

## Baptism at St. Jerome and St. James Parishes

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us 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. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as children of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: 'Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.'" (1213)

The sacrament is called baptism from the Greek language meaning "plunge" or "immerse." Through the plunge or immersion into water, the burial into Christ's death and promised resurrection are celebrated.



Because baptism is the first sacrament of initiation, when one becomes a member of the Church through water and the Word, it is essential that the local Church be represented. Therefore baptisms at our parishes normally takes place within the context of Sunday

Eucharist when the community is more fully gathered in prayer. In this way the entire faith community embraces the newly baptized as one of the fold.

For the baptism of infants and children, it is necessary to have the consent of the parents or guardians.

Further, the Church reminds us of the importance of parents in the formation of the children in the ways of faith. It states, "For the licit [lawful] baptism of an infant, it is necessary that there be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion." (Canon 868.2)

Because parents are the primary teachers of their children in the ways of faith, when infants and children are presented to the Church for baptism, it is the parents who must be actively living their faith. Evidence of this practice includes what the Church calls precepts. First among these is participation at the Sunday Mass on a weekly basis. This is the Lord's Day for the Christian. It is kept holy by celebrating the Memorial Meal and Sacrifice given to us by Jesus: the Eucharist. Through this sacrament we are strengthened and nourished to live our baptismal faith.

For those parishioners wishing to celebrate the baptism of an infant, a pre-baptismal preparation session is required. These sessions are scheduled every other month, and should be completed prior to the birth of a child. It is necessary to call the parish office at (618) 667-6571 in advance to register for a session. Pre-baptismal sessions are normally scheduled on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in the basement of the church (St. Joseph Hall). It is very important that both parents (Catholic and non-Catholic) attend the session. Godparents are welcome to attend as well.

Godparents must be Catholic, at least 16 years old, already confirmed and have received Eucharist. Testimony, from the pastor(s) of the Catholic godparent(s) to their active participation in the faith, is required two weeks prior to the date of baptism. While two may be chosen, only one Catholic godparent is required. A person of another Christian faith may be chosen as a Christian witness to the baptism.

