

## Church Law Regarding Baptism in the Catholic Church

1. Infant Baptism: According to the laws of the universal Church, a minor child under the age of seven is considered an infant (Canon 97.1) as well as those who habitually lack the use of reason. (Canon 99).

2. For an infant to be licitly baptized, it is necessary that:

- a. at least one of the parents consents to it (or the person that lawfully takes the parents place) and
- b. there is a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic Church. for example: formation and continued education in the faith, and participation in the spiritual life of the church community, ... (Canons 868-869)

*In the case of adoption baptism is to be postponed until after the adoption is complete and adoption papers/proofs can be procured.*

3. There should be one (1) Godparent for the person to be baptized who is not the father or mother of the one to be baptized. (Canons 873, 874.1)

4. If there are to be two Godparents, they must be of the opposite sex (male and female). (Canon 873)

5. Qualifications of acceptable Godparent (who sponsors the child into the Catholic Church):

- a. that he/she be designated by the parents of the person to be baptized; if this designation is lacking, the Pastor or Minister of the Sacrament may designate.
- b. that he/she has an intention to carry out the duty;
- c. that he/she be at least 16 years of age;
- d. that he/she be a Roman Catholic of the Latin Rite (Eastern Rite Catholics are allowed);
- e. that he/she has received the Sacrament of Confirmation;
- f. that he/she has received the Sacrament of Holy Communion;
- g. that he/she be a practicing Catholic leading a life of faith in harmony with the Church;
- h. that, if married, he/she was married in the Church;
- i. that he/she not be under a lawfully imposed or declared canonical penalty.

6. If there is only one Godparent (who must be Catholic) a "Christian Witness" (Non-Catholic) may also be chosen for the one to be baptized in accordance with the following:

a. A baptized person belonging to a non-Catholic ecclesial community 'may be' admitted as a "witness" to baptism (the formal title is Christian Witness, not "Godparent.") (Canon 874.2)

b. This privilege applies only to a non-Catholic belonging to an ecclesial community i.e., Mainline Protestant Church, Greek Orthodox, and other Churches with valid baptisms. A Catholic cannot be a Witness. A non-Christian cannot be a Witness.

7. If the Godparents are unable to attend the baptism, you may ask any Christian that you choose to stand in as "PROXY" for the Godparents. The names of the Godparents, not the proxy, will appear on the Baptism Certificate.