

# St. Luke the Evangelist Parish

## Godparent Guide

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Congratulations on being invited to serve as a Godparent! This is a great honor as well as a lifelong responsibility. Here is how Church Law defines your role, which is also referred to as a sponsor:

As far as possible the person to be baptized is to have a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it. (Code of Canon Law, canon 872)

You are accepting a lifelong office that makes it your responsibility before God to assist your Godchild in living a truly Christian life and living out his/her unique vocation. To assist you in this lofty task, this guide will:

- Help you better understand the Sacrament of Baptism
- The family's preparation for Baptism and the Godparent's role
- Outline the Baptism Liturgy
- Provide several suggestions for fulfilling your role after the Baptism

## About the Sacrament of Baptism

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The following questions from the Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church serve as a brief refresher on the Sacrament of Baptism:

### **252. What names are given to the first sacrament of initiation?**

This sacrament is primarily called *Baptism* because of the central rite with which it is celebrated. To baptize means to “immerse” in water. The one who is baptized is immersed into the death of Christ and rises with him as a “new creature” (2 *Corinthians* 5:17). This sacrament is also called the “bath of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (*Titus* 3:5); and it is called “enlightenment” because the baptized becomes “a son of light” (*Ephesians* 5:8).

### **253. How is Baptism prefigured in the Old Covenant?**

In the Old Covenant Baptism was pre-figured in various ways: *water*, seen as source of life and of death; in *the Ark of Noah*, which saved by means of water; in *the passing through the Red Sea*, which liberated Israel from Egyptian slavery; in *the crossing of the Jordan River*, that brought Israel into the promised land which is the image of eternal life.

### **254. Who brought to fulfillment those prefigurations?**

All the Old Covenant prefigurations find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. At the beginning of his public life Jesus had himself baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. On the cross, blood and water, signs of Baptism and the Eucharist, flowed from his pierced side. After his Resurrection he gave to his apostles this mission: “Go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew 28:19*).

### **255. Starting when and to whom has the Church administered Baptism?**

From the day of Pentecost, the Church has administered Baptism to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

### **256. In what does the essential rite of Baptism consist?**

The essential rite of this sacrament consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water over his or her head while invoking the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

### **257. Who can receive Baptism?**

Every person not yet baptized is able to receive Baptism.

### **258. Why does the Church baptize infants?**

The Church baptizes infants because they are born with original sin. They need to be freed from the power of the Evil One and brought into that realm of freedom which belongs to the children of God.

### **259. What is required of one who is to be baptized?**

Everyone who is to be baptized is required to make a profession of faith. This is done personally in the case of an adult or by the parents and by the Church in the case of infants. Also the godfather or the godmother and the whole ecclesial community share the responsibility for baptismal preparation (catechumenate) as well as for the development and safeguarding of the faith and grace given at baptism.

## **260. Who can baptize?**

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and the priest. In the Latin Church the deacon also can baptize. In case of necessity any person can baptize provided he has the intention of doing what the Church does. This is done by pouring water on the head of the candidate while saying the Trinitarian formula for Baptism: “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.

## **261. Is Baptism necessary for salvation?**

Baptism is necessary for salvation for all those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.

## **262. Is it possible to be saved without Baptism?**

Since Christ died for the salvation of all, those can be saved without Baptism who die for the faith (*Baptism of blood*). Catechumens and all those who, even without knowing Christ and the Church, still (under the impulse of grace) sincerely seek God and strive to do his will can also be saved without Baptism (*Baptism of desire*). The Church in her liturgy entrusts children who die without Baptism to the mercy of God.

## **263. What are the effects of Baptism?**

Baptism takes away original sin, all personal sins and all punishment due to sin. It makes the baptized person a participant in the divine life of the Trinity through sanctifying grace, the grace of justification which incorporates one into Christ and into his Church. It gives one a share in the priesthood of Christ and provides the basis for communion with all Christians. It bestows the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. A baptized person belongs forever to Christ. He is marked with the indelible seal of Christ (*character*).

## **264. What is the meaning of the Christian name received at Baptism?**

The name is important because God knows each of us by name, that is, in our uniqueness as persons. In Baptism a Christian receives his or her own name in the Church. It should preferably be the name of a saint who might offer the baptized a model of sanctity and an assurance of his or her intercession before God.

# Baptism Preparation

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## Baptism Preparation Classes for Families

Baptism Preparation Classes are designed for families who have never attended one before or who have not been to one in four years or longer. In these classes, we strive to help parents:

- Understand sacraments in general and baptism in particular.
- Understand how to live out the promises they make during the baptism ceremony.
- Recognize that this is about renewing their own relationship with the Lord and starting that relationship for their child.

To achieve these goals, we use the Christian tradition and sociological studies to suggest practical steps parents can take to be truly Christian parents. Because of this approach, both veteran parents and first-time parents have found our classes to be valuable.

## The Baptism Liturgy

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The Rite of Baptism includes six main parts:

### 1. Rite of Receiving the Child

The celebrant will ask the parents for the child's name and for them state their desire to have him/her baptized as well as your intention to be Christian parents:

**Celebrant:** What name have you given your child?

**Parents:** [Name]

**Celebrant:** What do you ask of God's Church for [Name]?

**Parents:** Baptism. (or Faith; New Life; etc.)

**Celebrant:** In asking for Baptism for your children, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising them in the faith, so that, keeping God's commandments, they may love the Lord and their neighbor as Christ has taught us. Do you understand this responsibility?

**Parents:** We do.

**Celebrant:** Are you ready to help the parents of these children in their duty?

**Godparents:** We are.

**Celebrant:** [Name], the Church of God receives you with great joy. In her name I sign you with the Sign of the Cross of Christ our Savior; then, after me, your parents (and godparents) will do the same.

## 2. Sacred Celebration of the Word of God

During the Sacred celebration of the Word of God, there will be one or more Scriptural readings. The celebrant will give a brief homily on Baptism and may explain some of the rest of the rite.

## 3. Prayer of Exorcism and Anointing Before Baptism

The Celebrant then prays over the child for the forgiveness of Original Sin and for the Holy Spirit to begin to dwell within him/her. He will then anoint the child with the Oil of the Catechumens on the breast.

## 4. Blessings of Water, Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith

The celebrant will then bless the water in the Baptismal Font, citing several instances from Salvation History of God's use of water to save his people. He will then lead parents and godparents through a renunciation of sin and profession of faith. This begins with the statement:

**Celebrant:** Dear parents and godparents, through the Sacrament of Baptism, the child you have presented is about to receive from the love of God new life by water and the Holy Spirit. For your part, you must strive to bring him/her up in the faith, so that this divine life may be preserved from the contagion of sin, and may grow in him/her day by day. If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, then, mindful of your own Baptism, renounce sin and profess faith in Christ Jesus, the faith of the Church, in which this child will be baptized.

The renunciation and profession take the form of nine questions asking if you renounce Satan and if you believe in the tenants of the Creed. After each question, parents should respond, "I do." After these questions, the celebrant continues:

**Celebrant:** Is it your will, therefore, that N. should receive Baptism in the faith of the Church, which we have all professed with you?

**Parents and godparents:** It is.

And immediately the celebrant baptizes the child, pouring water over the head three times and saying: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

## 5. Explanatory Rites

Immediately following the Baptism proper, the celebrant will anoint the child’s head with Sacred Chrism, clothe him/her in a white garment, and ask a godparent to light the Baptismal Candle from the Easter Candle.

## 6. Concluding Rites

The ceremony concludes with the Lord’s Prayer, a blessing, and a dismissal.

# Beyond Baptism

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To fulfil your lifelong office as a Godparent, consider the following suggestions:

### **Pray regularly for your Godchild.**

We recommend a brief, daily prayer for your Godchild. Less frequently, perhaps once a month on the same date as their Baptism or once a year on the anniversary, offer a more intentional prayer, such as this one from the book *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*:

Lord Jesus Christ, you loved children so much that you said, “Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me.” Hear our prayers and, with your unfailing protection, watch over (Godchild’s name) whom you have blest with the grace of Baptism. When s/he has grown to maturity., grant that s/he will confess your name in willing faith, be fervent in charity, and persevere courageously in the hope of reaching your Kingdom, where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

### **Talk regularly with your Godchild’s family about their efforts to be a Christian family.**

Especially while your Godchild is young, perhaps they could use your help in getting to Mass on Sundays. Perhaps you can pray together regularly, even if you do not live

close by. Consider gifts for birthdays, Christmas, and the Baptism Anniversary that will help reinforce faith in your Godchild.

### **Celebrate the Baptism Anniversary.**

This can be as simple as a phone call or a card in the mail. As your Godchild gets older, you might take him/her out to dinner or to an event. You can have a Mass said for your Godchild around the anniversary of his/her Baptism. Showing that this is a special anniversary for you will reinforce how special it is to your Godchild. You can use the anniversary as an occasion to discuss the topics from the Baptism Preparation Class with the parents.

## Contact Information

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### **Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish**

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725 Glenwood Avenue  
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724-266-6565

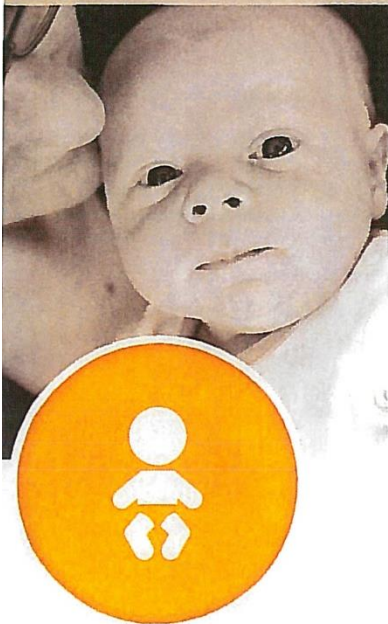
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# FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Here's your developmentally appropriate guide-at-a-glance  
for effectively ministering to kids of all ages



## BABIES

### TYPICAL BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Young babies recognize human faces and prefer them to inanimate objects.
- A baby's brain is beginning very early adaptation to the language it hears in the home.
- Babies recognize familiar voices.
- A baby's healthy development is largely dependent upon how much the baby can consistently trust familiar adults to care for his or her needs.
- Music and rhythm help stimulate infant brain development.

### TYPICAL PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Babies express curiosity and often bring things to their mouths as a way of exploration.
- Between the ages of 4 months and 7 months, babies begin learning to sit, roll, and eventually creep.
- At just a few months old, babies begin to recognize and even respond to people's emotions.
- They enjoy physical peekaboo-type play activities, especially with parents.
- Babies enjoy seeing their image in a mirror.
- At around 9 months, babies are able to express a wide range of emotions—and do so!

### FAITH CONCEPTS

- Babies seek and value unconditional love. Consistently demonstrating it is important to help them understand a loving God.
- As you provide an environment where babies can develop a sense of trust in the adults around them, you lay groundwork for them to trust an unseen God.
- People in the church community help demonstrate love for one another.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANSWER

- Am I safe?
- Do I matter?
- Are my physical needs met?
- Can I trust people to care for me?
- Do people see me?
- Am I loved?

### EFFECTIVE WAYS TO TEACH

- Babies need gentle, loving physical touch to feel love.
- They need eye contact and a person who will smile and interact with them.
- Babies react in utero to music rhythms before birth. Any use of rhythm and cadence boosts development and is instantly engaging.
- Read Scripture and Bible stories to babies. Even if they don't literally understand, they sense your tone and expressions of love for them.
- Babies thrive on routine. Add prayer time to your ritual.



# THROUGH THE YEARS

Use this information as a reminder, primer, guide, or cheat sheet about what's happening with kids developmentally at each age—and how you can strengthen their foundation of faith.

BY SHEILA HALASZ

## TODDLERS

### TYPICAL BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- A toddler's brain is developing social-emotional characteristics like making eye-contact, responding to his or her name, and gesturing.
- Inter- and intrapersonal intelligences are developing, which can lead to large emotions and power struggles with peers.
- Connections in the toddler's brain grow stronger through repetition, which is critical to learning.
- Brain development is happening at an explosive rate. Toddlers are experiencing a lot of change and may be easily overwhelmed.
- Toddlers may cling to caregivers and be fearful of strangers.
- Toddlers experience an egocentric existence, resulting in the 2-year-old's unmistakable anthem: "Mine!"

### TYPICAL PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Toddlers can walk on their own and enjoy their beginning autonomy.
- They're beginning to notice physical cause-and-effect relationships.
- Toddlers begin pretend play and enjoy pulling and pushing toys.
- They're able to mimic others and follow two- and sometimes three-step directions.
- They are drawn to things that interest them and will quickly abandon items, only to reclaim them later.
- Toddlers love repetition, rhythm, and routine.
- They have a limited attention span and become restless within a few minutes.
- They'll play side by side with others but not cooperatively with others.

### FAITH CONCEPTS

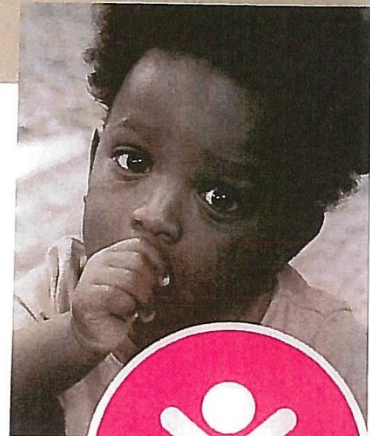
- Church is a special place.
- God and Jesus are important.
- God loves me.
- God made me, so I am special.
- I matter to God.
- I can show love.

### QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANSWER

- Do the people I am with like me and look happy?
- What will happen when I push, touch, poke, or drop toys? What will happen when I do that to people?
- Am I safe, even when I'm angry or unhappy?
- How do I get what I want?
- How can I be independent while still feeling safe?
- Does God always love me?

### EFFECTIVE WAYS TO TEACH

- Toddlers need to move their bodies. Let them move while you tell or read Bible stories.
- Encourage toddlers to experience joy in play.
- Let toddlers be loud as they praise.
- Toddlers won't share easily. Have duplicate items for toddlers to touch and manipulate so conflict stays to a minimum. Intentionally model concepts of sharing, cooperation, and getting along with God's people.
- Use music and rhyme with lots of repetition for Scripture and stories.
- Lead by example when developing character. Toddlers need to see what honesty, patience, self-control, repentance, and kindness look like before they can emulate positive character traits.
- Prayer rituals can include children offering prayer requests and starting their own simple dialogue with God.



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