

VITAL REGULATIONS FOR UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

CONCERNING THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND HOLY CHRISMATION:

Observant Orthodox Christians view Baptism not as a mere social event or ritual, but as a spiritual rebirth through water and the Spirit. Participating in this joyful spiritual event are the parents – the first teachers of faith and morality and the primary role models of faith to whom Almighty God has entrusted the gift of life – the Godparent (or by local custom, Godparents), who also fulfill the role of models of faith and morality as the infant matures spiritually and physically.

The Orthodox Church in general and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is particular, celebrates the gift of new life and stresses the sanctity and dignity of life by the following pre-baptismal rites:

- *A prayer of thanksgiving offered for the mother who has recently given birth. In this prayer, the Author of life is asked to preserve the mother from all affliction. This prayer is appropriately said in the presence of the new mother, in the hospital or if that is not possible, at home. The pastoral benefits derived from this first visit on the part of the pastor cannot be underestimated and binds the family to the parish family who, through the presence of the pastor, rejoice in the new birth.*

- *The Rite of Naming, which, in imitation of our Lord being named on the eighth day after His birth, is usually celebrated on the eighth day after the birth of a child. This rite, during which the Holy Cross is traced upon the forehead, lips and breasts of the infant, and the infant is given his or her Orthodox Christian saint's name, is appropriately celebrated in the vestibule of the parish church, although it may be celebrated in the home. Once again, this rite celebrated in the presence of the parents, family and members of the parish, serves to intensify our relationship to Christ and stresses our identity with Him, and the infant's spiritual identity with the saint – the spiritual role of faith and virtue, whose name he or she bears.*

When possible, the 40th day after the birth of the infant, in imitation of the Christ Child's presentation on the fortieth day, is reserved for the return of the mother to active life in the faith community and the Baptism, Chrismation, tonsuring, presentation and first reception of Holy Communion by the infant, who is now a child of God's Kingdom and full member of

Christ's Body, and is welcomed with joy and thanksgiving into the Faith Community. Parish members are obliged to act as models and teachers of faith, faithfulness, morality and virtue. Baptism may not be refused for any person or parent requesting it.

The following are the regulations concerning Baptism, which are binding upon all:

The primary sponsor (a male for a male child and a female for a female child) must be an Orthodox Christian who is a member of a Ukrainian Orthodox or other Orthodox parish and who is in good standing with the Orthodox Church. The primary sponsor renounces Satan in the name of his/her spiritual charge and recites the Orthodox Profession of Faith.

The privilege of fulfilling the sacred vocation of Godparent is denied to: any person who has been excommunicated by the Church or has excommunicated him/herself; any Orthodox Christian who has married outside the Orthodox Church and whose marriage has not been blessed in the Orthodox Church; any Orthodox Christian who is not a member of an Orthodox parish.

Only one sponsor is required, although by long standing local custom, two or more are accepted. The secondary sponsors must be of the Christian Faith, baptized in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual relationship created in Baptism prohibits the marriage of Godparents with Godchildren and Godparents with the parents of Godchildren.

Under normal circumstances, the appropriate place for the celebration of the Holy Mystery of Baptism is the parish church.

Baptisms may be celebrated on any day of the year, even on days prescribed for fasting and penance, but the post-baptismal festivities and activities, which contradict the spirit of the penitential day or season are normally postponed until another day.

As evidenced by the Liturgy of the Orthodox Church, the following days are traditional baptismal days: Lazarus Saturday, Holy Saturday, Pascha, the Nativity of Christ and Holy Theophany.

We also remind those who are asked to serve as Godparents for the child of a family member or a friend, that theirs is a tremendous responsibility, which they dare not take lightly. Tradition makes it almost sinful to refuse to accept such a responsibility when requested to do so, but one must refuse if he or she does not feel an honest commitment to Christ and His Holy Church and a willingness to provide spiritual guidance to his or her Godchild throughout his or her life



As a sponsor, you are required to pray daily for your spiritual charge, to help educate him/her in the faith, preparing for the day of First Confession, and for the other spiritual milestones of the child's Orthodox Christian life.

CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF HOLY MATRIMONY MATRIMONIAL CORONATION

Our Lord declared marriage to be an honorable estate by His presence at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee when He performed His first miracle. The Sacramental Coronation of a man and a woman is deemed valid only when it is celebrated in the Orthodox Church.

A shared common faith is most beneficial for the couple and the children that God will entrust to their care as the primary teachers and role models of faith. For this reason, the Orthodox Church encourages Orthodox Christians to marry Orthodox Christians. The reality faced in most parts of the world and especially in the United States is that the majority of Orthodox Christians marry those of other Christian Faith Communities. Such marriages are blessed if the couple exhibits to the Pastor an understanding of the difficulties that might arise from a mixed marriage and exhibits a willingness to adhere to Orthodox tradition in their marital and family life.

Those contemplating marriage must, prior to making any other arrangements, consult with their Pastor in person to inform him of their intention and to seek his advice concerning premarital counseling, Church regulations and the date/time of the celebration for the Sacrament. The Pastor must guide the couple into a clear understanding of what marriage entails and what the Christian responsibility is for both the man and the woman.

The pastor examines the intention of the man and woman and certifies that:

- there is no impediment to the celebration to the Sacrament
- both individuals are validly baptized
- neither of the individuals is already married
- in the event one or both individuals are divorced, proper decrees and explanations are provided
- in the event one or both of the individuals are widowed, death certificates are provided
- in the event one or both of the individuals do not belong to his own parish family, the pastor is provided with letter from their home parish pastor certifying their membership is in good standing

- a proper civil license has been obtained by the couple.
- at least one member of the wedding party should be an Orthodox Christian who acts as witness to the Sacrament and that all members of the wedding party are validly baptized Christians.

The following special circumstances must be observed if necessary;

-In the case of divorce, The Pastor must seek a blessing for the marriage from his Eparchial Bishop, providing him with all pertinent information and a recommendation based on his (the Pastor's) knowledge of the situation.

-The Rite of Second Marriage is to be celebrated in the event that both individuals have been previously married.

In the event of marriage between an Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian, the Sacrament must be celebrated in an Orthodox Church by an Orthodox priest according to the Orthodox Tradition.

Under no circumstances may the Sacrament be celebrated between an Orthodox Christian and a non-Christian.

The ordinary celebrant of the Sacrament of Matrimonial Coronation is the Pastor of the parish in which the celebration will take place. If guest Orthodox clergy from another Ukrainian Orthodox parish or from another

Orthodox jurisdiction in Communion with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, he must be invited by the celebrating Pastor to do so.

Orthodox Christians who marry outside the Orthodox Church and persist in this state are considered to have separated themselves from the Church. They may not receive the Sacraments/Mysteries of the Church, including the Eucharist and may not serve as sponsors for Baptism or witnesses for Matrimonial Coronation.

The following may not enter into the Sacrament of Matrimonial Coronation:

- Parents with their own children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren
- Brothers with their own sisters
- Brother in law with sister in law
- Aunts and uncles with nieces and nephews
- First cousins with first cousins
- Foster parents with foster children
- Foster children with children of foster parents
- God-parents with God-children
- God-parents with the parents of God-children.



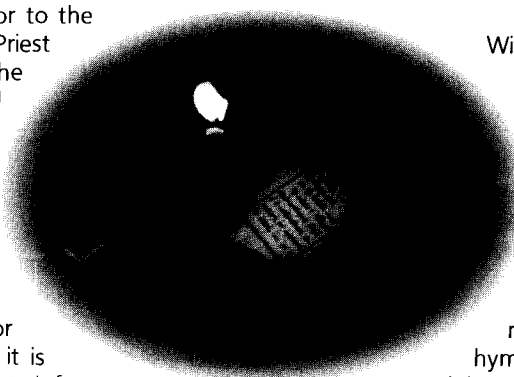
Days on which wedding are not permitted:

- On the eve of every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year.
- On the eve of every Sunday and Major Holy Days.
- From Meatfare Sunday to St. Thomas Sunday.
- During Great Lent, Sts. Peter & Paul Fast, Dormition Fast, and Philip's Fast (Advent-Nativity Fast).
- During Christmas Holy Days – January 7-18.
- On the eve of Beheading of St. John and on the eve of Elevation of the Holy Cross.

(In exceptional circumstances dispensation must be obtained from the Bishop)

CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF PENANCE

Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Holy Penance/Confession when He stated to His disciples: "Who so ever sins you remit they are remitted unto them. Who so ever sins you retain, they are retained." (John 20, 23) His Bishop, as successor to the Apostles, assigns the Orthodox Priest to hear the confessions of the faithful entrusted to his spiritual care in parish life. It is important to note that every Orthodox Christian should develop a relationship with a Father Confessor of his or her choosing, with whom he or she is most comfortable. In the event that the Spiritual Confessor is not his or her parish Pastor, it is the responsibility of the individual to inform the Pastor of such so that he is aware that spiritual needs are being met. Any Pastor will understand that an individual must choose a Spiritual Confessor with whom he or she feels most comfortable.



Those preparing for the Mystery of Penance or Holy Confession must conduct a thorough examination of their life and conscience prior to Confession. Confession before a Priest, who represents both God and fellow man must not be taken lightly and must be sincere and honest. An Orthodox Christian should never fear baring his or her spiritual soul to a Spiritual Confessor, seeking his guidance through any difficult time or with a spiritual problem.

CONCERNING HOLY UNCTION/ANOINTING WITH OIL

Orthodox Christians should understand that the Sacrament of Holy Unction/Anointing with Oil at times of Sickness is not the "last rite" for the faithful Christian. It is, rather, "unto the healing of soul and body."

Pastoral solicitude for the sick is manifested in the celebration of the Mystery (Sacrament) of Holy Anointing which has its scriptural basis in Mark 6:13 and the Universal Epistle of St. James 5:1. As to the celebration of the Holy Mystery, note the following:

1. The oil sanctified for use during the ritual is to be only pure olive oil without any additives
2. The Holy Mystery is administered on to those who are ill.
3. Where there is the inability to gather seven priests required by the ritual, the Mystery may be celebrated by one priest.
4. The reception of the Mystery is proceeded by Holy Confession and followed by the reception of the Holy Eucharist if the recipient is capable of receiving them
5. The Holy Mystery can be celebrated in the Church, home or in the hospital.
6. The Holy Mystery is administered only to Christians of the Orthodox Faith.
7. Those in danger of death, regardless of their spiritual condition, are never to be denied the Holy Mystery provided they have shown some sign of repentance.

CONCERNING FUNERALS

With the exception of the first day of Pascha/Resurrection of our Lord and the Nativity of Christ, funeral services are permitted any day of the year. Unless absolutely necessary, however, funerals should not be served on Sundays.

The externals of the funeral service should always reflect the spirit of Orthodox Tradition in the reading of the Psalms, prayers and hymns. The Funeral Service should be celebrated at the death of an Orthodox Christian. It may be celebrated in conjunction with a Divine Liturgy should the family of the deceased desire to participate in the Eucharist. The clear understanding of the mystery of death and man's ultimate destiny is communicated through the funeral service itself. The benefits provided in the readings and prayers of the funeral service can be of significant comfort to those who mourn the deceased.

The funeral service is normally conducted in a Church, but the final decision regarding such lies with the parish Pastor, who best knows the soul and spiritual state of the deceased and if he was a fully participating member of the parish community. It is the custom of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that the casket bearing the deceased be open during the funeral service. The general rule must apply that if the casket is open in the funeral home, it must also be open in Church.

MEMORIAL SERVICES

The deceased may be commemorated at Proskomedie and the Great Commemoration of the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated throughout the liturgical year and during the Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, when necessary. Memorial Services may be conducted in Church or at the grave of the deceased.

CREMATION

The Orthodox Church, mindful that the human being is fashioned in the image and likeness of God and is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, considers burial or entombment to be the most appropriate and acceptable manner of interring mortal remains. The Church maintains this time honored and sacred tradition as practiced in the Old Testament, the New Testament and the early Church Faith communities. Though the Orthodox Church does not and cannot sanction cremation as the norm, she is mindful that most instances of cremation are not at present connected with religious motives. Pastors are obliged to make this teaching known to those entrusted to their spiritual care

Unless otherwise determined by the Eparchial Bishop the celebration of the Orthodox Christian Funeral Rite must take place in the presence of an intact body with the remains interred or entombed in a sealed grave as befits the dignity of the deceased following the example of the burial of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

SUICIDE

In the upholding the principle of the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death, the Orthodox Christian Church does not and can never condone the premeditated and willful destruction of one's own physical life. This is viewed as murder and considered a grave transgression of Divine Law.

When confronted with a suicide, the pastor must provide the spiritual guidance and comfort for the bereaved family during and after the funeral. He should ascertain the events, which precipitated the tragedy, present his findings and pastoral recommendation to the Eparchial Bishop, and obtain his blessing for the type of Funeral service to be conducted in the place deemed most appropriate and spiritually beneficial for those who mourn.



ABORTION

Convinced that human life begins at the moment of conception and that all life is sanctified, every human being – even those in the womb – being the image of God, the Church views deliberate abortion in any stage of the human being's development as murder of an innocent life and therefore a grave transgression of Divine Law.

ASSISTED SUICIDE/ EUTHANSIA

The Orthodox Church views physician assisted suicide/euthanasia as the deliberate killing of another person who is deemed critically ill or mentally or physically challenged. Convinced that only the Creator of all can take life and that suffering does not make us less human, the Orthodox Church strongly condemns any act of assisted suicide or euthanasia by a health care professional or any other individual. Where there is life there is hope and in all human beings, regardless of their physical state, the likeness of God remains intact.



“Going through the fast does not consist in merely going through the time, but in going through it with amendment of manners.

Let us consider this: whether we have become more diligent; whether we have corrected any of our defects; whether we have washed away our sins?”

St. John Chrysostom