

**Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**

**244 Prospect Ave., Hermosa Beach CA 90254**

**310-372-7077**

## **Guidelines for INFANT BAPTISMS**

### ***Overview of Baptism Requirements for Infants***

It is a cause of great joy to help you to Baptize your child (or children) into the Catholic Church, especially here at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. This is an important step of your faith, and the beginning of your promise to raise your child in the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church. We view this as the beginning of a long relationship.

We recognize that among all who come seeking to baptize their children there is a great variety of levels faith and of formal participation in the church. If you are a regularly participating member of our Church we are filled with joy to be able to serve you at this time. Your Joy is our Joy. If you are not currently active in our Church, we recognize even the act of a parent/couple seeking baptism for their child, as an act of faith, and hope to welcome you, not only to baptism, but to further practice and grow in your faith. To baptize a child however, is also to commit to raise that child in the faith community until he/she is old enough to accept as an adult, their faith into which they were baptized as a child. The guidelines we have developed are to respond to the great variety of families seeking infant baptism.

### ***General Requirement of Parents Seeking to Baptize a child***

The parents, or at least one of them, or the person who legitimately takes the place of a parent, must give consent. There must be a founded hope, that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith (or the baptism should be delayed until such hope exists). At least one parent should be a Catholic attempting to live their faith and intending that the child become a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation).

***Families who are registered and active in the church:***

Families who are registered and active parishioners of our parish for three months or more, or of another parish for three months or more (with a letter from that parish stating they are registered and active) must attend the monthly baptismal class, along with the chosen Godparents for their child, and schedule the baptism on one of the designated Sundays at 1PM. If they or their chosen Godparents have attended the class within the last 2 years, they do not need to repeat it. Classes are held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church the second Wednesday of every month in the Parish Hall, 7:00-8:30 pm in English, (and first Monday of every month in Spanish). To register, please call the parish office (310 372-7077) for an appointment to fill out a form. Please come 15 minutes early to check in. Given the hour of the day and length of the pre-Baptism class, parents and godparents are encouraged not to bring their children with them to class.

***Families who are NOT registered and active in the church:***

Families who are not registered and active parishioners of our parish, or are not registered an active at any parish, must first meet with a priest<sup>1</sup> who will work with them to help them understand the process, and encourage them become involved in church (if they are not already). After this meeting the priest will direct the parent(s) as seems best; ideally to register in the parish and become active in our parish. After the parent(s) have been active for at least three months, they may schedule the baptism for their child on one of the designated Sundays at 1 PM, on a date after they and their child's chosen Godparents are able to attend the class for baptism. Please call the parish office 310-372-7077 to schedule an appointment with a priest.

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<sup>1</sup> At this meeting the priest will welcome the new family and discuss with them where they are in their faith journey. The priest will evangelize and catechize appropriately and explain the importance of practicing their faith, for the good of parent(s), and the sake of the child they are asking to be received into the church. The priest will also explore with the parents/parent ways to deepen their faith through personal prayer and Mass attendance, and the various offerings in our parish for evangelization, catechesis, prayer and service. It is possible that the priest will suggest more meetings, to journey with a parent(s) during this period of three months before the baptism is scheduled.

### ***Requests for Baptisms outside of the Regular Sunday Times:***

Baptism is the initiating of a new member into the church, the Body of Christ. As such, it is not meant to be a private ceremony, but a ceremony of the Church. Anyone requesting a baptism, outside the regularly assigned times, must first talk to a priest, who will determine if the need is pastoral<sup>2</sup>, and schedule a time when both the priest and church are available. After this meeting with the priest, the parent(s) and Godparent(s) follow the same guidelines as above to be prepared for the baptism, attend the class and schedule the baptism.

### ***Guidelines for Godparent Selection***

Only one Godparent is required, but you may also select two. If there are two, they must be one female and one male. Godparents must be 16 years or older. A parent cannot also act as a Godparent.

Your Godparents play an important role in raising your child in the faith, and hence must be good examples of the Catholic Faith. At least one Godparent must be fully initiated and an actively practicing Catholic; that is, they must have received the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, be regularly attending Mass and participating in the sacraments, and if also married, must be sacramentally married, that is they must be married in the church. A second Godparent does not have to be Catholic but must be a Baptized Christian. (In this case they are referred to more correctly as “Christian Witnesses.”)

If a Godparent cannot be present at the Baptism, the parents may choose a proxy (Christian witness) to stand in for him or her. Proxies do not replace the role of godparent. The proxy must be a Baptized Christian but is not required to attend a pre-Baptism class.

If Godparents do not live locally, they may attend a baptismal preparation class offered at a parish near their home. If they do, a certificate of attendance, or a

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<sup>2</sup> The reason for requesting the private baptism should be grounded in some pastoral reason, not simply to do it privately, for Baptism is intended to be celebrated in the Church Community, as the child is being welcomed into the community.

letter from the church indicating that they are qualified to be a Godparent, must be submitted to the parish office.

### ***Pastoral Considerations on the Godparent Requirements***

We do recognize that for some families the above guidelines for Godparents make it difficult to select the Godparents that might first come to mind. Godparents are to be guides in raising the children to become fully active members of the Catholic Church. If your desired Godparents do not meet all the requirements we ask you to consider the following:

If for the desired Godparent(s) have not yet been confirmed, we would prefer to first work with the Godparent(s) to help them be confirmed before the baptism of their Godchild.

If the desired Godparent(s) are not yet married in the church, we would prefer to work with them to help them be married in the church. For a couple already married civilly, this process is called convalidation. This process does not require a big celebration and if done simply does not cost money. Convalidation can be done by working with the priest for a preparation process, and consists of an exchange your vows in church, in front of at least two witnesses, and thus to make the marriage sacramental. Depending on the age of the couple and how many years they have been married, the time for this can vary. Please discuss the details with one of our priests.

Finally, we can help you find a member of our church who meets the above guidelines to be a Godparent(s). In addition to the assigned Godparent(s), you may also select additional Godparent(s) who does not meet the above guidelines. Only one Godparent must meet all the guidelines, and in our official records we record at most two, one woman and one man. However, we are open to you informally having more than two, and we would be open to having them stand in during the ceremony, and you can consider them as Godparents.