

Baptismal Responsibility

“Parents and godparents, you have asked to have your child baptized, in doing so you are accepting the responsibility of bringing him/her up in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to teach him/her to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” --Rite of Baptism.

Most children who are baptized are too young to fully understand the gift of faith they are receiving. It is the parents and godparents who are passing on their own faith to their child. This is why it is important that the child be brought up to understand and appreciate the amazing gift they have received at baptism. Parents and godparents make a solemn promise to do this as part of the baptismal ritual. This promise should be fulfilled in many ways:

Bring your child to church.

It is important to begin bringing your child to church, especially to Mass each weekend. Even at a very young age, a child begins to pick up the environment of faith and will experience the great love of God at Mass. Many parents feel uncomfortable bringing their young children to Mass, because they may make a lot of noise. Don’t worry, Fr. Matt can preach through anything!

Teach your child to pray.

Times for simple prayer each day help a child to develop a relationship with God and the habit of conversing with God. A few memorized prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be) or prayers in the child’s own words for loved ones or for special needs can be an effective way to pray in the morning or at bedtime. Saying grace, thanking God for your food at mealtime, is also recommended. Special practices can mark the different seasons of the Church year, such as lighting an Advent wreath, setting up a Christmas manger scene in your living room, or “giving up” something for Lent.

Teach your child what we believe as Catholics.

Introducing your child to the beauty of our Catholic faith can be done at a young age and helps your child’s spiritual development. There are many children’s books which describe bible stories, lives of the saints, what happens at Mass, at a level appropriate for your child. If you need a refresher as parents on what our Catholic faith is all about, Gate of Heaven Parish offers many opportunities for adult faith formation, including Discovering Christ, a basic introduction to who Jesus is and what we believe as Catholics, bible studies, and various opportunities for men, women, couples, and young adults.

Make sure your marriage is blessed in the Church.

The loving, lifelong, and committed relationship of marriage is at the foundation of any family. A strong marriage provides both spouses and children the firm foundation on which to flourish as individuals and grow in love. Marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman has the added dignity of being a sacrament, a sign of God's total, eternal, and faithful love for us. We believe it is important, if you are not married or were married outside the church, to have your marriage blessed in the church. Marriage and family life is always a challenge, but God is ready to help us with his strength and love. Fr. Matt would be glad to help you through the process of getting your marriage blessed.

Complete your child's initiation in the faith.

Baptism is the first step to initiating your child in the faith. When your child is of school age, be sure to enroll them in religious education classes at the parish, so that they can be prepared for First Communion in the second grade and later Confirmation in the tenth grade.

Live your faith at home!!!

This is really the most important thing you can do to live up to your baptismal responsibility at parents. While going to Church and attending religious education classes are important, the reality is that you are the primary educators of your child in the ways of the faith. The parish is here to assist you in any way we can, but we can only assist, we cannot replace your role as parents. Remember your primary responsibility in life is to get your spouse and children to heaven!