, healer, etc., - the more you will help your child grow into a rich relationship with God.

Another goal of religious training is that a person has a good sense of self worth. Your child was created in God's image and therefore is special and loved. It is important that your child develops a healthy conscience and not become a slave to fear. Further, your child should learn respect for all of God's creation.

Help your child know God in nature. Help make your child's experience of wonder and awe for creation be present throughout their life. Trips to the beach, to game farms and nature centers can be a wonderful faith experience if

you help your child see and give thanks to the God who is present in nature, in events and in the people in our lives.

If all this seems overwhelming, remember the importance of prayer. To be a parent is to be person of prayer. "Lord, help me to be a good parent." "Lord, watch over my child." "Lord, give me patience." If you want your child to be able to pray and to reflect on the experience of their life, the example has to come from you. Teach your child that prayer is talking to God, listening to God and knowing God is within us. You have been given a precious gift – your child. Handle with care. Handle with prayer. Handle with love.

Remember: An infant should be Baptized within the first three months after birth.

