

Our Lady of Lourdes Infant Baptism Guidelines

2621 Colonial Blvd., Violet, LA 70092 * (504) 682-7070

Office Hours: M-Th 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, F 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Baptism is the first Sacrament that we receive. It brings us into the Church, unites us to Christ, and fills us with the Holy Spirit of God. Through baptism we are made sons and daughters of God in the Son, then, after baptism, we must strive to live as children of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Parents and godparents of the newly baptized children take on the grave responsibility of bringing these children up in the practice of the faith and teaching them how to live as children of God and members of the Catholic Church.

Who can be baptized?

Anyone who has not been baptized already through a Church recognized baptism can be baptized as soon as they are born, and the Church encourages parents to bring their children in for baptism as soon as they can. You can even begin preparing the paperwork and the parents and godparents can attend the seminar before the child is born. The infant to be baptized must be brought in by a legal guardian. For an infant baptism, the child must be younger than the “age of reason,” which is about 7 years old; anyone 7 years old or older will have to go through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) or the RCIA for children.

If the parents are not married when the child is born, and they want to include the father’s name on the baptismal certificate, then we need to see the child’s legal birth certificate, since this also counts as a legal document in the state of Louisiana.

Choosing Godparents

The choice of Godparents for your children is a very important step which should not be taken lightly. In the Rite of Baptism, the Godparents of the child promise to help the parents raise the child in the practice of the faith. Godparents should pray for their godchildren, be involved in their lives, help teach them the faith, and give them a witness of living out the faith through going to Mass, prayer, and acts of charity.

For this reason, Godparents must be at least 16 years old, be active and practicing Catholics, and have received the Sacrament of Confirmation. If they are married, they must be in a marriage recognized as valid by the Church. If they are not married, they may not be cohabiting with someone, which is living together as if married.

There must be at least one Godparent. If there are two, there must be one man and one woman.

Christian Witnesses

If there is only one Godparent, there may also be a Christian Witness. This is a non-Catholic Christian who is baptized. Their name will be included in the baptismal record and the baptismal certificate as a Christian Witness. There is no gender requirement for Christian Witnesses, but they have to be at least 16 years old.

Testimonial for Baptism

The parents and Godparents of the child to be baptized will have to fill out and sign the Testimonial for Baptism for Parents and Godparents respectively. They will receive this form at the Baptismal Seminar. This form will serve as proof that they agree to and meet the requirements for baptism set out in the forms.

Baptismal Preparation

The parents and Godparents are required to attend a Baptismal Seminar prior to the baptism, unless they've already attended a Baptismal Seminar in Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. The Baptismal Seminar will be done by either a priest or deacon of the parish. If either of the parents or Godparents aren't able to come to OLL for the Seminar they can attend a Baptismal Seminar at another Catholic Church. Anyone who does attend the seminar at another parish needs to get a letter or certificate showing that they attended the seminar.

The seminar will cover at a minimum:

- The Role of Parents,
- The Role of Godparents,
- The importance of Parents as primary educators of their children in the faith,
- The importance of a Christian name,
- An explanation of the Rite of Baptism which, in addition to other aspects, focuses on the nature of the Sacrament of Baptism, especially as entrance into a community of faith.

Scheduling a Baptism

When you come to the office to schedule a baptism, this is what you should expect to happen:

- 1) You will need to fill out the form to register for baptism. Your contact information will be given to the next priest or deacon available in the parish.
 - a. Parents of the child are strongly encouraged to register with the parish as part of the baptismal request.
- 2) The priest/deacon will contact you to schedule your Baptismal Seminar for the parents and godparents. You will get copies of the Testimonial for Baptism for Parents and Godparents at this meeting.
- 3) The parents and godparents must complete the Testimonial forms and attend the Baptismal Seminar before we will schedule the baptism.
- 4) After this is done, you can contact the office to schedule the baptism.
- 5) Most baptisms follow one of the weekend Masses. We encourage everyone attending the baptism to attend that Mass.

Emergency Baptism

The Church recognizes that there are situations that fall outside of the normal course of events. If an unbaptized child is in danger of death, all of the above rules can be waved. The parents should contact the nearest priest or deacon so that they can perform an emergency baptism. If there isn't time to contact a priest or deacon, then anyone can baptize a person in imminent danger of death by pouring water on them three times, saying the baptismal formula ("I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"), and intending to do what the Church does in baptism. They should then contact the Church as soon as possible. The rest of the ceremonies can be performed at Church at a later time.

Fees

We do not charge a fee for baptisms. We do, however, ask that you consider making a donation to the Church at the time of the baptism to help offset the cost that we incur, including secretarial costs, the Baptismal Seminar, air conditioning the Church, etc. We recommend \$75 to \$100.