



**Guidelines for the Celebration of Your Child's Baptism
at Saint George's**

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Baptism is participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-5) and a washing away of sin (1 Corinthians 6:11). It is a birth from above (John 3:5) by which we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27) and renewed by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

Why do we baptize infants when some Protestant denominations – like the Southern Baptists – do not? The Church baptizes infants on the basis of the commitment made by the parents and Godparents that the child will be raised and nurtured in the life of faith in Christ Jesus, our savior and redeemer. The Apostle Peter, preaching to the crowds in Jerusalem on the feast of Pentecost and calling on them to be baptized, declared that the promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ was for them and their children (Acts 2:39). In this sense, baptism replaces circumcision as the mark of the covenant (Colossians 2:11-12). Additionally, the New Testament records that whole households were baptized. In the ancient Roman world, a household would have included parents, children and even infants and slaves. Acts 10 details the baptism of Cornelius' household by the apostle Peter and Acts 16:11-15 and verses 16-35 tells the stories of the Apostle Paul baptizing the households of both Lydia and his jailer in the city of Philippi. He also baptized the household of Stephanas in Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:16).

Parental Requirements and Responsibilities

Because baptism is a sacrament of the Church it cannot be celebrated in a spiritual vacuum and presupposes that the child being baptized will be raised in the Orthodox Church. Therefore, at least one parent of the child to be baptized must be a faithful and practicing Orthodox Christian. At Saint George Church, this means that a person is committed to Christ and His Church, active in the sacramental life of the community and a steward of the parish. The non-Orthodox parent must be supportive of raising their child in the Orthodox faith.

Naming your Child

It is the tradition of the Orthodox Church that the name given to one's child be a Christian name, usually the name of a saint or the name of an event in the life of Christ

or the Theotokos, in order for the child to more fully identify with his/her Orthodox faith. Names that are not specifically Christian may not be used for baptism.

Setting the Date

Please contact the parish office (732-463-1642), at least two months in advance to discuss a possible date and time of your child's baptism. Setting the date and time with the parish office should precede any other arrangements for reception venues, etc.

In keeping with the liturgical tradition of our Church, baptisms may not be celebrated from Christmas Day through the Feast of Theophany (December 26th – January 6th), during Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Good Friday) or any of the major festal celebrations of the Lord such as the Transfiguration of Christ (August 6th) and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th).

For those who are not active members of St. George's, no date can be set for the baptism before the parents have met with our Presiding Priest, Father Nektarios. Parents desiring to have their children baptized at St. George's, but who are not active members of any other Orthodox Christian parish should plan to attend Sunday Liturgy here at St. George's for a minimum of at least three months and become stewards of the parish before a date for the baptism can be discussed and set.

Godparent Requirements and Responsibilities

The sponsors or Godparents, who will be participating sacramentally in the service, must be chosen wisely, and are required to be faithful and practicing Orthodox Christians. All Godparents are required to submit their baptismal certificates (or transcripts) and marriage certificates (transcripts). If the Godparents are not members of St. George's, a "letter of membership in good standing" must be provided by the priest of the parish that the Godparents currently attend. In the Greek Orthodox tradition, to be chosen as a Godparent is considered a great honor. Godparents become members of one's spiritual family in the Church and are to assist the parents in the spiritual and religious development of their Godchild.

The Godparent traditionally purchases a new white dress or suit to be worn by the child. In addition to this, the Godparent brings to the church:

A cross

One white sheet (to wrap the baby in)

One large white towel (to place on top of the sheet)

One small white hand towel

One bar white soap (i.e. Dove or Ivory)

One bottle of pure olive oil

White undergarment or equivalent

Three white or beeswax candles

Following the day of the child's baptism, the Godparents customarily bring the newly baptized child to Church to receive Holy Communion for three consecutive Sundays and as frequently as possible thereafter. This is done to form the habit of attending the Eucharist and receiving Communion frequently in the child. This also gives the Godparents an opportunity for the spiritual bonding that is so necessary in their role as the child's teachers and guides in the practice of their faith.