Our Lady of the Lake

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Infant/Child Baptism Guidelines



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Baptism at Our Lady of the Lake Parish

Welcome! We're delighted you're considering baptism for your child at Our Lady of the Lake (OLL). This guide outlines the policy and process for infant baptism, which the Catholic Church permits for children up to age seven (Canon 97 §2, defining the age of reason; Diocesan Policy 205, referencing children below catechetical age). For children age seven and older, teens, or adults, baptism occurs through a distinct process, such as the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) or faith formation programs. For more information on those, please complete our OCIA Inquiry Form at oll.org/ocia/ to connect with our Director of Ministry.

Baptism is a profound sacrament that welcomes a person into the Catholic Church and begins their life in Christ. Children born into Christian families are welcomed into the domestic church—the fundamental unit of society and the place where both human and Christian culture are nourished. This is why, from the earliest days of the Church, the infant children of believers have been presented for baptism and recognized as called by God to share in the one life of the Lord's family. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant baptism: while bringing no human achievements or works to their encounter with God, children are nonetheless given a share in divine life.



Below, we'll explain what infant baptism means, our parish policies, requirements, and the step-by-step process. Our goal is to ensure families understand the significance of this sacrament and are prepared to nurture their child's faith. If you have questions, please submit the Baptism Inquiry Form at oll.org/baptism/ to reach our Director of Ministry. We're here to support and encourage you every step of the way as you embark on this beautiful journey.

What Is Baptism?

Baptism is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. It is the gateway to Christian life, where we are regenerated or "born again," cleansed of original sin, and incorporated into the Church community. At the same time, the Church has understood that children share the nature common to all humans, meaning they, like all of us, "must be born again" (John 3:3). This underscores the necessity for Catholic parents to bring their children soon after birth to the saving waters of baptism.

- From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC): "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments." (CCC 1213)
- "Baptism... frees from sin and regenerates." (CCC 1214)



It is also a public and communal celebration, where parents, godparents, and the parish community vow to support and foster the child's Catholic faith throughout their life. Though seen from a different point of view, elements of the catechumenate apply in the baptism of infants. In the case of infants, it is the role of the parents to provide the environment where a young disciple of Christ can grow. This will be most critical in the earliest years of life, where you, as parents, fulfill your role as evangelizers and Christian models. Our parish is here to support you in this great work, helping the formation in your family naturally lead to readiness for Eucharistic preparation when your child is older.

"Where infant Baptism is the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature, infant Baptism requires a post-baptismal catechumenate. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth." (CCC 1231)

The Church emphasizes baptizing infants soon after birth: "Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God." (CCC 1250)

Baptism is not merely a cultural tradition or family milestone—it's a sacred commitment to raise your child in the faith for the good of their soul. We rejoice with you in this opportunity and are excited to walk alongside your family.

Who Can Be Baptized?

- **Infants (under age seven):** Baptism should occur as soon as possible after birth. According to Canon Law: "Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it, they are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it." (Can. 867 §1)
- **Children age seven and older, teens, or adults:** These individuals receive baptism through a separate process, such as our faith formation program for children or the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA). Please submit the OCIA Inquiry Form at oll.org/ocia/ to connect with our Director of Ministry for details.



Baptisms usually take place in the family's home parish, where parents are registered, regularly attend Mass, and contribute to the community. At OLL, we follow the Code of Canon Law closely to honor the sacrament's importance, and we're happy to guide you if your situation is unique.

Requirements for Infant Baptism

For an infant to be baptized, Canon Law requires:

- Consent from the parents or at least one of them (or a legal guardian). (Can. 868 §1, 1/)
- "There must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion; if such hope is altogether lacking, the baptism is to be delayed according to the prescripts of particular law after the parents have been advised about the reason." (Can. 868 §1, 2/)

At least one parent must be Catholic; they do not need to have completed all sacraments of initiation themselves, but the focus is on their commitment to the child's Catholic upbringing. We believe in your family's potential and are here to help build that commitment together.



Baptism is a serious yet joyful commitment that involves a lifelong promise. If parents are non-practicing or seeking baptism mainly for cultural or family reasons, we may delay it to provide gentle guidance and ensure a genuine commitment—we see this as a chance to grow in faith as a family.

There are no fees for baptism at OLL, though the required preparation course costs $12 (paid directly to the provider). We're committed to making this accessible for everyone.

The Role of Godparents (Sponsors)

Godparents (also called sponsors—the terms are interchangeable) play a vital role: they assist the parents in raising the child in the Catholic faith. What a wonderful opportunity to involve loved ones who can model faith!

- From Canon Law: "A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it." (Can. 872)

Requirements for godparents:

- Must be at least 16 years old.

- Must be a confirmed Catholic who has received First Communion and leads a life of faith (e.g., regular Mass attendance, if married, in a valid Catholic marriage).
- Cannot be the child's parent.
- "Be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on." (Can. 874 §1, 3/)



You may have one godfather, one godmother, or both (but no more than two total). (Can. 873)

If a proposed godparent is not an active OLL parishioner known to the pastor, we require a "Godparent/Sponsor Affidavit" from their home parish pastor. This form confirms they meet the above criteria, understand their responsibilities, and intend to fulfill them (including praying for and giving Christian witness to the godchild). The baptism coordinator will provide the required form—we're grateful for their willingness to serve!

A non-Catholic Christian (or a Catholic unable to obtain the affidavit) may serve as a "witness" for support but cannot be recorded as a godparent. "A baptized person who belongs to a non-Catholic ecclesial community is not to participate except together with a Catholic sponsor and then only as a witness of the baptism." (Can. 874 §2)

The Baptism Process and Checklist

We're excited to guide you through the infant baptism process! To begin, please complete our Baptism Inquiry Form, available online at oll.org/baptism/ or on the last page of this packet. This form collects basic information about your family, including your name, contact details, and details about your child and faith background. Once submitted, our Director of Ministry will reach out to schedule an initial conversation.

Here's the step-by-step process for infant baptism:

1. **Complete the Baptism Inquiry Form:** Fill out and submit the form (oll.org/baptism/ or in-person at the parish office). This helps us learn about your family and your hopes for your child's baptism.
2. **Initial Contact and Interview:** After receiving your form our Director of Ministry will contact you to schedule an informal interview. We'll discuss your faith, the sacrament, and our policies, ensuring a founded hope for your child's Catholic upbringing. This is a supportive chat to celebrate and prepare together.
3. **Baptism Preparation Course:** Parents complete a self-paced online course (about 2-3 hours) explaining the sacrament and your role as Catholic parents. The coordinator provides the link; cost is $12. It's designed to inspire and equip you for this exciting role.
4. **Godparent Affidavits (if needed):** Obtain and submit completed forms from godparents' home parish.
5. **Registration Form:** Provide detailed info (child's name, birth date, parents' details, godparents). Include the child's measurements (shoulder-to-shoulder and shoulder-to-knee) for the personalized baptismal bib we provide as a special keepsake.
6. **Scheduling:** Discuss possible dates with the coordinator. Dates are tentative until all steps are complete. Baptisms occur on the third Sunday of every month after the 11:00 a.m. Mass.

Once everything is submitted, we'll confirm the date and celebrate this joyful occasion with you!

Ready to Get Started?

Begin by completing the Baptism Inquiry Form at oll.org/baptism/ or complete the final page of this packet. Once we receive your form, our Director of Ministry will reach out to guide you through the next steps. For baptisms of children age seven and older, teens, or adults, please use the same form to contact our Director of Ministry for information on our faith formation or OCIA processes. We're here to support you with encouragement and resources as you nurture your child's faith. God bless you and your family—we can't wait to welcome your little one!

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish

Baptism Inquiry Form

Date of Application: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Child's Full Name: _____

Child's Sex: ◯ Male ◯ Female Child's Birthdate: _____

Father's Full Name: _____

Is Father Catholic? ◯ Yes ◯ No

Mother's Full Name: _____

Is Mother Catholic? ◯ Yes ◯ No

Were Parents Married by a Catholic Priest or Deacon? ◯ Yes ◯ No

Are Parents Members at OLL? ◯ Yes ◯ No

If Not, Where Do Parents Regularly Attend Mass? _____

☐ We have read and agree to the Baptism Guidelines required to have our child baptized at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Parish.

☐ We would like to schedule a meeting with Greg Smith to discuss our baptism and begin the preparation process.

The best days/times for us to meet with Greg Smith are: _____

Signatures:

Father _____ Mother _____

Please return this form to the parish office. Greg Smith will reach out to you shortly for further discussion and to schedule a meeting.

office@oll.org or Our Lady of the Lake
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Holland, MI 49424