



The Sacrament of Baptism
at
Prince of Peace

A word of welcome

You are reading this booklet because you have made a request of Prince of Peace to have your child baptized in the Catholic faith. The Church rejoices when her little ones are brought into her life to become children of God and heirs to heaven. A new creature is added to the Kingdom, and the Church increases her family. When the LORD Jesus ascended into heaven, he charged his apostles, the first bishops and priests, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.*¹ The word *disciple* means learner. The Church seeks to make everyone a learner of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and she does so by making new Christians and forming them in the faith. When the Rite of Baptism starts, the celebrant asks a question to the parents presenting the child for baptism: *What do you ask of the Church of God?* The answer is baptism or faith. Baptism is a pledge that one believes in the teaching of Christ and wishes to impart it. Just as your child was born naturally of a mother and a father, now you can give that child the opportunity to be reborn supernaturally with God as Father and the Catholic Church as Mother and Teacher.

The two greatest gifts that we can give our children are life and faith. Thank you for wanting to give your precious one both!

Father Christopher Smith

What Baptism is *not*

Sometimes people ask baptism for the child because they think it is a rite of passage to celebrate a birth, to give thanks to God for the birth and dedicate the child to Him. The Church actually has a blessing called “churching” for this purpose, which can be celebrated during or apart from the baptism.² But that’s not baptism. Others think that it is important for a child to be baptized because it introduces them to the Judeo-Christian basis of our Western civilization. While it certainly does that, baptism is much more. Finally, many people seek baptism for their children because it is a tradition in their family, and other family members would be upset if the child were not baptized. Baptism is a beautiful tradition and it is a great way for families to be united around something special, but asking for baptism only for that reason is not sufficient reason for the Church to baptize a child.

Baptism: Doorway to the Seven Sacraments

¹ Matthew 28.19-20

² This is called *presentación* in Spanish

Jesus Christ gave His Catholic Church seven *sacraments*, external rites, which produce a special grace that they signify. These sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick. Each one is an encounter with God who does something in the soul. Baptism is the doorway to all seven sacraments. No other sacrament can be validly received unless a person has already been baptized. Often the font where the Rite of Baptism is celebrated is at the entrance to the church, since by that sacrament a child enters the family of the Church and can receive other sacraments as well.

Water and the Holy Spirit

*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.*³ Jesus teaches us that we cannot come to His Father except by Him, and the way to come to Him is by being reborn of water and the Spirit. We all know what it means to sin, to fall short of what God wants for us. We also know that *the wages of sin is death.*⁴ Sin separates us from God and merits for us eternal punishment. When Adam and Eve committed the first, or Original Sin, they caused death to enter the world. As a result, all of us experience *concupiscence*, a disordered inclination to sin. Yet God loves us and wants us to be with Him, so He gives us a sacrament that cleanses us from sin and gives us grace to overcome the effects of sin and concupiscence.

Because water cleanses the body, we use water in baptism to symbolize the cleansing of the soul. But the washing of baptism is no mere symbol. It brings into reality what it signifies. Cleansing of the soul accompanies the cleansing of the body because, even though the water is poured by a human hand, the Holy Spirit effects the spiritual cleansing of the baptized. In all of the sacraments, the Holy Spirit uses material elements and human agents to bring about a spiritual reality. Because nothing unclean can enter the presence of God,⁵ baptism is necessary to be saved. It is so necessary, that even should a person die before baptism who desired it, or who shed his blood for Christ, the very desire for baptism on the part of the person is considered to be baptism as well.

Sacrament of Regeneration

Baptism is first of all a sacrament of regeneration: it takes what in human nature has been wounded by sin and gives it new life. Supernatural divine life replaces mere natural human life in the baptism. The baptized is truly reborn, raised with Christ from death just as He rose from the dead. *Baptism . . . now saves you, not as a*

³ John 3,5, John 14,6

⁴ Romans 6,23

⁵ cf. Revelation 20,27

*removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*⁶

Sacrament of Initiation

Baptism is also a sacrament of initiation. Saint Paul in Romans 11 uses the image that we are grafted onto Christ by baptism and faith. We become members of Christ's Body, the Church. By baptism we enter the Catholic Church and have all of the rights and responsibilities of the lay faithful. The baptized are *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart.*⁷ Any baptized person is a Catholic Christian unless he begins to profess what is contrary to Catholic teaching.

Sacramental Character

Baptism imprints on the soul a special character. The baptized is given the ability to worship God as a member of His Church. By baptism, a Christian becomes a child of God and an heir to heaven. Even when we sin and lose God's grace because of our transgression, that does not take away our baptism. Baptism cannot be repeated, for once God has made a covenant with us to save us, He cannot take that away. If we are baptized and we remain faithful to Him, then we are assured of a crown of righteousness when we pass from this life to the next.

Who can baptize?

The bishop of the diocese in which you reside or the pastor of the parish of which you are a member has the right and should also have the great joy to baptize the members of his parish. He can delegate that right to another priest or deacon within the parish or in another parish for a serious reason. Because baptism is so important, where there is a state of emergency, like the child's possible death, anyone, even if he is not a Christian, can baptize validly by applying water to someone's head and saying, *I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* Such baptisms should be reported to the nearest parish immediately.

Sometimes families have a friend who is a Catholic priest or deacon from a different parish whom they want to celebrate the baptism. If the baptism is to take place in our parish, the celebrant of the baptism must provide an authentic copy of his *celebret*⁸ and a letter of good standing from his bishop dated within six months of the actual baptism date along with the other documentation required of the parents

⁶ I Peter 3,21

⁷ I Peter 2,9

⁸A *celebret* is a document from a priest's diocese stating that he is permitted to perform the sacraments.

for the baptism. Such a celebration of a baptism by a cleric not from the parish is not to take place during the regularly scheduled parish baptism times and must be scheduled through the Director of Baptismal Preparation and the parish office's scheduler.

Who can be baptized?

An adult who has not already been baptized may present himself for a period of preparation called the *catechumenate* at his local parish, after which he may be baptized, generally at Easter. Children who have not already been baptized may be presented by their parents or legal guardians for baptism when they have fulfilled all of the parish's pre-requisites for baptism. In order to have their child baptized, the parents or legal guardians must demonstrate that they are able to raise the child in the Catholic faith and also promise to do so. Apart from an emergency, children under the age of reason cannot be baptized except by their parents' consent. When parents are not practicing the faith or are living in a marriage situation contrary to the faith, the parish will encourage them to regularize their marriage situation as well as demonstrate a real practice of the faith as part of the preparation for their child's baptism. Because baptism is a sacrament of faith and the parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith, a child cannot be baptized if there is no reasonable belief on the part of the pastor that the child will be raised in the faith. Older children who spontaneously ask for baptism and are able to be prepared for it can be baptized if there is a reasonable belief that the child will be able to practice the faith. Sometimes children grow up in homes where neither parent is a practicing Catholic. In those situations, the individual(s) presenting the child for baptism should speak with the pastor to discern how the child can be raised in the faith.

A pastor or his delegate cannot baptize a person who is not a member of his parish except by special permission of the pastor of the parish were the person is a member. The pastor of Prince of Peace will also not baptize a child whose Catholic parent has not been a registered, active and contributing member of the parish attending Mass on Sundays and holy days and using the envelope system for Mass attendance and contribution records for at least six months, except for grave reasons or as set forth below. "Church-hopping" between parishes to find a more amenable policy is discouraged.

If you have recently moved to the parish, but need to have your child baptized before you have spent at least six months as an active, registered and contributing member of the parish, you must provide a letter signed by the pastor of your previous parish that you were indeed an active, registered and contributing member of your previous parish for at least six months prior to your registration at our parish.

When should we have our child baptized?

A child should be baptized at the first reasonable opportunity after the birth of the child. It is gravely sinful to delay baptism for light reasons, like waiting for certain relatives to be present at the rite or to coincide with a day special to the family. It is advisable to sign up in advance for the regularly scheduled parish baptisms closest to the projected due date for the child.

Where should we have our child baptized?

Baptisms normally take place in the family's parish church, as a child should be baptized in the parish where his parents are members. If a parent wishes a child to be baptized in another Catholic parish, the pastor will gladly cooperate with a family's wish to do so provided that the pastor in whose parish the baptism is to take place consents.

If you are not a member of our parish, but wish to have your baptism here, you must include with the Registration Form a certified letter from your pastor giving the pastor of our parish or his delegate permission to baptize your child as well as a certificate of having completed the baptismal preparation requirements required by your parish. If the celebrant is not a priest or deacon from our parish, he must provide a copy of his *celebret* and a letter of good standing from his bishop to be included in your Registration Form. If you wish a specific member of the parish clergy to celebrate the baptism, you must make a written request to him personally. Non-Catholic ministers do not celebrate or participate in the celebration of baptisms in this parish.

Responsibilities of Parents to Baptized Children

When a Catholic marries, he promises to raise any children in the Catholic faith. That solemn promise before God is repeated in written form as part of the baptismal registration packet as well as verbally during the Rite of Baptism. Because at baptism a child becomes not only a member of the Catholic Church but also becomes subject to all of the laws of the Church, it is important that the child be raised in the faith to know what his rights and responsibilities are as a Catholic as well as to have a deeper relationship with God.

What responsibilities do Catholic parents have towards their baptized children?

"Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the

primary and principal educators.”⁹ They must first of all be models of Catholic life and practice. They must not only provide for their children to receive the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist and encourage them to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, but they must also worship at Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation with their children, pray with them, and provide for their religious education. Catholic parents are obligated to provide a Catholic education for their children. Where they can enroll their children in a Catholic parochial school, they should do so. Where they are unable to do so, they should enroll the children in any religious education programs offered by the parish every year as long as the children are in their care. Their solemn promise to raise their children in the faith obligates parents to create a home and a lifestyle in which the faith can be taught, lived and loved. The Church is a great resource for helping families come closer to Christ and grow in their faith, but the ultimate responsibility lies with the parents.

Sometimes one parent is Catholic and the other is not. The Catholic party promised to raise the child in the faith, so it belongs to the Catholic parent to fulfill all of the pre-requisites for the baptism of the child, although the non-Catholic party is warmly encouraged to be a part of the whole process of preparation and to attend the baptism. We also encourage non-Catholic spouses to attend our Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes along with their spouse to learn more about their spouse and child’s Catholic faith.

Sometimes parents have left the practice of the faith and the baptism of their child is the occasion for their return to the faith. We joyfully welcome them back and invite them to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance as soon as possible. We do ask that a family be registered, active and contributing members of the parish for six months before enrollment in our Baptismal Preparation Class, unless they come from another parish that can provide them with a letter of good standing that they were registered, active and contributing members of their former parish for at least six months.

Sometimes parents have left the practice of the faith and the baptism of their child is the occasion for their return to the faith. We joyfully welcome them back and invite them to avail themselves of the Sacrament of Penance as soon as possible. We do ask that a family be registered, active and contributing members of the parish for six months before enrollment in our Baptismal Preparation Class, unless they come from another parish that can provide them with a letter of good standing that they were registered, active and contributing members of their former parish for at least six months.

⁹ Vatican Council II, (1965) *Gravissimum Educationis* [Declaration on Christian education]

Occasionally parents who have been married outside of the Church request baptism for their child. The parish will encourage them to commence the process of having their marriage regularized, if possible, so that the family can worship God together. Those parents will be contacted by the Director of Baptism Preparation and by the parish clergy to discuss how the Church can help in the regularization of the marriage, whether it includes the *annulment* of a previous marriage or the *convalidation* of the current civil marriage. When parents who are living together but not married ask for the baptism of their child, the Director of Baptism Preparation and the parish clergy will call on them to discuss how the Church can help them to either prepare for the Sacrament of Matrimony or discuss how the child can be raised within the Church and to offer any assistance the Church may provide. All that applies to parents also applies to legal guardians. However, we delay the baptism of children who are in the care of those who are not legal guardians or parents until permission can be had from a parent or legal guardian.

Baptism Preparation

Each parish has slightly different requirements for what is expected of parents offering their child for baptism. This parish requires first of all that parents read this little book and sign and return the Covenant of Understanding as well as the Registration Form for the baptismal class to the Director of Baptism Formation as soon as possible before a proximate date for the baptism. After these forms are reviewed by the Director of Baptism Formation, you will be invited to attend a baptismal preparation class. You may also be asked to make an appointment with the Director of Baptism Formation and/or one of the parish priests to get to know you better. All parents who have not already had a child baptized in this parish are required to take this class, and those who have are encouraged to take this class. After the class, you will have an opportunity to schedule the baptism with the Director of Baptism Formation. Ordinarily, the pastor of Prince of Peace delegates baptisms to the deacons of the parish. Should you wish one of the parish priests to do the baptism, you must coordinate that with the priest himself and the Director of Baptism Formation.

In this parish, we provide for the celebration of Baptism in Latin or English in the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite as well as in Latin in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

Selection of Godparents

At the baptism, there are generally two godparents or *sponsors*. The role of these sponsors is to assist the parents in the religious education of the children. Because the children are baptized into the Catholic Church, one sponsor must be a practicing Catholic in full communion with the Catholic Church, sixteen or older, having

received Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. This sponsor must complete the appropriate form which is found with your Baptismal Registration Form also provide a letter from his or her pastor attesting that the person is indeed a practicing Catholic in good standing. Because sponsors serve as an example of how to live the faith, someone who is not in communion with the Church cannot serve as a sponsor. Sometimes a sponsor is unavailable for the baptism, in which case a proxy is appointed who stands in for the sponsor at the Rite of Baptism. Families can have other Christian witnesses at the baptism who may belong to other Christian communities, but they may not serve as sponsors. One sponsor is sufficient, but there may be two sponsors: one male, the other female.

Naming my Child

Catholics always look to the saints for inspiration, which is why they name their children after saints or Biblical figures. As Pope Benedict XVI stated, "Every baptized child acquires the character of the son of God, beginning with their Christian name, an unmistakable sign that the Holy Spirit causes man to be born anew in the womb of the Church." Nonetheless, it is permitted to use a name which is not of a saint, as long as it is not a name which is anti-Catholic, pagan, or something which could cause scandal. It is recommended that such a name be paired with a name from the Catholic tradition. If you are looking for an appropriate Christian name, please see www.catholicity.com/names.

The Rite of Baptism

On the day of the Baptism, it is important for families and guests to arrive early. They should be asked beforehand to dress modestly, preserve a reverent silence in the church, and leave all cell phones and noisy toys in their cars. The child should be dressed appropriately (traditionally in a white gown) with no head covering, and with an easy opening to the chest, which the celebrant anoints during the rite. Videos and photos may be taken during the baptism as long as they do not interrupt the dignity of the sacrament.

The Rite of Baptism opens with a series of questions in which parents and godparents ask the Church for baptism and give the name to their child. An exorcism by which the Devil is expelled is then performed followed by an anointing of the child's chest with the oil of catechumens to strengthen him against the assaults of the Evil One. After a reading from Scripture and a brief instruction from the celebrant, the parents and godparents are asked a series of questions in which they renounce evil and profess their faith. The water is blessed if it was not already, and then the child is baptized, held face up over the font, usually by the godfather. After the actual baptism, the child is anointed with the fragrant oil of chrism as a sign of the beauty of his newly purified soul. The child may then be given white

garment to be placed over their baptismal gown and the godparents light a candle from the large Easter candle. The celebrant may also perform the rite called the *Ephephthah*, calling on God to open the ears and mouth of the new Christian to receive and transmit the Word of God.¹⁰ ¹⁰At the end of the service, the celebrant calls down the blessing of God upon parents, godparents and guests and can then bless any religious articles destined as gifts to the child. Photos are taken and the family rejoices in the baptism of a new child of God.

Many families choose to have receptions or parties after the baptism. Please contact the parish if you would like to use one of the parish facilities for such a party. It is also customary, but not required, to give an appropriate financial gift to the parish and/or the celebrant of the baptism, while it is understood that there is no charge for any sacrament.

After the Baptism: Enlightened Christian Life

Baptism is the beginning of a journey of faith that lasts for all eternity. The family is asked during the Rite of Baptism to help the child keep the flame of faith burning brightly throughout his life and to help him keep unstained the white baptismal garment which signifies the purity of the soul. In Baptism Christ gives light to the soul, dispelling the darkness of sin. It is the beginning of a further, deeper initiation into the faith accompanied by prayer and religious education, and preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and Holy Communion. The ancient Christians called baptism the sacrament of illumination, and the remembrance of the grace received in baptism will always illuminate the way of the Christian disciple.

Celebrating the Baptism of Your Child

Every child anxiously looks forward to celebrating the day he was born. Catholic families must also celebrate the day of their baptisms when they were reborn of water and the Spirit. Celebrating baptismal anniversaries by lighting the candle received at baptism, holding a simple party, looking at pictures, and praying for the celebrant of your baptism are all ways to keep that day special.

Documentation of Baptism

After the baptism, the Director of Baptism Formation will send you a certificate of the child's baptism. The baptism will be registered in the parish's records. Whenever someone receives a sacrament, proof of baptism is needed. You can always call the parish where you were baptized and request that they issue an official certificate of baptism in case you need it, which you will when the child prepares for

¹⁰ Mark 7:31-37

First Communion, Confirmation, Holy Orders or Matrimony. It can also be a useful identification document. Please keep a copy of the certificate along with your important papers and frame the original for your child.

What do I do now?

After you have read this booklet, signed the Covenant of Understanding, filled out the Registration Forms and obtained any other documentation asked for in the Registration Forms, please bring it to the office or send it in an envelope to the following address:

*Director of Baptism Formation
Prince of Peace Catholic Church
1209 Brushy Creek Rd
Taylors, SC 29687*

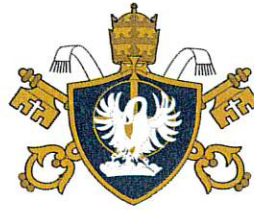
Afterwards, you will receive a phone call, letter and/or email with the list of scheduled baptismal preparation classes and a registration form for the class. After the class, you can schedule the actual baptism. If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Baptismal Formation for the parish. It is a great pleasure to have your family as part of our parish family. We are here to help you and yours come closer to Christ and grow in your Catholic faith. Please let us know how we can help you to do that!

Covenant of understanding to be signed by Catholic parents

I*, _____, parent of _____, have read the booklet *The Sacrament of Baptism at Prince of Peace*. I understand that I promise before God to raise my child in the Catholic faith. I have read and will comply with all of the pre-requisites mentioned in this book for my child to be baptized. I testify that I am a registered, active and contributing member of _____ parish in _____. I understand my obligations as a Catholic parent as described in this booklet and will fulfill them to the best of my ability. I also understand that scheduling the baptism depends on the availability of clergy and the church and is subject to change for serious reasons. I furthermore attest to the truth of all information contained in the Registration Form and any other written or oral correspondence with the parish, to the best of my ability. I also release the parish from any legal liability or responsibility for any accident that may happen during the preparation for and the celebration of the baptism of my child.

Signed

date



PRINCE of PEACE
Catholic Church & School
1209 Brushy Creek Road • Taylors, SC 29687
www.princeofpeacetaylors.net

Godparent Eligibility Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

I, _____, active member of _____
(Name of Sponsor) (Name of Parish)
testify, that by my answers and signature below, that I am capable to serve as a Godparent for
_____ **BAPTISM** _____ in the Catholic Church for _____
(Name of Candidate for Sacrament)

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- I am a practicing Catholic, regularly attend Catholic Mass, and receive the Eucharist.
- I am over the age of sixteen and have received the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- I am not a parent to the candidate who will receive the Sacrament.
- I understand and accept the obligations of a Godparent/Sponsor, to lead a life of faith, to pray, and assist my candidate in his/her spiritual growth.
- I regularly celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- I am **NOT** married **OR**
- I am in a recognized Catholic marriage (married in the Catholic Church or celebrated Convalidation of Marriage).

I hereby solemnly declare that I fulfill all the requirements and joyfully accept my role to act as a Godparent/Sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation.

Full Name of Godparent/Sponsor: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Current Address: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Email Address: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Phone Number: _____

Name of Godparent/Sponsor Parish: _____

Signature of Godparent/Sponsor: _____ Date: _____

For Parish use ONLY: This certifies that the above named person is known to me as a parishioner in good standing and that he/she is qualified to serve as a Godparent/Sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation.

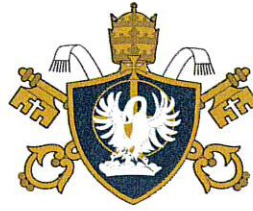


Church of Sponsor: _____

Church Address: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Pastor's Signature: _____ Date: _____



PRINCE of PEACE
Catholic Church & School
1209 Brushy Creek Road • Taylors, SC 29687
www.princeofpeacetaylors.net

Godparent Eligibility Form

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

I, _____, active member of _____
(Name of Sponsor) (Name of Parish)
testify, that by my answers and signature below, that I am capable to serve as a Godparent for
_____ in the Catholic Church for _____.
(Name of Candidate for Sacrament)

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

- I am a practicing Catholic, regularly attend Catholic Mass, and receive the Eucharist.
- I am over the age of sixteen and have received the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- I am not a parent to the candidate who will receive the Sacrament.
- I understand and accept the obligations of a Godparent/Sponsor, to lead a life of faith, to pray, and assist my candidate in his/her spiritual growth.
- I regularly celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- I am **NOT** married **OR**
- I am in a recognized Catholic marriage (married in the Catholic Church or celebrated Convalidation of Marriage).

I hereby solemnly declare that I fulfill all the requirements and joyfully accept my role to act as a Godparent/Sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation.

Full Name of Godparent/Sponsor: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Current Address: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Email Address: _____

Godparent/Sponsor Phone Number: _____

Name of Godparent/Sponsor Parish: _____

Signature of Godparent/Sponsor: _____ Date: _____

For Parish use ONLY: This certifies that the above named person is known to me as a parishioner in good standing and that he/she is qualified to serve as a Godparent/Sponsor for the Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation.



Church of Sponsor: _____

Church Address: _____

Pastor's Name: _____

Pastor's Signature: _____ Date: _____