

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church

185 Saint Thomas Drive, Ojai, CA 93023

www.stacojai.org (805) 646-4338

Baptism Frequently Asked Questions

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Baptism Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

This information sheet was prepared to answer the most commonly asked questions regarding baptism. The information provided is targeted towards baptisms performed in English for children under the age of seven. For baptisms for children in Spanish contact the parish office at (805) 646-4338. Once a child reaches age seven they have reached the age of reason and must make their own decision regarding baptism. Children age seven up to 18 who are interested in baptism should contact our Director of Religious Education, Aina Yates (maina@stacojai.org) for more information. Adults age 18 and over who are interested in baptism will go through our Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program and should contact Sister Rachel (mryourgules@villanovaprep.org) for more information. Please visit our parish website at <http://www.stacojai.org/baptism> for more general information on baptism.

General Questions

1. What are the requirements for baptism?

There are seven requirements to have a child baptized:

- a. One of the child's biological or adoptive parents must present the child for baptism. Proof of the parental relationship is evidenced by a birth or adoption certificate, a copy of which must be provided to the parish office. Another form of proof issued by the hospital may be used if a birth certificate has not yet been issued.
- b. There must be a founded hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith. A founded hope is determined by the priest or deacon and may be formed by evidence of the active Catholic faith of the parent's and god parents. If a founded hope is lacking as determined by the priest or deacon then the baptism will be delayed.
- c. There must be at least one god parent. A god parent is a confirmed Catholic who is actively living out their faith and will serve as a strong witness and teacher to the child being baptized. There may be a second god parent or Christian witness of the opposite gender of the first god parent. See questions 18 and 20 for more information on god parents and Christian witnesses.
- d. The parents and godparents must attend a Baptism Preparation Class so that they fully understand the sacrament of baptism and their responsibilities as parents and god parents to raise their child in the faith. See question 14 for more information on the Baptism Preparation Class.
- e. Baptism should take place in the family's home parish. If St. Thomas is not your home parish then we will need a permission letter from your home parish to perform the baptism. See question 8 for an explanation of why the letter is needed.
- f. Complete the [online baptism registration form](#).
- g. Pay the fee for baptism (see question 9).

The baptism will be confirmed only after all of the items above have been completed.

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2. What is baptism?

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons (and daughters) 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.” ([CCC 1213](#))

3. Who can be baptized?

Baptism is offered to anyone who wants to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. This decision is made by anyone over the age of seven or by at least one of the parents of a child younger than seven. A person can only be baptized once. “Every person not yet baptized and only such a person is able to be baptized.” ([CCC 1246](#))

4. When are baptisms performed?

Baptisms in Spanish are performed on the first Saturday of most months. Contact the parish office for details on Spanish baptisms.

Baptisms in English are normally performed the second Saturday of the month at 10:00 a.m. subject to the availability of the church and presider and should be scheduled at least two months in advance. Baptisms are not performed during Lent. Parents must complete all of the baptism requirements (see question 1) before the baptism date is confirmed.

5. When should I have my child baptized?

Parents may choose to have their children baptized any time before the child is seven years old. Once the child is seven years old baptism becomes their decision and not the parents. If they choose, parents are encouraged to baptize their child within the first few weeks after the child's birth. Parents are required to attend a Baptism Preparation Class before their child can be baptized. Parents are welcome to take the Baptism Preparation Class before the child is born to prevent any delays in baptism. See question 14 for more details on the Baptism Preparation Class. If there is a danger of death then the child is to be baptized without delay.

6. What happens if I don't baptize my infant immediately after birth?

Although not actually adopted as doctrine, for many years the Church taught that unbaptized children would enter a state called limbo. This teaching was abandoned after the Second Vatican Council. The Church now teaches:

“As regards children who have died without Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as she does in her funeral rites for them. Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,” allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism. All the more urgent is the Church's call not to prevent little children coming to Christ through the gift of holy Baptism.” ([CCC 1261](#))

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7. Can I have my child baptized if I am not a registered parishioner at St. Thomas Aquinas?

Yes. Parish membership is not a requirement for baptism at our parish, however, parents should be registered and active in a parish near them (see item b in question 1). If you are a member of another parish we will need a permission letter from your Pastor. If you are not yet a member of a parish we invite you to join St. Thomas Aquinas by contacting the church office at (805) 646-4338.

8. Can I have my child baptized at St. Thomas Aquinas if I am registered at a different parish?

Yes but we will need to have a letter of permission from your pastor stating that you are registered at that parish, an active member, and granting permission for the baptism to occur at St. Thomas Aquinas (Code of Canon Law 857). The reason for this is that baptisms should be performed and celebrated in your own community. Your pastor is responsible for your family's spiritual well-being. Baptisms that occur outside of your home parish should only be done after prayerful consideration and for good reason.

9. How much will it cost to have my child baptized?

The fee for baptism is \$80 and may be paid by mail or in person at the church office.

10. When should parents contact the parish about baptism for their child?

The earlier the better. Since it may take a couple of months to complete all of the paperwork and required preparation (see question 1), parents are encouraged to begin the baptism planning process 2-4 months before the child is born. A baptism date will not be confirmed until all of the baptism requirements are completed.

11. Can a child with a mental or physical disability be baptized?

Yes. Physical or mental disability is not a reason to withhold baptism.

12. If the parents are not validly married in the Catholic Church can they still have their child baptized?

Yes. The parent's marital status is not a reason to withhold baptism of their child. However, the question of a founded hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith must still be answered (see item b of question 1). Such a hope may not be founded if the parents are not willing to be married in the Church or have their existing marriage convalidated in the Catholic Church. The parents should discuss this situation with the priest or deacon.

13. Can I have a priest or deacon from outside St. Thomas Aquinas perform the baptism?

Yes with the permission of our pastor. Contact the church office as soon as possible. All of the requirements in question 1 still apply. If the priest or deacon is outside the Archdiocese of Los Angeles then they will need a Statement of Ordinary from his archdiocese.

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Baptism Preparation Class

14. What baptism preparation is required?

Parents and god parents must attend a Baptism Preparation Class so that they fully understand the sacrament of baptism and their responsibilities as parents to raise their child in the faith. If the parents or god parents have proof that they received baptism preparation within the past two years then they do not need to attend the class. A certificate of completion will be issued after completing the class. The certificate may be used as proof of completing a Baptism Preparation Class if the baptism will occur at a different parish or the parents want to baptize another child within two years.

15. When are Baptism Preparation Classes?

Baptism Preparation Classes are typically offered on the first Saturday of odd numbered months (January, March, May, etc.) 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Parents will sign up for a class when they [register online](#).

16. Are parents required to attend Baptism Preparation Classes before their children are baptized?

Yes. Parents are required to attend the class unless they have proof that they have received baptism preparation within the past 24 months. God parents are also required to attend the class.

17. Can I go through baptism preparation at St. Thomas Aquinas if the baptism will be at another parish?

Yes. After completing the class you will receive a certificate that you can present to the other parish.

God Parents

18. What are the requirements for god parents?

God parents (or sponsors) present the child for baptism along with the parents and promise to help the parents raise the child in the Catholic faith. The role of god parent is more than just an honorary position and should be offered and accepted only after prayerful consideration. There must be at least one god parent. There may be a second god parent or Christian witness (see question 20) who must be the opposite gender of the first god parent. Non-Christians may not serve as god parents or Christian witnesses. All god parents must be:

- a. A fully initiated (received the sacrament of Confirmation) Catholic and active in their faith. A baptized Christian who is not Catholic is considered a Christian witness and not a god parent (see question 20).
- b. If married after becoming Catholic, god parents must have been married in the Catholic church.
- c. Over 16 years old.
- d. Not be a parent of the one to be baptized.
- e. Attend a baptism preparation class at St. Thomas or another parish and provide proof of attendance.

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19. Are godparents required to attend Baptism Preparation Classes before their god child is baptized?

Yes. The role of the godparent is very important to the spiritual life of the child. Godparents must understand that their responsibility goes far beyond the day of the baptism. In order to be able to fulfill their duties and support the parents in the spiritual upbringing of the child, Godparents are required to attend a Baptism Preparation class at St. Thomas Aquinas or another parish sometime within the previous 24 months of the baptism. If they attend a class at another parish they must provide a letter or certificate of completion prior to the baptism.

20. Can non-Catholics be god parents?

No. One non-Catholic baptized Christian may serve as a Christian witness (not a god parent) as long as there is also a confirmed Catholic god parent. A Christian witnesses' name will not appear on the baptismal certificate. Non-Christians may not serve as god parents or Christian witnesses.

21. I am going to be a god parent at a baptism at another parish. Can I take the Baptism Preparation Class at St. Thomas?

Yes. You will receive a certificate of completion which you can send to the other parish as evidence of having taken the Baptism Preparation Class at St. Thomas. See question 15 for more information on the class.

22. Can a sibling be a god parent?

Yes as long as they meet the requirements in question 18.

23. I'm not able to attend the ceremony, can I still be a god parent?

Yes. The role of the god parent endures long after the ceremony. You may have someone serve as a proxy for the god parent at the baptism. The proxy must meet all of the same requirements as the god parent.

References

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)