



7887 Walmsley Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125-3496
Main Line: (504) 861-9521
Office: (504) 861-6205
Fax (504) 314-9614
www.archdiocese-no.org

January 13, 2013

Dear clergy, religious, and lay faithful of the Archdiocese of New Orleans:

**PROMULGATION OF THE POLICY ON INFANT BAPTISM
AS PARTICULAR LAW IN THE ARCHDIOCESE**

The sacraments of the New Testament were instituted by Christ the Lord and entrusted to the Church. As actions of Christ and the Church, they are signs and means which express and strengthen the faith, render worship to God, and effect the sanctification of humanity. Among the sacraments, Baptism occupies the first place because it is the gateway to the other sacraments and is necessary for salvation.

While the proper manner of administering the sacrament of Baptism has been prescribed in the Code of Canon Law and in the approved liturgical books, varying practices and some pastoral issues have arisen in parishes throughout the Archdiocese regarding the administration of the sacrament of Baptism. In order to address the practices and issues that have arisen, the Pastoral Care and Practices Committee, led by Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre, Auxiliary Bishop, was mandated to take a survey of the varying pastoral practices and issues across the parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The purpose of the survey was to come up with recommendations for uniform practices throughout the Archdiocese. A survey of the parishes was done through the ten deaneries in the Archdiocese. The results of the survey were then presented to the Presbyteral Council for discussions. The recommendations were discussed in several meetings by the members of the Presbyteral Council before they were finally passed unto me for approval. This Policy will help to standardize and bring uniformity to the administration of the sacrament of Baptism throughout the Archdiocese.

Ergo, I hereby promulgate the Policy on Infant Baptism as particular law for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. As particular law, this Policy is to be read and implemented in conjunction with the universal laws of the Church. The Policy takes effect on January 12, 2014, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. But although pastors may choose to implement the Policy in their parish before the aforementioned date, they must implement it by the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in 2014.

I exhort all those on whom the execution of this policy depend and all the faithful to observe it with a sincere spirit and good will for the salvation of souls.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am

Most Revered Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans

Given on this day:
The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Policy on Infant Baptism

Archdiocese of New Orleans

“From the earliest times, the Church, to which the mission of preaching the Gospel and of baptizing was entrusted, has baptized not only adults but children as well. Our Lord said, ‘Unless a man is reborn in water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’ The Church has always understood these words to mean that children should not be deprived of baptism, because they are baptized in the faith of the Church, a faith proclaimed for them by their parents and godparents, who represent both the local Church and the whole society of saints and believers: ‘The whole Church is the mother of all and the mother of each.’” (Rite of Baptism of Children, no. 2)

The birth or adoption of a child is a sacred time to celebrate both earthly life and God’s promise of eternal life to those who are born of water and the Holy Spirit. Just as the living God grants us earthly life, God also calls the Church to celebrate with the family of a newborn or newly adopted child the new life that God offers in the Sacrament of Baptism.

In order to assist parents and parishes in making the Baptism of Children a time to celebrate faith and rejoice in the gift of new life, the Archdiocese of New Orleans has adopted the following as particular law in the archdiocese regarding the Sacrament of Baptism.

Regarding Parents who Present Children for Baptism

- 1. All parishes undertake Baptismal Preparation that at a minimum covers the following:**
 - a. Role of Parents**
 - b. Role of Godparents**
 - c. Importance of Parents as primary educators of their children in the faith**
 - d. Importance of a Christian name**
 - e. 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**

- 2. With regard to Parents who present children for the Sacrament of Baptism, first time Parents shall attend Baptism Preparation. However, if the Parents have attended Baptism Preparation previously in the parish where the Baptism is to take place, then no further preparation should be required regardless of the number of children of these Parents that are presented for Baptism in that particular church parish.**

- 3. Since the most common reason for delaying Baptism is a concern regarding the ‘founded hope’ that the child would be brought up in the Catholic faith, there is a *Baptism Testimonial Form* compiled for use in all parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans that asks**

Parents to swear to tell the truth about their intentions to raise the child in the Catholic faith and requires Parents to sign the form. This allows priests and deacons to take the Parents *'at the word of their sworn statements'* and fulfills the requirement for a 'founded hope' that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith.

4. That with the regard that is due for 'Baptism in danger of death' (canon 866 §2), there be acceptance and continuance of the current practice of NOT baptizing a child presented by anyone who is not at least a legal guardian of the child.

5. That parish registration prior to Baptism only be strongly encouraged so that the needs of any future pastoral care required by the family can be given attention.

6. That as long as all other requirements are met, children of unwed parents should be baptized without the added requirement of marriage, or even of promised marriage, on the part of the parents.

7. Regarding children born to unwed parents, a certificate of birth from the State that declares paternity on the part of the mother and father shall be sufficient to enter the name of both parents into the baptismal record.

Regarding Proposed Godparents

1. First time Godparents shall attend Baptism preparation prior to serving in this role.

2. Catholics who are not yet confirmed cannot serve as either a Godparent or as a Christian Witness.

3. Catholics who are not practicing their faith in any manner or who are not in 'good standing' cannot serve as Godparents or as Christian Witnesses.

4. Catholics who have rejected the faith cannot serve as Godparents or as Christian Witnesses.

5. There is a *Baptism Testimonial Form* compiled for use in all parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans that asks the Godparents to swear to tell the truth about the information they provide, and then requires Godparents to sign the form. This allows priests and deacons to take the Godparents *'at the word of their sworn statements'* and eliminates the need for any other attestations regarding their 'good standing' in the Church, reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation, etc.

Other Concerns

- 1. For emergency Baptisms that may take place in hospitals, etc. the canonical requirement that the baptism be recorded in the territorial parish in which it was celebrated must be respected.**
- 2. With regard to ‘supplying ceremony’ for a child who was baptized in an emergency, a notation may also be made in the index of the baptismal register of the church parish where the ceremony is supplied indicating that only ceremony was supplied, and also stating in which church parish the baptismal record is inscribed. Only the church parish in which the baptism was actually celebrated may issue a baptismal certificate for any such baptism.**
- 3. While Baptisms during Lent should be discouraged in normative circumstances, it nonetheless remains the prerogative of the pastor after consultation with the parents to decide on celebrating a private baptism during Lent.**
- 4. With regard to the Celebration of Baptism during Mass, and the Celebration of Baptism for One Child and the Celebration of Baptism for a Number of Children, these remain pastoral decisions made solely by the pastor after consultation with the parents of the child(ren) to be baptized.**

The Sacrament of Baptism is the basis of the whole of Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other Sacraments. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1213*) It is hoped that the above guidelines will enhance the joy of the celebration of the baptism of a child, bestowing God’s grace upon the child baptized as well as enriching the lives of parents, godparents, and all others who gather to celebrate the gift of new life offered in baptism.

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

Parental Testimonial for the Sacrament of Baptism

Date: _____

Name of Child to be Baptized: _____

Proposed Date of Baptism _____

Statement of Catholic Parent(s)

“It is my sincere hope and intention to raise my child in the Catholic faith and to do all in my power to assure through my own efforts that my child practices and grows in the Catholic faith.”

By signing below, the Catholic parent(s) solemnly swear that the statement above is a true and correct indication of their intentions.

(Must be signed by at least one Catholic parent.)

Father's Signature: _____

Father's Name Printed: _____

Mother's Signature: _____

Mother's Name Printed: _____

Signature of Pastor or Delegate (In Parish where Baptism is to be Celebrated)

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

Godparent Testimonial for the Sacrament of Baptism

Date: _____

Name of Child to be Baptized: _____

Proposed Date of Baptism _____

Criteria to Serve as Godparent for Baptism

1. The Godparent must be a Catholic in good standing with the Church who has been Confirmed and regularly practices his/her Catholic faith;
2. The Godparent must be at least sixteen years of age;
3. If married, the Godparent must be in a marriage recognized as valid by the Catholic Church. Person may not be cohabiting, or living together without marriage.
4. If not previously attended, the Godparent will attend a Baptismal Seminar in preparation for this Baptism.

Statement of Godparent

“I meet the above stated criteria to serve as a Godparent, and I will do all in my power to assist the parents of this child to raise their child in the Catholic faith.”

By signing below, the proposed Godparent solemnly swears that he or she has read the above criteria, and that the statement above is a true and correct indication of his/her intentions.

Godparent's Signature: _____

Godparent's Name Printed: _____

Signature of Pastor or Delegate (In Parish where Baptism is to be Celebrated)