

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.’”¹

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.² 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 Church³ and in the policies of the Archdiocese of Seattle⁴. 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.

¹ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213

² See *Code of Canon Law*, 867

³ See *Code of Canon Law*, 849-878

⁴ 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.⁵
 - **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.⁶
 - If the pastor determines that there is not well-founded hope that the child will be raised Catholic, he may delay baptism.⁷
- Parents who are not in a valid Catholic marriage will be encouraged to regularize their marriage.⁸
 - **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.**⁹
 - 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.¹⁰
 - 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.**¹¹
- 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.¹²

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

⁶ See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 4

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

⁸ See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 5

⁹ See *Code of Canon Law*, 872

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 873

¹¹ See *Many Gifts, One Spirit*, 'Infant Baptism', IB 21

¹² 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 interview form
 - baptism information/agreement form
 - all of these forms are included in this document (see pages 5-11)
- 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).¹³
 - **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.

¹³ 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.¹⁴
 - **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.

¹⁴ 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)

**SAINT MARK CATHOLIC CHURCH
SHORELINE, WA**

GODPARENT/SPONSOR NAME: _____
CHILD(REN) BEING SPONSORED: _____
SACRAMENT DATE: _____
PARISH OF CELEBRATION: _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

INTERVIEWS SHOULD BE DONE SEPARATELY & PRIVATELY
(FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWER)

1. Do you solemnly swear to answer the following questions truthfully? _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

2. Full name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Mobile/Home/Other** (circle one)

3. Are you at least 16 years old? **Yes/No** (circle one)

4. Have you been baptized? **Yes/No** (circle one) If so, what denomination? _____

5. Have you been confirmed? **Yes/No** (circle one) If so, was it in the Catholic Church? **Yes/No** (circle one)

6. Are you practicing your faith through attendance of weekly Sunday Masses, holy days of obligation, and regular confession, and reception of the Eucharist? **Yes/No** (circle one)

If so, what is your parish? _____ **If not**, are you resolved to do so? **Yes/No** (circle one)

Are you married? **Yes/No** (circle one) If so, is your marriage in the Catholic Church? _____

7. **(If not married or married outside of the church)** Are you living out chaste (ie, celibate) life as taught by the Church? **Yes/No** (circle one) **If not**, are you resolved to do so? **Yes/No** (circle one)

8. Do you affirm that you will faithfully carry out the duties of a godparent or sponsor in accord with the precepts of the Catholic Church? **Yes/No** (circle one)

SIGNATURES & PARISH SEAL

Signature of godparent/sponsor: _____

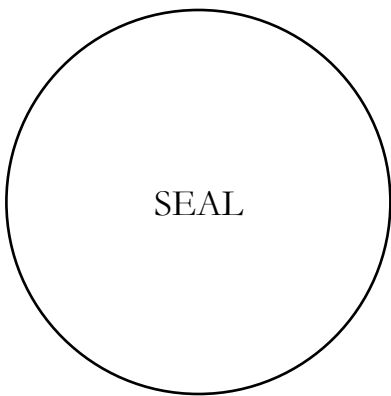
Date: _____

This godparent/sponsor is known to me personally: **Yes/No** (circle one)

**I affirm that the person named above is suitable to serve as a
godparent or sponsor.**

Signature of interviewer: _____

Name & position/title of interviewer: _____



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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.¹⁵ 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: _____

¹⁵ 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.