

***YOUR GUIDE TO BAPTISM, CHRISMATION,
40-DAY BLESSINGS OF INFANTS***

at

ST. SOPHIA'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



SYRACUSE, NY

METROPOLIS OF DETROIT

The Sacrament of Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), 40 Day Blessing

The following information is designed to give you a greater understanding of what is required to schedule a baptism and/or chrismation (confirmation) or 40 day blessing at Saint Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church.

Forty Day Blessing

To schedule a 40 day blessing of a newborn, first contact the parish priest. If the blessing is on a Sunday after the liturgy, please arrive at the Church before 10:30 am and wait in the lobby. Notify an usher that you have arrived. When the Divine Liturgy is over, an usher will bring your family into the Narthex (vestibule of the church) where the priest will meet you and appropriate prayers will be read. The child will then be carried into the Nave (main part of the church) by the priest as the parents follow and proceed onto the Solea (raised part at the front of the Nave). The newborn will then receive the special blessings of the Church and introduced to the congregation.

Although it's not a sacrament *per se*, forty days after birth, in accordance with the Old Testament tradition observed by the Virgin Mother, Orthodox parents should bring their newborn to the church for a "40 day blessing," preferably on the nearest Sunday to the actual day.

Baptism and Chrismation (Confirmation) are included in the seven major sacraments of the Orthodox Faith. The seven sacraments are: the Eucharist (Communion), Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), Confession, Marriage, Holy Unction (The sacrament of healing) and Holy Orders (Deaconate, Priesthood, Hierarchy). You must be an Orthodox Christian in good ecclesiastical standing to partake in any sacraments after baptism and chrismation. Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of his or her life and accepts the doctrines and tenets of the Orthodox Church as the only steadfast way to salvation is eligible for the sacrament of holy baptism.

The Orthodox Church practices infant baptism. This enables the newly born to partake of the benefits derived from the redemptive act of Christ. All children and adults are eligible for baptism, regardless of the marital and spiritual status of the parent(s).

When scheduling a baptism, an appointment must be made to meet with the parish priest prior to making any other arrangements. Please select an Orthodox Christian name that is recognized by the Orthodox Church for the person being baptized or chrismated. Consult with the parish priest when choosing the baptismal name. This name is used by the priest at the Eucharist and at all other sacraments.

When scheduling a baptism and/or chrismation the godparent(s), or sponsor, must be an Orthodox Christian in good ecclesiastical standing. The Godparent(s) or sponsor are traditionally chosen from outside your immediate family to expand your Orthodox family and grow in the faith together. The Godparent(s) or sponsor must also be stewards of St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church and have paid their annual pledge in full prior to the sacrament and must also fill out a pledge form for the following year.

If the parents of a child presented for baptism live in Central New York, but are not stewards of St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church, they (or at least one) are required to become stewards. A pledge card

should be filled out and the pledge completed, and a pledge card for the following year must also be filled out.

In the event that parent(s) and/or godparent(s) are not stewards of Saint Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church but are stewards of another canonical Orthodox parish, a letter of good standing will be required from the home parish. A donation of \$200.00 payable to Saint Sophia's Church will be required prior to the scheduling of the baptism or chrismation.

Items provided by the family for the baptism:

- 1 single white sheet
- 1 white bath towel
- 2 white hand towels
- 8 oz. container of olive oil
- 1 large white candle
- 2 medium size white candles
- A bar of white soap
- Baptismal cross and chain
- White baptismal outfit with white undergarments
- Baptismal pins (optional)

Adult Baptism – Adults wishing to convert and schedule a baptism or chrismation must become stewards of St. Sophia Greek orthodox Church and have paid their pledge in full prior to the sacrament and also fill out a pledge form for the following year. The Godparent(s) sponsor(s) must also be members in good ecclesiastical standing in the Greek Orthodox Church as well as a steward(s) of a Greek Orthodox parish. The Godparent(s) or sponsor are traditionally chosen from outside your immediate family to expand your Orthodox family and grow in the faith together. If the sponsor(s) are not stewards of St. Sophia's, a letter of good standing will be required from their home parish. If the godparent(s) are not stewards of St. Sophia's Church, a donation of \$200.00 payable to Saint Sophia's Church will be required prior to the scheduling of the baptism and/or chrismation.

Our parish priest is available for this sacrament. In the event you wish to invite an additional Orthodox priest, permission must be granted from the priest of St. Sophia's. Priests from other religious denominations are not permitted to participate in the sacrament. If permission is granted, the family is responsible for all the financial requirements and accommodations of the additional priest.

Please be considerate of the clergy and assistant (voytho). A gratuity is encouraged for the priest and assistant (voytho) given directly or mailed to the Church. Please indicate clearly on your check or with a note to whom your gift is to be given.

You may also choose to make a gift directly to St. Sophia's Church.

For more information on the customs of our faith and heritage, please consider purchasing the books The Orthodox Study Bible and A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America, both available in our Church bookstore. Also, free of charge, see the booklet Making the Most of Your Confession.

The Requirements for being a Parishioner in Good Ecclesiastical Standing

Any person eighteen years of age or over who was baptized according to the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church, or was received into the Greek Orthodox Church through chrismation (confirmation), who lives according to the faith and canons of the Greek Orthodox Church, who has met his or her stewardship obligation and abides by the regulations and by-laws of the parish, is a parishioner in good standing of the parish.

A person qualifying as a parishioner in good standing who also wishes to be a member in another Orthodox parish must pay his/her financial obligations fully to each parish.

No person shall be accepted as a parishioner while retaining membership in a non-Christian religion, or on a non-Orthodox Christian denomination, or in an Orthodox parish which defies the jurisdiction or the ecclesiastical authority of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, or who deliberately disregards and transgresses the moral law.

When transferring from one parish to another, the parishioner shall present to the priest of the new parish a letter of transfer signed by his or her former priest, which shall include all the pertinent information required.

The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox faith to his/her life, activities, his/her time, to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services of worship faithfully on Sundays and holy days, to keep the rules and fasts of the Orthodox tradition, to receive frequently the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, to train and teach the young according to the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy, to respect the clergy, the ecclesiastical authority, and all governing bodies of the Church, to be obedient in matters of faith and ecclesiastical order, and to cooperate in every way towards the welfare and prosperity of the parish and the success of its sacred mission.

The obligations of a parishioner are to support St. Sophia's with regular stewardship gifts and special assessments as the Parish Assembly may establish, and to meet such Archdiocesan financial charges as may be fixed by the Biennial Assembly. Financial hardship will be reviewed by the parish priest and/or the Stewardship Committee.

The rights of a parishioner are to attend all regular and special parish assemblies, to take part in its discussions and to vote therein, and be elected a member/officer of the Parish Council and in such position to take part in the administration of the Parish and in the direction of its life and activity.

We can all use our talents in response to God's love by serving God on the Choir, Sunday School Program, Philoptochos, GOYA and Parish Council - or by participating in the other ministries of our Church.

Annual Stewardship Pledge

To support the ministries of St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church and to meet its financial obligations the annual Stewardship Program was adopted in January 2004. Each parishioner (18 years old and above) herein (or husband and wife) are requested annually to sign and submit to the church office a stewardship pledge card during the month of January or soon thereafter making a financial commitment to support our parish. Please fill out the pledge form completely. Each steward is requested to commit an honest portion of his/her/their annual income for the work and support of the Church.

A new stewardship pledge must be submitted every year.

The Parish Register shall include the following information concerning each steward:

The baptismal and family name and dates of baptism, dates of marriage, complete family record of spouse and children, date of entry into the parish indicating if a transferee from another parish, record of payment of parish and Archdiocesan financial obligations, and the date of death.

Many have asked for guidance on how much the annual stewardship donation should be. The parish council has set a guideline of between 1% and 2% of your household annual income. The amount of your gift is between you and God, this is only a guide. No one will ask for verification.

Proportional giving is much more equitable for each person gives of their treasure according to his or her means. Those who receive more may give more and those who receive less may give less and still be active parishioners of the church. Your pledge amount should come from your conscience and love for God.

Your annual stewardship commitment may be paid weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. You may pay at the Church office during business hours, request personalized offering envelopes, mail in by check (no cash in the mail please) or pay electronically through direct deposit or a bank card.

A commitment is in the strictest of confidence and is not a legal obligation but a promise to God. A parishioner may contact the priest or a member the Stewardship Committee to increase or decrease his or her stewardship pledge according to financial circumstances.

A person whose name appears on the membership rolls of the Church and has executed an annual stewardship pledge card, submitted and is not in arrears in payment of his/her stewardship obligation for the preceding year is deemed a parishioner in good standing.

A new parishioner is considered in good standing if he/she has submitted an annual stewardship pledge card. If a new member is to have a baptism or wedding in the Church, the pledge must be paid in full prior to the sacrament and a pledge card filled out for the following year.

When a wedding, baptism or confirmation is requested by a current member of the parish, and the stewardship commitment for the prior year has not been met, the pledge must be fulfilled. The parishioner must also fill out a current annual pledge form which must be paid in full prior to the wedding baptism or confirmation. He/she must also fill out a pledge card for the following year. You are considered a new member if you have not been a member in good standing the previous year.

For the purpose of voting for Parish Council members and/or participating at a parish assembly a new member of the parish must have been enrolled for a minimum of 3 months.