



"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



Our Mission: "To proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ."

Reverend Father John Touloumes, *Proistamenos*
Reverend Father Radu Bordeianu, *Assistant Priest*

Preparing For a Baptism at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church 985 Providence Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Dear Parents:

You have requested a baptism for your child at Holy Trinity Church, an event which will certainly bring great joy to both your family and the Holy Trinity Church community. This document provides you with important information on preparing for that important event in your child's life as he/she is "born again" (John 3.5) into the new life of our Savior Jesus Christ.

CONFIRMING A DATE: Prior to the baptism, a date and time must be confirmed by the priest before other commitments (such as receptions) are made. Baptisms are most often done on Saturdays or Sundays. They are also normally done outside Lent and other major fasting periods of the church calendar. Any exceptions to those usual practices are handled on a special request basis.

SELECTING A GODPARENT: The selection of a Godparent is the next item and must be done with great personal care, respect for the guidelines of the Church and a desire to choose a spiritual guardian who will be able to participate in your child's life and whose life and commitment to Christ will be an inspiration for your child.

Important: A Godparent must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing in every way with the Orthodox Church. To assure this and to avoid changing selections in the event of an obstacle, it is important to consult the priest BEFORE inviting a person to be a Godparent. Keep in mind that only one person will sign the baptismal certificate as the Godparent, so if there is a married couple, be sure to indicate which of the two will sign.

In an effort to honor or include friends or family, sometimes requests are made for the them to have a part in the service. There are other roles that non-Orthodox friends and family may take during the service of baptism, such as the changing and dressing of the child and the holding of candles. A non-Orthodox person may not, however, be listed as a Godparent.

PAPERWORK NEEDED - INFORMATION FORM AND BIRTH CERTIFICATE: Please complete the Baptism Information Form (found on our web site at HolyTrinityPgh.org/documents/sacraments) and return it as soon as possible, **along with a copy of your child's official Birth Certificate.** These may be emailed, mailed, faxed or delivered in person. If you have any questions, please call the church office at 412-366-8700.

INVITATIONS

Invitations should not be printed or sent until the date has been confirmed by the Church Office.

WHAT TO BRING: You will need the following items for the service. These items should all be new. They are traditionally provided by the Godparent, but who provides what is left completely to your discretion.

- A Cross (preferably Orthodox style) and chain.
- A large, white bath towel.
- Two white hand towels.
- A white flat sheet (twin will do).
- A small bottle of olive oil.
- A bar of white soap.
- A white baptismal outfit.
- A white undershirt or “onesie.”
- A cloth diaper (to line the regular or disposable diaper and absorb Holy Oil).
- One large (18” or more) white candle decorated with white ribbons for the Sponsor.
- Other smaller white candles decorated with white ribbons for the others in the baptismal procession.
(For small children to participate some families prefer to use battery-operated candlesticks for safety)
- “Martyrika” baptismal remembrances/witness pins (these can be purchased or handmade)

ARRIVING AT CHURCH: On the day of the baptism, please be sure that you, the Godparent and the child arrive at the church **at least 20 minutes prior to the service**. Keep in mind that a spirit of reverence and respect is required at all times in the church. You will set up all items needed for the Baptism in the Family and Pastoral Care Room at the left side of the Narthex. This is where the child will be changed and dressed.

The priest will review the service with all those involved upon your arrival. Please be ready to indicate who will help with the changing of the child’s clothes during the service. This is often grandmothers, aunts or other beloved people in the child’s life. As stated above, those assisting do not need to be Orthodox Christians.

THE BAPTISTRY: Baptisms at Holy Trinity Church are done at the Baptistry(*), an area specially built, furnished and adorned for Baptisms. The baptistry has a font for children in the center and a large walk-in font for adults and older children around the side. Both are outfitted with comfortable warm water. For services at the Baptistry, enough seating for all expected guests will be turned to face the font, which allows a more experience for the family and guests and a clear view of all elements of the service.

For services taking place at the Baptistry, all guests will be invited to participate in the Baptismal Procession at following the dressing of the child. The Sponsor and those holding candles will process around the font twice, then be joined by the entire congregation for the third time. The entire procession will then proceed up the center aisle to the front of the church for the Holy Scripture readings, the offering of Holy Communion and Cross to the newly-baptized and the closing prayers.

(*In instances where more than 100 guests are expected or if specially requested, the entire Baptism will take place at the front of the church on the Solea - the elevated area at the front - and will use the portable font. This is due to the limitation of the number of chairs that can be turned toward the Baptistry.)

Important: Please let the priest know at least a week in advance how many guests you will be expecting so the proper area can be set up.

ABOUT THE SERVICE: The service to be held will involve three Holy Mysteries (or Sacraments): Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion. Each of these has a personal and significant meaning in the life of a Christian:

- ❖ Baptism is our personal Pascha experience. In the Font, we die as the old Adam and are born anew in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the New Adam, through the descent of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Chrismation is our personal Pentecost experience. We receive the “Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit” through anointing with Holy Chrism.
- ❖ Holy Communion is received by the child after Baptism and Chrismation. It mystically unites us with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through the receiving of His Precious Body and Life-giving Blood.

Recognizing the pastoral needs of our parishioners and their non-Orthodox attendees at baptisms, the service is offered almost entirely in English, with repeated hymns or phrases also offered in Greek. If you have a particular language request outside those standards, please consult the priest in advance.

The service lasts about 45 minutes, including a brief message at the end. This does not include time for photographs.

Important: Baptisms must start at their scheduled time. Though we may make humorous comments about “Greek time,” in a parish of over 350 families, delays can create serious issues for other sacramental, liturgical or pastoral events on the same day. And catering venues do not usually take kindly to wedding parties showing up late. Please be respectful of others and be prompt on your wedding day.

CLERGY

The baptism will be officiated by the head priest of the parish unless otherwise indicated. If you desire the assistant priest or deacon, that must be specifically requested in advance. Also, if you desire to have any other Orthodox clergy from other parishes or jurisdictions to participate, that must be cleared with the head priest well in advance. Proper papers of permission to serve must be received ahead of the ceremony if they are not clergy from the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh. Non-Orthodox clergy are not permitted to participate in the service.

Important: If you desire to have any Holy Trinity clergy or their wives attend your reception, you must specifically send them invitations in advance as you do other guests. It should not be automatically assumed that the clergy will attend receptions, and it is not always possible based on the parish schedule.

CHANTER

Our parish chanter will be made available for Baptisms and should be offered a gratuity for his service. Any other chanting requests must be submitted in advance to the priest.

STEWARDSHIP/FEES

By virtue of the Orthodox member(s) of the couple being a member in good standing at Holy Trinity Church, their stewardship pledge and offerings support all the ministries of the Church, including sacramental life. There are no fees for the use of the Church or for the services of the clergy for sacraments.

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY DURING THE SERVICE

Both photography and videography are permitted during the service, including flash if needed. All photographers and videographers are expected to dress modestly and appropriately to respect the church environment. Jeans, t-shirts and other very casual attire are not allowed. All photographers and videographers are also expected to make their presence discrete and to avoid crossing between the congregation and the service.

Important: Photographers and videographers are permitted on the main floor of the church only. No equipment or personnel are permitted on the “Solea,” which is the elevated platform at the front of the church where the service takes place. Photos and video may be taken from the sides of the Solea to get a view of the events during the service. Photographers and videographers are also not permitted in the immediate area surrounding the Baptistry to avoid interfering with the service or the view of the congregation.

ONLINE BROADCAST

Holy Trinity offers HD (1920x1080 resolution) broadcast of live services every Sunday. Sacraments are not broadcast unless requested. If a live broadcast of a Baptism is desired, a specific request must be made to the priest prior to the service. If broadcast, a copy of the video may be requested following the ceremony.

AFTER-SERVICE “MARTYRIKA” & PHOTOS

Following the Baptism it is traditional to have the parents, Godparent(s) and child form a receiving line at the front of the church (on the main floor in front of the Solea). Guests will be invited to offer their greetings and congratulations, and if Martrika (witness pins) are being offered, this is the place they should be distributed.

Families often remain in the Church for photographs following the Baptism. This is permitted to take place on the Solea. Please remember that you are still in a sacred space and all conversations and actions should be respectful of that. In no case is food or drink allowed in the Church.

AFTER THE SERVICE: Please keep in mind that the towels, the sheet, the diaper and the child's undergarments will have Holy Oil and Chrism on them, so special care should be taken in cleaning the sacrament from these items after the Baptism.

- ❖ First, place them in a hand tub or a wash basin filled with soapy water
- ❖ Carefully wring the items to remove all the Holy Oil
- ❖ Pour the contents of the basin into the ground outside where it will not be trampled by people walking (not down the drain, please). This special care is out of respect to the sacrament, which should not be cast into the drain or trash.
- ❖ After that, they may be washed as usual in the future.

FOLLOWING-UP: For three consecutive Sundays after the service, the Godparent should accompany you and the child to the Divine Liturgy for Holy Communion with the child dressed in the new baptismal outfit and the Godparent carrying the child and another person next to him/her carrying the baptismal candle. Children should be held in the **right arm** of the Godparent to enable safer and easier distribution of Holy Communion. If it is not possible for the Godparent to attend, please choose another honored Orthodox Christian family member or friend to stand in - or bring the child yourself. (Note: The baptismal candle does not need to be lit for the entire Liturgy. Just prior to Holy Communion, you may go to the Narthex to light the candle at the candle box.)

LIFE IN THE CHURCH: The on-going commitment to keep the child involved in the life of the Church continues from the day of Baptism forward. The child should be brought for all Sundays and feast days of the Church. He/she should also participate in Church School, youth ministries, attendance at worship services and frequent Holy Communion. These things and more will help you and the Godparent fulfill your calling to raise the child in the Holy Orthodox Faith and in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the blessings of the Lord will be with you as you prepare for this great event.

In Christ.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. John', written in a cursive style.

Father John Touloumes

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