

CELEBRATING THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community † Spirit of Christ Mission

The Catholic **Rite of Baptism for Infants** reminds us that *"From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the Gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized children as well as adults. Our Lord said: 'In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit. John 3:5 The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church. This faith is proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: 'The Church is at once the mother of all and the mother of each'. Saint Augustine*
To fulfill the true meaning of the sacrament, children must be later formed in the faith in which they have been baptized. The foundation of this formation will be the sacrament itself, which they have already received. Christian formation, which is their due, seeks to lead them gradually to learn God's plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized." Rite of Baptism for Children #2-3

WHAT MUST WE DO TO CELEBRATE THE BAPTISM OF OUR BABY?

PARISH MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Baptism is INITIATION into the Church, the Body of Christ. This reality is reflected in the life and ministry of the local parish community. When parents bring their infant for baptism they ask that this newborn baby be welcomed into the Church in and through a particular parish community. This presupposes both parental membership and participation in the local parish and the support and care of the parish community. In other words, parents themselves must feel supported and nurtured in their own faith as they promise to hand on this faith to their newborn child. This support and nurturing occurs when a parent or parents participate regularly in the life of the parish, principally through weekly participation in SUNDAY MASS.

- a. For an infant to be truly initiated, therefore, the father and/or mother, must themselves be part of the faith community. This means, in most cases, a parent or parents are **registered in the parish** for a suitable period of time prior to the expected celebration of Baptism. This time period enables the family and/or parents to feel welcomed and integrated into the life and worship of Blessed Trinity Catholic Community and/or Spirit of Christ Mission. The time period is flexible depending on the particular circumstances of the parents and family.
- b. The father and/or mother **participate weekly in SUNDAY MASS** at Blessed Trinity/Spirit of Christ, for this is the way of living they have chosen to hand on to their newborn child.

c. On some occasions a parent or parents, bringing their newborn baby for baptism, have themselves been away from the church for some time and for a variety of reasons. These persons are especially "**welcomed home**". Blessed Trinity/Spirit of Christ Mission makes special provisions for these persons to renew their faith and return to the Table of the Lord, since this is the faith and the Church into which their baby will be initiated.

d. Single mothers and fathers are welcomed as members of the Church and are invited to participate fully in the life of the Parish as they bring their children for baptism.

d. In some instances parents have not been married in the Church, or have been divorced or remarried. Though there are some restrictions in terms of full participation in the sacramental life of the Church, these persons are still considered members of the church and the baptism of their child is an important moment in their own faith journey. Such an occasion provides the opportunity for couples to consider the process of having their marriage blest by the Church.

e. In other situations parents who have a family history or connection to Blessed Trinity/Spirit of Christ (or the former Pope John XXIII or Holy Family) Catholic Community, but who now reside in another city or parish, seek to have their child baptized at Blessed Trinity or Spirit of Christ. In such situations a letter of permission from the family's local pastor or pastoral administrator is required as well as a statement from him or her that the parent or parents are active members of the Catholic Church and have participated in a baptismal preparation process.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

The **Rite of Baptism for Infants** notes that *"Before the celebration of the sacrament (infant baptism), 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."* *Rite of Baptism For Children #5.1*

- a. The process of sacramental preparation developed at Blessed Trinity † Spirit of Christ reflects the importance of this conviction and our commitment to an ongoing development of adult faith. The process of preparation also reflects the truth that we are not "isolated individuals" but part of a community of faith. The immediate preparation process for infant baptism ordinarily involves three gatherings in the Fall, Winter and Spring.
- b. Parents participate in the **Process of Preparation for Baptism** based on their particular needs and/or circumstances. *Special accommodations are made for those who have participated in previous years.*

- c. In addition parents and/or family participate in the Sunday Whole Parish Faith Formation Process (schedule is announced in the Fall).
- d. The ideal time to participate in the Process of Preparation for Baptism is **prior to the birth of the baby**. This provides the parents adequate time for preparation and participation. Particular circumstances and needs are worked out with parents and families individually.

SELECTION OF GODPARENTS FOR YOUR CHILD

The child to be baptized must have at least one godparent. Godparents stand as a reminder that the task of handing on the faith extends beyond the parents and must involve others. In this sense godparents can be said to represent the wider community of faith. Godparents are asked to help parents in their duty as Christian parents; with the parents they profess the faith of the Church, the faith into which the infant is to be baptized. **Godparents, therefore, are normally active, mature Catholics, registered in a local parish community and participating weekly in Sunday Mass.** Godparents for Baptism are fully initiated into the Church (i.e. Baptized, Confirmed, in good standing with the Church and **regular participants in the Sunday Eucharist**).

When they are members of a parish other than Blessed Trinity or Spirit of Christ, a letter from their pastor or pastoral administrator indicating their active membership in the parish is required.

In special circumstances, at the parents' request a person from another Christian church may serve as a "Christian witness" to the Baptism, but not as a godparent. That person must also be baptized and active in her/his particular church, participating weekly in Sunday worship. A letter from their pastor indicating their membership and participation is required. In such situations, another person (an active Catholic) must be designated as the official godparent (a person who meets the above requirements).

In all cases at least one godparent must be a *practicing* Catholic as described above.

PERSONAL VISIT AND SCHEDULING THE BAPTISM

Ordinarily, following the Process of Preparation parents for infant baptism arrange for a personal visit with a staff person. At this time immediate preparations will be made and particular concerns or questions may be discussed. The date of the celebration of baptism may be scheduled during this visit. Infant Baptism may be scheduled for any Sunday during the year *except for the Sundays of Lent*. **Baptism is NOT celebrated during Lent**, except in emergency situations. Baptism on the Sundays of Advent is also discouraged.

The Easter season (Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday) is a most appropriate time for Baptism and therefore the celebration during Sunday Mass is strongly encouraged during this season.

Baptism during the Sunday Mass is the norm at Blessed Trinity † Spirit of Christ, since the child is being initiated into the Church-the body of Christ. This initiation will eventually lead the child to the Table of the Lord, the Eucharist.

For those parents, who for *serious reasons* request baptism outside of Sunday Mass that option will be provided on selected Sundays following the Mass.

Ordinarily Baptism is celebrated only on Sunday (or Saturday during the 5:00 Vigil Mass).

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT that the date you select for Baptism is placed on the parish calendar before plans are made for family visits, gatherings, etc.

THE CELEBRATION OF INFANT BAPTISM

Immediate preparation for the baptism of your baby will be made during the personal visit with the staff person. This will include the preparation of parents and godparents for their part in the liturgy, involvement of friends and family members, participation of children etc. Various options and possibilities will be explored. You will be provided with a planning guide and some suggested themes for your own prayer and reflection.

On those rare occasions when the choice is made to celebrate Baptism outside of Mass particular preparation for the liturgy will be made.



1475 Eaton Street ~ Missoula, MT 59801

Phone 406-721-2405

blessedtrinitymissoula.org