

III. Baptism of Infants

17. Infants are considered those who have not yet reached the age of reason understood as seven years of age) and those who are not responsible for themselves. (Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition) ([canon, no.852](#))
18. Baptism of infants should be celebrated within weeks of their birth. ([canon, no. 867](#), §1)
19. **Preparation of Parents for the Baptism of an Infant**
The pastor, who is responsible to discern the existence of a “reasonable hope” that the child will be properly initiated into the Catholic faith by the commitment of its parents ([canon, no. 868](#)) should, with the assistance of a baptismal preparation team, prepare parents for the baptism of their infant. (Decree on Christian Initiation(DCI, Introduction)
20. In addition to the initial interview, at least one formal session of baptismal preparation should be provided by the parish community.
 - The baptism of a child offers a key moment in the evangelization of parents. Every effort should be made to ensure that the initial contact with the parish, the interview process, and the baptismal preparation are occasions of welcome, invitation and hospitality.
 - This process of preparation can begin even before the birth of the child.
 - The initial interview provides a time to discern the commitment of at least one parent or the person who lawfully takes the place of the parent to raise the child in the faith. It is also a time to guide parents in the selection of suitable godparents.
 - The preparation process should assist parents in assuming their role as primary catechists of their child.([canon, no.851](#),§2) This occasion should be viewed as an opportunity for evangelization, helping parents to grow in their commitment to Christ and their spiritual life beyond the current level of their faith understanding and commitment. The influential role of the grandparent as catechist may be taken into consideration during the preparation process.
 - A baptismal catechetical team should be comprised of catechists and other qualified persons.
21. **Content for Catechesis:** In preparation for the baptism of their infant, parents are expected to participate in the parish process of baptismal catechesis before the infant will be baptized.([canon, no.851](#),§2) An infant in danger of death is to be baptized without delay.([canon, no.867](#),§2)

22. The parish should present baptismal catechesis which
- Teaches that Baptism (1) is the foundation of the Christian life because it is the journey into Christ's death and Resurrection, which is the foundation of our hope; (2) gives sanctifying grace, that is, God's life; (3) gives them a new birth in which they become children of God, members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit; (4) cleanses people from original sin and from all personal sins; (5) incorporates them into the life, practices, and mission of the Church; and (6) imprints on their souls an indelible character that consecrates them for Christian worship and is necessary for salvation in the case of all those who have heard the Gospel and have been able to ask for this sacrament (*see Catechism of the Catholic Church* [\(CCC\), no. 1257](#))
 - Teaches that through Baptism we receive a share in the mission of Christ as king, priest, and prophet
 - Teaches that Baptism “symbolizes the catechumen’s burial into Christ’s death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as ‘a new creature’” ([CCC, no. 1214](#))
 - Teaches that Baptism is “the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit...and the door which gives access to the other sacraments” ([CCC, no. 1213](#))
 - Teaches that through Baptism the faithful “share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission” ([CCC, no. 1268](#))
 - Teaches that “the Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*” (thus “the whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life has its root in baptism”)
 - “enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues”
 - “giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit”
 - “allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues” ([CCC, no. 1266](#))
 - Teaches that “having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us. From now on he is called to be subject to others, to serve them in the communion of the Church, and to ‘obey and to submit’ to the Church’s leaders, holding them in respect and affection” ([CCC, no. 1269](#)) . . .
 - Teaches that the ordinary minister for the Sacrament of Baptism is a priest or deacon . . . but that, in the case of necessity, any person [even a non-baptized person] who intends to do what the Church does can baptize by pouring water on the candidate’s head and saying the Trinitarian formula [“I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”] ([CCC, no. 1256, no. 1284](#)) (NDC, no.36:A1)
23. The catechesis should also include “a thorough explanation of the Rite of Baptism together with the fundamental signs and symbols that it employs: immersion in or the pouring of water, the words of the Trinitarian formula [“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”], and the anointing with oil” (NDC, no. 36:A1).

24. The pastor, catechetical leader, together in collaboration with catechists, should determine what resources should be used by referencing the [Catechism Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series](#) published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Subcommittee on the Catechism.
25. **Delay of Baptism:** Following the long-standing tradition, infants are baptized into the faith of the Church and should not be deprived of the Sacrament of Baptism. (Rite of Baptism, no. 2)
26. While it is possible to refuse Baptism, the sacrament is to be delayed if there is not a founded hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith. Parents should be advised of the reason for the delay ([canon, no. 868](#), §1,2) and offered help to remedy the cause of the delay.
27. In the case of single parents or parents in irregular marriages, baptism should not be delayed if there is a founded hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.
28. In cases of a pending [adoption](#), Baptism should be delayed until the adoption is finalized.
29. **Requirements for Godparents:** Godparents, together with parents, present the infant to the Church for Baptism. The selection of two godparents is customary, but only one – either male or female – is required for Baptism. If two godparents are chosen, one should be male and the other female. ([canon, no. 873](#))
 - A godparent must be a fully initiated Catholic (having received Baptism, Confirmation, and First Communion) and should have completed his/her sixteenth year unless the pastor makes an exception for a just cause. ([canon, no. 874](#), §1.2, §1.3)
 - A godparent must be a practicing Catholic, leading a life in harmony with the Catholic faith and the role of godparent. (canon, no. 874, §1.3, §1.4)
 - A Christian, baptized in another faith tradition, may not serve as godparent, but may serve as a Christian witness along with the Catholic godparent and should be recorded accordingly. (canon, no. 874, §2)
30. Parents take the responsibility for choosing a godparent(s) who will serve as a good example for living the Catholic way of life. As a mark of the continuity between Baptism and Confirmation, a godparent(s) may later serve as the sponsor of the child when she/he is confirmed. ([canon, no. 893](#), §2)
31. Where cultural practice involves multiple godparents, pastors may allow the family to have a number of people participate in the celebration as honorary/secondary godparents. However, the names of only one set of godparents, one male or one female or one of each, are recorded ([canon, no. 873](#)). The rest may be listed on the reverse side of the Baptismal Certificate as “secondary” or “honorary” grandparents. Only those names recorded in the baptismal book will appear on any certificates issued after the initial certificate is given.