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Overview of the Program

Call to Celebrate: Baptism has the following goals:

- ▶ To welcome parents and invite them to a deeper involvement in the life of their parish community
- ▶ To lead parents to a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism, and the commitment it requires of them
- ▶ To help parents discern their readiness to celebrate their child's Baptism
- ▶ To support and strengthen parents' relationship with the Church
- ▶ To prepare parents to enter into the liturgical celebration of their child's Baptism with "full, conscious, and active participation"

The program consists of three catechetical sessions, each lasting about two hours. After the parish has made initial contact with parents seeking Baptism for their infants and young children, parents are invited to participate in a process that includes faith-sharing, instruction, and prayer. This program is intentionally designed to be inclusive of single parents and non-Catholic spouses, as well as Catholic parents, so all present will feel welcomed and valued. It is also sensitive

to both birth parents and adoptive parents. Furthermore, this program approaches baptismal preparation without presuming a great deal of background on the part of the participants. Thus, all present—whether they are weekly worshipers, parents returning to the Church, or those with non-Catholic spouses—will be able to understand and participate in the process with full engagement and comprehension.

The overall arrangement and content of the **Call to Celebrate: Baptism** sessions flow from the baptismal ritual itself, following the structure of the *Rite* and using the prayers, symbols, and actions of the ritual as integral components of the catechetical process. At the first session, parents are given a handbook containing resources that enable them to participate with greater attention during the sessions. The *Parent Handbook* can be used between sessions to continue the momentum of the group meetings.

Program Overview

Initial Contact and Discernment

A pastoral conversation between the Director and a parent from each family is a critical part of the registration process. This will enable the Director to gain a sense of the pastoral background and needs of each participant family. The Director is encouraged to share this information, in confidence, with the session facilitators in advance of Session One. Below is a program overview and the corresponding parts of the *Rite of Baptism*.

Session One

Call to Celebrate: Baptism

Welcome/Introductions
Sharing Faith Journeys

Choosing Godparents
Identifying Hopes and Dreams
for Your Children

Rite of Baptism

Reception of the children
No counterpart in the *Rite*, but an important part of preparation
Questioning the godparents
Questioning the parents

Session Two

Call to Celebrate: Baptism

Committing Your Child to Christ
Belonging to a Family
The Communion of Saints
The Prayer of Exorcism and
Original Sin

Rite of Baptism

Questioning the parents
Questioning the parents
Litany of the Saints
Prayer of Exorcism

Session Three

Call to Celebrate: Baptism

Baptismal Promises
The Water Ritual
Anointing with Oil of Chrism
The White Garment
Closing Prayer

Rite of Baptism

Baptismal promises
Blessing of water
Blessing with Chrism
Presentation of the garment
Presentation of the candle

Adapting the Format

If three two-hour sessions are not feasible for your situation, the format is flexible enough to be adapted. Timelines for individual sessions may be shortened as long as the

basic flow of the overall program is respected. Sessions may also be combined, as in the example given on page 12.

Team Formation

Something wonderful can happen in the process of preparing parishioners to minister as members of the *Call to Celebrate: Baptism* team. The call to this ministry can open up new horizons of understanding for ordinary parishioners who may not have had any previous experience with theological updating or pastoral-care training. What is asked of those who serve in this ministry is quite modest, and this guide contains resources that ensure that volunteers will be well prepared to become *Call to Celebrate: Baptism* team members.

One of the most effective ways of doing adult faith formation for average parishioners is to involve them in a pastoral situation where they realize their own need for “updating” in order to minister more effectively. The suggested approach to team formation provided here aims to address parishioners in just that way. The Director of the program may wish to adapt this approach or use it as a springboard for more extensive training experiences. What is most important is to use team members’ “teachable moment” of call to this ministry as an opening to meaningful adult faith formation that will deepen their own faith journeys.



Session one

BEFORE THE SESSION

Connect with participants—by phone, mail, or in person—prior to the first formal session. It is important that participants have clear and realistic expectations of the program and their participation in it. You may wish to use the sample letter provided. (See page 39.)

Send participants the Godparent Information Sheet (p. 41) and the certificates Catholic godparent(s) need to have signed by their local parish (p. 43). Parents should be informed that they are not expected to choose godparents this early. However, they will be expected to have begun the conversation among themselves as to whom they will choose and why.

Give facilitators and team members copies of the relevant pages of this guide (or their own copy of the entire guide). Be sure to include the Facilitator Planning Sheet that should be used to help facilitators assign responsibilities for the various segments of the session.

Provide facilitators with the names of those who will be participating in the session and, if possible, some of the pastoral background information on each family that will have surfaced as part of the registration process. It is very helpful for the facilitators to know, for example, which of the parents are Catholic (or Christian) and which are not, which families have other children and which ones are bringing a firstborn, how connected the family may be to the parish, and so forth.

Preparing the Space

One facilitator will need to arrive an hour early to set up the space and to make certain all is prepared for the earliest arrivals.

- ☐ Arrange chairs in a tight circle, (you want people close together), but be sure to leave several points of entrance into the circle.
- ☐ In the center of the circle, place a table covered with a white cloth.
- ☐ Place a candle, a crucifix, and a glass bowl filled with water on the table.
- ☐ Set out an easel pad and markers for notes.
- ☐ Have simple snacks and beverages available as an expression of hospitality.
- ☐ Lay out nametags for participants to pick up as they arrive.
- ☐ Put out copies of the Session One evaluation sheet (p. 45).
- ☐ Provide *Parent Handbooks* and pencils or pens for participants. Have *Godparent Handbooks* available.
- ☐ If desired, make a sign-in sheet available in a prominent place.

FACILITATOR PLANNING SHEET

Session One

Record the names of each person who will be completing the tasks below.

Room set up and early arrival preparation _____

Provide drinks _____

Provide snacks _____

Record the names of each person who will lead each of the sections.

Welcome/Introductions _____

Opening Prayer _____

Sharing Faith Journeys _____

**NOTE: If the session includes more than 10 participants, smaller groups should be formed. You will need one group leader for each small group.*

Choosing Godparents _____

Identifying Hopes and Dreams for Your Child _____

Team Member Sharing Response _____

Team Member Leading Rest of the Segment _____

Closing _____

SESSION AT A GLANCE

- 1** Welcome/Introductions
20 minutes
- 2** Opening Prayer
5 minutes
- 3** Sharing Faith Journeys
45 minutes
- 4** Break
5 minutes
- 5** Choosing Godparents
15 minutes
- 6** Identifying Hopes and Dreams
20 minutes
- 7** Closing
10 minutes



20 MINUTES

Facilitators' Welcome

INTRODUCE yourselves:

- ▶ name
- ▶ some background information
- ▶ number of children
- ▶ how long you have been members of the parish

EXPLAIN your roles:

- ▶ lead discussions
- ▶ share your own experiences
- ▶ answer any questions as best you can

WELCOME all participants—especially acknowledging the presence of parents with other faith traditions.

Participants' Welcome

INVITE participants to go around the circle and share:

- ▶ name
- ▶ response to an easy icebreaker question, e.g.:

What do you like best about being a parent?

What aspect of your faith are you most looking forward to sharing with your child?

REFERENCE the overall program goals that are found on page 1 of the *Parent Handbook*.

Overall Program Goals

- To welcome and invite you to a deeper involvement in the life of this parish community
- To lead you to a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism and the commitment it requires of you
- To help you discern whether you are ready to celebrate your child's Baptism
- To support and strengthen your relationship with the Church
- To prepare you enter into the liturgical celebration of your child's Baptism with "full, conscious, and active participation"

POINT out that the topics covered in the three sessions will follow the order of the *Rite of Baptism*.

EXPLAIN that everything discussed is directly related to the ritual parents will celebrate on the day of their child's Baptism.

REVIEW the session etiquette and process that will be followed from the list below, and then invite questions or comments so that all are in agreement. You may want to post these for everyone to see.

- ▶ Start on time; end on time.
- ▶ Participation and sharing is encouraged by all.
- ▶ Respect and value one another—whether we agree or disagree with one another.
- ▶ What is said in the room stays in the room.

Explanation of Session One Goals

DISCUSS goals, referring to page 2 in the *Parent Handbook*.

Goals for Session One

- To pray together
- To share one another's faith journey
- To explore the roles and responsibilities of godparents
- To discuss the significance of our children's names
- To identify the spiritual hopes and dreams we have for our children

WELCOME and discuss any questions before moving on.

VERIFY that everyone has an evaluation form, and explain that forms will be collected at the end of today's session.

INVITE participants to fill out the evaluation forms during or immediately following the session. Explain that the ministry team takes evaluations seriously, and encourage candor in participants' responses.

Total Time Elapsed: 0:20



2 Opening Prayer



5 MINUTES

LIGHT the candle on the center table before beginning the prayer. The candle should remain burning for the entire session.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Amen.)

Let us pray:

(Pause a few seconds for silent prayer.)

Good and Gracious God,
you are the source of all life.
We ask you to bless our time,
to guide our conversations,
and to help us grow closer to you.

We thank you most especially
for the gift of our children,
and we ask for your continued blessings
upon them and upon us as parents.

We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

(Amen.)

Total Time Elapsed: 0:25

3 Sharing Faith Journeys



45 MINUTES

DIVIDE participants into groups of six to eight people. Have groups move their chairs into smaller circles.

MAKE sure to pace this section so everyone has time to share if they wish to do so.

INTRODUCE this section by making the following remarks:

We come together with the same goal in mind: Baptism for our children.

We are here because we want our children to have a special relationship with God.

Before we begin talking about our children, though, let's talk about ourselves. We'd like to spend a little time getting to know something about one another's personal stories.

Please open your *Parent Handbook* to My Faith Journey on page 4.

DIRECT the participants to complete the activity.

- ▶ Reflect on your relationship with God over the course of your life.
- ▶ Think of the ups and downs, and the events that caused your relationship with God to change.
- ▶ Then, on your paper, draw a line that reflects how your relationship with God has changed throughout your life.
- ▶ Begin your line in childhood, and use words or symbols to note events along the way.
- ▶ We'll give you about three or four minutes, and when everyone is done, we'll talk about our stories.

GIVE participants 3–4 minutes to complete the sheet, letting them know when time is almost up. Do the activity along with the participants.

HAVE a facilitator in each small group begin first to model how the sharing should work. Keep this initial sharing to about three minutes.

INVITE participants to share when they feel ready—no need to go around the circle in order.

MAKE sure to pace this section so everyone has the time to share if they wish to do so, but do not force participants to share more than they are comfortable sharing. Give everyone a chance to speak before taking a break.



Total Time Elapsed: 1:10

4 Break



5 MINUTES

RETURN all chairs to one circle, if smaller circles were created for faith journey sharing.

Total Time Elapsed: 1:15

5 Choosing Godparents



15 MINUTES

INTRODUCE this section by making the following remarks:

Prior to our gathering, you received the Godparent Information Sheet to read at home. A summary of that information can also be found on page 5 of your *Parent Handbook*.

You were invited to consider the criteria established by the Church for godparents and, in light of those criteria, to think about whom you might want to ask to be your child's lifelong spiritual mentor.

We'd like to hear where you are in the process of choosing godparents.

ASK the participants these questions:

- ▶ If you already have chosen godparents for your child, whom have you chosen? How did you come to this decision?
- ▶ If you have not chosen a godparent yet, what criteria are you using in your consideration?
- ▶ Do you have any questions or concerns about choosing godparents?

INVITE all to respond, and facilitate a discussion.

Total Time Elapsed: 1:30



Godparents in the Catholic Tradition . . .

When you invite a person to serve as your child's godparent, you are asking this individual to make a lifelong commitment to your child. The day of your child's Baptism marks just the beginning of the godparent-godchild relationship. It is the hope of the Church and the Catholic community that your child's godparents will be lifelong companions who will nurture your child's faith and help him or her become a true disciple of Christ.

The Catholic community calls godparents to:

- ▶ help their godchild grow in faith
- ▶ teach their godchild about Catholic traditions
- ▶ model for their godchild how to live a Catholic life

The law of the Roman Catholic Church requires that each child being baptized have one godparent to serve as his or her spiritual role model and friend. This godparent may be male or female. Two godparents—one godmother and one godfather—are the custom in the United States, but are not required.

To be a Catholic godparent, one must:

- ▶ be a Catholic who has received the Sacrament of Confirmation and regularly participates in the Eucharist
- ▶ be an active member of a Catholic faith community
- ▶ be at least sixteen years old

When choosing a godparent for your child, it may be helpful to consider the following:

- 1 Is this person actively practicing his or her faith? Does he or she worship at Sunday Eucharist regularly? *(This is the most important question to ask. If the person selected is not an active, practicing Catholic, he or she will not be able to fulfill effectively the role of godparent.)*
- 2 Does this person live close enough, or will this person have sufficiently frequent contact, to get to know your child and play an active role in your child's faith life?
- 3 Does this person know enough about the Catholic Church and Catholic faith to be able to teach your child about it?
- 4 If something happened to you, would this person make sure your child was raised as an active member of the Catholic community?

What is a Christian witness? Some families may wish to have a non-Catholic Christian also serve as a sponsor for their child. Although at least one Catholic godparent is required, a baptized non-Catholic Christian may be invited to serve as a "Christian witness" who will participate in the celebration and will stand alongside the godparent during the baptismal ceremony.

Los padrinos en la tradición católica . . .

Cuando ustedes invitan a alguien a ser el padrino o la madrina de su hijo, le están pidiendo a esa persona que asuma un compromiso de por vida con el pequeño. El día del Bautismo marca el comienzo de la relación padrinos-ahijado. La Iglesia y la comunidad católica esperan que los padrinos sean compañeros de su hijo para toda la vida, que alimenten su fe y lo ayuden a transformarse en un verdadero discípulo de Cristo.

La comunidad católica llama a los padrinos a:

- ▶ ayudar a que su ahijado crezca en la fe
- ▶ enseñar a su ahijado las tradiciones católicas
- ▶ ser para su ahijado un ejemplo de cómo vivir una vida católica

La ley de la Iglesia católica romana exige que cada niño que se bautice tenga un padrino para que sea su modelo de conducta espiritual y su amigo. Puede ser un hombre padrino o una mujer madrina. La costumbre en los Estados Unidos es que los padrinos sean dos—un padrino y una madrina—pero no es un requisito.

Para ser un padrino católico, se debe:

- ▶ ser un católico que haya recibido el sacramento de la Confirmación y que participe regularmente de la Eucaristía
- ▶ ser miembro activo de una comunidad de fe católica
- ▶ tener por lo menos dieciséis años de edad

Cuando escojan un padrino o una madrina para su hijo, puede resultarles útil tener en cuenta lo siguiente:

- 1 ¿Practica activamente esta persona su fe? Participa regularmente en la Eucaristía dominical? *(Ésta es la pregunta más importante. Si la persona escogida no es católica activa y practicante, no podrá cumplir su función de padrino o madrina de manera efectiva.)*
- 2 ¿Vive esta persona relativamente cerca o tiene un contacto suficientemente frecuente con su familia para llegar a conocer a su hijo y cumplir un rol activo en la vida de fe del niño?
- 3 ¿Sabe esta persona lo bastante acerca de la Iglesia católica y de la fe católica para poder enseñárselo a su hijo?
- 4 En caso de que algo les ocurriera a ustedes, ¿se aseguraría esta persona de que su hijo crezca como un miembro activo de la comunidad católica?

¿Qué es un testigo cristiano? Posiblemente algunas familias deseen elegir un cristiano no católico que apadrine a su hijo. Aunque es requisito que por lo menos uno de los padrinos sea católico, se puede invitar a un cristiano no católico y bautizado para que actúe como “testigo cristiano”, quien participará de la celebración y permanecerá al lado de los padrinos durante la ceremonia bautismal.