

Celebrant's Guides: Infant Baptism



Model Planning Process

1. The pastoral relationship begins with the initial approach by the parents or guardians of the infant to be baptised ('the candidate') – leading to a first appointment (home visit? Or in the Presbytery?)

NB There are a number of formal *blessings* for parents before and after the birth of a child, also for welcoming an adopted child and for blessing parents after the death of a child. These may be pastorally useful on occasion. See the Canadian *A Book of Blessings* pages 53-64, or the USA *Book of Blessings* 65-99, which also provides a rite for blessing an unbaptized child at pp. 45-51.

2. First formal meeting – need to take particulars of the child, desired godparents, etc., note possible pastoral issues. Realistic timescale; appropriate preparation. Good to leave a "[Baptism brochure](#)." *May* be appropriate to leave some kind of liturgy planner if family is keen and liturgically aware. Review pastoral checklist afterwards.

3. Second formal meeting – deal with content of the service: who does what, particular expectations; procuring candle and white garment – suggest it may be a better symbol for child not to be in white clothes at start of service. Do the family want to produce a service book? Assert editorial control. Communicate the policy on costs (organist, flowers, building usage, stole fee). Review pastoral checklist afterwards.

4. Celebrant's planning:

- ▶ Which texts from the variable parts of the rite? (Does the parish use the Redemptorist *Baptism Book* or similar? Be ready to announce page numbers and even warn the congregation when you are going 'off-book'.)
- ▶ Where in the Church will you perform the various segments – greeting (door?) – exorcism and litany of saints (centre stage?) – baptism (font) – blessing (centre stage)? Remember the importance of the celebrant and all key actions being visible and audible to the whole congregation.
- ▶ Prepare homily, and 'homiletic' remarks for appropriate moments during the service.
- ▶ Does the parish have a 'standard leaflet' to guide congregations through baptisms? Are you preparing an order of service for this occasion? It's wise for a leaflet to ask people to turn off mobile phones and a phrase like 'If you wish to take photographs, please do so discretely, quietly and without interrupting other people's view.' – depending on parish policy.

5. The Baptism. Are you attending the reception, if any, afterwards?

6. Follow-up visit, perhaps to deliver the certificate. You may want to give away e.g. a prayer book or catechism to encourage the family to develop their faith practice.

[Credits & References](#)

Pastoral & Canonical Checklist

Questions to ask yourself after the first (and subsequent) meeting. It may not be necessary to check all of these with the parents directly, but any area of significant uncertainty should be enquired upon.

1. Is the candidate a person who has not yet attained use of reason (a child under 7, or an older child or adult with serious learning disabilities)?
2. Is the baptismal name in accord with Christian sentiment? (c855)
3. Is there a realistic hope of the candidate being brought up in the faith? (c868.2)
4. Do both parents feel able to ask for Baptism in a public forum?
5. Do any of the following apply?
 - ▶ The identity of one or both parents is uncertain [see c 877.2];
 - ▶ The child is adopted [contact the Diocesan Curia re Registration];
 - ▶ One or both parents are members of an Eastern Rite. [This fact, and which rite, should be noted in the Baptismal Register].
6. Is there at least one godparent who is a confirmed and practicing Catholic?
7. If more than two godparents, who will be officially entered in the register? One *must* be a practicing Catholic. The other may be a practicing Catholic of the opposite sex, or an Eastern Orthodox; or if a baptised Christian of another denomination, is listed as a 'witness' rather than a godparent.
8. Do you have permission from the pastor of the place of baptism? (c857)
9. Normatively, Baptism should be on a Sunday, and there should be only *one* service including Baptism(s) on that day. It is preferable not to baptise in Lent but to wait for the Easter Vigil or Easter Sunday; nevertheless, the spiritual good of the child and family take priority. If these norms are not being observed, is there a good reason? (c856)
10. Which elements of the service are the family capable/willing of being involved in planning?
 - ▶ Readings (and who reads?)
 - ▶ Music (is there a soloist or cantor?)
 - ▶ Prayer of the Faithful (special inclusions?)
 - ▶ Any special family saints for the litany?
11. Have you run through the order of baptism and explanatory rites? Is it clear who is bringing the candle and white garment, and what role each member of the baptismal party will play?
12. Have you asked the family "Is there anything traditional you're especially looking forward to?" (Godparent does X, priest always does Y, etc...)

BAPTISM FOR A CHILD

THE CHILD	BOY / GIRL
Christian Names	
Phonetic Guide	
Surname	
Date of Birth	
Place of Birth	

THE PARENT(S)	MOTHER	FATHER
Christian Names		
Surname		
Religion		
Maiden Name		n/a
Landline Tel.		
Mobile Tel.		
E-mail		

CONTACT ADDRESS	

GODPARENTS AND WITNESSES <small>* one or two (1M 1F) who will be officially registered; not grandparents; usu. 16+; confirmed; communicating.</small>	FULL NAME	RELIGION

THE SERVICE	MASS / SERVICE
Time	
Date	
Place	
Booklets?	
<i>Details of post-baptism reception or party, if any.</i>	