

Guidelines for the Celebration of Your Child's Baptism at St. Paul's

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 St. Paul's this means that the Orthodox Christian parent 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 at 949-733-2366 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 during Great Lent, Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Good Friday) or the major festal celebrations of the Lord that are also days of fasting such as the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th).

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. If the Godparents are not members of St. Paul'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 (sponsor/s) must be Orthodox and current with their stewardship pledge to their parish. If married, the marriage must have taken place in the Orthodox Church.

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:

- Gold Byzantine Cross (can be plain cross but should not have crucifix on the 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 of white soap (i.e. Dove or Ivory)
- One bottle of pure olive oil
- Complete white outfit (including hat or bonnet, socks, shoes, undershirt) for newly baptized child
- Three white or beeswax candles
(Baptismal Candle: these are large white candles and are available for purchase through the church office. You may decorate it with a bow if you wish. For three consecutive Sundays following the baptism, this candle accompanies the baby when receiving Holy Communion)

Following Baptism

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.



After the baptism, the large bath towel, white crib sheet and white outfit should first be washed by hand in a basin. This water, as well as water from your baby's first bath following the baptism, should be poured out onto your plants or flowers. Any other garments, which have come into contact with the holy oils, should also be washed this way. You may later wash them in the washing machine. We do this so that the holy oils do not go into the sewer.