

Infant Baptism Preparation for Parents

For parents of children who have not yet reached their seventh birthday.

English Program

Our Catholic family warmly welcomes and supports those who are seeking to be Christian parents through the sacrament of baptism, a gift of God to their children through the ministry of the Church. Parents are encouraged to prepare for the baptism of their child during pregnancy if possible, and should allow at least two months before the proposed date of baptism. At St. Mary Magdalene, preparation consists of a half-day retreat for parents of the child to be baptized. Both parents must attend the baptism retreat before the baptism will be scheduled. If this presents a hardship for your family, please let the Director know and we will strive to work with you. Godparents are not required by our archdiocese to participate. Babysitting is provided at each of the sessions.

When should we seek to have our child baptized?

Your parish family encourages you to attend class before your baby is born; however, you may attend the first available preparation session after we have received your registration and a courthouse-issued copy of your child's birth certificate. If the child is unborn the birth certificate will be required after birth. If your child is older (up until the seventh birthday), we welcome you to participate and have your child baptized as soon as possible. If the unbaptized child is seven years old or older, please call the parish office for more information about our RCIA program for children.

What is the session like? How long is it?

Our Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston requires a minimum of 4-6 hours of preparation. You will attend an afternoon-long retreat, offered monthly, except in July and December. The retreat consists of some informal time of sharing along with some basic teaching about the sacraments and the faith life of the Church. There is also practical instruction about how to prepare for your child's baptism day. We facilitate opportunities for you to explore your own faith experience and learn from other parents' experiences. All of this is done in a non-threatening and supportive environment. You will be invited to share your ideas, but no one will call on you unless you wish to speak. You **MUST** have turned in your registration form and birth certificate in order to have your name put on the list to attend class.

Do sponsors (godparents) have to attend?

No. By archdiocesan directives, sponsors are not required to attend the preparation, yet because they are promising to support the child as he/she grows in faith, they should attend Sunday Mass regularly, read carefully the support material provided, and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they enter into this important commitment. It is your job as parents, to read the

sponsor/godparent form carefully and make sure that the person(s) you have chosen meet the qualifications. Do not sign the sponsor form if you are not sure your godparents are eligible. We will discuss this at the retreat.

Do I have to attend preparation even if I have done this before?

Yes, you do. If you have a child to be baptized, you are required to attend. Preparation isn't just about baptism itself, it is about your promise to live your Christian life, and what that means in terms of *this moment* in your journey of faith with *this child*.

Do I have to be a parishioner in order to baptize here?

When a child is baptized, the parents make a solemn promise to raise the child to practice his/her faith. It is expected that the parents will bring the child to Mass each Sunday. The Church therefore presumes that in baptizing your child at St. Mary Magdalene, you will also be worshipping here and participating in the life of the community. If you are not a parishioner, we understand that there may be special reasons why you may want to have your child baptized at St. Mary Magdalene. If you are not a parishioner at here, Church law requires that you obtain a letter from the pastor at your home parish granting permission to have your child baptized at St. Mary Magdalene. If you live within our parish boundaries, you have a right to be served here whether you are registered in the parish or not, though we do encourage every family to register.

When are baptisms celebrated?

Our regularly-scheduled monthly baptisms in English are at 2:30 on Sunday afternoons. See current schedule for details. You may also request to have your child baptized at most any Sunday Mass. Check with our baptism scheduling secretary for details. Individual or "private" baptism may be scheduled only if a family has a truly urgent situation and only if a priest or a deacon is available for a specially requested date.

How do I get started?

To celebrate in English, you may download the registration form and the contents of the welcome packet from this site or pick up a folder at the parish office.

Parents are responsible for reading the Welcome Packet and following the directions it contains before attending the retreat. Most general questions can be answered by reading the information provided.

For Infant Baptism celebration in Spanish, see the Director for Hispanic Ministry. (Vickie Cortez: 281-446-8211)