

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

of
Name

The Parents

Names

The Godparents

Name(s)

Celebrant

Name(s)

Date

Church

City, Province

*“As many as have been baptized into Christ
have put on Christ.”*

Alleluia.

(Gal. 3:27)

THE BAPTISMAL SERVICE

Baptizing children in infancy is an expression of God's great love for us. It shows that God loves us and accepts us before we can ever know Him or love Him. This unconditional acceptance is emphasized in the Orthodox Church, and includes giving infants the Sacraments of Holy Chrismation and Holy Communion.

The many gestures involved in the performance of the Sacrament of Baptism in the Orthodox Church are not mere forms devoid of meaning. Christianity is life. Each action in the Sacrament of Baptism expresses what Christ is actually doing for us through that Sacrament.

THE PRE-BAPTISMAL SERVICE

Prayers at the Reception of Catechumens

As God Breathed Upon Man to make him a living soul, so the priest breathes three times upon the infants to symbolize the new life that the infant will receive through baptism.

The Naming

A Christian name is given to the infant. From the moment the child is received into the Church, emphasis is placed on their individuality. Each child is given their own particular name. It is the practice that the child be given a name of a Saint of the Church, who will pray for the child, and serve as a role model for Christian living.

The Exorcism/The Denial of Satan

The baptismal service begins in the narthex (entrance hall) of the church where the priest calls upon the sponsors to denounce (for the child) the devil and all his works and to declare their allegiance to, and belief in Christ. To symbolize the renouncing of the devil, the sponsors face away from the Altar, and breathe and spit upon the unseen enemy.

The Acceptance of Christ

In accepting Christ for the children the sponsors face the altar (East) and recite the Nicene Creed, the declaration of Orthodox Faith. It is this affirmation of faith by the sponsors; the parents' promise to raise the child faithfully; and the Grace of God that form the basis of the Orthodox Christian Church's acceptance of infant baptism.

The Nicene Creed

*I Believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of Heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all ages.*

*Light of light, True God of True God, begotten, not created,
of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made.
Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and became man.*

*He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
and He suffered and was buried.
On the third day, He rose according to the Scriptures.
He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will have no end.*

*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
who proceeds from the Father,
who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who spoke through the Prophets.*

*I believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.
I expect the resurrection of the dead.
And the life of the age to come. Amen.*

The Processional

The Priest asks the sponsors if they have united themselves with Christ. The sponsors answer in the affirmative, and then bow and worship God. The priest then prays for the children, and leads them in procession to the Baptismal Font at the front of the Church. In the language of the Church Fathers, the Baptismal Font is known as the "Divine Womb" from which we are born again as children of God (see John 1:12,13).

THE BAPTISMAL RITE PROPER

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

The Priest and Sponsors align themselves around the Baptismal Font. The Priest will make three reverences before the Holy Altar; and begin the Litany of Peace..

The Blessing of the Water

Water is a visible means used to express to us that through Baptism the infant is being invisibly cleansed of sin. The Priest prays three times, "O King who lovest mankind, come now and sanctify this water, by the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit." Each time, he makes the sign of the cross over the water. The Priest then makes the sign of the cross three times, dipping the

fingers of his right hand in the water; and breathing upon it three times, he says: "Let all adverse powers be crushed beneath the sign of the image of Thy cross."

The Anointing with Oil

Olive oil is blessed and applied by the priest to the various members of the child's body: hands, ears, feet, mouth, etc. in order to dedicate them to the service of Christ. The sponsors then anoint **(Name)** entire body with olive oil. This custom had its beginning among the ancient Greek wrestlers who anointed their bodies with olive oil to make it difficult for the opponents to maintain a grip on them. In baptism, the child is anointed with olive oil to symbolize the fact that with Christ's help the infant will be able to elude the grip of sin.

The Immersion

After being anointed, the child is then held upright by the Priest, facing East, and is baptized by immersion into the water three times, saying, "The servant of God **Name**, is baptized, in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." We believe that Christ died for our sins and rose on the third day. The immersion in water symbolizes the death of our old self. As Christ was in the tomb for three days, the child is immersed three times, representing his death in Christ. However, Christ conquered death and rose on the third day. After the third immersion, the child, likewise, rises into the everlasting life of Christ, a new being, cleansed of every sin, and promising to surrender his life to Christ, as God and Saviour: "He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them."

The Sacrament of Holy Chrismation

The Anointing with Holy Chrism

Having taken **(Name)** out of the baptismal font and placing him in his sponsor's arms, the Priest then administers the Sacrament of Chrismation by anointing the child with Holy Chrism or Myron, which is blessed on Holy Thursday by the Patriarch of Constantinople. The infant is anointed with Holy Chrism by the priest, who makes the sign of the Cross; on the brow, on the eyes, on the nostrils, on the lips, on both ears, on the chest, on both feet, and between the shoulders. The priest says each time: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." The sponsors respond each time by saying: "Amen." Whereas Baptism empties the child of all sin, Confirmation fills the "vacuum" by imparting to the child the Grace of God, thus enabling him to live the life of Christ. This is the Sacrament by which we receive the Holy Spirit, and are anointed as Christians..

The Tonsure/Cutting of Hair

After chrismating the child, the Priest cuts three locks of hair from the child's head, saying: "The servant of God **(Name)**, is tonsured in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." This is an expression of gratitude from the child, who having received an abundance of blessings through the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation and having nothing to give to God in return, offers part of his hair which symbolizes strength.

The Dressing

When the child has been tonsured, the Priest then takes up the inner garment of the newly-baptized child and blesses it with the sign of the Cross, saying: "The servant of God, **Name**, is clothed with the garment of righteousness: in the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen." The inner garment represents the white robe that was worn by the newly baptized Christians in the Early Church. The sponsors then take the child and dress him in new clothes, often times white, which signify that the child has become a new creation in Jesus Christ.

The Post-Baptismal Rites

The Putting on of the Cross

The Cross is the symbol of our Christian faith. It serves as a reminder to the one wearing it of the commitment made to Christ at Baptism, and as a witness to the world. The Lord Himself said: "If anyone wishes to follow me, let him first deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Mt. 16:24) The Cross is blessed and placed around the neck of the newly baptized child.

The Procession Around the Baptismal Font

The Priest, accompanied by the Sponsor bearing the Child and a lighted candle, proceeds around the Baptismal Font three times, censing as he leads. This religious dance expresses the joy of the angels in Heaven who celebrate the name of the child being written in the Book of Life. The following verse from Scripture is sung three times: "As many as have been baptized in to Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia." (Gal. 3:27) This expresses our belief that through baptism the child has "put on Christ." Tradition states that at this moment God assigns a guardian Angel to stay with the newly baptized person until the end of his life.

The Epistle Reading (Romans 6:3-11)

The reader chants or reads the following: "Brethren: Do you not know that as many of us as

were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Gospel Reading (Matthew 28:16-20)

The Priest reads the following passage from Scripture: "At that time, the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some hesitated.. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in Heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen"

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

As a full member now of the Body of Christ, the newly baptized child is given Holy Communion, by partaking of the consecrated bread and wine that is the resurrected Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

YOUR PRESENCE AT THIS CELEBRATION OF FAITH

Our presence at this Baptismal Ceremony should serve as an occasion for us to reaffirm our baptismal vows to God. Carried before the baptismal font, we too once vowed through our Godparents that we would renounce the devil and become children of God, believing, obeying, loving, and serving Him. God promised to be our Father, to forgive our sins, provide for our needs, and to bring us to Heaven. Baptism is a solemn promise between God and His children. God never breaks His promise. We must always strive to remain loyal to ours.

“Glory to God for all things”
(St. John Chrysostom)