



St. Stephen Catholic Church

5049 Bell Shoals Road

Valrico, Florida 33596

(813) 689-4900

(813) 671-4434 Religious Education Office

“The one who believes and is baptized will be saved.”

Congratulations!

The birth of a child is one of the greatest of miracles! Your child is a gift from God and a sign of His infinite love for you. God has entrusted this child to you to love, nurture, teach, guide, and protect. This is your divine mission in life, your vocation. Your child is certainly blessed to have you as parents!

We know that you want only the best for your child, to share those things and values which matter most to you. That is why you have asked to have your child baptized Catholic. The Lord taught us that baptism is necessary for salvation (Jn. 3:5; Mk16:16). Through baptism your child will be reborn as a child of God through water and the Holy Spirit, immersed in His love, enlightened with grace, set free from sin and death, and welcomed into God's family, the Church. Baptism is one of the most important events in your child's life. That is why we are so glad you have asked us to baptize your child!

Of course, baptism is not magic. The primary way your child will come to know God's unconditional love is through you – your words and your actions – by the way you live your faith. Studies confirm that your first image of God is often that of our parents and your faith life will have tremendous affect upon your child. Know that we will do everything we can as a community of faith to support you in your vocation as parent. Another important resource to help you to share your faith with your child is your child's godparents.

The role of godparents is not simply honorary so choose them well! The godparents assist you in sharing the Catholic faith with your child by guiding and teaching the child throughout life. Perhaps the most effective way to teach is through example. Naturally one cannot share what one does not have. Therefore, the godparent must be an active Catholic over 16 years of age who has received Confirmation and regularly participates in Sunday Mass. The godparent's life must be in harmony with the faith and role to be undertaken. Logically, those who are living with another outside of marriage, married outside the Church, or fail to live in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church cannot serve as godparents. You may choose one or two godparents (male and female). If you'd like, a baptized Protestant can serve as witness along with a godparent. Your godparents should contact their parish to secure a letter stating that they are eligible to serve as godparents.

You are invited to attend a baptism seminar in the near future. This will help you to prepare for the ceremony and will share some insights regarding your child's faith development. Afterwards, you are welcome to schedule the baptism. At St. Stephen's, baptism usually occurs the second and fourth Sunday in the afternoon, although we will try our best to accommodate your needs.

Yes, baptism is the most important day of your child's life since it is the doorway to eternal life. We are honored that you have chosen to share this moment with us. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. Be assured that you and your entire family remain in our prayers!

In His Most Holy Name,

Fr. Bill Swergoss

Pastor

Baptism for **Infants**
&
Young Children

Baptism for **Adults and older Children** is arranged through the OCIA Process (Order of Christian Initiation)

Office of Religious Education
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