

GUIDELINES
for
FULL INITIATION:
Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
(for children of Catechetical age AND for Adults)

in the Parish of Saint Eugene
Asheville, North Carolina

Revised June 30, 2002

General Considerations:

1. The celebration of Baptism in the Catholic Church is not merely a cultural response or duty that is entered without preparation or reflection. Baptism is rather a radical moment that “frees us from darkness (RCIA n. 1)” and washes us into the life of the Kingdom of God. It is meant to introduce us to a process that will welcome us to a community that lives a life differently than the life of the world.
2. Baptism uses the rich symbol of water as a starting point. It challenges the new Christian and his or her family to see that the life that begins at the font unfolds as a “gateway” to life in the rest of the Church (CIC, 1983).

Who Can Celebrate Baptism?

Because Baptism is such an important reality in the life of the Church, The Parish of Saint Eugene responds to the Church’s theology and practice with these guidelines for celebrating the Baptism of children of catechetical age (age six and above) and of adults.

For Children of Catechetical Age:

a) Since Baptism also reflects a relationship with the Church, those who bring a child for Baptism are expected themselves to have a relationship with the Parish community. This relationship is articulated in three ways:

-membership in the Parish community (by registration).

-active participation in the life of the community through regular practice in worship as well as the tithing of your talent and treasure.

-an openness to participate in the preparation program before celebrating Baptism in the Parish

b) A child is prepared in a number of ways. These include the child’s regular Sunday School or Catholic elementary school religion programs and the additional “First Sacrament” programs offered in the Fall and the Spring of each year. In addition, as Lent begins, the child is initiated into a family based initiation program to more immediately prepare the individual for the sacraments.

c) The Baptism of children of catechetical age also includes the celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist so that the integrity of the initiatory sacraments can be celebrated and preserved. (NSC n. 11).

d) This celebration always takes place at the Easter Vigil, the night before Easter.

e) Children who are already baptized in another Christian tradition are not rebaptized. Their preparation is the same as (b) above. They will make a profession of faith, be Confirmed and receive First Eucharist at the time of their entrance into the church.

For Adults:

a) Throughout the year adults are invited into a process of inquiry to help them determine their readiness for the more immediate preparation for baptism in the Catholic Church.

b) Once an individual has completed the Inquiry cycle, that person is admitted to the Catechumenate (usually in the late Summer and again in the late Fall) This weekly, Sunday morning gathering prepares the adult for full initiation.

c) Adults are initiated at the Easter Vigil, the night before Easter, with the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

d) Adults who are already baptized in another Christian tradition are not rebaptized. Their preparation is similar to what is noted in (a) above and they are Confirmed and receive First Eucharist when they make their Profession of Faith.

Where and How Do We Celebrate Baptism?

1. Because Baptism is an action of the entire community and because we believe that no one is ever saved alone (L.G. n. 32), it is always celebrated in the Parish church and when the community gathers at the Eucharist.
2. In accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church since the restoration of the Rites of Initiation (1973), the preferred method of Baptism is by immersion. The current structure of our Baptismal pool accommodates the partial immersion of both infants and adults. Appropriate instruction will be given prior to the celebration of baptism in our pool. Usually this instruction occurs on Holy Saturday, at mid day.

When Do We Celebrate Baptism?

- a) In an emergency, the Sacraments of Initiation will be celebrated as soon as possible.
- b) Outside of an emergency, the Sacraments of Initiation - Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist - are celebrated at the same celebration and during the Easter Vigil.

Sponsors and Godparents?

Sponsors represent the whole Catholic community and pledge their support as the newly baptized grows in faith.

1. Generally, for children, there are two Sponsors. There is usually one for adults, although more are possible.
2. The church has some *preconditions* about Sponsors. These include:
 - You must designate them and they must be willing to assist your child in leading a Christian life.
 - They must be Catholics who are baptized and who have been Confirmed and have received first Eucharist.
 - They must lead a life in harmony with the faith and be regular in their practice by attending Mass in their Parish and receiving the Eucharist.
 - If they are not from the Parish of Saint Eugene, they must present a Sponsor Certificate from their home Parish that affirms these above preconditions.
3. Sponsors who cannot be present for a celebration can be represented by a Proxy. There are no preconditions for a proxy *but the person they represent must fulfill all the criteria listed above.*

What Do We Do Next?

1. Baptismal Preparation Programs are offered on a regular schedule by the Parish. You will find information concerning the next date in your Parish bulletin or you can call the church office at 254-5193 for details and for a reservation. Parents or children of catechetical age should plan to attend one of these sessions.

2. Adults should enter into the next cycle of the Inquiry Program where their questions will be answered and they will be prepared by prayer, discussion and discernment to enter into the Catechumenate. Information on the Inquiry program is in the Parish bulletin, or you can call the church office for details.

Other Considerations?

1. In a situation where spouses might be separated or divorced and where custody of a minor child is shared, both parties must agree to the celebration of Baptism. This is an important legal consideration that should never be overlooked when considering the public celebration of this or any Sacrament of Initiation.
2. There are no fees for the celebration of Baptism in the Parish of Saint Eugene.