

ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC CHURCH
5330 Babcock Street, NE
Palm Bay, FL 32905
321-727-1565 • Fax: 321-676-2579

Dear Parents,

The Community of St. Joseph, and I as its pastor, would like to express our joy at the birth of your child. We want also to welcome your child into our community. We do this through the sacrament of baptism.

In asking to have your child baptized you are taking on a great responsibility. You are committing yourself to raising your child in the regular practice of the faith. You are taking on the responsibility of being the primary teachers of your child in the ways of faith. We want to assure you of our commitment to support you in this endeavor.

As with any initiation there is a period of preparation, which must first occur. Since your baby obviously is not able to be prepared, it is the parents and godparents that must do the preparation. This is a time for the parents to understand more fully what baptism is, and what it means. It is also a time to

learn more about the Church and the message of Jesus Christ. For some parents it is an opportunity for the people of St. Joseph's to share your joy, and to welcome you back and let you get to know us. For others it is a time to share your joy once again, and to walk farther with you on your faith journey.

We see it as a time set aside to work with you on deepening your faith, so that you will be able to see the love we have for you and hopefully come to realize the joy you can share with us. God bless you and your little one.

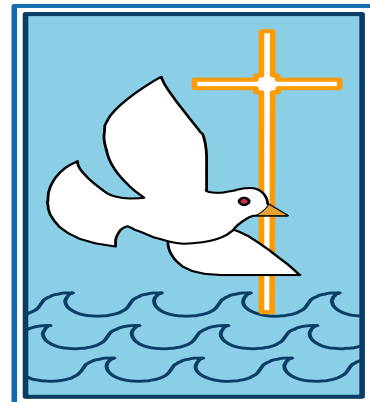
Sincerely in our Lord,

Father Bob Hoeffner
Pastor

Procedures for Baptism at St. Joseph Catholic Church

Congratulations! You have come to have your baby baptized. We welcome you and thank you for your willingness to take on the responsibility of raising your child in the practice of the faith. In order to assure that you are prepared for this major step in the life of your family, we ask you to follow the procedures contained here and in the Baptismal Preparation Package. This should help you to accomplish easily the requirements needed to have your baby baptized in your parish.

As soon as one is available to you, please bring in an official, that is certified, copy of your child's birth certificate. We need to make a photocopy of it at the office. Our records will have to reflect the information of the birth record. If there are any changes in that birth record (e.g. name changes, spelling changes, etc.) you have about sixty days to amend it. Otherwise, it will take a court order to make changes. Please bring in a court order that shows those changes.



When we record your baby's baptism, it is a legal document that must reflect the birth record information. So bring us the birth certificate and any other papers that will help us.

The birth record also helps us to identify who the parents are. This is for your protection, as well as your child's. Please also present your picture identification when you register your child for baptism. A driver's license is perfect.

If you are not registered in our parish, we will get that done when you fill out the baptismal registration forms. Welcome, official new members! If you are coming to our parish only for the baptism, we will need the permission of your pastor in order to baptize your baby. We will accept any requirements that your pastor imposes, or waives. Many families ask us to baptize their children when they come to visit grandparents. And we have lots of grandparents here! So whatever your pastor says, goes. If there is a problem, please call our pastor. We should be able to work something out. If you are preparing to baptize your baby someplace else (like your baby's grandparents' church) we will gladly get you prepared and give you a Pastor's Permission Form to take to the priest or deacon who will do the baptism.

The most important document that you will sign in the package is a Petition to have your baby baptized. In order to do that, you must be the custodial parent or guardian. You must also be willing to raise your child in the practice of the faith. This is very important. If you are a parent who is not a Catholic, you are welcome to sign the petition, but we do not require it. If you have difficulty with this section, please talk to the pastor.

If you are married and your marriage did not take place in the Catholic Church, and has never been blessed or recognized by the Catholic Church, our pastor would like to meet with you to invite you to regularize your marriage in the Catholic Church. This will NOT prevent your child from being baptized. We will still baptize your baby. Father just wants to invite you to get your marriage blessed. Please call him before you schedule your baby's baptism.

Our parish tries to prepare parents and godparents for your baby's baptism. We ask that the parents and the godparents attend one preparation class. This can be done in our parish however, if schedules and distance or other things make this impossible, preparation classes can take place at other parishes.

We just need a letter from the parish where the classes were taken. If as a parent you are not a Catholic, we invite, encourage and welcome you to the class. If there is a problem in this area, again, please talk to our pastor. If you as parents, or the godparents, have attended a preparation class for baptism here or any other parish in the last four years, please let us know. The classes will probably be waived for those persons.

The baptized is given a sponsor (godparent) to present the person for baptism and, after that, to help the baptized to lead a Christian life faithfully. Godparents are asked to fill out an eligibility form. This has two parts: the first part tells us that the godparents understand the role he/she is undertaking. Godparents today have a very different role to play in the Catholic Christian life of your child. Secondly, we also ask that the pastor of the godparents verify for us that they are qualified to be sponsors for the sacrament of baptism. Both of these are accomplished by completing the eligibility form that you will receive in your baptism package.

To be a sponsor (or godparent) a person must be a practicing baptized and confirmed Catholic who has reached the age of sixteen. Persons baptized in other

Christian traditions may be witnesses of the baptism, but a least one sponsor must be present who is completely initiated Catholic. If you do not know anyone who qualifies as a sponsor, let us know and we will gladly provide one. Catholics not completely initiated may act as witnesses as well. If your sponsors can not be present for the baptism, another family member or friend of appropriate age can substitute for their presence as a proxy. Proxy's names are not entered into the record.

After you have all your paperwork completed, you can call and set a definite date and time for your baby's baptism. Tentative dates may be set, but there is no commitment or agreement to baptize your baby, nor will the baptism take place until all the required work and forms are complete. Knowing this now will avoid unpleasant situations later on.

Baptism will normally be celebrated in the parish at one Mass on Sunday of the second full weekend of each month. This time varies each month so that no particular Mass gets all the baptisms every month. This will not occur during Lent. There may be up to four baptisms celebrated at a Mass. Otherwise, baptisms take place the last Sunday of each month after the last Mass. Remembering that the priests are

very busy, if there is a time that must be scheduled other than these, that must be negotiated with the priest or deacon who will do the baptism, according to his schedule. Although they are permitted, baptisms are discouraged during Lent because of the nature of the season. Because of the baptismal nature of the season of Easter, baptisms may be scheduled on any of the eight Sundays of the Easter Season, as well as the Feasts of the Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi, which follow that season immediately. They will take place after the last Sunday Mass. In the Diocese of Orlando, outside of emergency or special health conditions, baptisms must take place in a Catholic Church, chapel, oratory or designated shrine.

Understanding that your child will wear his/her name all through life, and encouraging discretion on the part of parents, a child may be baptized with any name, as long as that name is not against Christian beliefs and sensitivities.

The preferred method of baptizing in the Catholic Church today is total immersion or pouring water over the entire body of the candidate. The Church accepts the validity of pouring water only over the head (infusion), but the full sign of immersion should

be given serious thought and consideration. Our parish will do either option, and either option is available to you at your choice and direction. If your child will be immersed, or completely covered with the baptismal water, please bring him/her to church dressed only in a diaper and wrapped in a warm blanket, with a bath towel, baptismal clothing, and an extra diaper brought separately.

The color of the baptismal garment is traditionally "white". There is no required gown. The ritual refers to a white garment, and any suitable white garment will do. Our parish will supply the baptismal candle, which you keep as a remembrance. If you wish to conserve some of the baptismal water, you must provide your own container.

There is no charge for your baby's baptism. Nor is there a charge for the classes, or for the church. Any gift that is given as a donation is gratefully accepted for the church. Monetary gifts are always appreciated. These gifts run our programs and our church. Your generosity in offering a substantial gift to the church on the occasion of your child's entering into the Body of Christ will certainly be blessed, since we can never outdo the Lord in generosity. If you wish to give a gift to the minister who baptizes

your child, it must be placed in an envelope clearly marked as such, with the priest or deacon's name on it. It should be given to him saying that it is specifically for him, and that a separate gift will be given to the church. Otherwise, the presumption is that these gifts are given to the church, and will be marked as a deductible contribution on your record.

I hope these instructions and the materials in the baptismal package and the classes will be of great help to you. If there are any problems or questions along the way, please be sure to ask us. If you wish special consideration for special circumstances, please talk to our pastor.

Again, congratulations and thank you. May God bless your family now and always!

If additional information is required, you may contact the Director of Religious Education or the assistant to the DRE at the Parish Office, 727-1565.

