

## Baptism policy for Saint Mark parish

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read that “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: ‘Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water and in the word.’”<sup>1</sup>

We strive to assist parents and guardians in their obligation to ensure that “infants are baptized in the first few weeks”, according to the law of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, parents and godparents must duly prepare for the responsibilities and celebration of baptism – ideally this preparation will be completed well before the child is born.

The requirements for the preparation and celebration of sacrament of baptism are laid out in the law of the Church<sup>3</sup> and in the policies of the Archdiocese of Seattle<sup>4</sup>. All baptisms will carefully observe the norms outlined in these documents. Parents and godparents are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the information in these resources (see footnotes below). Our baptism preparation program will cover the details of both.

**Please note:** This policy exists to highlight local policies of Saint Mark parish and address some of the most common questions we receive. Though discernment has gone into the formation of these policies, not every circumstance can be anticipated, nor every norm spelled out here. This document may be edited as need arises or circumstances dictate.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213

<sup>2</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 867

<sup>3</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 849-878

<sup>4</sup> See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, ‘Infant Baptism’

The following are the policies for baptisms at Saint Mark parish:

### Requirements of parents/guardians

- Baptism may only be requested by the parents or guardians of the child.<sup>5</sup>
  - **Requests from others (ie, relatives and friends) will be referred back to the parents/guardians.**
- At least one parent of the child must be a practicing Catholic who agrees to raise the child in the faith.<sup>6</sup>
  - If the pastor determines that there is not well-founded hope that the child will be raised Catholic, he may delay baptism.<sup>7</sup>
- Parents who are not in a valid Catholic marriage will be encouraged to regularize their marriage.<sup>8</sup>
  - **In most circumstances, an invalid marriage is NOT grounds to refuse baptism of a child.**

### Requirements of godparents

- **A minimum of one godparent is required, except in extraordinary cases.**<sup>9</sup>
  - A maximum of two godparents is permitted. In this case, it must be one man and one woman, though they need not be a couple themselves.<sup>10</sup>
  - If a chosen godparent can not be physically present at the baptism, they may be godparents by proxy.
    - **The parish and the celebrating clergy must be informed beforehand about proxy arrangements.**<sup>11</sup>
- Godparents must be practicing Catholics, at least 16 years of age, baptized and confirmed, have received First Holy Communion, and not under any canonical penalties.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 867 and *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 1

<sup>6</sup> See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 4

<sup>7</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 868 §2 and *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 13

<sup>8</sup> See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 5

<sup>9</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 872

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 873

<sup>11</sup> See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 21

<sup>12</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 874

- If a godparent is married, they must be married in the Church.
- The parents/guardians of a child may not be that child's godparents.

## Paperwork

- Before baptism may occur, the following paperwork must be submitted to the parish office:
  - state-issued birth certificate
  - baptism information form
  - godparent commitment form
  - baptism information/agreement form
    - these forms are at the end of this document (pages 5-10)
- All paperwork must be submitted no later than the Tuesday **two weeks before the date of baptism**

## Place of baptism

- Baptisms are as a rule to be celebrated at the parish church of the person to be baptized (or their parents).<sup>13</sup>
  - **Parishioners of other parishes will be directed to celebrate baptism at their parish church** with their parish community and their parish priest.
  - **Exceptions must be approved beforehand** by both the pastor of Saint Mark parish and the pastor of the parish church to which the person (or their parents) belongs.
- Outside of necessity (for example, danger of death) the proper place for baptisms is a church.

## Time and date of baptism

- Baptisms are celebrated on a fixed monthly schedule on the second weekend of each month, either on Saturday after the 9:30 am Mass or on Sunday after the 10:30 am Mass.

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<sup>13</sup> See *Code of Canon Law*, 857 §2

- Out of fairness to all, requests for special times & dates will only be considered in extraordinary circumstances and must be approved by the pastor.

### **Preparation for baptism**

- Formal preparation for the celebration of baptism is required for the parents of any child(ren) being baptized. This ordinarily consists of a one-day group session (a minimum of 4 hours) of catechesis & prayer with the pastor or the Pastoral Assistant for Faith Formation.<sup>14</sup>
  - **Parents only need repeat this session once every three years**, though they are encouraged to attend in the intermediate years for their own benefit and the benefit of other parents.
  - **Godparents are NOT obliged to attend**, though their participation is encouraged whenever possible.

### **Minister of baptism**

- The pastor or the deacon of the parish will celebrate baptisms.
  - Visiting clergy may only celebrate baptisms with the explicit permission of the pastor.

### **Stipends**

- While donations are gratefully received, **stipends are not obligatory** and there is no set amount.
  - However, **if baptism is celebrated by a visiting cleric a stipend should be offered to him** – many clergy (especially retired priests) rely on stipends as an important means of income. If in doubt, please speak with the pastor or parish staff for guidance and assistance.

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<sup>14</sup> See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 7

# Baptism information form

## Child's information

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Middle name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthplace: \_\_\_\_\_  
(city, state, and country)

When was your most recent child baptized in the Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Remember to attach  
a copy of your  
child's state-issued  
birth certificate

## Parents' information

Father's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Sacraments received:

baptism Church: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name, city, and state)

confirmation

marriage –  Catholic  civil  other \_\_\_\_\_  
(check only one box) (church and denomination)

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth place: \_\_\_\_\_  
(city, state, and country)

Mother's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's maiden name: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Sacraments received:

baptism Church: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name, city, and state)

confirmation

marriage –  Catholic  civil  other \_\_\_\_\_  
(check only one box) (church and denomination)

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth place: \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact information

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone numbers: \_\_\_\_\_  home  cell  work  
(check only one box)

\_\_\_\_\_  home  cell  work  
(check only one box)

E-mail addresses: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please specify to whom this e-mail address belongs)

\_\_\_\_\_ (please specify to whom this e-mail address belongs)

## Godparent information

Godfather's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Sacraments received:

baptism      Parish: \_\_\_\_\_  
(parish name, city, and state)

confirmation

marriage –  Catholic  civil  other \_\_\_\_\_  
(check only one box) (church and denomination)

Godmother's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Sacraments received:

baptism      Parish: \_\_\_\_\_  
(parish name, city, and state)

confirmation

marriage –  Catholic  civil  other \_\_\_\_\_  
(check only one box) (church and denomination)

## Godparent commitment form

To be chosen as a godparent is both a special honor and a serious responsibility. You represent the Catholic faith community to your godchild. Second only to the parents of this child, you have been entrusted with the responsibility to participate in this child's Christian life.

There are many ways you can nurture this spiritual relationship and become a special friend to your Godchild. Among them are:

- Mindful practice of the faith
- Daily prayer for yourself, your godchild, and their parents
- Celebrating the baptismal anniversary of your godchild
- Sharing in the struggles & triumphs of Christian life
- Actively seeking to learn more about the faith
- Celebrating the liturgical year with your godchild
- Supporting their preparation for and celebration of the sacraments
- Supporting and assisting the parents in their Christian duties

I understand my commitment to the above and accept the responsibility of being a Godparent to:

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Name of godchild

Name:

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(please print your full name)

Signature:

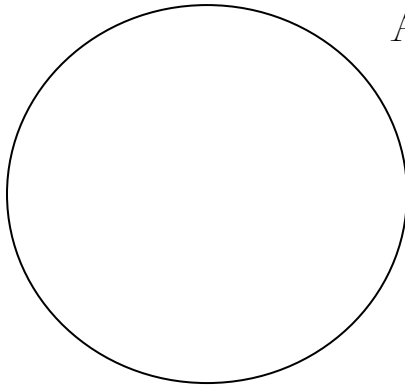
**If the Godparent is not a parishioner at St. Mark, please have the following (see other side) completed by their pastor**

The person named on this form is an active member of this parish, meets the requirements to be a godparent (as outlined in canon law and archdiocesan policy), is ready to assume the responsibilities of being a godparent.

Signature of pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print the full name)

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_



Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(place parish seal here)



## Parent commitment form

Passing on the faith to one's child is both an extraordinary gift and a serious responsibility. In doing so parents assume the responsibility of forming their child in the faith. To do so, it is necessary that the parents themselves be well-formed Catholics who actively participate in the life the Church both personally and within their parish. This is most evident in the celebration of Sunday Mass, regular confession, and daily prayer.

In preparation for your child's baptism, parents are asked to review and affirm their own faith. This is the faith of the Church – the faith in which your child is about to be baptized.

**Do you currently attend Mass each Sunday?**     yes  no

Consider the value of your daily meals, a full night's sleep, time with your family, or regular vacations. Taking away from just one of these can handicap your ability to live well! Sunday Mass is the spiritual nourishment of our faith, helping us live well as Christians.

**Do you go to confession at least once a year?**     yes  no

As sinners, it is easy to focus on what we have done wrong and how we might be admonished for our failings. The sacrament of confession reminds us that God seeks above all to offer us His mercy and love. What better time to receive His forgiveness than in preparation for your child's baptism?

**Are you actively involved – to the best of your ability – in the life of the parish by offering your financial support, volunteering, and participating in extra-liturgical gatherings?**     yes  no

Consider how you might engage in the life of the parish. What would you like to see done at your parish? Who could you get to know a little better? What opportunities are there for fellowship?

**Will you pass on the Catholic faith to your child as he or she grows by bringing them to Mass each Sunday, preparing them for the sacraments, and sharing your faith with them?  yes  no**

There is no universal template for faithful parenting as a Catholic, though a good starting ground is found in the five precepts of the Church.<sup>15</sup> Take time to discuss with your spouse and the godparent(s) you have chosen how you will pass on the faith your child will receive in baptism.

Father's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print the full name)

Mother's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print the full name)

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print the full name)

Date & time of baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>15</sup> See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2041-2043 – essentially attending Sunday Mass, making an annual confession, reception of the Eucharist at least once a year, celebrating the holy days of obligation, and observing the days of fasting & abstinence. The faithful also have a duty to provide for the material needs of the Church.