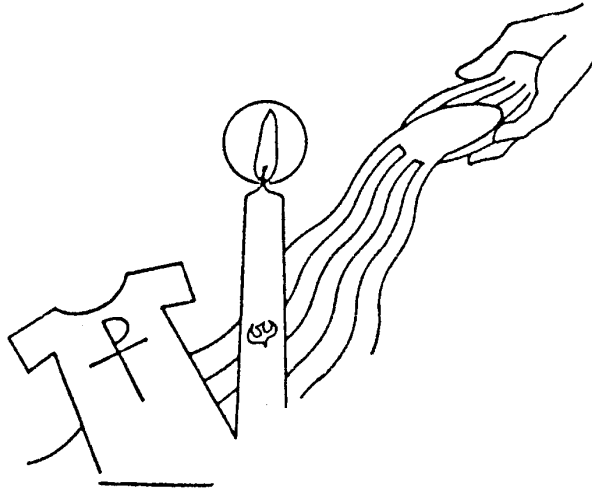


# Infant Baptism Preparation Program



Most Holy Trinity Catholic Community  
1713 N. Tinsley  
Angleton, Texas 77515-3598  
(979) 849-2421 Parish Office  
(979) 849-1764 Education Office

**Please bring this booklet with you to each of the sessions  
to use as a reference and for taking notes.**

*The nursery offers childcare services for infants and children. Please call the parish office at 849-2421 no less than one (1) week before the scheduled meetings to reserve a space for your child. Infants younger than 9 months may also be taken to the sessions with the parents.*

*For more information and/or questions regarding the Baptism preparation process, scheduling of Baptism date, etc., please call the parish office.*

## Infant Baptism Preparation Program

*“Catechesis for Baptism is directed primarily to adults - adult candidates for Baptism and parents and godparents of infants who are to be baptized. Preparation for the Baptism of infants...encourages parents to reexamine the meaning which faith has in their lives”*

National Catechetical Directory



The purpose of this booklet is to provide parents with the necessary information and guidelines for Infant Baptism and the Baptism preparation process. Our hope is that this program will make the celebration of your child's baptism a more meaningful experience.

In asking to have your child baptized you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God's Commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbors. The Baptism Preparation Program offers an excellent opportunity for you, the parents, to renew and/or deepen your faith, strengthen your commitment to the Church, seriously reflect on the responsibilities of Christian parenting, and come to a better understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism.

It is with great joy that our Catholic Community of Most Holy Trinity and the Baptism Team welcomes you to this program and we look forward to welcoming your new child into the family of God through the faith filled celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism.

## **Most Holy Trinity Parish Guidelines and Policies**

The following guidelines and policies are given in the light of the Church's mission and ministry to give living witness to the faith that it professes. These policies were developed in relation to the Code of Canon Law (CCL), Rite of Baptism with Children (RBC), the Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA), the General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), and the Diocesan guidelines for Galveston-Houston. They are implemented under the direction of the pastor and his delegates to prepare and empower parents bringing children for baptism to assume their role and responsibility in the sacramental life of the Church.

**1. BEGINNING:** *“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.”* RBC, #5.1

The parents and baptismal team need ample time to prepare for the baptismal celebration. Therefore, parents seeking baptism for their child are invited to contact the parish office during the 4th or 5th month of pregnancy or as soon thereafter as possible to make arrangements for the preparation classes and the baptismal date.

**2. WELCOMING:** *“The people of God, that is the Church, made present in the local community, has an important part to play in the baptism of both children and infants.”* (RBC, #4) *“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.”* (RBC, #7)

The pastor or a welcoming member of the baptismal team will contact the parents to arrange an initial meeting time to assist them with the necessary information explaining the process of preparation for baptism, the responsibilities of the Church, the parents and the godparents, assign their sponsor team, meeting times, and assist with the completion of necessary paperwork.

**3. ASSESSMENT OF READINESS:** *“For an infant to be baptized licitly: (1) the parents or at least one of them or the person who lawfully takes their place must consent; (2) there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion...”*

One parent must be Catholic and active in the practice of their faith. The parents are to be instructed as to the nature of the sacrament of Baptism, and understand their responsibility to raise their child in the faith. Therefore, attendance by both parents is required, regardless if the spouse is Catholic, unless pastoral considerations have been made.

Couples who are in an irregular marriage (not witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon) or have other impediments that prohibit them from full communion in the Church are encouraged to seek whatever avenues necessary to restore them to full communion and membership in the Catholic Church, by contacting the parish office and arranging an appointment with the pastor.

Assurances must be given by the parents that the gift of faith given freely by God in Baptism will be given opportunity to grow by an authentic education in the faith and Christian life. If the pastor deems that these assurances are not serious there can be grounds for delaying the sacrament. At times, longer periods of preparation may be necessary in order to assure both the integrity of the sacraments and the child's future development as a Christian.

**4. GODPARENT/SPONSOR:** *“Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian Initiation, or, together with the parents, presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligation inherent in it.” (CCL, # 872)*

A suitable sponsor (commonly referred to as godparent) is to be chosen following the norms of the Code of Canon Law. To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must:

- be designated by the parents or the one who takes their place
- be have completed the sixteenth year of age
- be a fully initiated (has already received the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist) and actively practicing the Catholic faith
- not be bound by any canonical penalty legitimately imposed or declared (e.g. one who is in an irregular marriage cannot be a sponsor)
- not be the father or mother of the one to be baptized
- there can be only one male sponsor or one female sponsor or one of each
- a non-Catholic, baptized person can participate only in the role as a witness of the baptism.

**5. CATECHESIS:** *“Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child’s earliest years....Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith.”* (CCC, # 2226)

Six (6) hours of baptismal catechesis will be provided by the pastor and/or his trained delegates. Parents will be enrolled in the sessions prior to setting the baptismal date. A member of the baptismal team will forward the session dates and times to the parents. Both parents are strongly encouraged to attend. Because of the role of Godparents in the witnessing of a committed life of faith, they too are encouraged to attend.

**6. CELEBRATION:** *“So that baptism may clearly appear as the sacrament of the Church’s faith and of incorporation into the people of God, it should normally be celebrated in the parish church, which must have a baptismal font.”* (RBC, #10)  
*Although baptism can be celebrated on any day, it is nevertheless recommended that it be celebrated ordinarily on Sunday, or if possible, at the Easter Vigil.”* (CCL, #856)

Because of the communal aspect of the sacrament, private baptisms are not encouraged. Infants should be baptized in the ordinary communal Mass of the parish. If parents choose to baptize at another Catholic church, please be assured that all necessary paper work will be provided upon completion of the Baptism preparation program.

As for the rite of Baptism itself, immersion will be used unless there are medical contradictions, because it is the more suitable symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Baptisms will be scheduled during the Masses on the second Sunday of alternating months.

**7. NURTURING THE FAITH:** *Before and after the celebration of the sacrament, the child has the right to the love and help of the community...(RBC, #4) “After baptism it is the responsibility of the parents, in their gratitude to God and in fidelity to the duty they have undertaken, to enable the child to know God, whose adopted child he has become...”* (RBC, #5.5)

## Policies of Most Holy Trinity

1. Completion of the Baptismal Preparation Program (4-6 hours) for all parents presenting infants for baptism except for those who have completed the preparation program within the past 3 years. (Attendance is required at the Recognition Mass and Planning Session)
2. At least one parent be a practicing Catholic and a member of Most Holy Trinity.
3. Attendance at all sessions by parents is required, whether or not the spouse is Catholic. Godparents are encouraged to attend all sessions so they may feel comfortable with their role. They are required to attend the first and last session and the recognition Mass.
4. A Godparent Statement letter needs to be signed and returned no later than the 1st session. See “Choosing a Godparent” section, for more details.
5. Couples who are in an irregular marriage (not witnessed by a Catholic priest or deacon) or circumstances are encouraged to seek whatever avenues necessary to restore them to full communion and membership in the Catholic church by contacting a priest, deacon or advocate provided by the parish.
6. Infants should be baptized in their community parish, however, for those parents who choose to baptize elsewhere please be assured that all necessary paperwork will be provided upon completion of the Baptism preparation program.
7. Baptism of the infant will be by immersion unless there are medical contraindications.
8. Baptisms are scheduled bimonthly and will be celebrated during the second Sunday's Masses unless there is a canonical impediment of the couple. Because of the communal aspect of the sacrament, private baptisms **are not** celebrated at Most Holy Trinity.
9. There is a \$20.00 registration fee which will cover materials, books, paper work, etc. This fee should be paid no later than the second session.
10. Before a Baptismal Certificate will be issued, a copy of the child's state birth certificate must be turned in to the Parish Office.

## **Baptism Preparation Program**

The program consists of four (4) sessions and the attendance of a Recognition Mass.

### **Session I**

Goals and topics for this session include:

- \* Present the scope of the program and its benefits
- \* Role of Parents, Godparents and community
- \* Define sin, sacrament, and the meaning of baptism and conversion
- \* Acquaintance with others preparing for the baptism of their child.

### **Recognition Mass**

An opportunity to allow the community to pray for you as you prepare for this sacrament. At a scheduled weekend Mass, you will be asked to stand and be recognized before the community as parents who are preparing to baptize their child into the community. Godparents need to be present at this Mass.

### **Session II**

Topics to be covered at this session include:

- \* The interconnection of the stories of salvation with that of their own.
- \* Transition of bringing a new child into the family at part of the family life cycle.
- \* Highlight the opportunity of grace perfecting family life.

### **Session III**

Topics to be covered:

- \* Revisit understanding of baptism as initiation and call to discipleship.
- \* Connect intimacy in marriage/household to discipleship.
- \* Highlight the sacrament of marriage as a path for couples to grow in their own discipleship as spouses and parents.

### **Session IV.**

Scheduled immediately prior to the date of Baptism. Topics include:

- \* Images of holiness in family life and review of Christian family.
- \* Highlight concept of domestic Church.
- \* Connect prayer and stewardship with discipleship and conversion.
- \* Review the Rite of Baptism (with Godparents present).

## Choosing a Godparent

### **Role of Godparent (Canon Law 872-874)**

The godparents, together with the parents are present to profess the church's faith, in which the child is being baptized. Therefore, in order to be appointed sponsor, the person must be suitable for this role and have the intention of fulfilling it.

1. Only one godparent is required, but two may be permitted. If two are chosen, one must be male and the other female. (Canon 872-873)
2. The godparent(s) must have received the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.
3. The godparent(s) must not be bound by any canonical penalty.
4. The godparent(s) may not be the father or the mother of the child to be baptized.
5. When the godparent(s) are represented by proxies, the latter should be Catholic, and the godparent must give explicit indication of their desire to assume the role and responsibility of godparent.
6. The godparent(s) must be mature enough to undertake this responsibility, having completed the 16th year. (Canon 847.2)
7. If only one godparent is chosen, a second person, called a Christian Witness may also be asked. The Christian Witness is a baptized Christian of another faith (not Catholic).
8. An unbaptized person cannot act as a godparent of Christian Witness.
9. If godparent(s) are from out of state, you must choose a parish member to be a "stand in" to help on a daily basis.

## **The Rite of Baptism**

The introduction to the rite of baptism says this of the godparent(s):

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

What are the important elements here?

1. That there is to be at least one godparent, or more as the parents desire and perhaps as the local custom suggests.
2. That the godparent(s) be present at the rite so that they can make their commitment publicly.
3. That the church continues to understand that the bond between the godparent(s) and the family is very close, and to ask that the godparent not only be ready to help the parents, when appropriate, in the Christian formation of their child but even more that the godparent be an example to the child of what a Christian is.
4. That the godparent(s) speak not only for themselves but for the entire church.

In the Roman Catholic rite of baptism, until the late 1960's, there was much for the godparent(s) to do within the ceremony. Now, it is the parents who hold the baby, answer the questions and clothe the child in the baptismal garment. But the godparent(s), though they may not be at the center of things, still have an important part in the rite:

*at the beginning, they are asked by the priest or deacon if they are ready to help you in your duty as Christian parents;  
with you, the godparents renounce sin and evil and profess their faith in God;  
they are the first to hold the child after baptism;  
they assist in clothing the child with the baptismal garment and in lighting the baptismal candle.*

### **Making your Choice**

In deciding on a godparent or godparents, then, you have some important directions set for you by this brief paragraph from the ritual. There is everything to suggest that it is a serious responsibility to choose well; it is a decision worth much thought, prayer and discussion. When the choice has been made, it is appropriate that you tell the godparent-to-be what led you to your decision. There is a great honor involved, but also a great responsibility.

You are looking, certainly, for a mature member of the Catholic church, one who has received the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation and eucharist). You are looking for someone who can share with you the task of handing on a faith and whose life shows that faith in great and small ways of everyday living. You are looking for someone you can call on for help. You are looking for someone who knows that being a Catholic has to do with prayer, with justice towards the poor, with kindness for friends and strangers alike, with many things that are not so popular or common in our own society.

So enjoy this time to consider the possibilities. Talk it over with each other. Consider what will happen if you end up living far away from the godparent. Would this person continue to take an interest in your child and to be a presence in the child's life?

When you have made your choice and your godparents-to-be are determined by parish personnel as having met requirements, and they have accepted, you may wish to ask them to be more a part of the baptism by making the baptismal garment, or by making or buying a beautiful baptismal candle. It may become your custom over the next years to invite them to your home on the anniversary of the child's baptism for a special celebration of a most important event, or specifically involve them in additional ways in your child's life.

### **Godparent Statement Letter**

You will be required to have your godparent(s) review and sign the Godparent Statement form. We recommend that this letter be presented as soon as they accept the responsibility of being a godparent. Please make sure that the letter states your child's name so that the letter can be more easily traced. The signed letter is required **on or before the first session.**

## Preparations for the Baptism

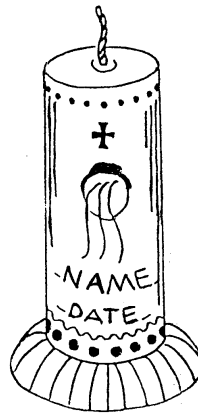
### Baptismal Candle

One of the most important symbols of baptism representing the light of Christ, is the baptismal candle. The presider will light this baptism candle from the Easter candle during the ceremony.

Each family must provide a white candle for each child being baptized. We recommend using a large, free standing, pillar type candle so that it can be used again for other sacramental celebrations for that child. This type of candle and candle holder can be purchased at any candle shop and most drug and grocery stores.

If you wish, decorations can be added to the candle to personalize it. You may want to decorate it in a way to match the banner, with the child's name, the baptism date, and any symbols you wish to include. Here are some suggestions:

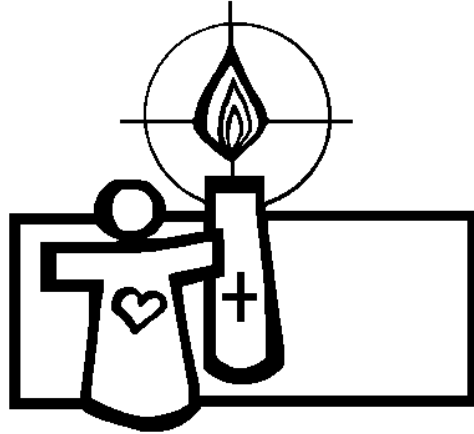
- Ribbons or bows can be pinned into the candle
- Silk or dried flowers can be attached at the base
- Beads, sequins, etc. can be pinned into the candle
- Silk flower candle rings can be purchased for a nice effect
- Words and dates can be painted on the candle



### **White Garment**

As a symbol of your child's "putting on the new life of Christ", you are asked to bring with you a white garment in which to dress your child after he/she is baptized. This may be a gown that has been in your family for generations, or it might be something newly purchased just for this occasion.

Please bring your child to church dressed in comfortable clothes that will be easy to remove, as you will be undressing the baby at your seat.



### **Siblings**

The Baptism of a younger brother or sister is a special time for a child. It is important that you take time to explain this event to your older children and provide opportunities for them to be involved in the preparations. This might include helping you decorate the candle or plan a celebration to follow the Baptism. Older children can help dress the baby, and stand with the parents and godparents at the time of the anointing rite.

## **Photography**

The Rite of Baptism is a sacred event, one in which we celebrate with much joy. We encourage families to record this special event, either with photographs or videotape, to share with your child as he or she grows. However, we do ask that you be considerate of the other families present. Please arrange for a friend or family member to handle the camera, as the parents and godparents will be occupied with the ceremony. We ask the person recording this event to adhere to the following guidelines.

- At baptisms during liturgies, photos and videos may **ONLY** be taken of the actual baptism and may not be taken of the Mass itself.
- Videotape or photograph **ONLY** from the assigned pew of the baptism family. Sit next to the godparents for the best positioning of the camera.
- **LEAVE THE PEW ONLY AT THE TIME OF THE IMMERSION** in the baptismal pool. Stand next to the font for the best picture.
- The celebrant will be happy to pose for additional photographs after the ceremony. Just ask!!

Thank you for making this a beautiful celebration for your family and all the other families and guests in attendance.



