



*The Linked Parishes of:*  
**Church of the Sacred Heart, Bay Head, NJ**  
**St. Pio of Pietrelcina Church, Lavallette, NJ**  
Administrative Offices: 103 Washington Avenue  
Lavallette, NJ 08735  
732-793-7291    [office@stpioparish.com](mailto:office@stpioparish.com)

## BAPTISM GUIDELINES

Congratulations and best wishes as you celebrate the gift of new life. It is with joy that the Church receives your child as a candidate into the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is the great Sacrament of Initiation which makes us children of God and children of the Church. Baptism is the beginning of your child's faith life. A life, that will be filled with the love of God. In presenting your child for Baptism, you assume the duty of training your child by word and example to love God and neighbor, and to be faithful members of the Church.

Please make note of the following guidelines for Baptism:

- Because Baptism brings your child into membership of the Parish Community, parents are encouraged to register as parishioners of the parish, if they are not already parishioners. A Registration form is attached (if needed).
- **FIRST TIME** parents must both attend a Baptism Prep Class. You will receive a call from Deacon Jim & Barbara Turro to arrange your attendance at our next class. Classes are held at Sacred Heart Church in Bay Head one evening per month. If you cannot attend our class, you may attend one at another Catholic Church; please present to us a letter stating you attended an alternate class, noting the date and place of the class.
- **GODPARENTS:** The Church views Godparents as a religious responsibility (not a social role) as they assume their role in the faith formation of their Godchild. So please be conscious of these guidelines as you choose Godparents for your child. The Church gives specific guidelines for Godparents. All Catholics acting as Godparents must:
  - Be sixteen (16) years of age or older.
  - Have received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation
  - If married, the marriage must have been celebrated by a Catholic Priest or Deacon in a Catholic Church (or received a dispensation).
  - They are to be Catholics in good standing – practicing their faith.
- One certified Catholic in good standing must be present at the ceremony. If more than one godparent, there must be one man and one woman. If the Godparent cannot be physically present at the ceremony, they may be represented by a Proxy.

See other side →

- Godparents must present a **Certificate of Eligibility (a/k/a Sponsor Form)** issued from the Church ***where they are registered***. This is to be brought to the parish office **2 weeks before** the date of the Baptism. Failure to do so will result in rescheduling of the baptism until you can obtain the proper forms. Please note the following alternatives:
  - If you have chosen a Godparent who fulfils the requirement, but for some reason cannot obtain a Certificate of Eligibility, they can come to our parish office, in person, and sign and have witnessed an Affidavit form for Baptism Sponsor that will be substituted for the missing Sponsor Form.
  - If you find difficulty finding someone eligible to be your child's Godparent, the priest can fulfill the role of Godparent for your child or we can provide one of our staff or church volunteers. If you would like this option, please let us know at least one week before the baptism date.
- **Non-Catholics:** If you request a non-Catholic to be involved in the Baptism, he/she must be a baptized Christian. Non-Catholics are called Christian Witnesses, not Godparents. Catholics who do not meet the listed requirements may **not** be Christian Witnesses. They should be faithful in the practice of their faith. Please see the attached FAQ's re: The Role of the Christian Witness in Catholic Baptism

#### **BAPTISM DAY:**

- Baptism Ceremonies are generally scheduled on Sunday at 12:00noon. They **do not** occur in the context of a Mass. Note: our last Sunday Mass is at 10:30am.
- Everyone should gather at church about 10 minutes before the start of the ceremony.
- The ceremony will last about 30-45 minutes (depending on the number of children being baptized that day, we limit the number of babies to no more than 4)
- Feel free to bring whatever is necessary to make your child comfortable during the Baptism ceremony.
- Family members and guests are cordially invited.
- A free-will donation for the Church helps to offset the cost of the Liturgy. Your generosity is appreciated. A Donation envelope is attached.

Thank you and God bless you as you plan this memorable day in the life of your child and family.

Attached:      Parish registration form  
                     Baptism donation envelope  
                     FAQ re: The Role of the Christian Witness in Catholic Baptism

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
*regarding*  
***THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS***  
***IN CATHOLIC BAPTISM***

Q. 1. What are the conditions regarding the admission of a Christian Witness to the baptism of a Catholic child?

A. 1. The Christian Witness, as the Godparent / Sponsor, must meet some conditions.

- He cannot be a Catholic. (A ex-Catholic is still a Catholic, one who is under canonical penalty, having been excommunicated, therefore not in good standing with the Catholic Church.)
- He must be at least 16 years of age.
- He must be validly baptized. (A baptized person who belongs to a non-catholic ecclesial community may be admitted only in company with a Catholic Sponsor, and then simply as a witness to the baptism.) [Canon # 874.2]
- He must be living an upright life.
- He cannot be the mother or the father of the person to be baptized. [Canon Law # 874.1.5]
- He cannot labor under a canonical penalty, whether imposed or declared. [Canon # 874.1.4] (This means he cannot be an ex-Catholic who was automatically or publicly excommunicated because of his support or practice of abortions, heresies, etc...)

Q. 2. What are the expectations of a Christian Witness?

A. 2. First it is necessary to understand the role of the Godparent / Sponsor.

According to Canon Law # 872, "In so far as possible, a person being baptized is to be assigned a Sponsor. In the case of an adult baptism, the Sponsor's role is to assist the person in Christian initiation. In the case of an infant baptism, the role is, together with the parents, to present the child for baptism, and to help it to live a Christian life befitting the baptized and faithfully to fulfil the duties inherent in baptism."

In simple words, a Godparent, over and above being an example of how a Catholic should live his faith, takes responsibility for the religious education and spiritual

formation of the baptized person. He represents the Catholic Church and the faith community into which the person is being baptized.

The Christian Witness, although he may be a very holy Christian, cannot fully attest to the teachings of the Catholic Church. He cannot be an example of how a Catholic should live his faith through the Sacraments when he is not a Catholic. He cannot represent the Catholic Church and the faith community when he does not belong to the Catholic Church and one of its faith communities.

A Christian Witness cannot give what he does not have.

So what is expected of the Christian Witness? As a person witnesses a car accident, the Christian Witness attests, by his presence at the ceremony, to the fact that the baptized person did receive the Sacrament of Baptism. That is it!

Q. 3. Since such is the case, should a person chose a Christian Witness for the Sacrament of Baptism?

A. 3. Many Catholic parents are under the impression that should they die before their child reaches adulthood, their chosen Christian Witness will raise their child as a Catholic. They fail to realize that a Christian Witness is not a Godparent / Sponsor. He is just a witness!

As a Certified pilot is not qualified to teach University and vice-versa, a baptized non-Catholic from any religion is not qualified to teach the Catholic faith to anyone's child. If they were qualified, they would have converted years ago to the Catholic faith and would be referred to as a Godparent, not a Christian Witness, or a baptized Christian from another religion.

I have yet to find one non-Catholic who has raised a child as a Catholic! You cannot pass on to another person the faith, knowledge and understanding that you do not possess.

Parents are accountable to God regarding the soul of their child(ren) that has/have been placed in their care. Should they entrust the salvation of their child to a Godparent / Sponsor or to a Christian Witness? Which one is most likely to guide the child in the One, True, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church?

© Catholic Doors Ministry

Frequently Asked Questions: What is a Christian Witness? ([catholicdoors.com](http://catholicdoors.com))