

SERVING AS A GODPARENT



ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH OF CAPE COD
CENTERVILLE, MA

SERVING AS A GODPARENT

It is a rule of the Orthodox Faith that every person, child or adult, should have a Godparent at Baptism. To serve as a Godparent is both a special honor and imposes responsibilities which last a lifetime. Through Baptism we receive forgiveness of all sin, whether original or actual; we "put on Christ," becoming members of His Body which is the Church. The Godparent, along with the parents and guided by the Church, should assist the newly baptized child throughout his/her life. Just as natural parents care and nurture their children, so do the Godparents, however, their focus is on the spiritual development of the child. Every Godparent becomes accountable to God as to whether or not he has discharged his duties to the child which he has baptized.

WHEN IT ALL BEGAN

The early Church faced the problem that the majority of those who wanted to become her members came from pagan families and therefore lacked even an elementary Christian education and knowledge of the new faith. To remedy this, the Church undertook the task of educating them before their baptism. The systematic instruction, which was a preparatory stage for baptism was called catechism. During this stage, one learned the simple elements of the Christian faith and morals and later in the fourth century one was also given an education of the more profound Christian mysteries, as is made clear in the Fourth Pre-baptismal Catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem. The candidate had to be introduced by one of the faithful, (called anadochos) and be examined by the "doctors" who were in charge of the catechumens, to ensure that clear spiritual motives led him to enter the Church. The "anadochos" which means one who receives, were responsible for the candidate and played a very important role during the process of his catechesis and even after the candidate had been baptized. Eventually, infant baptism became the norm rather than the exception in the Church and the "anadochos" or Godparent was called upon to be the spokesperson for the infant.



THE SACRED RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GODPARENT

The Godparent is the representative of the infant. He speaks for the infant and vows that he will do all he can to assure that the child will be a true soldier of Christ and a devoted member of His Church. He accepts the sacred responsibility of assisting the child to understand the practices and teachings of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Godparent makes a public profession of the Nicene Creed during the baptism. His renunciation of the devil is made on behalf of the candidate for baptism. The Godparent pledges himself to help his Godchild through problems he may encounter during life's journey, especially in the child's spiritual development.

The Church encourages the Godparent to bring the child regularly for Holy Communion. The Godparent should also prepare to receive Holy Communion. A faithful Godparent will be a friend in Christ and maintain close contact with his Godchild. The relationship between the Godparent and the baptized is so important and so close that the Church forbids marriage between the Godparent and the Godchild.

REMEMBER YOUR GODCHILD

Remember your Godchild on the date of Baptism along with birthday anniversaries, Christmas, etc. The greatest gift you can give your Godchild is the spiritual and emotional relationship you build with them by spending time together.

By now you have to come to realize that the most important quality for a Godparent is to live a Christ-filled life and that he demonstrate his faith as a light-

bearer, devoted to receiving salvation for himself and his Godchild. The Godparent is called upon to accept the Divine Commandment read from the Holy Gospel at the service of baptism, "Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."



Use this check list to prepare for the Baptism:

- **Spiritual Preparation:** Pray about the day and read the bible.
- **Reflective Preparation:** Familiarize yourself and understand the spiritual and theological meaning of Baptism, as well as the order of the service and your participation, therein.
- **Items Needed:**
 - White baptismal outfit
 - White undershirt
 - Baptismal cross
 - 3 baptismal candles—one large, 2 small
 - One small bottle of olive oil
 - 2 white towels—one small, one large
 - 1 white linen sheet
 - 1 bar of soap



St. George Greek Orthodox Church
1130 Falmouth Road
Centerville, MA 02632

Phone: 508.775.3045
Fax: 508.775.3091

E-mail: agios@stgeorge-capecod.com