

# Sacrament of Baptism

*“Baptism, the gateway to the sacraments, is necessary for salvation, either by actual reception or at least by desire. By it people are freed from sin, are born again as children of God and, made like to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by a washing in real water with the proper form of words.”* (Can. 849, The Code of Canon Law)

## **When are Baptisms Celebrated?**

Baptism is usually celebrated at St. Benedict’s Church, Smithfield on the first and the third Sunday of each month at **11.30 am**.

Exceptions to these times may occur during the First Holy Communion time (i.e. November).

Parents are obliged to see that infants are baptized within the first weeks after birth. (cf. can. 867) In case of urgency (i.e. a child’s illness), a Baptism may take place anytime.

The possibility to baptise a child in St. Gertrude’s Parish exists for actual parishioners of this Parish.

**If parents are from an other Parish a letter of permission from the parents’ current Parish Priest is required.**

## **How to Choose a Baptismal Name**

*“Parents, sponsors and parish priests are to take care that a name is not given which is foreign to Christian sentiment.”* (Can. 855).

A name of a Christian saint should be given to the child, either as a first or second name, or both. This saint then becomes the patron saint of the child. Information about Christian names and saints is available at the following sites:

[www.newadvent.org/cathen/10673c.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10673c.htm)  
[www.catholic-forum.com/saints/index.htm](http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/index.htm)  
[www.catholicdoors.com/misc/names.htm#names1](http://www.catholicdoors.com/misc/names.htm#names1)

## **Who can celebrate Baptism?**

The present Parish Priest, the assistant priest are the normal ministers of Baptism. However, special arrangements may be made for relatives who are clergy to celebrate Baptism. Prior permission from the Parish Priest must be obtained for outside clergy to perform the sacrament.

## **Preparing for Baptism**

All parents are asked to attend a Baptismal Preparation Class before their child is baptized. These are held on the Tuesday before the date of Baptism at 6:45 pm in the Parish House (8 Justin Street, Smithfield - the yellow house next to the Presbytery). We ask Parents to bring **a copy** of the child’s Birth Certificate and the completed enclosed “Baptismal Application Form”.

The preparation class is important for the information it provides regarding the ceremony and for a broader understanding of the significance of the Sacrament of Baptism.

### **Role of Parents in Baptism**

- At least one parent or responsible guardian must give consent to the baptism of the child.
- There must be a “founded hope” that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion. This means that the parents demonstrate their commitment to insure that the child receives the sacraments and be instructed in the Catholic faith.
- At least one of the parents must be a practicing Catholic.

### **Role of Godparents in Baptism**

Along with parents, a godparent/sponsor is to present the child at baptism, to assist the parents in raising the child in the Catholic faith and to serve as a role model, according to the General Introduction to Christian Initiation. The Code of Canon Law suggests, but does not require, that the sponsor for baptism also be the sponsor for confirmation.

There are five qualifications a godparent/sponsor must meet, according to the Code of Canon Law (Can. 874):

- Be chosen by the parents or guardians of the child, or, in their absence, by the Parish Priest or minister of the sacrament
- Normally must be at least 16 years old
- Have received the sacraments of **Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation** and be a Catholic of good standing, leading a life in harmony with the faith
- Be someone other than the child’s parents
- Not be bound by any penalty imposed by the Church

### **How many godparents can a person have?**

According to canon 873, one godparent/sponsor, male or female, is sufficient, but there may be two (or more). **If you choose two or more godparents/sponsors for your child then they must not all be of the same sex. (Can. 873)**

### **Can a Christian who is not a Catholic serve as a godparent?**

A non-Catholic cannot serve as a godparent/sponsor (according to canon 874, §2), but he or she can participate in the baptism as a witness. However, it remains the responsibility of the Catholic godparent/sponsor to ensure a Christian upbringing for the child, according to the New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law.

If a non-Catholic, Christian witness is chosen, the other godparent/sponsor must be a practicing Catholic.