102 Baptism Of Infants

102 BAPTISM OF INFANTS

Baptism of adults in considered normative since it reflects most clearly the process of conversion which is essential for Christian initiation as well as the unity of the three sacraments of initiation. Nevertheless, the form most commonly celebrated is the baptism of infants/children who have not reached the age of reason.

Policy:

102.

A minor younger than 7 years old is regarded an ‘infant’ with respect to baptism. The ‘infant is not considered responsible for himself or herself, or to have attained the ‘age of reason’*CIC* 97§2; 852§2

102.

Policy:

The ordinary ministers of baptism are bishops, priests, and deacons. In imminent danger of death, when no priest or deacon is available, any member of the faithful, indeed anyone with the right intention, may and sometimes must administer baptism. *Christian Initiation*, General Introduction, nos. 11, 16

102.1. FORMATION OF PARENTS (AND SPONSORS)

102.1.1

Policy:

Catholic parents preparing for the baptism of their infant are expected to participate in a process of sacramental formation before the baptism of their child. Sponsors are also encouraged to participate in the formation process. *CIC* 851§2

102.1.2.

Policy:

Parishes may collaborate with other parishes in the region to offer baptismal preparation for parents.

Procedures:

1. Baptismal preparation of parents may take a variety of formats. It should not be lecture style only, rather it should engage discussion and participation from the participants.
2. Baptismal preparation is not only the priest's or deacon's responsibility. Lay catechists should assist with this ministry as well. It is imperative that all those who are leading baptism preparation sessions receive adequate formation themselves, prior to leading baptismal preparation sessions.

102.1.3.

Policy:

Parents are expected to attend baptismal preparation sessions prior to the baptism of each child. This is an excellent opportunity to engage the parents in adult formation and intentional discipleship opportunities. Each child will find them at a different point on their own faith journey and therefore, they are reminded of the importance of entering the process of preparation anew with each child

Procedures:

1. Adaptations may be necessary for parents participating in a preparation program who have already participated in a

baptismal preparation program for their first child.

2. This ministry to parents should be viewed as spiritual guidance or formation and pastoral care as well as catechesis. The preparation of parents for their child's baptism should be characterized by a sincere love and concern for the family, a desire to deepen their relationship to Christ, to the Church family, and to assist them in arriving at a deeper appreciation of baptism and their own vocation as Christian parents.
3. In the case where parents have not been fully initiated in the celebration of baptism, confirmation, and first Eucharist, a ministry to parents may be an opportunity to encourage the parents to complete their initiation.
4. It is important to be mindful that the baptism of an infant is for the benefit of the infant, rather than leverage to force a parent to enter marriage or to complete their own sacraments of initiation. Undue force, such as conditioning the baptism of a child on the validation of the parent's marriage, could render the marriage invalid due to pressured consent. It should be remembered that the laws regarding the administration of the sacraments should be interpreted broadly since the faithful have a right to them.
5. A request for infant baptism cannot ordinarily be refused. However, a baptism can be delayed until such a time as the parents or at least one of the parents are ready and able to assume the responsibility entrusted to Christian parents in the rite. This occasion should be viewed as an opportunity for evangelization, not placing an undue burden on the parents but helping them to grow in the spiritual life from whatever level of faith they may be.

102.2. SPONSOR (GODPARENTS)

[*CIC* uses the term ‘sponsor’ for infant baptism and ‘godparent’ for adult baptism]

102.2.1.

Policy:

a.In the baptism of infants, parents take responsibility for choosing a sponsor who will serve as good witness for living the Gospel of Christ. *CIC* 872

b.The baptismal sponsor can later serve as the confirmation sponsor.

c.Although the selection of two sponsors is customary, only one sponsor is required for baptism. A sponsor can be either male or female. If two sponsors are chosen, one must be male and one female. *CIC* 873

d.A sponsor must be at least sixteen years old (unless the bishop indicates otherwise); be someone who has completed sacramental initiation with confirmation and Eucharist; who is free of any canonical penalty and therefore free to celebrate the sacraments; and must not be the mother of father of the infant to be baptized. *CIC* 874 §1.2°,3°,4°,5°

e.A baptized non-Catholic Christian can be chosen as a Christian witness provided there is at least one Catholic godparent. *CIC* 874 §2

102.3. BAPTISM BY POURING OR IMMERSION

102.3.1

Policy:

Baptism can be conferred by pouring or by immersion. *CIC* 854

"Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament. Preference for immersion over pouring is affirmed in the Rite. *Rite of Baptism for Children* Introduction no. 18.2

102.3.2 Policy:

In the Archdiocese of Baltimore, whenever a new church is erected, provision should be made for a font that allows for the immersion of infants at least, and for the immersion of adults, if possible. See *Built of Living Stones*

Procedures:

In the building of a new church or the renovation of an existing church, the parish should consult with the Archdiocesan Building Commission and the Office of Worship regarding the construction of the font.

102.4. TIMES AND SCHEDULING OF CELEBRATION

102.4.1.

Policy:

In order to accentuate the paschal character of baptism, the celebration of infant baptism should ordinarily take place on Sunday, even during Mass. Celebration in the context of the parish community conveys the communal dimension of liturgical actions. *Rite of Baptism for Children* Introduction no. 9; *CIC* 837§2, 856

Procedures:

1. The fullest expression of Baptism as incorporation into the church is best achieved through a communal celebration that includes all who are to be baptized at one ceremony with the

assembly present to welcome the newly baptized into the community.

2. Infant baptisms may be celebrated at a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass on a schedule accepted by the pastor/ PLD in consultation with others in the parish. The frequency of celebration at Sunday Mass will depend on the needs of the parish. It is not necessary for parishes to schedule the baptism of infants every Sunday. Once a month is an acceptable pastoral practice. Appropriate days on the liturgical calendar or in the life of the parish should be chosen.
3. Infant baptisms may also be celebrated at an Easter Sunday Mass or any of the Sundays of Easter. If the infant to be baptized is the child of an adult catechumen, that infant should be baptized at the Easter Vigil, such that parent and infant are baptized together.
4. Unless there is a genuine pastoral need, baptisms should not be scheduled during Lent, lest the approaching celebration of Easter with its strong baptismal focus be diminished.

102.5. PLACE OF BAPTISM

102.5.1.

Policy:

Since baptism incorporates the infant/child into the Church, it should be celebrated in the parish church of the parents. The parish church must have a baptismal font. *Rite of Baptism for Children* Introduction no. 10; *CIC* 857, 858

102.5.2.

Policy:

Baptisms in private homes, school or hospital chapels, are not permitted except in cases of emergency. *Rite of Baptism for Children* Introduction no. 12,13; *CIC* 860

102.5.3.

Policy:

An infant or child who was baptized in an emergency situation may be brought to the church at a later time to complete the baptismal ceremony, but omitting the pouring of the water.

Rite of Baptism for Children, no. 31§3, 165-185; *Rite of Bringing a Baptized Child to the Church*

Procedures:

a.Anyone who baptizes in a case of emergency is obliged to inform the pastor of the parish church so that the baptism is recorded in the register of the parish in whose territory the baptism took place.

b.The family should receive information concerning the parish where the baptism was recorded.

1. The Rite of bringing a baptized child to the Church includes the liturgy of the word, intercessions, anointing, clothing with the white garment, handing of the lighted candle, praying the Our Father, blessing and dismissal.

102.6. MINISTER OF BAPTISM

102.6.1.

Policy:

The ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, a priest, or a deacon. In imminent danger of death, when an ordinary minister of baptism is unable to be present, a non-ordained person can serve as an extraordinary minister of baptism. *Rite of Baptism for Children* Introduction no. 21§1; *CIC* 861; *Christian Initiation* General Introduction, nos. 11, 16; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 68

102.6.2.

Policy:

Pastors should provide instruction to the Christian faithful concerning the ritual of baptism in case of emergency. *CIC* 861§2; *Christian Initiation* General Introduction, no. 17, *Rite of Baptism for Children* no. 157-164.

Rite of Baptism for Children in Danger of Death when no priest or deacon is available

Procedures:

1. The shorter rite of baptism should be used for emergencies by the extraordinary minister when the need arises.
2. The shorter rite may also be used by the ordinary ministers in emergencies.

102.6.3.

Policy:

Unless it is a case of emergency, ordinary ministers are permitted to celebrate Baptism only in their territory of jurisdiction. *CIC* 862; Christian

Initiation General Introduction, no. 17

102.6.4.

Policy:

The baptism of a minor who is fourteen years or older should be deferred to the bishop, who may delegate a priest to confer the baptism. *CIC* 863; Christian Initiation General Introduction, no. 17