



# **INFANT BAPTISM GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES**

## **ST. PIUS V CHURCH**

**Buena Park, California**

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### REGISTRATION AND SCHEDULING

Those wishing to have their children baptized should be directed to the parish office during regular business hours to complete the prescribed form (available in both English and Spanish). The receptionist will schedule you for a conference at a specific date and time. All completed forms are given to a team of volunteer lay ministers that will interview the parents (only) and talk about requirements of the church and make suggestions, if necessary, for them to follow.

All baptisms details (date and hour) will be scheduled at the conference, and the parish office will contact you if necessary. There is a maximum of 6 Baptisms on a particular Saturday, scheduled on a first come, first served basis. There are no baptisms during Lent.

Parents also must schedule at the time of the Conference, their date(s) on which they will take the baptismal preparation class(es) (discussed in greater detail below). Parents and godparents are greatly encouraged to attend the baptismal preparation class on the Wednesday immediately preceding the Saturday on which their child is to be baptized (since that is the class conducted by the baptismal coordinators who will handle the baptism on the following Saturday, and since that is the class where readers are chosen and other final preparations are made for the specific baptismal liturgy). However, they may attend any class preceding the baptism.

There is no charge or stipend for baptisms (although, as discussed below, parents or godparents are encouraged at the baptismal preparation classes to make a donation on the day of the baptism). Donations for Private Baptisms: \$300.00, (If paying by check please make it payable to St. Pius V Church).

### REQUIREMENTS FOR GODPARENTS

Godparents are to help “the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and fulfill faithfully the obligations” of being a Christian (Code of Canon Law c. 872). Because godparents have this important role to play in their godchildren’s lives, each godparent must be:

1. 16 years of age or older

2. A Catholic who has been baptized and received the Sacraments of Confirmation and First Eucharist,
3. Practicing the Catholic faith, including regular attendance at Sunday Mass (except in case of illness or other just cause),
4. If married, married in the Catholic Church (Code of Canon Law c. 874).

## **BAPTISMAL PREPARATION CLASSES**

Parents (or guardians) and godparents of record (i.e., the one or two godparents who will be listed in the parish's official baptismal records) are required to attend one baptismal preparation class prior to the baptism. Classes are held Wednesday nights at 7:15 p.m. and last about an hour and a half. The baptismal coordinators organize and conduct the baptismal preparation classes. The classes include a basic explanation of the theology and Church teaching regarding baptism, an explanation of the baptismal rite, practical suggestions for the parents regarding the baptismal rite (white garments, baptismal candles, etc.), and information about parish ministries and services for children as they grow in the faith (parish school, religious education, sacramental preparation, etc.).

Parents (or godparents) also are encouraged at the classes to make a donation to the parish on the day of the baptism. The baptismal coordinators briefly review with the parents (and godparents) the principles of stewardship, including discernment of one's financial resources and ability to make a donation of whatever amount. In the context of baptismal preparation, parents (and godparents) are particularly reminded that authentic stewardship should lead one to make one's donation to the parish proportional to the amount that will be spent on any post-baptismal celebration (food, beverages, music, hall rental, etc.). The baptismal coordinators provide envelopes to the parents or godparents for their donations and ask that they bring their donations on the day of the baptism.

A child will not be baptized unless both parents and at least one godparent of record have attended a baptismal preparation class. If one or the other parent will not be able to attend a baptismal preparation class for any reason, our Parish Office should be contacted as soon as possible to make a pastoral judgment based upon the particular circumstances (e.g., serious hardship, parent no longer involved in the family, etc.). In the case of godparents, only godparents who have attended a baptismal preparation class will be permitted to participate in the baptismal liturgy as godparents of record.

Baptismal coordinators will have those attending the baptismal preparation class sign an attendance sheet (using the prescribed form). Baptismal coordinators also will retrieve

the respective registration forms, record each parent's and godparent's attendance on the form, and review with parents whether all preliminary requirements have been met for their children to be baptized (attendance at baptismal preparation class by both parents and at least one godparent).

Parents and godparents must be on time for class – those arriving more than 20 minutes late will have to come to another class. Baptismal coordinators, in their sole discretion (in terms of their own time availability, etc.), may agree to keep late-comers after class to catch up on the material they missed or schedule a private make-up class (for example, if a baptism is scheduled for the following Saturday and would otherwise have to be cancelled because a parent and/or godparent has not attended a baptismal preparation class).

Baptismal coordinators ask at the class preceding a particular baptismal liturgy for two volunteers to serve as readers – one for an Old Testament reading or a New Testament reading from other than one of the Gospels, and one to lead the intercessions. (The priest or deacon presiding at the baptismal liturgy may decide to proclaim a Gospel passage as well.) Baptismal coordinators choose the readings and intercessions in advance, based on liturgical principles (e.g., based on the liturgical season, not on the shortness of the reading).

## **BAPTISMAL LITURGY**

Parents should bring the children to the church wearing white baptismal clothes or garments. They should be discouraged from using a sash or ribbon (as sold in some commercially available baptismal “packages”).

Parents and godparents should arrive at the church no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the baptismal liturgy. The baptismal coordinators check in the children, parents and godparents and ask them at that time whether they have a donation for the parish.

Baptismal liturgies start on time – there will be no waiting on parents or godparents to arrive (no exceptions – the many who have made the effort to arrive on time will not be made to suffer for the laxity of a few). Since the essential elements of a baptism are the pouring of water with the Trinitarian formula, a child will be baptized as long as his or her parents get him or her to the church before that part of the liturgy is completed. However, baptismal coordinators should ensure that parents and godparents arriving late do not disrupt the baptismal liturgy or disturb those who have arrived on time (e.g., by

having late arrivers wait in the vestibule until an appropriate time in the liturgy for them to enter). If parents get their child to the church after the pouring of water has been completed for the rest of the children (i.e., during the explanatory rites following the pouring of water), the baptism will have to be rescheduled to another time. Generally speaking, baptisms at St. Pius V are conducted using all of the prescribed rites for baptisms, including the preparatory and explanatory rites. When all enter the church and take their places, the parents, holding their children, should be seated next to the aisle so that the priest or deacon will be able to anoint the children with the oil of catechumen.

For the Liturgy of the Word, one reader (a volunteer chosen by the baptismal coordinators) reads from the Old Testament or New Testament. After the priest or deacon proclaims a Gospel he gives a short homily. A second reader will lead the intercessions. Unless the priest or deacon indicates otherwise, he leads the Litany of Saints.

When it is time for the pouring of water for each child, the priest, deacon or baptismal coordinator goes to where the child and his or her party is seated and invites the child, parents, godparents and honorary godparents (i.e., those other than the godparents of record) to come forward around the font. Grandparents and other close family members and friends also may be included in this group if the total number is reasonable. (There should be no more than ten people other than parents and godparents of record standing in close proximity to the font.) For the pouring of the water, one of the parents, not the godparents, holds the child over the font. The parent not holding the child and the godparents of record stand in close proximity to the child (the presider will guide the parents and godparents on exactly where to stand). The presider may also ask that the parent not holding the child and the godparents of record lay hands on the child while he or she is being baptized. In addition to the number standing in close proximity to the font (parents, godparents, honorary godparents, etc.), no more than two persons may take photographs or videotape a baptism in the area immediately surrounding the font. Photographers and videographers should position themselves so that they do not disrupt the liturgy and in accordance with the presider's instructions. Others may take photographs or videotape the liturgy from their seats in the assembly. Flash photography is allowed; video lights are not. Parents, godparents, honorary godparents and others (grandparents, close friends, etc.) standing in close proximity to the font may not take photographs or videotape – presumably, if they are standing in such an honored position, they have an important role to play. Therefore, they should be directing their full

attention to fulfilling that role and not be distracting themselves and others by taking photographs or videotaping the liturgy.

Although infants normally are not baptized by immersion at St. Pius, if a parent so requests, the presiding priest or deacon should be consulted well ahead of time so that the possibility can be discussed. The logistics of baptizing an infant by immersion would have to be discussed in advance by the priest or deacon, the baptismal coordinators and the parents.

After the pouring of water, a baptismal coordinator leads each child and his or her parents and godparents of record into the sanctuary for the explanatory rites (anointing with chrism, etc.), placing them on the assembly side of the altar facing the assembly. At the lighting of the baptismal candles from the paschal candle, the godparents (generally godfathers) lighting the candles are instructed to stand on the brick floor just outside the sanctuary.

Other than standing around the font during the pouring of water, the honorary godparents have no other special role in the liturgy. For example, only the godparents of record, not the honorary godparents, answer the various questions during the liturgy (in the opening rites, renewal of baptismal promises, etc.). Only the godparents of record stand in the sanctuary with the children and parents after the pouring of water.

Presiders usually stay for a time after the liturgy to pose with the newly baptized and their parents, godparents, family and friends. If requested, Presiders will also bless religious articles at this time.