

A Discernment Process

IS THIS THE RIGHT TIME TO BAPTIZE YOUR CHILD?

The Church is a family of believers that wants every member to experience an ever deepening sense of belonging and commitment to her as the visible Body of Christ in the world. This is especially true for those members who are parents with all the responsibility of Christian parenting. A blessing given toward the end of the baptism rite confirms this challenge. After blessing each parent, the priest affirms:

Parents will be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith. May they be also the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus Our Lord.



As part of the preparation for Baptism, the parish community will ask you if you experience that sense of belonging. Have you really considered what being a committed Christian, active in your faith, means? It is through you that your child will learn the Christian way of life. It is primarily through you that your child will come to know and love the Lord.

This process of faith reflection is a very personal one. This thoughtful searching involves taking an honest look at your religious beliefs and practices and making a personal evaluation of them. This process is called spiritual discernment. Discernment is really a very honest and intimate conversation between you and the Lord.

The following statements are offered to guide you in your discernment, to help you decide if this is the right time for you to baptize your child. Only you, together with pastoral guidance, can make that decision.

Read each statement carefully and prayerfully. Take time to look into your own heart to discern where you are on your own faith journey at this point in your life. If you find that most of the following statements generally reflect your own experience, then feel confident that you are ready to celebrate your child's Baptism at this time.

However, if you find that many of the statements do not reflect your personal situation, you may want to postpone your child's Baptism while you take time to deepen your understanding of the Catholic Church. You may want to examine your participation in the Christian community.

If you have been away from active participation in the Church for some time or have not yet completed the three Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) yourself: it is especially important that you make the decision carefully. On the back of this page, then, are some points for you to reflect on in your own heart.

POINTS FOR DISCERNMENT

As I was growing up, my own parents were Christian and they made decisions in their lives that were usually based on their beliefs. They lived their faith.

I was given a number of opportunities to learn about the Catholic faith as I grew up.

As an adult, I have tried to live out my religious beliefs by regularly participating in Sunday Mass and by assisting at parish activities when possible.

Most of the time the Lord Jesus seems very real to me and I feel I can speak to him from my heart.

I have a Bible and feel fairly comfortable in reading passages from Scripture for inspiration and encouragement.

I feel I know the basic teachings of Jesus Christ fairly well, and I do have a sense that Jesus loves me personally as I am.

I believe that I can talk about Catholic religious beliefs and values with those closest to me.

I am generally comfortable in talking about my Catholic beliefs with co-workers, neighbours or friends who seem genuinely interested in what Catholics believe.

I find that I do have a commitment, because of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, to assist others who are in need of my time, my skills or my money.

I generally try to support my own parish to the best of my ability, both financially and in other ways.

I really believe that being a Christian makes a difference in the world. My faith calls me to imitate Jesus and to live out my Catholic Christian values. And I accept that responsibility as a challenge, not a burden.

I understand that when I baptize my child, I am making a commitment to Christian parenting, with God and the Church community as my support. I accept the commitment to raise my child in the Catholic Church. I will do all I can to provide a religious education and to model my faith by the consistent practice of my religion.