

INFANT BAPTISM POLICY
Revised May 2010

ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF LABRADOR WEST
LABRADOR CITY, NL - WABUSH, NL

This policy was adopted with input from our Pastors, Baptism Preparation Team and Pastoral Team members, adhering to the guidelines established by Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church.

A new baby in the family! How exciting! There are many things to consider at this joyous time in your family's life. Baptism is the primary spiritual consideration for Christians of the Roman Catholic faith. We hope that this brochure will be helpful in your decision making.

Q. I want to have my baby baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. What is the first step?

The first step is to call the parish office at 709-944-2289 or fill out an online form to register for Baptism Preparation. Our parish website is www.labcitybasilica.catholicweb.com We encourage you to have your child baptized within the first few weeks after birth.

Q. What is involved in Baptism Preparation?

When families desire to have their child welcomed into the faith community through the sacrament of Baptism, a period of preparation is required to familiarize them with the ceremony of Baptism as well as the commitment they are undertaking to raise their child in the Roman Catholic faith. Parents and godparents are required to attend two sessions:

- the first will be an evening session (without children please)
- the second session will take place following the 10 a.m. Sunday Mass or prior to the 7:00 pm. Sunday Mass (attendance at Mass is part of this session; if you require someone to look after your child/ren for this session, we can provide that in the Church facility)

As a follow-up to these preparation sessions, one of our priests or a member of the Pastoral Team will meet with both parents for an informal interview and discussion prior to the Baptism.

The whole process takes a minimum of four weeks so it would be a good idea to start it before the baby is born. Baptism preparation sessions are offered approximately once per month, with the exception of Lent. There are no sessions offered in July and August.

Q. When does Baptism take place?

Baptisms are scheduled within Mass on the last weekend of the month. (This is subject to change depending on parish activities or the availability of a priest.) In the case of emergency, the baptism should not be delayed. Please contact the priest or parish office (944-2289) if your child is gravely ill.

Q. Can we have a private Baptism?

The norm is to have a communal Baptism celebration. The sacrament of Baptism is the first of the sacraments of initiation into the Roman Catholic faith. This community would like to welcome you and to share in the privilege of raising your child in the faith. As such, the community is very much a part of this celebration.

Q. Can our baby have more than two godparents? Can we have two godfathers or godmothers instead of a godmother and a godfather?

The role of the godparents is purely a religious one. They are to accompany the child in the development of his/her faith. Canon 873 of the Code of Canon Law states that there will be only one godfather or only one godmother; or a godfather and a godmother. By specifying this, the analogy is made between natural parenthood and spiritual parenthood.

Q. Who can be godparents?

Since the godparents' role is to assist the parents in raising the child as a Catholic, their selection is a very important decision. Canon 874 states that to serve as a godfather or a godmother, the following conditions must be met:

- To have been chosen and to have the aptitudes and the intention to serve in the function of godparent
- To be at least 16 years of age
- To be a Catholic who has completed the Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) and who lives a life coherent with the faith.
- To be free from any canonical penalty imposed or declared
- To be neither the father nor the mother of the baptized

A baptized non-Catholic could serve with a Catholic godparent but will act as a * Christian witness to the baptism

*(meaning there would be one sponsor listed in the parish register and on the Baptism certificate; the other person would be listed as Christian witness)

Q. Can members of all Christian denominations serve as a Christian witness along with a Catholic godparent (sponsor)?

No. Only members of certain denominations may serve as Christian witnesses to a Catholic baptism – eg. Anglican, United, and others. These denominations believe in baptism conferred with flowing water accompanied by the Trinitarian formula – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If you are unsure about your desired sponsors' religious eligibility please contact the parish office.

Q. Is there anything else required of godparents prior to the Baptism?

Yes. By accepting the honour of being a godparent, they are consciously making a commitment to help you raise your child as a Catholic, so it is only fitting that we should help prepare them for this role. At least one godparent must attend a Baptism Preparation Session – either with you or at another time before the Baptism takes place. If they are from another parish, we would require a letter from their pastor stating that they have fulfilled this requirement. Also, godparents should provide a recent copy of their own Baptismal certificate indicating a notation of Confirmation. This could be obtained from their parish of Baptism.

Q. I am currently residing in another parish, but would like to have my baby baptized at Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Labrador City. What is required to make this happen?

We require a letter from your parish of residence stating: (a) you have attended Baptism Preparation sessions (b) your pastor grants permission for your child to be baptized in this parish. The requirements for godparents as previously indicated also apply.

Q. Can we have proxies for our godparents?

Yes; however, it is advisable that only one actual godparent be replaced at the ceremony by a proxy. If the godparent cannot be present for the Baptism, he or she may appoint another person to serve as proxy. It is not the parents who appoint a stand-in for their chosen godparent. The real godparent must give consent to the proxy; as proxies are merely stand-ins for the godparent they are listed as such in the parish register but the actual godparent will be identified as the sponsor.

Q. Are we allowed to take pictures during the Baptism?

Yes, but they should be limited to one designated photographer per family during the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism and should also be taken from a discreet distance. Following the ceremony, you may take other pictures with the priest, family members, etc. for a period of approximately 15 minutes. Due to the sanctity of the altar and its immediate surroundings, we ask that you respect and reverence this area by not going beyond the sanctuary steps to take pictures. Videos of the ceremony should also be limited and discreet.

Our aim is to provide the best possible understanding of the sacrament of Baptism for families and godparents, and to help you make this a truly spiritual experience of God's love. We wish you joy and blessings as you assume your new role as Christian guardians of the faith for your child.

“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them.” Mark 10:14