

# Guidelines for Sacraments and Sacramental Services

(taken and adapted from <https://www.holyorthodox.org/orthodoxchristians>)

The Sacraments and Sacramental services of the Church are not held “at large” in the Orthodox Church, but in the context of the local community, the parish.

**Because of this, the Priest does not do sacraments “for hire”, but, rather, as the shepherd of the parish community.**

While it is common today for people to look at the church from a consumerist point of view as a “commodity” and go “shopping” for churches for baptisms, weddings, and funerals, to see is who is most cost-efficient, who will “tailor” the service to what they want, this is completely foreign to the Orthodox Christian Faith. This is usually the thinking of people who are not attached to a parish community. However, doing things properly, these services are only done in the context of participating membership in a local community. For example, for baptisms, sponsors must be participating members in good standing of some local Orthodox community. Likewise, for weddings, the couple and their witnesses must be participating members in good standing of a particular Orthodox Church, a parish.

**For this reason, as a general policy, Fr. only does baptisms, weddings, and funerals for parishioners (those who attend church here).** He will not perform a baptism or wedding with anyone whom he does not know and has not even attended here at all, unless it is an emergency situation (for example an emergency baptism if the child is gravely ill and going to die, etc.). ***Again, this is because a Priest does not do sacraments “for hire” but, rather, as the shepherd of a community.*** It is also because he has to answer before Christ for every sacrament that was given hastily and spurned because he did not make sure that they were doing the right thing in matters surrounding the sacrament.

***In the case of baptism,*** Fr. will not perform a baptism unless it is understood that the child will be brought regularly to church and reared in the Orthodox Christian faith, and this is demonstrated by parents or godparents who already are attending and participating regularly. **This is because the purpose of baptism is to inaugurate the child’s walk with God as a regular Communicant** (which, by definition, can only happen if they are brought to Liturgy and Communion regularly, i.e., preferably every Sunday, but not less than once a month).

**Baptism is not a magic trick to keep the child out of hell, but the means to engraft the child into Christ's body for a walk with God in the context of that body.**

In the event of people that are new to the area, before a baptism or wedding will even be discussed, the parents or couple need to demonstrate that they are serious about church before he will do any service, **by attending regularly.**

Some who are worldly thinking might say "well don't they need the business?" The answer is, no, we don't. **We don't want "business".** We don't believe in consumerism in the Church. Our church exists based on the commitment of its members to God's mission in prayer, charitable deeds, and financial stewardship.

**If the faithful do not take financial care of the church that God entrusted to them, it deserves to close.**

*In the case of weddings, Fr. will not perform a wedding for any couple who is not dedicated to walk together with Christ as a "trinity",* being an icon of the Trinity and of Christ and the Church by coming regularly to Church and participating regularly in Communion and the life of the Church.

Likewise, in accord with the teaching of the Church, Fr. does not do funerals "at large". **To do a full funeral, one has to demonstrably pass from this life as an Orthodox Christian in good standing.** In general, Fr. only buries his parishioners upon their repose, or parishioners under the care of another priest upon the priest's request in cases where they are unavailable. Other funerals will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

**Please note, there are no "private" services in the Orthodox Church.** All services are services of the Church and thus opened to the local Church community to participate. The purpose of all these services is to propagate the Orthodox Christian Faith.

Baptisms and Weddings are instances in which many visitors come who are not Orthodox, and thus it is imperative that they understand the services. As a result, **the Priest does Baptisms and Weddings in English, because it is an opportunity to evangelize others toward the salvation that Christ in the Church offers.**

**The Priest respects your time as valuable. Please return the favor and respect his time as valuable.**