



BAPTISM INFORMATION

-St. Vincent's Catholic Parish-

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you for seeking your child's baptism in the Catholic Church!

Baptism is the greatest gift you can give your child, for through it, he or she is purified from sin¹, marked with indelible belonging to Jesus Christ², and given sanctifying grace to live in the Holy Spirit³. This is the beginning of their lifelong relationship with God, who loves them, created them, and wishes to be intimately present in their lives.

As parents, you are your child's first and most important teachers in the faith, and your love, example, and participation will help them grow in their relationship with God. We are honored to walk alongside your family during this journey.

On the following pages you will find information about our baptismal process for children dependent on age. Please read. If you have questions, the appropriate contact is listed on each page.

If you yourself need any sacraments (Confirmation, First Eucharist, or Holy Matrimony), please let us know so we can help you prepare to encounter Christ in those Sacraments!

With prayer,

St. Vincent's Clergy & Staff

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) paragraph 1265

² CCC 1272

³ CCC 1266



Table of Contents

Requirements for All Baptisms at St. Vincent's	3
Children Below the Age of Reason (0-6 yrs)	4
Children Above the Age of Reason (7+)	6
Frequently Asked Questions	8



Requirements for All Baptisms at St. Vincent's

Dear families,

Our hope at St. Vincent's is that all families who seek baptism at our parish come not only to receive the sacrament, but also become more deeply a part of our faith community and find a home in the Church.

Just as a child needs to grow up in the context of a family to mature into a whole person, a Christian needs consistent community - a family of believers - for his or her faith to grow and flourish.

Baptism is an initiation, but "for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth," there is "need for instruction after baptism" (CCC 1231). This instruction takes place primarily within the family, which is a child's principal learning ground for what it means to live and to love. For a family to effectively form a child in faith, the family itself benefits from being strongly connected to a faith-filled community, and the support, relationships, prayer, and ongoing instruction in the Christian life it provides.

For this reason, we ask that families seeking baptism commit to registering as official parishioners and joining the St. Vincent's community for weekend Mass every week, making St. Vincent's your home parish. We encourage you to build, rebuild, or strengthen the habit and priority of coming to Sunday Mass weekly as a family.* Registration can be completed on our parish website, www.vincentcatholic.org, under the "About" tab: "registering as a parishioner."

Consistency is not without effort. There is a wide variety of events that compete for prioritization: sports, travels, plans with others. We are given the first commandment of "keep the Lord's day holy" not to force a duty, but rather for our own good; God knows life is better when we strive to live it oriented toward Him.

"Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! Yes, let us open our time to Christ, that he may cast light upon it and give it direction. He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and he gives us "his day" as an ever new gift of his love. The rediscovery of this day is a grace which we must implore, not only so that we may live the demands of faith to the full, but also so that we may respond concretely to the deepest human yearnings. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human." -Pope St. John Paul II, *Dies Domini*

*If circumstances do not allow for you to join St. Vincent's on a given weekend, families should go to Mass at a Catholic Church in their area.



Children Below the Age of Reason (0-6)

In addition to registering as parishioners and joining the St. Vincent's community for Sunday Mass (pg. 3), we have the following steps for infant baptism:

- ***Copy of Birth Certificate***

Used to verify details for baptismal certificates and records.

- ***Selection of Godparents***

Godparents are practicing Catholics who have received all of their sacraments of initiation (baptism, Eucharist, confirmation), and, if married, were married in the Catholic Church. They are people who will be committed to supporting your child by their good example, prayers, and ongoing encouragement in their Godchild's life of faith. (Can. 872, Can. 874 §1)

Questions about Godparent requirements? See the FAQs on page 8.

- ***Letter of Good Standing / Sponsor Eligibility Form***

Godparents take this form to their home parish to have signed by the pastor and sealed with their parish seal. It verifies their reception of the sacraments of initiation (and Catholic matrimony, if applicable) and that they are living in accord with the tenets of the Catholic Faith, poising them to step into the role of Godparent. We will issue the Letter for you to pass on to your Godparents.

Hard copies of the Letter of Good Standing are to be returned by mail to St. Vincent's parish office: 4077 Ibis St. | San Diego, CA 92103

- ***Baptism Class***

A class to be completed by both parents (individually) and by both Godparents, involving an instructional component and an engagement to be completed at home. A certificate of completion will be issued upon reception & review of the engagement portion of the class. We hold baptism classes every third Wednesday of the month at 7pm. Signups and dates can be found on Flocknote, which you will have access to upon registering as a parishioner.



Local Godparents are encouraged to take the baptism course offered through their home parish, but they are also welcome to attend ours! Godparents who are not local may complete the course offered at their home parish and submit a certificate of completion to office@vincentcatholic.org

In-person attendance is strongly encouraged; we understand, however, the schedule complexities of family life, and can supply information for an online course offering if needed. Reach out to the parish office by email.

Calendaring the Baptism

Once all of the above steps are complete and documentation is received, we can calendar the baptism. *Please note that we do not tentatively schedule dates on the calendar if not all of the steps are complete;* please plan accordingly and prioritize completion of steps before initiating travel and other arrangements inasmuch as is possible. Often there are several families walking through this process at the same time, and we want to be able to honor choice of date for families that have completed all of the steps before those who are still in the completion process.

- *Public baptisms* (\$150) occur during the Mass and can take place at any of our weekend Masses (Saturday 4pm, Sunday 8:30am & 10:30am), barring conflicts.
- *Private baptisms* (\$250) can be scheduled on Saturdays based on Deacon Kevin's and the sanctuary space's availability. (Fr. Alex and Deacon Matt only perform public baptisms).

For initial inquiries, please see the FAQ page on page 8.

To acknowledge understanding of this process, receive relevant materials, and for any additional questions about infant baptism that the FAQ page does not address, please email office@vincentcatholic.org. In your initial email, please include your child's birth certificate.



Children Above the Age of Reason (7+ yrs)

In addition to registering as parishioners and joining the St. Vincent's community for Sunday Mass (pg. 3), we have the following steps for baptism of children seven and above:

Children who have reached age seven and older and have not yet been baptized will enter the Order of Christian Initiation for Children (OCIC), a two-year preparation process culminating in the reception of Baptism, Confirmation, and first Holy Eucharist together, typically at the Easter Vigil Mass.

The Age of Reason

Children who have reached the Age of Reason (generally age seven and older) are capable of responding to God's call with their own faith - by this age, children are generally able to distinguish right from wrong and exercise the use of reason to make choices - and are therefore prepared for Christian initiation differently than infants and younger children. The Church recognizes these children as “catechumens”⁴ (“those being instructed”): those who have not yet been baptized and are preparing to become members of the Church through a period of prayer, formation, and participation in the life of the Christian community.

OCIC Process

- **Eligibility**
 - The child has reached the age of seven or older.
 - The child has not previously been baptized in any Christian tradition⁵.
 - A parent or legal guardian requests initiation on behalf of the child and commits to supporting the child's faith formation.
 - The family is willing to participate actively⁶ in the parish community throughout the preparation process.

⁴ Latin *catechumenus*, tracing back to Ancient Greek *katēkhoúmenos*: kata - ‘down,’ ēkhein - ‘to sound,’ resound: teaching and instructing as a handing “down” from above.

⁵ The Catholic Church recognizes one valid Baptism celebrated with water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, including baptisms performed in many other Christian communities. Because Baptism can only be received once, children who have already been validly baptized will prepare for the remaining Sacraments of Initiation (first Eucharist and confirmation).

⁶ “Participate actively:” regular Sunday Mass attendance, participation in required parent meetings and formation sessions, and fostering prayer and the Catholic faith at home.



- **Requirements - Children**

As part of their preparation, children will:

- Maintain regular attendance in formation sessions (1st & 3rd Sundays)
- Attend Sunday Mass weekly and on Holy Days of Obligation.
- Demonstrate readiness for sacramental initiation.

Readiness is determined by consistent participation in the formation process, an age-appropriate understanding of the faith, a desire to receive the sacraments, regular participation at Sunday Mass, and a willingness to continue growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

- **Requirements - Parents & Families**

- Attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation.
- Continue active participation in formation opportunities.

Some examples: Family Faith Formation Sessions, Parish Adult Faith Formation, Parish Speakers, Exhibitions, etc.

- Attend required meetings.
- Support the child's preparation by nurturing prayer and family involvement in parish life.
- Continue active participation in formation opportunities.

Ex: praying together regularly, attending Sunday Mass, talking about what their child is learning in faith formation, reading scripture together, participating in parish events when possible, modeling a Christian life through acts of kindness, forgiveness, and service. These simple practices help reinforce what children are learning and show them that faith is lived both at church and at home.

- **Length of Formation**

The preparation process shall ordinarily extend over two consecutive years.

Note: Across the Diocese of San Diego, children who have reached the age of reason and are preparing for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation ordinarily participate in a two-year formation process. This reflects the Church's understanding that becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ takes time, allowing children and their families to grow in faith, learn the teachings of the Church, and become active members of the parish community before receiving Baptism, Confirmation, and First Holy Eucharist.

If any additional questions arise about baptism for children seven and above that the FAQ page does not address, please email Rafael Quevedo, our Director of Religious Education, at rafael@vincentcatholic.org.



Frequently Asked Questions

-Godparents-

1. *Do there need to be two Godparents?*

Canon law requires a minimum of one Godparent (Can 873). If there are two Godparents, they must be one male and one female (Can. 873).

2. *I have a family member that is Christian, but not Catholic, who wants to support my child in the faith. Can they be a Godparent?*

Because baptism is a new birth in the family of God, someone being baptized Catholic needs a Catholic Godparent to help raise them in that family. A non-Catholic Christian family member can most definitely help raise the child in Christianity more basically, but will not have the active practice to hand on Catholicism, as they themselves are not practicing the Catholic faith.

Your non-Catholic Christian family member is welcome to be a “Christian Witness” (Can. 874 §2) at the baptism. Christian Witnesses still take on the role of bearing witness to the love of Jesus and teaching your child to love Him. The Christian witness is an exception allowed for various reasons, but the witness is not called a Catholic Godparent because they are not fully practicing the Catholic faith.

You may have any number of Christian Witnesses present at the baptism, but only one will be recorded on the certificate and in our sacramental registers. Please note: if you have two Catholic Godparents, Christian Witnesses will not be printed or recorded.

3. *My Godparent is not local and their parish does not provide a baptism course. What should he or she do?*

If your Godparent is not local and their home parish does not offer a baptism course, they are welcome to take our online course. Please reach out to the parish office.

4. *I have a family member who has received all of their sacraments of initiation but was not married in the Catholic Church. Can they still be a Godparent?*

A Godparent, according to canon law, “leads a life in keeping with the function to be taken on” (Can. 874 §1, 3 - the function of being a Godparent, see page 4). If a Godparent’s role is to model Catholic living to a Godchild, it is important that they themselves have pursued life in the Church, including in their relationships. Having a



sacramental union proclaims the beauty & importance of involving God in all things in our lives, especially our relationships.

A sacramental marriage is set apart from other marital relationships in that there is a particular grace and call conferred on the couple to make Christ present in the world by living out His love for the Church in their love for one another. In addition to giving husband & wife supernatural aid in fulfilling their vows to lay down their lives for each other, there is special grace given to carry out their unique role in God's plan for His people, including the role of being someone's Godparent!

For different reasons, many Catholics have gotten married outside of the Church; the Church provides many ways for such couples to make their marriage sacramental. In the end, having a marriage in the Church, or bringing a marriage into the Church, offers a couple blessings to help them live their marriage well.

Now could be a fitting time for you or a family member or friend to bring their marriage into the Church!

To learn more about the avenues for doing so, please reach out to your parish priest.

-Parents-

1. I haven't received all of my sacraments. Can my child still be baptized?

Whether or not you have received all of your sacraments does not disqualify your child from being able to receive baptism. Even so, to effectively raise your child in the faith - a responsibility accompanying your child's baptism - requires living it oneself; the graces of the sacraments are indispensable in fulfilling this calling. If there are sacraments you have not received and would like to learn more, please email office@vincentcatholic.org!

2. My spouse and I weren't married in the Catholic Church - can we still have our child baptized?

Whether or not parents are married in the Church is not disqualifying for the child being baptized; raising a child in the faith, however, comes with the responsibility of aligning one's own lifestyle with the practice of the faith. Furthermore, the grace of a sacramental marriage aids parents in the raising of children. If you were not married in the church, we invite and encourage you to reconcile your marriage with the Church as part of the baptismal process for your child. (See question 4 under Godparent FAQs.)



3. *My spouse isn't Catholic, but I am. Can we still have our child baptized?*

Yes, only one parent must be Catholic; your spouse must consent to the baptism and your child being raised in the Faith.

-Baptisms of Previous Children-

1. *This is not my first time having a child baptized at St. Vincent's. Do I need to retake the baptism course?*

If it has been 3 or fewer years since you took the baptism course at St. Vincent's, we waive the requirement to take the class. Please provide a valid and dated certificate of completion, or let us know when your child was baptized. The course has been updated in recent months and offers new enrichments than in past years, so it will be a different experience than previously.

2. *The people I have chosen as Godparents have already been Godparents for another of my children. Do they need to take the baptism class?*

If it has been 3 or fewer years since they took the baptism course at St. Vincent's, we waive the requirement to take the class. Please provide a valid and dated certificate of completion, or let us know when the baptism took place.

-OCIC-

- ***Why does OCIC include all three sacraments of initiation? Is my child able to be baptized and wait to receive first communion and confirmation with their peers?***

Background:

For the first five hundred years of the Church's history, the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, in that order) were received together and conferred by the local Bishop. The break did not occur until Christianity became widespread enough that Bishops, who were also involved in governing, found themselves unable to preside over every baptism in the city and countryside. The Eastern and Western Churches responded differently to the new logistical reality: the West, by allowing local priests to preside over baptisms (but reserving confirmation for the newly-baptized at a later time



with the Bishop, leaving a delay between sacraments), and the East, by delegating all sacraments of initiation to the local priests (and having the Bishops simply bless the oil used in the sacraments ahead of time). The separation of the sacraments of initiation initially was a practical rather than theological decision.

Confirmation still preceded first communion until 1910, when Pope Pius X lowered the communion age to 7 (from about 12-14 beforehand) with the decree *Quam Singulari*. While the decree acknowledged children's capacity to recognize Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist and allowed them to receive Him sooner, it consequently led to the shifting the sacraments of initiation out of their original order. This shifting has slowly allowed for a misunderstanding of the sacraments of initiation in the modern Western Church, namely the viewing of confirmation as an adult commitment to the Faith, rather than a strengthening through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Why confirmation before communion:

"The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist." (Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraph 1322)

Conformity to Christ is a lifelong process for which confirmation grants strength. In being sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are given supernatural aid to live as Christians: exercising virtue, resisting evil, discerning and following God's calls in our lives. Confirmation fortifies the foundation, the Eucharist nourishes and sustains us. As the Catechism highlights, the Eucharist, as the source and summit of our faith, is rightly the climax of Christian initiation.

In our present culture, young people face a flood of forces fighting for their attention and hearts. The grace of confirmation helps in this battle; to postpone confirmation or mistakenly view it as a rite of passage reserved for later adolescence delays the reception of this grace, and, for many people, means never being confirmed at all. It is to children's benefit to receive this sacrament sooner, rather than later.

Further Reading: Restored Order

The Gift of the Father: Pastoral Letter from the Most Reverend James Sean Wall on the Restoration of the Order of the Sacraments of Initiation



Restoring the Order of the Sacraments by Paul Senz, Catholic Answers Magazine

The History and Development of the Sacrament of Confirmation, Loyola Press