



Some time ago, a judge in a Custody Hearing requested that I write a brief letter, explaining the Catholic Church's position on infant baptism. I believe it worthwhile to share this letter and other related practices.

To Whom It May Concern:

The necessity of baptism is essential to salvation. It is imperative that a person be baptized as soon as is practicable. In the case of an infant, baptism is expected to be administered before the baby is taken anywhere (*out of the house*). Commonly, a baby should be baptized within the first month of life. Infant baptism is a grave responsibility of ALL parents. This is an inherent obligation of parenthood in the Catholic Church. To fail to do so in a timely fashion, without good reason, is considered a gross irresponsibility.

What happens with reference to a baby's baptism if the parents are unwed? Some priests are reluctant to baptize a baby of unwed parents. In conscience, these priests are concerned that the child may not be raised in the faith. This is a legitimate concern and a defensible position. I, on the other hand, do not hold this position. In such cases, I believe this to be a 'teachable moment.' The (unwed) couple is reaching out to the Church for their baby's baptism. As their pastor/vicar, I want to 'be there' for them at this crucial time in their (usually) young lives. So, I trust that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibility to their child, even though their personal lives may be 'out of order.' (Often, the baby's grandparents give encouragement and essential support.) Though such times can be confusing and fraught with turmoil, this is no reason to 'penalize' an innocent baby for what may be construed as irresponsible conduct by the young parents. Perhaps young & irresponsible, they are to be admired for their outstanding courage in not taking the 'easy way out'...abortion!

The only requirement I expect, besides a sincere promise that the child be reared Catholic, is that the godparents be 'Practicing Catholics' and able to prove this with a Sponsor's Certificate from their (home) pastor.

It is always an honor for me to help in such situations. So, please, do not hesitate to call.

God bless the children!

Sincerely, Fr. 'T.'