

Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish
Billerica MA



BAPTISM

“For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3: 26-28)

Welcome and Congratulations on having made the decision to Baptize your child and having them enter into the Catholic Faith! You have begun a journey of parenthood and have chosen to make sure your child knows Jesus. This booklet will help you understand what your responsibilities are through the process. We look forward to your presence in our faith community and everything your family will bring to it!

If after reading this, you still have questions, please feel free to reach out to Dustin Batista (dustin.batista@billericacatholic.org).

May God Bless you and your family!

What is Baptism?

Baptism is the first of three Sacraments of Initiation, which enter us into the life of the Church.

“Since the time of early Christianity, Baptism has been the rite of initiation into the Christian community of the Church. In Baptism, the ‘one Spirit’ makes us members of the Body of Christ and of ‘one another’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 1267). Pope John Paul II describes the result of Baptism as a ‘mystical unity’ between Christ and his disciples, and the disciples with one another, like ‘branches of a single vine.’ This reflects the mystical communion of the Holy Trinity (Christifideles Laici [The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World], no. 12).” (USCCB, Incorporated into Christ’s Body, Sent on Christ’s Mission)

Upon receiving Baptism, your child will receive the Holy Spirit, “Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Their soul will be marked as belonging to Christ. At their Confirmation, your child will receive the Spirit again in a different and unique way.

Having your child baptized makes them a member of the spiritual family of Christ, the Church. In particular, they will become a member of this Parish of Saint Matthew. It is here they will grow in their faith. While you as parents are the primary role models of faith and will receive support from Godparents, we are here to guide you and your entire family in their journey as active members of our Parish. Please see this directory to contact the correct person to find out more information about Parish offerings; <https://billericacatholic.org/st-matthew-directory/>

Godparents

Choosing Godparents is a very important decision. You are choosing someone to journey through the faith with your child. They should be someone who will be involved with your child's life, and someone who can model the Catholic Faith. The title of Godparent is one that comes with responsibility and commitment. Consider someone who will continue to play a major role in your child's life, and will be present to be with them as they continue their journey in the Church and its Sacraments. You must choose at least one Godparent for your child's Baptism. If choosing two, the second must be of the opposite sex. The same is true if you are choosing to have one Godparent and a Christian Witness, they must be of the opposite sex.

Who Can Be a Godparent?

- A child must have one practicing Roman Catholic godparent in good standing with the Church.
- Catholic Godparents must be at least 16 years old.
- A Godparent must have received the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- A godparent must be actively practicing the faith, attending mass and confession regularly.
- If married, they must be married within the Catholic Church. (If not, ask us about having your marriage sacramentalized).
- A non-Catholic, Baptized Christian may be chosen as a Christian Witness, as long as one Godparent is a practicing Catholic.

Christian Witness

In the event that you wish to have someone who is not Catholic, you may have a non-Baptized Catholic act as a Christian Witness. They would still need to be Baptized in another Christian faith and actively practice their faith. You still need to have one Godparent who meets the requirements previously mentioned. A Christian Witness is not the same as a Godparent, as a Godparent is chosen to help the child along their journey in the Catholic Faith. During the ceremony, Godparents will make a profession of their faith and to assist the child in theirs, which the Christian Witness will not take part in.

What does the Godparent do during the ceremony?

Godparents will stand with the parents, and declare publicly their commitment to encourage and support the parents in raising the child in the Catholic faith. Parents and Godparents will trace the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.

Godparents will place their hand on the shoulder of the parents as a symbol of their commitment to support parents in the child's faith journey.

The Godparent may also be asked to light the baptismal candle from the Paschal candle, or place the white garment on the child.

Preparation Meeting

In order to prepare your family and child for the sacrament of Baptism, we would like you to complete a Video Worksheet prior to our formal meeting. The purpose of this worksheet is to familiarize yourself with Baptism and its effect on your family life.

Reflection questions will accompany the watching of four youtube videos which you should reflect and pray on. [Click Here for Worksheet](#)

After watching and completing these videos and a worksheet, you will take part in a meeting with other families also preparing for Baptism. Baptism is a communal event, where your child becomes a member of the Church family. The videos and meeting must take place before the date of your child's Baptism.

The Ceremony

During the ceremony, there will be certain symbols and words used that are particularly important;

Water

Water is an essential part of the Baptismal Rite. Much like in today's society, water is used throughout Scripture to signify cleansing and cleaning. The water will be blessed by the priest or deacon, and poured over the child. While we cannot physically see the effects of the water on the child, the stain of original sin is being washed away.

Light

During the Baptism, the parents or Godparents will be asked to light the child's Baptismal candle from the Paschal candle. This symbolizes the Light of Christ, now a part of the child. The parents and Godparents are entrusted with this light, to ensure that Christ continues to burn brightly in their lives.

Anointing Oil

Oils will be used during the ceremony and placed on the child. The Oil of Catechumens will be applied to the child's chest, invoking Christ's protection in the child's life. Holy Chrism will be placed on the crown of the child's head, which represents the royal priesthood of the child.

White Garment

The child will be dressed in a white garment during the ceremony. This symbolizes how the child is now free of sin, spotless and pure.

"I Baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit."

These words are spoken by the priest or deacon during the ceremony. These words are given to the Apostles from Christ himself after the Resurrection; "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 19).

Photography

Photography is allowed, as we want you to remember this joyous occasion! We ask that you remember this is a sacred place and event. Please do not use flash photography. The celebrant will be available after the ceremony for photos as well. Please send some photos to heather.murphy@billericacatholic.org for our website and bulletin!

Fees

There is no charge to receive any Sacraments in our Parish. Families who would like to make an offering for the Parish may do so according to their financial means.

Cancellation

If for some reason you need to postpone or cancel for Baptismal date, please call the office to let us know. (978-663-8816) In the case that it is a weekend and no one answers, please use the emergency prompt.

What's next?

We encourage you to continue to be involved in Parish life! As Catholics we are obligated to attend weekly Sabbath Mass and other days of Obligation. You can find our mass schedule here. <https://billeriacatholic.org/sme-parish-activities/>

Just like sin has been washed away from you child, you too have the opportunity to be freed from sin. Catholics are obligated to take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, at the very least, once a year and if you have committed a mortal sin. You can call the office and make an appointment (978-663-8816), or find offered Reconciliation times here; <https://billeriacatholic.org/sme-parish-activities/>

There are numerous family events, activities, and ministries you can get involved in. We are here to support you and your family in your relationship with Christ and the Church. Please let us know how we can better serve you.

Checklist: Have you completed the following actions?

- Are you registered with the parish? [Click Here](#)
- Have you read and understand this document?
- Has the Parish received your Baptism Application? [Click Here](#)
- Have you completed and returned the Godparent form? [Click Here](#)
- Have you completed the pre-meeting Video Worksheet? [Click Here](#)
- Have you attended a Baptism Preparation meeting?
- Have you scheduled a Baptism date?