

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEING A

# GODPARENT



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## DUTIES OF THE GODPARENT

Being a Godparent is a beautiful and wonderful responsibility. The Godparent shares the sacred responsibility of nurturing the child in the Orthodox Faith.

A Godparent undertakes and promises to help the Godchild become a child of God, with the knowledge of the Faith and Love of Christ. Should something happen to the child's parents, the Godparent is prepared to undertake full responsibility for the spiritual upbringing of the child. It may at first appear to be a burden, but much happens and spiritual benefits are derived by both the Godparent and the Godchild.

I pray this information, and the following suggestions, will help you understand the important role the Godparent plays in the child's spiritual life.

Be a good example to your Godchild as a devout Orthodox Christian. When your Godchild is of age, see that your Godchild attends Sunday School. Prepare to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion with your Godchild on a regular basis. Encourage the child and his or her parents to attend Church regularly. Be a friend to your Godchild, so that you may both grow in grace. Be an example for your Godchild to look up to.

You have also undertaken to direct the life of the child to Christ when you promised, "I accept Christ ... and believe in Him as my King and my God". By reciting the "Creed", you accepted at the same time the duty to teach your Godchild the truths about

Christ and His Church. Make a point of being in Church with your Godchild, and ensure that your Godchild regularly receives the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Becoming a Godparent is a good time to reaffirm your own faith, and a good time to begin practising it more fully. Keep the words of our Lord in your heart and mind; He said, "Teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world".

### ***DUTIES OF THE PARENTS***

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**P**reparing for your child's Holy Baptism calls for the greatest of care on the part of all those who are responsible. Parents have this responsibility, since they bring the child into this world. Children are not only our children ... but also God's children, entrusted to us for their physical and spiritual welfare. If we want our children to be tomorrow's happy individuals, good citizens in society, normal and worthwhile family members, we must seriously consider their spiritual upbringing. God loves and cares for children. Christ said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of God".

**H**ave your child baptized as soon as possible after the Fortieth Day Blessing. Acknowledge that your child is also a child of God. Rededicate yourself and your family to your Church.

**S**piritually prepare yourself for your child's baptism. Let it be a turning point for your entire family. Your child becomes a member of the Christian Faith and a participant in the Kingdom of God; your child is reborn by the Grace of

God; and your child's salvation begins. These realizations are unfortunately sometimes forgotten.

**C**hoose your child's Godparents wisely, thinking seriously about the Sacrament of Baptism. Select a person who will really care about your child and take an active, faithful role in the spiritual development of your child. A Godparent should be a practising Christian Orthodox and one that your child will lovingly look up to. It is wise to choose a Godparent who is fully aware of the privilege and its great, continuing responsibility.

**A**sk your priest to explain some of the highlights of the service beforehand. Receive Holy Communion with a sense of personal dedication to God. Attend Church regularly with your child. Together with your child, receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion regularly. Set the example and pray together in the home, at meals, and before bedtime. Remember the obligations of a Christian parent are not incurred on the day of Baptism and then forgotten. A child is not only flesh and bones, but a spirit as well; hence, it is essential that spiritual growth begin immediately after Baptism.

### ***CHOOSING YOUR CHILD'S NAME***

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**L**et your child be named after a Saint. In so doing, the Saint enters your home through the naming of the child. St. John Chrysostom's idea is that the child should be given a Saint's name; that the child should be continually told the story of the Saint whose name the child bears, and thus be motivated to

become like his or her Patron Saint. From the very moment the child receives its name, emphasis is placed on the child's individuality. The child's own particular name distinguishes it from every other child of God. It is the Church's acceptance of the child as an individual in its own right.

It is important to remember that if the Godparent is married, the wedding must have been blessed by the Orthodox Church. A non-Orthodox may not be the Godparent in an Orthodox Baptism. The relationship between Godparent and Godchild is so important and so close, that the Church forbids marriage between the Godparent and the Godchild.

In closing, I would like to share a picture I once saw in a magazine. It was a picture entitled, "A Baby's First Five Minutes". It showed a mother's love as she reached to embrace her newborn child.

So it is that every time an infant is baptized. The Hand of God's love reaches out to embrace that child, and bestow upon it the kiss of His Love. God imitates an agreement of Love; in effect,

*"I will be your Father,  
your Saviour,  
and you will be my son, my daughter".*



## **REQUIREMENTS FOR BAPTISM**



### **BY GODPARENTS**

*WHO MUST BE OF THE EASTERN ORTHODOX FAITH*

Undershirt  
Underpants or Diaper  
Socks and Shoes  
Outfit  
Cross and Chain  
Large Towel and Two Handtowels  
White Sheet  
(single or crib-size)  
Baby Blanket  
Two Candles  
Soap  
Olive Oil  
Token Crosses for Guests

### **BY PARENTS**

Boubounieres (optional)