



From a Bishop's Journal (715)

Diocesan Guidelines on Baptismal Ministry (2)

7. Good Catechesis

Besides the home visit, a sound baptismal catechesis requires a minimum of two meetings. If circumstances allow or where there is need, time necessary will have to be taken, so that the sacrament does not remain dormant. If, for valid reasons, only one meeting can be organised, time must be taken to have a good dialogue between the parents and the baptism preparation team person. Before having a baptism, the one in charge of the parish will ensure that the parents have been prepared. There shall be no baptism without adequate preparation.

8. Topics to be Covered

In order to realise the greatness of baptism, it would be important to address the essentials of the Christian faith with the parents, their experience as parents, the meaning of their lives, the values they hold dear, their experience of God, their experience of Jesus Christ, of his life and message, the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world, the mystery of the Church, the sacraments, original sin, Christian behaviour, the Christian call, and Christian witness. This can be a very important opportunity for a new evangelisation focussed on love, faith, and hope.

9. Place of Baptism

As a general rule, children are baptised in their parents' parish church. If parents decide for another church, they must advise their community, and be given the necessary preparation. The priest or the person responsible for baptism ministry shall advise the priest of the other parish, confirming his permission and guaranteeing that the people involved have been adequately prepared and are ready to take on their obligations.

10. Celebration of Baptism

I ask that the rites used at baptism be performed in a dignified manner so that they will be understood by all present, and that short explanations be given, without burdening the

celebration. If possible, the celebration should be festive, with song and music. Such celebrations could be held at the Sunday Mass, especially on the feast of the Lord's Baptism and at Easter.

11. **Formation in Christian Living**

I recommend that with support from the diocesan pastoral office, adequate ongoing formation be offered to baptism ministry teams, to help them carry out as well as possible this major ministry in the Church. I also recommend that in homilies or at parents' meetings for religious education and sacramental preparation, the parents' awareness be raised regarding their children's religious education, and the commitment they as parents made when they asked for their children to be baptised.

12. **Religious Awakening, and Culture of the Call**

Through the agency of the Diocesan Committee for Family- and Parish- Based Catechesis, may parishes and pastoral units invent ways of promoting the development of religious awakening in our children, as a follow-up to their baptism. I recommend that we develop in our parishes and pastoral units a "culture of the call," by calling upon people to commit themselves in their church communities in the name of their responsibilities as baptised, and in the name of their own vocation.

13. **Baptismal Renewal**

I am reassured that this baptismal renewal will help make our Christian communities even more vibrant, fraternal, and missionary. Let us continue to build our Church together!

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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