



## Christening Planner

### As soon as practical after the birth of your child:

- Contact your church or the church where you want the christening to be performed and find out when they have a christening service. Some will christen your child with a few weeks' notice. Some may request that the parents have a conversation with the priest or pastor or even special sessions of instruction. Some prefer to schedule christening events on special days during the church year. While many are willing to accommodate the parent's requests, those that require preparatory work or baptize on feast days or other special holidays can be accommodating...or not. And if not, appeals often fall on deaf ears. Not because they are uncooperative but because they have a rationale for establishing these requirements or dates and will adhere to them. One example of this is a parish that defers baptisms during Lent to Easter or the week after. This can be done because baptisms go against the narrative of Lent. Some that will baptize during these seasons may request that the baptism be more private and not celebrated as publicly.
- Ask the church if they accommodate photographers, can provide a space for an after-christening celebration etc. Some have no issue. Where the church has facilities and can make them available (cost may be associated), it makes the process much easier. One location, one set of people to coordinate with, no need to load grandparents, guests and other family members into a fleet of cars for the trip to a second venue. Some churches may limit the in-service photography to 1 person, no flash. This is a serious Christian sacrament that incorporates, in fact, a [minor exorcism](#).

### **Six months before the christening date:**

- Decide what type of gown or suit you want for your child. If you want a made to measure or off the rack gown, then this item can be delayed until a few weeks before the event. If you want a bespoke or custom gown, begin to make arrangements for one to be made at this point. Be sure to understand what you want for the gown or suit. A complete ensemble includes bib, socks, shoes, bonnet or hat, blanket and a small towel.
- Contact your church and begin the process of completing the necessary preparation and paperwork. Also establish a date for the event. Some churches may require preparatory work by the parents before the christening.
- Make a guest list.
- Determine who the Godparents will be and make sure they can be available to attend, especially if they have to travel for the event.
- Make sure the selected godparents are qualified to be godparents by the church where the baptism will be performed. Some parishes have a godparent eligibility form pre-screening process that will need to be completed. Generally the qualifications are:
  - Of a certain age considered to be sufficiently mature to offer spiritual guidance to the child. Sixteen to eighteen seems to be the range where most churches will allow someone to become a godparent.
  - A baptized communicant of \_\_\_\_\_, where the qualification can be "of a christian church" or of a specific denomination.
  - An active member of their church and in good standing
- Decide what you want to do after the ceremony. Will it be a small affair with family at home or an event that will require you to book a facility and services? If you want to have an event at a facility, begin that planning now (this guide focuses on preparation for the sacrament of baptism and will not address post-event planning).

### **Four months before the christening date:**

- If you want an heirloom christening gown or suit (and accessories) that is made to measure with custom embroidery, it is time to make those arrangements now.
- Key individuals that need to be at the event and those that may need to travel a long distance should be sent a "save the date" reminder

### **Three months before the christening date:**

- Guests should be sent a "save the date" notification.

### **Two months before the christening date:**

- Re-confirm the event date before you have invitations printed.
- If you plan to engage a printing service for invitations, do this now.
- Guests and key individuals should be sent an informal “save the date” reminder.
- Grandparents and great-grandparents may need help if they have to make hotel and transportation arrangements. Handling this now eliminates a source of stress later.
- If you intend to hire a photographer, do that now. If you intend to have a friend or family member do the honors using your camera, then make sure your camera is in good working order. If not, you will need time to get it fixed or replaced.
- If you are having an heirloom gown made and have not received it, confirm that delivery is still on schedule.
- If you have decided to get gifts for the godparents, now is the time.

### **One month before the christening date:**

- If the church requires a birth certificate, make sure they have it by now.
- Send the formal invitations via mail.
- If you have decided to buy a christening gown or suit that is pre-made, it is time to do that now.
- Regardless of the gown, it is time to buy the post-christening outfit.
- If you plan to preserve the christening gown or suit after the event, it is time to decide where it will be going for preservation.
- If mom, dad or siblings are to get new outfits for the event, get those now.
- Decide which keepsakes you may want from the event. Common choices are a special Bible, jewelry, preserved holy water, or a christening candle. Your local church may have customary items they recommend.

### **Three weeks before the christening date:**

- Contact a few of those invited and make sure the invitations were received. If no one had any issues, assume that everyone who was sent an invitation has received it by now.

### **Two weeks before the christening date:**

- If the christening is to be an event for a family portrait, schedule that photo session now. It is recommended that the portrait session be done after the christening as to guarantee that the gown will be in finest condition for the actual event.  
If the gown is stained during the events of christening day, it can be cleaned or replaced for the photo session.
- Confirm travel plans, lodging arrangements etc. with key people for the event.
- If you are having a catered affair post-christening, verify that all of the plans are still on course.
- If you need to order a cake for a reception, do that now.
- Confirm that any paperwork that needs to be completed is done.

### **One week before the christening date:**

- One last check with the church.
- Prepare a donation to the church.

### **The night before**

- Make sure the christening outfit is ready.
- Pack for the event. Make sure you have a warm blanket, especially if you will be away from home for some time. In addition to things for your child, do not forget cameras, batteries (buy or charge), and media.

### **Christening Day**

- Dress your child at the church. Child seats are hard enough to cope with, never mind the larger than usual gown or thicker than usual suit.
- Enjoy.