



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC CHURCH  
4556 TELEGRAPH ROAD | ST. LOUIS, MO 63129

PARISH OFFICE  
314.487.5736 x100 | PARISHOFFICE@SFASTL.ORG

Dear Parents,

The birth of a child is a major event in the life of any family. On behalf of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, we extend to you and your child our warmest welcome. Baptism is a welcoming of your child into Christ and into the Church. You are the primary teachers of your child. Your child will learn about life, love, God and our Catholic faith from you. By your example and life, your child will learn about your values and beliefs.

A decision to have your child baptized is serious. Baptism is no mere social convention, but the Sacrament in which Christ Himself purifies, justifies and sanctifies (cf. 1 Peter 1:23) your child for eternal life. This decision means that you are choosing to accept responsibility for your child's early faith formation.

We rejoice with you in the birth of your child and look forward to welcoming him or her in to the Family of God and the communion of the Holy Catholic Church. To assist you we have established the following program.

Please read carefully our guidelines in order to facilitate your celebration.

#### General Requirement for Parents:

1. One parent must be a Baptized Catholic. If neither parent is baptized, please speak to the rectory staff to determine if an exception applies (for example a parent is a candidate for initiation).
2. If you live within St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church boundaries or are a registered member of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, then there are no further permissions necessary. If you do not live within the boundaries, you need to obtain permission from your pastor. Permission can be granted by your pastor by his own letter or by completing the Request Form of Parents for Permission for Baptism.

#### Interview Prior to the Baptismal Encounter Night

The parents of the child to be baptized are required to meet with one of the parish priests prior to attending the baptismal encounter night. Once the registration form



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is completed, a priest will contact you to set up a brief appointment to review your registration and address any concerns or issues.

### Baptismal Encounter Night

A baptismal preparation night is required for all parents. Sponsors are welcome to attend but it is not mandatory. During the Rite of Baptism, the celebrant will ask the parents if they are prepared to raise their child in the faith by following the commandments. Sponsors will also be asked if they are ready to support the parents in this privilege and responsibility. This requires that you know what is being asked of you and are prepared to live that out with the help of God and His Church.

Baptismal Encounter Nights are held on the first Thursday of each month. Please sign up for a night when you send in your registration form by contacting the parish administrative assistant. You may attend the night during the time of pregnancy.

If you have attended a baptismal class in the past, but have not attended a baptismal encounter night prior to July 2015, it is highly encouraged to come again as the program has significantly been revised.

### Steps in Preparation

#### Parents:

1. **Application:** Complete the baptismal application on our website at [www.sfastl.org](http://www.sfastl.org) and return it to the rectory office by saving it to your desktop and emailing it to [parishoffice@sfastl.org](mailto:parishoffice@sfastl.org).
2. **Night:** Register and attend a baptismal encounter night. Parents are required to attend a class unless granted an exception by the Pastor.
3. **Interview:** Schedule a pre-baptism interview with one of the parish priests.
4. **Verify Boundaries:** If not registered at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church or living within our boundaries obtain a letter of permission from the parish where you are registered or whose boundaries you live within. To check parish boundaries, go to <https://www.archstl.org/find-my-parish>



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and type your address in the parish finder box to determine which parish boundaries you live in.

5. **Sponsors:** Prayerfully choose sponsors (godparents) for your child, inform sponsors (godparents) of their requirements and have each sign a sponsor form. You may choose 1 or 2 sponsors. See below for their qualifications.
6. **Christian Witness:** If you are having a Christian witness for your child, inform this person of the requirements and have them sign a Christian witness form. See below for their qualifications.
7. **Book the Ceremony:** Schedule your date of Baptism. This is done through speaking with the rectory staff. All paper work must be completed prior to confirming your date. This is particularly important for families arranging out of town guests.
8. **Attend the Ceremony:** On the date of the Baptism, please arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the Rite.

#### Sponsors (a.k.a. Godparents):

1. **Qualifications:** Make sure you meet the qualifications to be a godparent. See below.
2. **Sponsor Form:** Sign and return the Form.
3. **Attend the Ceremony:** On the date of the Baptism, please arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the Rite. If the godparents cannot attend the actual Baptism ceremony, proxies may be used. See below.



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## Qualifications for Godparents/Sponsors

To be qualified to serve as a godparent, a person must follow these Guidelines:

- Fully initiated member of the Catholic Church. This means that they should have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. This person should be willing and able to help the child develop and grow in the Catholic faith. They should also be practicing and in good standing.
- If married, they must be in a valid marriage recognized by the Church.
- There must be at least one sponsor. In the case where there are two sponsors, one must be male and the other female. The maximum number of sponsors is two.
- The minimum age for a fully initiated Catholic to be a sponsor is sixteen (16) years of age.
- A baptized Christian, non-Catholic, may not be a sponsor, but may act as a Christian witness along with a Catholic sponsor.
- Non-baptized persons may not officially act as a sponsor or a witness to a baptism of a child in the Catholic faith.
- Parents of the child being baptized may not serve as a sponsor or Christian witness.
- Must sign a sponsor/Christian witness form.

## Christian Witness

Because the sponsors are required to help the child live out the Catholic faith, non-Catholics are not permitted to be sponsors. If a family wishes to have a non-Catholic participate in the Rite, it is required that the person be a baptized Christian and can be designated as a Christian witness. He/she will be recorded as “Christian witness” in the official records. The Christian witness is asked to sign a Christian Witness Form attesting to their baptism and that they strive to live their Christian faith.



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### Proxies

If the Sponsors cannot be present at the Baptism, proxies can be designated to answer the parts of the sponsors during the ceremony itself. They should meet the same qualifications as sponsors but do not have to attend the encounter night or fill out the Sponsor Form. They will be listed in baptismal record as “proxies”.

### Fees

There are *no fees* for having your child baptized. Often times a family will choose to make a gift to the parish to help with the costs associated with your celebration and to assist with the ministry of the parish.

If you would like to offer a gift specifically to the celebrant of the sacrament, please designate your offering for him.

### Information

If you have any other questions concerning the celebration of baptism, please contact the rectory staff at 314-487-5736.



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## Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

### **Can a member of my family who is not Catholic but a Christian be a godparent?**

A godparent or sponsor is required by Canon Law to be a fully initiated Catholic in good standing (*This means that have received Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation. If they are married, they must have a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.*) A non-Catholic, then cannot serve as a godparent in a Catholic baptism. A Christian may serve as a Christian witness. A godparent is asked to promise to help the parents of the child to raise the child in the Catholic faith.

### **Can a family member who is not Christian be a witness?**

No, the Church requires for Baptism that a witness be Christian. Non-Christians are welcome to attend a celebration of the Sacrament; however, the Church makes no demands on their conscience to participate in a Rite which may be contrary to their beliefs.

### **Can a married family member who is Catholic but did not marry in the Church be a godparent?**

Unless the marriage is otherwise recognized as valid by the Church, this person cannot serve as a godparent. This person may very well be a good person in many ways, but the marital situation needs to be reconciled before they fulfill the role of godparent.

### **Can a family member who was married in the Church but now is separated or divorced be a godparent or sponsor?**

Possibly. Separation or divorce does not necessarily inhibit a person from being a godparent, but please contact the rectory for clarification for your situation.

### **Can I have my child baptized if my spouse is not Catholic?**

Yes, only one parent needs to have received the Sacrament of Baptism. The other parent must agree to have the child baptized. Please note, however, that if one or both of the parents have expressed an intent to become Catholic, the child may be baptized. As long as there is an earnest desire for the child to be reared in the Catholic faith, the Church will work with the parents on baptizing the child and addressing any specific concerns.

### **Do I have to be married in the Church to have my child baptized?**

No, however; we would invite those who have not received this sacrament to talk to one of the clergy for more information on how to celebrate this sacrament.



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**Do I have to be confirmed to have my child baptized?**

No, however, we would invite anyone who is an adult and has not been confirmed to enroll in our Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Program or inquiry with the clergy on how to be confirmed.

**Can I have more than two godparents or sponsors?**

No, however, we would invite your entire family to be involved in the upbringing of your child in the Catholic faith. Different family and cultural traditions are important to raising your children in the faith and are encouraged by the Church.