



YOUR BAPTISM

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM!

“Yet the Lord did not promise merely to be present with the saints, but to abide in them—more than this, to make His abode in them. What then shall I say? Where it is said that He is united with them, it is with such love that He becomes one spirit with them.”

St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*

The trajectory of the Christian life is sanctity, and every Christian is called not simply to be a “good person” but to become a living revelation of God’s love to this world. In encountering Christ the Christian is transformed, melted like wax in fire, and reshaped into a living icon of God’s glory. This transformation is effected within the sacramental life of the Church, where God makes Himself available with an imminence found nowhere else in the world. The Church is where our life in Christ begins, where we meet God face to face and are both crucified and resurrected by the encounter.

Our entrance into the Church begins with the holy sacrament of Baptism, where our *whole being* is oriented towards a new life and God Himself comes and *makes His abode in us*. Together with Baptism we receive Chrismation and the Holy Eucharist, becoming fully-incorporated members of the Orthodox Christian Church. Following these moments, our entire life becomes an exhilarating effort to recognize, protect, and cultivate the gifts of grace that we receive on the day of our baptism. Christ is enthroned in glorious humility in our heart, and we are perpetually beautified as we plunge ever more deeply into mystical union with Him.

We rejoice to address you as you prepare to enter the Church, knowing that, through God’s grace, we are soon to gain a sibling in Christ and a companion on our shared journey to His Kingdom.¹

GENERAL PREPARATION

FOR THE BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE: By ancient tradition, each person baptized is given the name of a Saint who then becomes their patron and whose life and spirituality they hope to

¹ Sometimes, the Orthodox Church receives Christians through a sacrament of anointing called Chrismation rather than through a full Baptism. Please speak to the priest about your background to determine whether reception by Baptism or Chrismation is recommended.

emulate. Please complete the attached form indicating your chosen baptismal name as well as your legal name (inasmuch as they might be different). We will also need a copy of your photo id.

CONSIDERING YOUR SPONSOR(S): The most important decision you will make after choosing to be baptized is in the Church is picking a suitable sponsor. The preference of the Church is that you choose ONE Orthodox Christian to be your sponsor in baptism. Your Sponsor(s) must be of the Christian Orthodox Faith, that they may be there to support and guide you as you integrate more and more fully into the body of Christ. Your sponsor should be someone of exemplary character and deep faith. To this point, he or she (they) must be ecclesiastically and financially in good standing, and if married, his/her marriage must have been sanctified in the Orthodox Church.

Sponsors from a parish church other than St. Nicholas must provide a letter from their parish priest stating that this person is in good ecclesiastical and financial standing and is eligible to perform the duties of a Sponsor. Please have this information to us by four (4) weeks before the date of the Holy Sacrament.

The Sponsor(s) should familiarize themselves with the Nicene Creed (copy enclosed), which they will recite together with you as you confess your faith in the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT: While the Church is the Spiritual Body of Christ, it is also in a very real sense the Physical Presence of His Body on Earth. When you become a pledging and contributing member of the Parish of St. Nicholas you help us as a parish to meet all the financial obligations and responsibilities of running a Church including: salaries for priests and staff, building maintenance, utilities, insurances, and myriad other ministry-related expenses. Without your pledge and support we cannot meet the spiritual, pastoral and real-world needs of yourself and of your fellow parishioners. Please see St. Nicholas's other baptismal packet for further information regarding fees.

WHAT ITEMS ARE NEEDED FOR THE BAPTISM?

The following are a list of items that are needed at your baptism. Traditionally, these items are provided for by the Sponsor (Godparent). Please share the list with them:

Xiton (*see below)

Bottle of olive oil (1) (500ml)

Bar of mild white soap (Ivory or Dove are good examples) (1)

White Hand towels for Priest, Sponsors, and Participant (2)

Large white towel (1)

Decorated Candle to be held during ceremony (1)

Other small candles for children who may attend the service and join the joyful procession around the font

Gold or Silver Cross w/chain (1)

White t-shirt or singlet for after baptism

Baptismal outfit to be worn following the ceremony (White and light khaki colors preferred)

Witness pins (Martyrika) are optional but encouraged as they signal that each person present was a witness of the blessed sacrament.

THE XITON



The Xiton is a white garment with inscribed with a cross, and is worn when the catechumen enters the baptismal font and emerges from it as a fully-fledged member of the

Orthodox Church. The color of the garment represents the purity of the soul after baptism, as well as the luminous promise of the Life in Christ.

THE ACTIONS OF THE BAPTISM

By the time we've reached adulthood, most of us have become accustomed to avoiding the spotlight. We've been conditioned such that any sort of direct attention can feel strange to us, or perhaps even improper. Rest assured that on the day of your Baptism all who witness will be blessed to see you enter the Church, and there is no reason to feel self-consciousness. Nevertheless, having an idea of what the service itself looks like ahead of time may help you to enjoy the sacrament more fully on the day of its performance. Please read the description of the service below, and do not hesitate to contact the priest if you have any questions. To learn more about the theology of Baptism, read St. Cyril's words at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310100.htm>.

The Renunciation of Satan and the Turn to Christ

Before the Baptism proper, we will proceed to the narthex of the church for a brief service in which, together with your sponsor and the priest, you will (a)renounce Satan, (b)turn towards the altar and commit to Christ, and (c)confess the Nicene Creed as a declaration of your faith in God, the Holy Trinity, and the Church. Following this service you will join your priest and sponsor(s) and proceed towards the front of the church, where the Baptism proper will take place.

The Baptism Proper

Blessing of the Waters

The Baptism Proper begins with a series of petitions and prayers during which the water in the baptismal font will be blessed, bringing to mind the day that Christ Himself blessed the waters in the Jordan River when He Himself was baptized by St. John.

Anointing with Oil

Next, oil will be blessed, added to the font, and used to anoint the person who has come to be baptized. At this point, you will move to a private place to don the white baptismal garment known as the *chiton*. Once you've returned, the priest will anoint your chest and back, hands, face and feet, and your sponsor(s) will be asked to anoint you as well. This anointing echoes the priestly anointing recorded in the Old Testament and represents your own entrance into the "priesthood" of every Christian.

Immersion and Resurrection

Following the anointing comes the baptism itself. "Baptism" comes from the Greek word *βαπτίζω*, which quiet literally means "to immerse." Our immersion in the baptismal waters signals a dying to our old self, and our resurgence from the waters represents our birth unto a new life,

transformed and resurrected. This is a moment of great grace and dignity in the baptism, and it is a blessing for all who are present.²

The Holy Chrism and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

After the immersion, the newly-illuminated is anointed once again, this time with the Holy Chrism. Here the miracle is as astounding as it is subtle: the Holy Spirit humbly descends into the heart of the newly-baptized, and God dwells within us in a new and radical way. In response to this gift, the newly-illuminated makes a modest offering of thanksgiving in hair that is cut from their head in the sign of a cross. From here you will dress in new and bright garments, circle the font three times with your priests, sponsor(s) and family, and receive your baptismal cross.

The Chalice and Communion with Christ

The culmination of the Baptismal service is the culmination not only of the day, but of all Christian life. We encounter God every time we receive Holy Communion, imbibing His Body and Blood and meeting Him much as we will at the end of our life, the beginning of eternity. The newly-illuminated Christian approaches this moment humble yet unashamed, having been prepared for the encounter by the preceding sacrament.

² While *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* has become a sort of ethnic cult-classic, the baptismal scene in the movie may have done more harm than good. Please remember that this scene is *intentionally far-flung and comedic*, and in no way resembles the sober grace of a real Orthodox baptism.

Below is a copy of the Creed that you and your sponsor(s) will recite at the sacrament.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, 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 men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried. And He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified; Who spoke through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen

ΤΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΛΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ

Πιστεύω εἰς ἓνα Θεόν, Πατέρα, Παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων.

Καὶ εἰς ἓνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων· φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο.

Τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα.

Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα. Καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς Γραφάς.

Καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς.

Καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ Κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν.

Εἰς μίαν, Ἁγίαν, Καθολικὴν καὶ Ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ὁμολογῶ ἐν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

Προσδοκῶ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν.

Καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν.

ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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PROPOSED³ Date and Hour of Baptism _____

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE INFORMATION

[Please complete the information below and forward to the church **4 weeks prior to the baptism.**] **First name, middle name and last names as they appear on Birth Certificate**

CANDIDATE

Name of Candidate for Baptism:

Place of Birth (City/State) _____ Date of Birth _____

Address

City/Zip _____ Phone () _____

What brought you to the Orthodox Church? _____

SPONSOR/S (GODPARENT/S)

Name of Sponsor:

Members of what parish/church? _____ Membership # _____

City/State of parish _____

³ Once the church office has received your Baptismal Certificate Information Sheet, we will contact you to lock in a date and time.

***IMPORTANT: Please forward this document along with the necessary verification of church membership if parents or sponsors are from another parish.**