

Baptismal Guidelines & Information

St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church

Baptism brings about the birth of new life in Christ. The Orthodox Church practices infant baptism because historically it never required "understanding" as a pre-condition. To know God is the fruit of baptism. Baptism makes a person a participant in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and a member of His body the Church. This is the first step in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. The Church does have a responsibility to administer the sacrament only to those who have shown that this is the primary purpose for the baptism.

"Or are you ignorant that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by the baptism into the death, that even as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we should walk in newness of life. [Rom. 6]."

Saint Chrysostom: "What does it mean that 'we were baptized into His death?' That it is with a view to our dying as He did. For the Baptism is the Cross. What the Cross then, and the burial, is to Christ, that the Baptism has become to us, even if not in the same respects. For in the flesh He died and was buried, but we have done both to sin."

I. Requirements Prior to the Baptism for the parents:

Active Church Membership

A Baptism is a privilege that requires a commitment on behalf of the parents to raise the child in the Orthodox Church. If parents are not active members of the Church, they must demonstrate a desire to become active for the sacrament to be approved. Parents are the primary role models for their children in living a committed life to Christ.

Commitment to Christ is expressed in regularly attending Sunday liturgy, participating in the sacramental life of the Church and being a current Steward of the Church.

- If you have previously baptized a child at St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church and the child has not been attending services, a request to have another child baptized requires a discussion with the priest.

- If parents are not regularly attending an Orthodox Church and want to schedule a baptism, an appointment should be made with the priest in order to discuss the situation.

***"Good Standing"* Requirements for an Orthodox Christian**

• Married in the Orthodox Church

If you were not married in the Orthodox Church, your marriage needs to be blessed in the Church in order to be in good standing. This is not required prior to baptizing a child but arrangements must be made to have the marriage blessed in the Church.

- A Stewardship Form needs to be completed for the current year.
- Actively attending the divine services on Sundays.

Choosing a Sponsor or Godparent

In the Baptismal service, the Church requires a Sponsor/Godparent (koumbaros -- male, Koumbara -- female). The Godparent is the one who vouches for the child and the family as to the sincerity of the reasons why they are seeking baptism. In addition, godparents serve to guide, teach, and counsel their godchildren in the Orthodox faith. The Church requires that the Godparent be an Orthodox Christian in good standing; there are no exceptions to this rule. The priest can help couples in the selection of godparents if needed.

"Honorary" Godparents

In some cases parents request a "non--Orthodox" person serve as an "honorary godparent" for their children. The Church does not permit honorary godparents. Perhaps, close friends may be considered as "aunts" or "uncles" or "Theo" and "Thea" this identifies them as being a part of one's family.

Requirements to be a Godparent

- Must be an Orthodox Christian
- A registered Steward of an Orthodox Parish.
- If married, must be in the Orthodox Church.
- If married in the Orthodox Church and are now divorced, they need to obtain an Ecclesiastical Divorce Decree.

- A parishioner may serve as a sponsor in another Parish by presenting a letter of good standing from his or her home Parish Priest.

The Godparent anoints the child with blessed oil during the ceremony. By participating in the sacrament in this manner, the Godparent is making a pledge to guide and support to their Godchild.

Godparent Customs

- It is customary for the Godparent to bring their Godchild to Holy Communion for three consecutive Sundays after the Baptism. This is done in order to form the habit of frequent communion for the child.
- Parents may wish to invite the Godparent to the home and bathe the child after the Baptism.

II. Scheduling Your Baptism

If you would like to schedule a baptism for your child, parents need to schedule an appointment with Fr. Timothy. Baptismal arrangements are only conducted between the priest and the child's parents. Grandparents please have your children contact the parish priest. In order to provide parents with every opportunity to understand the significance of baptizing one's child, an appointment with the parents and the priest is necessary.

Once a date for the baptism is scheduled with Fr. Timothy, please complete the online Baptismal Form on St. Katherine's website under the "More" tab.

Invitations

The printing of invitations should not be done until the date and time for the baptism has been confirmed with Fr. Timothy.

III. Frequently asked Questions

Naming the Child

If the child was not given a Christian name (a saint's name) at birth, one must be selected. The giving of a Christian name establishes a life--long relationship between the child and their Saint. Fr. Timothy can assist in selecting a name.

Purchasing Baptismal Candles and Martyrika (witness crosses with ribbon)

Traditionally, the newly baptized receive a decorated candle at baptism. Some provide their guests with martyrika (witness pins) which can be personalized with the child's name and date of the baptism.

If you do not know where you can order the above items you may visit the following websites:

Length of the Baptism service

The Baptism service is approximately 45 minutes long.

Honorariums

- If a chanter is requested, a \$100.00 honorarium given by the family to the chanter.
- An honorarium for the baptism may be offered to the priest at your discretion.

Fees

- There is no fee for the Sacrament; however, it is required that you are a current Steward of St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church. A signed pledged card along with an initial payment is required prior to the Baptism.

Dates

Days when baptisms are NOT permitted:

Baptisms may not be performed from Christmas Day through the Feast of Theophany (December 25 - January 6), during Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feastdays of the Lord. (Fixed dates: Feb. 2, Sept. 14) Moveable dates: Pentecost, Ascension, and Palm Sunday.

Baptismal Checklist

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

- Cross & Chain
- White Outfit for after the Service & "Onesie"

- A Small Bottle of Olive Oil
- A Bar of white Ivory soap
- 1 white hand towel
- 1 Large White Bath Towel - (If a double baptism please bring 2)
- 1 Large Candle - (If a double baptism please bring 2)
- Optional additional smaller candles for Children to participate in a procession