

BAPTISM for Infants

HOLY BAPTISM

The entire Church, triumphant and militant, rejoices when a child is grafted on to Christ through Holy Baptism. Your decision to baptize your child in the Orthodox Church is an indication of your love for the Church and for her sacramental life. Holy Baptism is the cleansing of one's soul from the sin of Adam and Eve. It is also the initiation, if you will, of the child into the Church that has been instituted by Christ Himself, when He was baptized in the Jordan River by St. John the Baptist. This sacrament actually has within it three sacraments, Holy Baptism, Holy Chrismation, and Holy Communion.

Holy Chrismation is the imparting of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the child, and thus fills the void, which is created when we wash away the sins of Adam and Eve and our own individual sins.

COORDINATING YOUR BAPTISM

Please contact Fr. Ted Paraskevopoulos (fr.ted@mac.com) or the administrator in the office (416-241-2470) to arrange for a meeting pertaining to the needs and requirements of your baptism. They will prepare all necessary Church documents, along with the collection of any Church fees. Please feel free to ask Fr. Ted any question you may have concerning your baptismal service here at Sts. Constantine & Helen.

SETTING THE DATE

An individual or a family desiring to baptize their child should first contact the church office to schedule an appointment with the parish priest. It is preferable to schedule your baptismal date with the parish priest at least

three months prior to the desired date so that scheduling conflicts can be avoided. According to the official policies of our Metropolis, baptisms should not be celebrated during Great Lent along with several large feast days of the Church. However, please speak with Fr. Ted if you are compelled to choose such a date.

BAPTISM: SPIRITUAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

Due to the fact that Baptism is a Holy Sacrament, it cannot be celebrated in a spiritual vacuum.

This, therefore, presupposes that:

1. The person to be baptized has never been baptized before in the Orthodox Church.
2. If someone has been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in another Church -and wish to join the Orthodox Church, they need to be baptized again. However, for Roman Catholics, Oriental Orthodox Christians, re-baptism is not required, only Holy Chrismation is sufficient to 'make whole anything that is lacking', and to join the individual to the Orthodox Church.

SCHEDULING

Any time 40 days after birth are permitted for infant baptisms. In cases of an emergency, this requirement is waived and can be done immediately after birth if there is a concern. Otherwise, we recommend the child be between 3-6 months—they tend to be a little calmer than newborns and less feisty than older infants. When you look for a time of the day, keep in mind your baby's schedule. Try to aim for a time during which the child will be well fed and well rested. Grumpy babies make baptisms less enjoyable for themselves and sometimes everybody else as well, though it is no fault of their own. The full baptismal service generally takes 45 minutes.

GODPARENTS

The "koumbaro" or "koumbara"- the sponsor who will participate sacramentally in the service by speaking on behalf of the child, or standing with the adult, as they accept Christ and renounce the devil, along with placing oil on the individual and receiving them as they come out of the Baptismal font, must be an Orthodox Christian "In Good Standing" and a steward/member of his/her parish. "In Good Standing" means that they may not have gotten married

outside the church or participated in any foreign sacraments, as this would excommunicate them from the Orthodox Church.

They are charged with being the spiritual parents of those baptized, to raise them in the Orthodox Church. If one is not Orthodox, then this role cannot be fulfilled. If the “koumbaro” or koumbara,” is from another Orthodox parish, they must provide proof from his/her parish priest certifying his/her active stewardship/membership in the Church.

NOTE: Honorary witnesses (who may or may not be Orthodox) may also be included and assist, as long as there is one main Orthodox sponsor. They, as well as the parents, may assist in holding the child during the service at various points, especially if it keeps baby happy and relaxed.

REQUIREMENTS to Serve as a Godparent

1. Must be a baptized Orthodox Christian
2. Must be an **active** Orthodox Christian (attend church regularly and receives Holy Confession and Holy Communion often)
3. **Must know the Lord’s Prayer and the Nicene Creed off my heart.**
4. A registered and paid member of our Parish.
5. If married, must have been in an Orthodox Church.
6. If married in the Orthodox Church and are now divorced, they need to obtain an Ecclesiastical Divorce Decree.
7. If they are from another Orthodox jurisdiction (or country) they must present a letter of good standing from his or her home Parish Priest.
8. Must understand that by participating in the sacrament in this manner, the Godparent is making a pledge to guide and support their Godchild by **taking them to Church, speaking to them about Christ and the faith**, and to **model a healthy Orthodox Christian lifestyle to their Godchild.**

VISITING CLERGY

Guest clergy, in Communion with the Orthodox Church, may participate in a baptism at Sts. Constantine & Helen Greek Orthodox Church. Canonically, it is the responsibility of the priest from where the baptism is taking place to extend an invitation to any and all visiting clergy. Orthodox Christian clergymen in communion with the Metropolis are welcome to participate in the celebration of sacraments at Sts. Constantine & Helen with the blessings of our pastor.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOTAPING

Photographs of your baptism are permitted but should not in any way impede or distract from the celebration of the sacrament. Photographers should be quiet and respectful; the use of a flash is allowed. If you are planning on professional photography and videography, please ask that your photographer arrive early at the Church so that guidelines can be laid out. Also, please ask guests to be respectful of the professional's space, for your benefit.

ITEMS NEEDED

The following items are either provided by the parents or the Godparents.

1. Cross & Chain
2. White Outfit for after the Service
3. A Small Bottle of Olive Oil
4. A Bar of Ivory soap
5. 1 white hand towel
6. 1 Large White Bath Towel (If a double baptism bring 2)
7. 1 Large Candle (If a double baptism bring 2)

DAYS WHEN BAPTISMS ARE NOT PERMITTED

Baptisms may not be performed:

1. From Christmas Day through the Feast of Theophany (December 25 - January 6)
2. During Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feast days of the Lord.

WASHING OF THE CLOTHES & BABY/ ADULT AFTER THE SERVICE

Due to the fact that Holy Oil has been spread upon the child/adult and is seeped into the clothing and towels, care must be taken when washing everything. When bathing yourself, or your child for the first time after the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, please do so in a tub, which does not empty into the sewer system. Rather, when you are finished, you can empty the water, together with the Holy Oil around the foundations of your house, in the flower gardens or any place outside where people do not step. The same holds true for washing the towels and clothing.