

*Saint Sophia*  
GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL



## GREETINGS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD!

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Miami shares your joy in anticipation of the Holy Baptism of your child. Through Baptism, your child is filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit and is brought into the fullness of life in the Holy Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ.

Enclosed you will find information regarding Baptism in the Church, as well as forms to complete in order to schedule the sacrament and provide us necessary information to complete the Certificate of Baptism. Please complete these forms carefully, as soon as possible, and return them either via postal mail: Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 244 SW24TH ROAD, MIAMI, FL. 33129 or via email to [office@stsophiamiami.org](mailto:office@stsophiamiami.org).

We look forward to serving you as you prepare yourselves for the Holy Baptism of your child.

May GOD grant your precious child many years!

In His Service;

Fr. Spiro D. Bobotas

## **Baptism**

The Sacrament of Baptism incorporates us into the Church, the Body of Christ, and is our introduction to the life of the Holy Trinity. Water is a natural symbol of cleansing and newness of life. Through the three-fold immersion in the waters of Baptism in the Name of the Holy Trinity, one dies to the old ways of sin and is born to a new life in Christ. Baptism is one's public identification with Christ's Death and victorious Resurrection. Following the custom of the early Church, Orthodoxy encourages the baptism of infants. The Church believes that the Sacrament is bearing witness to the action of God who chooses a child to be an important member of His people. From the day of their baptism, children are expected to mature into the life of the Spirit, through their family and the Church. The Baptism of adults is practiced when there was no previous baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. (Source: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org))

## **Chrismation**

The Sacrament of Chrismation (Confirmation) immediately follows baptism. As the ministry of Christ was enlivened by the Spirit, and the preaching of the Apostles strengthened by the Spirit, so is the life of each Orthodox Christian sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Chrismation, which is often referred to as one's personal Pentecost, is the Sacrament which imparts the Gift and the Seal of the Holy Spirit.

In the Sacrament of Chrismation, the priest anoints the various parts of the body of the newly-baptized with Holy Chrism saying: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Oil, which is blessed by the bishop, is a sign of consecration and strength. The Sacrament emphasizes the truth that not only is each person a valuable member of the Church, but also each one is blessed by the Spirit with certain gifts and talents. The anointing also reminds us that our bodies are valuable and are involved in the process of salvation.

The Sacraments of initiation are always concluded with the distribution of Holy Communion to the newly-baptized. Ideally, this takes place within the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, especially in the case of adult baptism. This practice reveals that Orthodoxy views children from their infancy as important members of the Church. There is never time when the young are not part of God's people. (Source: [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org))

## Overview

The service begins with initial petitions and prayers blessing the water and then the baby is anointed with pre-baptismal oil. Oil is an oft-used symbol in the Orthodox faith, representing light, reconciliation and peace. From ancient times, oil was recognized as having marvelous medicinal properties, and as such represents the healing of the stain of original sin. The priest makes the sign of the cross in the water with the oil three times and anoints the baby on its brow, chest, ears, hands, feet and back. The sponsor makes the confession of faith on the child's behalf by reciting the Nicene Creed. The baby is immersed in water thrice in the name of the Holy Trinity, during which the entire Church "seals" each immersion with an "Amen." After the service, the child is dressed in a post-baptismal outfit representative of its new spiritual life. For two consecutive Sundays after the Baptism, the sponsor carries the infant to the Holy Altar to receive Holy Communion.

## PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING BAPTISM

### INITIAL CONTACT:

Initial contact with Fr. Spiro should be made by the parents of the child (there are separate procedures for adult baptism), to set up an appointment. A baptismal packet is sent to the parents electronically via email, or by printed copy via postal mail. The parents complete the enclosed scheduling and parental information sheets (see FORMS A & B below) and return them to the Cathedral office as soon as possible. A folder is created into which all returning paperwork and pertinent documentation is placed.

### THE SCHEDULING SHEET (FORM A):

The scheduling sheet (FORM A) is reviewed by the Cathedral clergy, who then schedule the date and time based on careful consideration of the Orthodox ecclesiastical calendar, major feast days of the Church, and previously scheduled services and sacraments. **PLEASE NOTE:** baptisms are not performed during Holy Week and are not scheduled during wider community events, such as the Saint Sophia Festival.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** The child **MUST** be baptized in the name of a canonized Saint of the Orthodox Church. If there is uncertainty concerning the appropriateness of a baptismal name, inquiry should be made directly to the Cathedral clergy.

**PARISHONER(S) IN GOOD STANDING:**

"Good standing" refers to both ecclesiastical and financial status. The Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Article 18, Section 1) define a parishioner as: "Every person who is baptized and chrismated according to the rites of the Orthodox Church. The religious, social and moral duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox Faith to his/her life and to: adhere to and live according to the tenets of the Orthodox Faith: faithfully attend the Divine Liturgy and other worship services; participate regularly in the holy sacraments; respect all ecclesiastical authority and all governing bodies of the Church; be obedient in matters of the Faith, practice and ecclesiastical order; contribute towards the progress of the Church's sacred mission; and be an effective witness and example of the Orthodox Faith and Traditions to all people." Furthermore, "a parishioner in good standing must: be eighteen years of age or over, be current in his or her stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish," and "cooperate in every way towards the welfare and well-being of the Parish."

The Cathedral clergy try to honor one of the three requested dates, beginning with the first. If none can be scheduled, the cathedral clergy will directly contact the parents order to seek possible alternative dates and times. PLEASE NOTE: NO date or time IS considered final until approved, including those II involving the deposit or down payment of monies for reception venues, until final approval is given. III! Once the Cathedral clergy have approved the date and time, the baptism may be scheduled.

**PARENTAL INFORMATION SHEET (FORM B):**

The parental information sheet (FORM B) must be completely filled out. It is used by the Cathedral clergy to prepare the Certificate of Birth and Baptism, which will be signed by the Orthodox sponsor(s) upon completion of the sacrament on the day of the baptism, and then, issued to the parents of the child. \*

**THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE:**

By decree of the Chancellor's office of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, no baptism may be celebrated without the prior submission of an official birth

certificate issued by the State in which the child was born. The birth certificate may be scanned electronically and submitted via email ([office@stsophiamiami.org](mailto:office@stsophiamiami.org)), or photocopied and submitted via postal mail to Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 244 SW 24TH ROAD, MIAMI, FL. 33129 or Faxed to 305-858-1854

The birth certificate must be received by the Cathedral office no later than fifteen (15) days before the date of the baptism in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled.

#### **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF PARISHONERS IN GOOD STANDING:**

As stewards in good standing with Saint Sophia Cathedral or a sister Orthodox Parish (– ie. those current in "stewardship and other financial obligations to the Parish") - may along with a usage gift of \$350. 00 schedule a baptism.

#### **FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF NON-PARISHONER:**

If neither parent is a member in good standing of Saint Sophia Cathedral, or a sister Orthodox Parish) Stewardship needs to be established as well as a \$350.00 Cathedral Sanctuary Usage fee. This fee offsets some of the expenses of clergy, sexton, as well as the Cathedral overhead costs involved in opening and closing the church building on that day. \*

Non-members who choose to join Saint Sophia Cathedral, can do so and are welcome to speak to the office.

All financial obligations to the Parish must be recorded by the Cathedral office no later than fifteen (15) days before the date of the baptism in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled. \*

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** In cases of extreme financial hardship, and upon confidential consultation with the Cathedral clergy, necessary adjustment to the above Parish financial obligation fee schedule will be made. No child will be refused baptism based solely on the inability of the parents to totally fulfill Parish financial obligations.

## **8. THE ORTHODOX SPONSOR(S):**

**The Orthodox sponsor(s) MUST:**

1. Be baptized or chrismated Orthodox Christian(s).
2. Be thirteen years of age or older.
3. If married, be married in the Orthodox Church. Please note, according to Orthodox Canon Law, only ONE individual is permitted to act as sponsor (godfather/ godmother). The ONLY exception to this canonical rule is the case of a MARRIED COUPLE who are BOTH Orthodox Christians, and who are thus defined by the Church through the sacrament of marriage as ONE individual. In the case of an Orthodox sacrament as "honorary sponsor," but may NOT directly participate in the sacramental Rites of the baptism.
4. If divorced, the sponsor MUST have received an ecclesiastical divorce. Be member(s) in good standing with Saint Sophia Cathedral (please see the "Pastoral Guidelines" of the Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: "A person who wishes to sponsor a candidate for Baptism or Chrismation must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing and a supporting member of an Orthodox parish."). If the sponsor(s) are not members of Saint Sophia Cathedral, they must obtain a letter from the priest of their home parish affirming they are members in good standing of that parish. This letter may be delivered to Saint Sophia Cathedral either by postal mail, fax, or email (see above), and must be received no later than fifteen (15) days before the scheduled date of the Baptism.

The Sponsor needs to be prepared on behalf of the child to respond to the questions of the Orthodox Catechism posed by the priest and recite or read the Nicene Creed (see below: "**Making of a Catechumen**"). \*

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** Parents should give serious consideration to their selection of the sponsor, keeping in mind that the primary responsibility of the godparent is the profound role of life-long spiritual guide to the child. This is a great and awesome spiritual responsibility, and only those qualified and eager to fulfill this sacred trust to the best of their ability should be chosen.

**PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SPONSOR(S):**

Traditionally, the sponsoring godfather and/or godmother provide the following necessary items for the baptismal service (in contemporary practice, however, the parents, grandparents, or family members, often do):

1. An Orthodox baptismal cross (NOT a crucifix), usually made of gold.
2. Three white candles. Typically, the one for the godparent(s) is larger than the two smaller ones held by the witnesses, who are traditionally, but NOT necessarily, young children. All three candles are usually decorated with ribbons or trimming of some kind (a custom, NOT a requirement).
3. A complete change of clothes into a celebratory baptismal outfit (including undergarments) for the child, traditionally white.
4. One large white bath towel.
5. One white twin bed flat sheet.
6. Two small white hand towels (not wash cloths).
7. One small bottle of olive oil (new).
8. One new bar of bath soap (for the priest and sponsor(s) to wash their hands).

Additionally, together with the parents, the godparent(s) appoint special individuals to undress and dress the child - typically, but NOT exclusively, the grandmothers - and to serve as witnesses (see #2 above).

Finally, it is the great honor and sacred responsibility of the sponsor(s) to bring the child to church to receive Holy Communion the next two Divine Liturgies the child is able to attend (traditionally, the child receives Holy Communion three times, the first being on the day of the child's baptism). If the sponsor(s) are unavailable, then by all means, the parent or grandparents or other family members may bring the child, instead.

## **10. IMPORTANT GENERAL INFORMATION:**

Photographs and/or video of the baptism are permitted, but only to ONE designated photographer and/or videographer. Furthermore, to ensure the proper dignity and solemnity of the sacrament, the use of flash or video lights is expressly FORBIDDEN. Our primary purpose on this day is to initiate the child into the Church, the Body of Christ, NOT to create theater. This strict Cathedral policy MUST be respected and followed.

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE:** A maximum time limit of 20 minutes is allocated for picture taking after the sacrament of baptism has been completed.

In the instance when the family wishes to invite the Cathedral clergy to a reception or gathering following the sacrament, a formal invitation is to be sent to their home address, as is the case with all other guests. If scheduling and prior commitments permit, the Cathedral clergy are at times able to attend. However, a verbal invitation offered either a few days earlier, or on the day of the baptism itself, will not be honored.

It is sometimes the case that a family has a prior relationship with clergy of other Greek Orthodox parishes within the Greek Archdiocese, or of Greece, or of other Orthodox jurisdictions, both here in the United States or abroad. If the family wishes to invite a priest from another church to participate in the sacrament, it may do so, but it is the family's express responsibility to notify the Cathedral clergy well in advance, as well as to remind the invited cleric that he must also contact us, well in advance of the day of the baptism. Ecclesial documentation properly identifying the canonical status of the priest, issued by his presiding bishop, must be presented to the Cathedral clergy before permission to concelebrate the sacrament can be granted. As with all other documentation, this must be submitted no later than fifteen (15) days before the date of the baptism in order for the sacrament to proceed as scheduled.

Once the sacrament has been completed, the Baptismal Certificate is signed by the sponsor(s) and dated. At a later time the Cathedral clergy complete the Baptismal Certificate in triplicate. One copy is sent to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in New York, one copy is retained by Saint Sophia Cathedral as part of the permanent archive, and the original is mailed to the parent(s) of the child for their permanent records. The parents must not lose, misplace, or carelessly damage the Baptismal Certificate, since no new original can ever be re-issued. This original may be required for the purposes of marriage, church membership, or perhaps even enrollment in a parochial educational institution requiring proof of baptism. All that can be issued in the future, should the original be lost, is a Letter of Certification of Baptism.

## SCHEDULING – BAPTISM (FORM A)

Child's name:

Male

Female

Date of Birth

Names of Parents:

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

REQUESTED DATES AND TIMES (in order of preference):

1. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact telephone numbers (as applicable):

(1) Home: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Father's cell: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Father's work: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Mother's cell: \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Mother's work: \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email addresses (as applicable):

(1) Father's email: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) (2) Mother's email: \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions or comments:

## PARENTAL INFORMATION SHEET (FORM B)

Child's Information:

Male                      Female

Legal name(s) on Birth Certificate (First & Middle): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Baptismal Name(s) in English (First & Middle): \_\_\_\_\_

\*Baptismal Name(s) in Greek (English phonetics): \_\_\_\_\_

\* According to the Great Tradition of the Orthodox Church, a child is baptized with one name of Orthodox Christian origin, that of a canonized Saint of the Orthodox Church. However, in practice, the child may receive a second, or middle name, as well.

Born in (City, State, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (Month, Day, Year): \_\_\_\_\_

### **Parents' Information:**

**Father's Name** (First, Middle, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Born in (City, State, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother's Full Maiden Name** (First, Middle, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Born in (City, State, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

**Father's religion:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mother's religion:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents' Current Mailing Address (complete):**

Date of Marriage (Month, Day, Year) \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Marriage (City, State, Country): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Church (if Orthodox): \_\_\_\_\_

Marriage Performed by:      Priest              Civil Official              Parents Not Married

### **Godparent(s) Information:**

Name (First and Last): \_\_\_\_\_

If Married. Name of Spouse (First and Last) serving as:

Orthodox Co-Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

—  
Non-Orthodox Honorary Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Making of a Catechumen”**  
**Questions posed by the Priest and the**  
**responses of the sponsoring godparent(s) [bold]**

*Then the Priest turns him (her) that is to be baptized to face westward, If the person is a child, the Sponsor holding him (her) faces West. the Priest then says thrice:*

Do you renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his worship, and all his angels, and all his pomp?

*Each time the Catechumen (or the Sponsor if the person to be baptized is a child or a foreigner) answers and says:*

I do renounce him.

*Again the Priest asks him (her) that is to be baptized:*

(3 times) Have you renounced Satan?

*And the Catechumen or the Sponsor answers (3 times):*

I have renounced him.

*After the third time, the Priest says:*

Then blow and spit upon him.

*And this being done, the Priest turns the Catechumen to the East with lowered hands, and repeats the following three times:*

Do you join Christ?

*The question is answered three times:*

I do join Him.

*Again the Priest asks three times:*

Have you joined Christ?

**Catechumen (or Sponsor):** I have joined Him.

**Again the Priest asks:**

And do you believe in Him?

**Catechumen (or Sponsor):** I believe in Him as King and as God.

On behalf of the child the Sponsor recites the Nicene Creed:

### ***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.

For us all and for our salvation, He 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 worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead.  
And the life of the age to come. Amen."