

A Catechumenal Approach to Infant Baptism

The Catechumenal process used by the ancient church and restored in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults illustrates the normative means of gradual conversion and growth in holiness. These 4 stages or periods can also be applied to the formation and preparation of Parents and God-Parents for infant baptism. For complete details of requirements please visit “Entering New Waters of Baptism” Diocese of Phoenix Infant Baptism Policy available online at <https://dphx.org/childrens-catechesis/sacramental-policies-for-children/>



Period 1 Inquiry: This period includes the basic announcement of the kerygma and an opportunity to form relationship and built rapport. Preparing the soil for an acceptance and response to God’s love becomes the primary mission of this period.

- Welcoming Conversation with parish priest or designated minister prior to baptism. (cf. Policy 1)
 - Express joy at the birth of their child
 - Help parents recognize significance of this event
 - Extend invitation for parents to more fully enter the life of the Church.
 - Affirm parents on their own response to their baptismal call of providing an upbringing in the faith for their own child
 - Help parents recognize how the presentation of their child for baptism illustrates the work of the spirit and the indelible mark of their own baptism.
 - Discern parents readiness, and sincerity to live the Christian life and clearly establish a reasonable hope that the child will be raised in the Catholic faith (cf. Policy 1.4)
- Group Intro Session:
 - To proclaim the kerygma
 - To create community among those presenting children for baptism.
 - To clearly set the expectations of those who are in formation and preparing
 - To incorporate the God-Parents into the process
- Introduction to Parish at Sunday Mass prior to Baptism
 - Modeled from the Rite of Entrance this introduction would consist of families preparing children for Baptism to attend a Sunday Mass with the community prior to the day of their child’s Baptism.
 - Introduce (or reintroduce) family to community.
 - Encourage community to welcome this family and child who will be baptized the following week (or another time)

Period 2 Catechumenate: This period includes the more in depth catechesis and proclamation of faith. Planting the seeds for a life long relationship with Christ and His Church (cf. Policy 2, 2.1 & 3)

- A period of catechesis that is designed to proclaim the good news and move towards an enculturation of the Gospel into ones life.
 - Review Theology of Baptism (cf Recommended Formation Content pg 9 Topic 1)
 - Review Role of Faith Community(cf Recommended Formation Content pg 9 Topic 2)
 - Review the Liturgy of Baptism (cf Recommended Formation Content pg 9 Topic 3)
 - Incorporate additional learning objectives based on community needs.

- Since content is not devoid of prayer and intimacy with God, each topic should be proclaimed joyfully and clearly with an opportunity for discussion and dialog.
- An opportunity for a personal response to the activity of God in the life of the family and child being present for Baptism.
 - A period of reflection in which the parents reflect on the activity of God in their life.
 - A call to holiness or challenge from the presenter or designated minister to grow in faith and an opportunity to commit to Christ and the living of an authentically Christian life.
- An opportunity for parents to receive support in forming the domestic church.
 - Testimony of active families about creating the domestic church.
 - Practical means of forming a family that prays together etc.

Period 3 Purification & Enlightenment: This period includes the more prayerful reflection and immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Baptism as well as joining the community for prayer.

- An at home activity that incorporates prayer and scripture that more spiritually prepares the family for the celebration of Baptism
 - This activity can be completed in between the last Formation class and the day of reception of the sacraments.
- A home blessing
 - If possible a priest could come and bless the home, or a bottle of holy water could be given to the parents with some instructions of how to bless their home.
- Encouraged readings and personal study
- Sacramental Confession



Reception of the Sacrament of Baptism:

“If possible, baptism should take place on Sunday, the day on which the Church celebrates the paschal mystery. It should be conferred in a communal celebration in the presence of the faithful, or at least of relatives, friends, and neighbors, who are all to take an active part in the rite.” – Rite of Baptism

Period 4 Mystagogia: This period includes the response of the family to the sacrament and the invitation to live the Christian life in full participation with their child in the community.

- The newly baptized and family should attend the Sunday mass following the Baptism to be introduced to the community.
- Parents should be encouraged to be fully involved in the parish.
- Parents should be contacted by staff member to encourage participation in Mass and community events.