Baptism Request Form

St. John the Merciful Orthodox Church

Introduction

Holy Baptism is not simply a family event or a meaningful ceremony—it is the beginning of a new life in Christ, entrance into the Church, and the foundation of the Christian life.

Because of this, Baptism is always connected to the life of the Church: to faith, to worship, to the Eucharist, and to the ongoing formation of the child.

This form is the first step in preparing for that life.

A Note on Age

This form is intended for **children under the age of seven**.

Children over the age of seven are typically received into the Church along with their families through a period of catechumenate (instruction and formation), followed by Baptism or Chrismation as appropriate.

If your child is over the age of seven, please contact the parish so we can guide you through that process.

A. The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is administered in full accordance with the life and tradition of the Church.

It is not abbreviated or adapted to convenience. The prayers, exorcisms, and full rite are part of how the Church receives a new Christian into the life of Christ.

Baptism is properly performed by **triple immersion** in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Name of the Child

The child is baptized with the name of a recognized Orthodox saint.

This is not simply a label, but a connection to the life of the Church—a heavenly patron and example.

Parents should give this serious thought. If needed, the priest can help guide you in selecting an appropriate name.

C. The Role of the Sponsor (Godparent)

The sponsor is not an honorary role.

The godparent stands before God and the Church as a guarantor that the child will be raised in the Orthodox faith.

For this reason:

- The sponsor must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing
- The sponsor must be actively living the sacramental life of the Church
- The sponsor should be someone capable of guiding the child spiritually

The first sponsor should be of the same sex as the child. A second sponsor of the opposite sex may also be present.

Non-Orthodox individuals may be present as witnesses or honorary godparents, but they are not the official sponsors.

D. The Life of the Church

Baptism is not the end—it is the beginning.

Parents and sponsors are expected to:

- Bring the child regularly to the Divine Liturgy
- Raise the child in prayer and the life of the Church
- Ensure the child receives Holy Communion

The newly baptized Christian should receive the Holy Eucharist as soon as possible, ideally at the Divine Liturgy following the baptism, to be fully received in the Church.

E. Timing and Celebration of Baptism

Under usual circumstances, a child is baptized at about 40 days old. The Church does not delay Baptism unnecessarily, but also allows time for the parents and sponsors to prepare appropriately. Normally this is discussed with the parents when the priest visits them after the birth of the child.

In the Orthodox Church in America, it is normative for Baptism to take place on a Sunday, before the Divine Liturgy, so that the newly illumined may immediately participate in the Eucharist together with the parish community.

When necessary, Baptisms may also be scheduled on a Saturday; however, they should take place no later than 2:00 PM, in keeping with the Church's preparation for the Lord's Day.

Baptism is never a private ceremony. It is an act of the whole Church. For this reason, Baptisms are open to all members of the parish, who are encouraged to be present and to participate in welcoming the newly baptized into the life of Christ.

F. What Is Needed for Baptism

Preparation for Baptism is both spiritual and practical. The following items are needed for the day of the service:

- **A new white baptismal garment** (symbolizing new life in Christ)
- **At least one large towel** (two or more is recommended for older children)
- **A baptismal cross**
- **A decorated baptismal candle**
- **An icon of the child's patron saint**

It is customary for the **godparent(s)** to provide the baptismal cross, candle, and icon.

All items should be brought with you on the day of the Baptism.

G. Timeline for Baptism Preparation

The preparation for Baptism begins before the day of the service and unfolds in a simple, ordered way.

Upon Going Into Labor

Notify the priest when you go into labor so that the Church may begin praying for you and your child, and so that a visit can be arranged after the birth.

In many cases, this is also when the **baptism date is tentatively chosen**, depending on recovery and scheduling.

It is customary for the priest to:

- Visit on or shortly after the day of birth
- Offer the **Prayers at the Naming of the Child** on the eighth day

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One Week Before Baptism

Contact the priest to confirm that all preparations have been made.

At this time:

- The date and time should be finalized
- All required items should be ready
- The sponsor should prepare by going to **Holy Confession and Holy Communion** close to the time of the Baptism

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Day of Baptism

For an Infant

- Dress the child in a **comfortable, easy-to-remove garment**
- Bring:
    - At least **one large bath towel** (two recommended)
    - The **new white baptismal garment**

For a Child

- Dress the child in a **plain dark t-shirt and shorts**
- Bring:
    - The **white baptismal garment**
    - **Two or more large towels**

For All Baptisms

It is customary for the godparents to provide:

- The **baptismal cross**
- The **decorated candle**
- The **icon of the patron saint**

These items should be brought on the day of the service.

F. Location of Baptism

Baptism is normally performed in the Church or appointed baptistry.

In the case of adult baptisms, the service may take place outdoors at an appropriate location.

G. Baptism Request Information

Please complete the following:

Child Information

- **Full Name of Child (as it will appear in the Church record):**

- **Date of Birth: _____**
- **Place of Birth (City, State/Province, Country):**

Parents

Father

- Full Name: _____
- Religion: _____

Mother

- Full Name (Maiden Name): _____
- Religion: _____

Sponsors (Godparents)

- **Sponsor (Godparent) Name: _____**
- **Is the sponsor an Orthodox Christian in good standing?**
  ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
- **Second Sponsor (if applicable): _____**

Witness (Optional, Non-Orthodox)

- Name: _____

Baptism Planning

- **Preferred Date of Baptism: _____**
- **Is this date flexible?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

Contact Information

- **Parent Email: _____**
- **Parent Phone Number: _____**

H. Acknowledgment

We understand that Baptism is a sacrament of the Church and that we are committing to raise this child in the Orthodox faith, in participation with the life of the Church.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____