

**DIOCESE OF GALLUP  
SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES  
BAPTISM**

Baptismal guidelines for the Diocese of Gallup are to be given to parents and godparents as they prepare to have their infants baptized. The compilation of the provisions is from the Code of Canon Law and the Rite of Baptism for Children.



1. Each parish and mission of the diocese is to have some program of adult instruction and preparation for the sacrament ( cf, C851.2). The occasion of the baptism of the baby can be a great teaching moment for a family and a marvelous opportunity to remind adults of their own baptismal commitments. Such an opportunity should not be ignored.

2. Some provisions of the Guidelines will call for prudent pastoral interpretations and judgment. While the sacraments may never be refused outright without recourse to the bishop, there will undoubtedly arise circumstances in which its conferral may be legitimately delayed. In order to baptize licitly, for example, there must be at least a reasonable hope that the child will be reared in the Catholic faith. In cases where such reasonable hope is lacking, the

sacrament " ...is to be put off according to the prescriptions of particular law and the parents are to be informed of the reasons" ( cf , C. "'--' 868.1 ).

Pastors, however, should guard against laying down rigid conditions for baptism which in fact go beyond the demands of Church law and infringe upon the rights of Catholic people. Forcing a couple to have their marriage convalidated by the church as a condition to baptizing a baby would be an example of this type of rigid, and illegitimate, practice. While parents in such a situation should by all means be encouraged to have their marriage rectified, their freedom of consent to sacramental marriage must be respected.

3. Baptismal instructions for parents and sponsors should be seen as an aspect of adult education, and even as a means of parish renewal. Conscientious dialogue and instruction with parents and godparents at this significant moment in their lives may well reap a rich harvest of renewed commitment to the faith and to the parish.

**B. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Church wishes to help parents and godparents more perfectly live their baptismal vocations and as a result help the newly-baptized grow properly in their vocations as Roman Catholics. For this reason, each parish in the Diocese of Gallup should provide baptismal instructions to parents and godparents, designed to help in spiritual formation so that the adults can help the newly baptized child grow joyfully in the Faith. For the baptism of an infant, it is necessary that there be a well-founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion. The Diocesan ministers are here to help growth in the Faith and to be renewed. We as a Diocese pledge to do our best for parents and child and to help the newly baptized grow day-by-day in a commitment to Jesus Christ and His Church.

#### C. BAPTISM AND THE COMMUNITY

Just as the birth of the child is so important to the entire family, so the baptism of the child is important to the parish family. For this reason, the Church suggests that baptism should be administered on Sunday and that members of the parish community should be present. At times some parishes have baptisms at Sunday Masses.

#### D. TIME OF BAPTISM

(Canon 867) Parents are obliged to see to it that they are baptized within the first weeks after birth. Parents should therefore go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and be properly prepared for it even before birth, if possible.

#### E. BAPTISMAL DIRECTIVES FOR THE DIOCESE OF GALLUP

Please note that in the following directives (Canon) refers to the Code of Canon Law and (R.B.C.) refers to the Rite of Baptism for Children.

#### F. BAPTISM AND THE COMMUNITY (R.B.C. #9)

The sacrament should usually be celebrated on Sunday when the Church commemorates the Lord's Resurrection. On Sunday, Baptism may be celebrated during Mass. ..but this should not be done too often. Even when administered outside of Mass, effort should be made to have representation of the community present.

#### G. PLACE OF BAPTISM (Can 857.2)

Infants are to be baptized in the parish church proper to their parents. No priest is to baptize a child of parents not belonging to his parish without written permission of the proper pastor before administering the sacrament.

#### H. BAPTISM AND SPONSORS

(Canon 874.2) To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must have completed the sixteenth year. The pastor or minister of the sacrament may judge that an exception is to be made for a just cause .

(Canon 874.3) To be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. If the only condition lacking in the proposed sponsor is that he or she is not confirmed; the person should be enrolled in the RC.I.A. or in some appropriate form of adult education that the parish offers in preparation for the Sacrament o Confirmation.

(Canon 874.3) To .be admitted to the role of sponsor, a person must be a Catholic who leads a life in harmony with the Faith and the role to be undertaken. A life in harmony with the Faith includes the sacrament of matrimony (if the sponsor is married), regular attendance at Sunday Mass and religious education of their own children.

## L BAPTISM AND PARENTS

(Canon 851.2) (Canon 867) The parents of an infant who is to be baptized and likewise ""-"" those who are to undertake the office of sponsor are to be properly instructed in the meaning of the sacrament and the obligations which are attached to it. The pastor is to see to it that the parents are properly formed by pastoral directions and by common prayer, gathering several families together and where possible visiting them

(R.B.C. #5) Because of the natural relationships, parents have a more important ministry and role in baptism than godparents.

(R.B.C. #5.1) Before the celebration of the sacrament, it is of great importance that parents, moved by their own faith or with the help of friends or other members of the community, should prepare to take part in the rite with understanding.

(N.B.) Proper pastoral care responds to the needs of parents and at the same time, upholds the sanctity and integrity of the sacrament. The RCIA is the process mandated by magisterium for the renewal pf the Church. The Sacred Congregation for the Defense of the Faith in 1980 made a strong plea for visualizing infant baptism in a larger process of ongoing pastoral care. The pastoral care at the time of infant baptism may conceivably be a vehicle of renewal for a great number .

(Canon 868.2) For the baptism of an infant, it is necessary that there be a well founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion. If such a hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be put off according to the prescriptions of a particular law and parents are to be informed of the reason.

(R.B.C. 8.2) When the parents are not yet prepared to profess the Faith or to undertake the duty of bringing up their children as Catholics, it is for the parish priest. ..to determine the time for the baptism of infants. August 1996