

Assumption (Koimisis) of the Theotokos
Greek Orthodox Church
Baptism Guidelines

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,..." (Matthew 28:19).

These were the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. One would think that the last words of anyone are most likely the most important he/she would have to say. Obviously, to Jesus Christ, Baptism is of paramount importance.

It is said that Baptism is the greatest of sacraments because without it we may not partake of the other sacraments of our Church. Baptism not only washes away all sin—original, voluntary and involuntary—but recreates and restores the image of God within us: giving us the potential to live a new life in Christ.

The mystery of Baptism is our personal Paschal experience, where we participate in the death and three-day resurrection of Christ through our triple immersion into the sanctified waters. In Baptism, we die with Christ by descending into the font, and we rise and live with Him through our emergence.

The Baptismal Font is called the "Tomb and the Womb of the Church". As the "tomb", we die with Christ that we may eternally live with Him. As the "womb of the Church", we are in it, born anew by water and the presence of the Holy Spirit, making us children of God and uniting us with the Church in heaven and on earth. In addition, at the moment of Baptism, God appoints a guardian angel over the soul of the one being baptized.

After Baptism, the child is immediately Chrismated in the Orthodox Faith, giving him/her the fruits of the Holy Spirit; and, the Holy Spirit Himself through His presence in the Holy Chrism. It is the child's personal receiving of the Holy Spirit: a personal Pentecost.

Four locks of hair are cut in the sign of the Cross on his/her head. A white outfit symbolizing purity is worn and a baptismal candle is held proclaiming that Christ is the light of this child's life. Finally, the child receives his/her first Communion. Thus, unlike other Christian denominations, in the Orthodox Christian baptismal service the child becomes a full member of the Church immediately through Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion.

Planning a Baptism at our Assumption Parish

- The date of the Baptism is made with the priests through our church office. Upon setting the date, we will send you a baptismal packet with additional information. Enclosed will be a stewardship card and a form that needs to be completed and submitted to our church office promptly.
- It is recommended that infants be baptized after the 40-day Blessing, and within six months of birth.
- The baptismal name of your child should be of Christian/Biblical origin.

- The parents and godparents must be Orthodox Christians in good sacramental and financial standing with a canonical Orthodox Church. If not a parishioner of Assumption, a letter from one's home parish should be sent to our church well in advance of the date stating their good standing.
- It is recommended for parents and godparents to meet with one of the priests, prior to the baptism, so that he can explain the sacrament and address any concerns.

What is Needed for the Baptism

It is customary for the godparents to provide the following. However, some parents may wish to provide some of these items:

1. White clothes to be worn by the child after baptism
2. A new white undergarment (t-shirt or one-piece garment)
3. A baptismal Cross to be worn by the child (not a crucifix)
4. A new large white bath towel
5. A new single bed sheet or crib sheet
6. A bar of soap
7. Two new white hand towels
8. A bottle of olive oil (at least 8.5 ozs.)
9. One large decorated baptismal candle & three small decorated candles
10. Martyrika or witness pins

After the Baptism

By custom, three days after the Baptism the child is bathed in a tub. The water from this tub must not go in any drain but poured around the foundations of the home or in an area where no one would walk. Care must also be taken with the towels and sheets that were used during the Baptism. These also must be rinsed in a tub before washing conventionally. The water should be disposed of in the same manner mentioned above.

The child is brought to church for the next three Sundays in its baptismal outfit and candle, by the godparents and/or parents to receive Holy Communion. It is expected that the child be brought to church regularly and frequently.

When Baptisms are not Conducted

Baptisms may not be performed from Christmas Day through the feast of Theophany (December 25th to January 6th), during Holy Week, or on any of the Great Feasts of the Lord. Baptisms may be done during seasons of fasting, such as Great Lent, the Dormition Fast and during the Christmas Advent. However, due to the solemnity and fasting expectations of these days, it is preferred to schedule Baptisms outside these holy seasons. Any questions or concerns may be brought to the priest's attention.

Written by: Fr. Michael Varlamos