

Best Practices for Welcoming & Evangelizing Children's Baptismal Ministry

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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The following represent the collective wisdom shared in the workshops With Great Joy in November 2019 around the archdiocese. Thanks to the many pastoral ministers who offered best practices from their parish communities.

Before

- Attention to initial contact - website, person answering call, initial conversations
- Book/outreach for expectant parents
- Offer care and support for parents who experience stillbirth, miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy
- Use the liturgical calendar — blessing of parents on the Feast of the Visitation, for example
- Baptism preparation that is centered around faith sharing (rather than overload of information)
- Ways to connect symbols of baptism with everyday moments of life, i.e., bathing the child
- Invite parents and Godparents to know the date of their baptism and celebrate anniversary of baptism
- Meals after baby is born/when mother returns to work
- Formation and faith reflection for Godparents
- Leave first pew open for new families - greet, welcome, invite
- Encourage inter-generational mentoring
- Take baptism formation to the family, especially for 2nd children and beyond (bring a meal, have a conversation, etc.)
- Have parish registration materials available at baptism sessions
- Create a parish list of ministries and contact persons to distribute at baptism sessions
- Have as much information about practices, scheduling, etc. available online. Online registration can also be helpful, even if it requires follow-up

During/Day of Baptism

- Invite children to come to font, place them where they can see, before Mass invite them to touch water and explain what will happen during baptism

- Customize/personalize baptismal candles - develop parishioner ministry
- White garment given by parish for those who do not have a garment that has deep meaning (i.e., for the families that don't have a garment that is a family heirloom)
- Give parents a blanket knitted by parishioners (fleece blanket for older children) with note
- Build present and future connections with school - voucher for school scholarship as part of congratulations package
- Gift bag with photo frame with inspirational quote, hand-knitted blanket
- Baptismal water in holy water bottle
- Keepsake box for candle, white garment, holy water, certificate, etc.
- Have baptism ministry team members present at baptism to welcome and assist the families

After

- Write letter to child and mail after baptism
- Call/text after baptism and offer home blessing
- Encourage families to light baptismal candle on anniversary of baptism
- Invite families to bring baptismal candle to celebration of First Holy Communion. Children bring lit candle to font for renewal of baptismal promises
- Annual dinner for all who had child baptized in previous year
- Be sure to have e-mail address and cell numbers for families. Addresses change often but these remain stable
- Equip families for liturgical living and prayer rituals at home. CatholicAllYear and the Catholic Catalogue are good resources for beginning ideas.