

# Orthodox Catechism

## Session 7 – Sacraments of the Orthodox Church - Part I

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# **Sacrament of Baptism**

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# Sacrament of Baptism

## Introduction

As Orthodox Christians, the Sacrament of Baptism is our entry into the Church as members of the Body of Christ. In the Jewish faith the entry into the temple is considered one of the initiate rite into the faith by being dedicated to temple. This is remembered in the Orthodox Church's celebration of the Presentation of the Theotokos into the Temple<sup>1</sup> and of the Entry of Christ into the Temple (Luke 2:22). The Christian faith remembers this through the 40-day blessing (or churching) of infants when they are 40 days old.

In line with Jesus' own words (Baptism represents our "new birth" by which our "worldly self" dies and we are raised with Christ to eternal life. It is through the Mystery of the sacrament of Baptism, that we are mystically born into the Christian spiritual life. The Holy Sacrament of Baptism grants access to participation in the other Sacraments of the Church.

## Origin of Baptism

**Defining the Term "Baptize"** The Ancient Greek meaning of the word baptize, βαπτίζω is to "dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge, wash or to make clean with water. Examples of these uses are found in the New Testament.

...καὶ κατέβη Ναυμὰν καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ." (2 Kings 5:14)

"καὶ ἀπο ἀγορᾶς εἰάν μὴ βαπτισῶνται οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἐστὶν ἃ παρελάβον κρατεῖν βαπτισμοὺς ποτηρίων...." (Mark 7:4)

**Old Testament Origins** the idea of washing or cleansing with water appears throughout the Old Testament. In Exodus, before receiving the Law from Moses on Mount Sinai, God commanded the people to wash their clothing as a symbolic act of purification (Ex 19:10). In Leviticus, God commanded Aaron to wash himself before and after he ministered in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. (Lev 16:4).

The Israelites also used this "water of cleansing" to purify themselves and these water rituals formed the basis for the Jewish Mikveh laws. Here the Hebrew word mikveh (literally "a collection or gathering together") refers to a gathering or pool of water for the purpose of ritual cleansing. Reference the Pool of Siloam and the six stone jars for the rites of purification at the Wedding of Cana.

Use of the Greek word βαπτίζω (being used in its original Greek sense) as a cleansing is seen in 1 Kings 5:14 when Naaman was told by the prophet Elisha to *immerse yourself and be cleaned* to be cured of his leprosy, it is recorded that Naaman, "κατέβη καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ."

To this day, Gentiles who would embrace Judaism must undergo baptism in a Mikveh ritual. The purpose of this ceremonial immersion is to portray spiritual cleansing, as the great Rabbi Maimonides concluded in his codification of the laws of mikveh:

*"...uncleanness is not mud or filth which water can remove, but it is a matter of Scriptural decree and dependent on the intention of the heart."*

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<sup>1</sup> The Presentation of the Theotokos is not in the New Testament, but in the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James.

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In Isaiah the term βαπτίζω is used in a totally different way. In Isaiah the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word בָּעֲלָהּ (root בָּעַל ) in verse 21:4 with the Greek word βαπτίζω to express the idea of something “falling upon” or “overwhelming” the prophet.

**New Testament Origins** Examples of the original Ancient Greek meaning of the term βαπτίζω are found in the New Testament.

“και απο αγορας εαν μη βαπτισωνται ουκ εσθιουσιν και αλλα πολλα εστιν α παρελαβον κρατειν βαπτισμους ποτηριων....” (Mark 7:4)

The change in the meaning of “baptize” begins to take the Christian meaning in Christ’s own words regarding baptism in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1-7), *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born ανωθεν (from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

When Nicodemus expressed his perplexity, *“How can a man be born a second time?”* Christ replied that this new birth is accomplished by water and the Spirit:

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is truly born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”* (John 3. 3-5)

This transformative property of baptism is expressed in James W. Dale<sup>2</sup> work on the rite of baptism where he suggested the following as a definition of “baptism” (closely following Orthodox theology),

*“...whatever is capable of thoroughly changing the character, state, or condition of any object, is capable of baptizing that object: and by such change of character, state, or condition does, in fact, baptize it.”*

After His Resurrection, Christ commanded the disciples to *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”* (Matthew 28.19)

## Baptism in the Early Church

The disciples of the Early Church obeyed this command of Jesus as is evident in the multitude of passages in the Book of Acts referencing baptisms being performed. In fact, Acts (2:41) records of the disciples baptizing over 3000 people in a single day.

In St. Paul’s letter to Titus (3:5) he teaches that baptism is the washing away of sins and uncleanness by Christ’s sacrifice, and the giving of new life by God’s Holy Spirit to those who are cleansed in this way. In Romans (6:3-4) he connects baptism with death and resurrection meaning that the person, in professing Christ announces that he has died to his worldly focus of life and has been reborn to God.

The earliest form of instruction on Baptism which was in use by the Early Christians of the 1st century is in Chapter 3 of the Didache: Teachings of the 12 Apostles,

*“Now about baptism, baptize this way: after first uttering all of these things, baptize "into the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy Spirit" in running water. But if you do not have running water, baptize in other water. Now if you are not able to do so in cold water, do it in warm water. Now if you do not have either, pour water three times on the head, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son,*

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<sup>2</sup> James Wilkinson Dale (1812-1881) Author of *Classic Baptism, Johannic Baptism, and Judaic Baptism*

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*and of the Holy Spirit." Now before the ritual cleansing, the baptizer and the one being baptized should fast, and any others who are able".*<sup>3</sup>

In the Ancient Church, the first step for a new "catechumen" of the Church was to prepare for baptism where they would be taught the basic truths of the Faith. The Catechumen could participate in the first part of the Divine Liturgy (Liturgy of the Word), where they would hear the Gospel but would not be allowed to participate in the second part of the Liturgy (). This second part, Liturgy of the Eucharist, was reserved for baptized Christians. It was at this point that the catechumens would be asked to leave the church to receive further instruction in the faith as they prepare for baptism<sup>4</sup>.

## Baptism and Original Sin

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, St Augustine responded to the heresy of Pelagianism. Pelagius held that man could, by the natural power of free will and without the necessary help of God's grace, lead a morally good life and thus reduce the influence of Adam's fault to bad example. St. Augustine's response would become the basis for the Catholic Church's connection between baptism and "original sin." The Catholic Church pronounced the meaning of original sin at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Council of Orange (529 AD) and again at the Council of Trent (1546 AD) and has included the theology of "baptism removing the stain of original sin" in their Catechism<sup>5</sup>.

The Orthodox Church agrees with the first part of the Catholic Catechism *"that [original sin] affected the human nature; this effect being the introduction of death into the now fallen nature of all Creation. However, the Orthodox Church does not support the further claim of the Catechism that baptism also removes the "...contracted sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice."*

## Infant Baptism

For some Protestant Churches practice of infant baptism in the Orthodox Church is controversial arguing for the idea that a proper baptism requires an acknowledgement by the candidate of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, which can only happen upon the candidate reaching the "age of reason."

Infant Baptism became a debated issue about 1525, when those in the [Anabaptist](#)<sup>6</sup> movement rejected infant baptism and began re-baptizing each other, viewing their infant baptisms as invalid. One of the arguments used against infant baptism is that it is not *directly* referred to in Scripture.

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<sup>3</sup> Notice in these instructions the focus on the Trinitarian Formula (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and also on the importance of fasting.

<sup>4</sup> This "command to leave" is still present in today's Divine Liturgy when just prior to the reading of the Nicene Creed the priest exclaims, *"The Doors, The Doors."*

<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church (CC404). *How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam "as one body of one man". By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice... Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.*

<sup>6</sup> Anabaptist is Greek for "to baptize anew or again" (ανα – anew or again and βαπτίζω – to baptize)

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While this is true there is also no mention in Scripture of the practice of Christian parents waiting to baptize their children until they are older. The Bible does describe five separate household baptisms:

- The Household of Cornelius, Acts 11:13–14
- The Household of Lydia, Acts 16:15
- The Philippian Jailor's Household, Acts 16:33
- The Household of Crispus, Acts 18:8
- The Household of Stephanas, 1 Corinthians 1:16

Each of these references an entire household (οἶκος in Greek) being baptized, and it is reasonable to assume that many such households included children and infants<sup>7</sup>. In the Septuagint the term οἶκος is used as a translation of the Hebrew word בֵּית (household). An analysis of Biblical texts indicates that this term in Hebrew does not treat individual family members as *autonomous* but rather emphasizes the *organic* integrity of the whole family. When God established or spoke about His covenant with the House of Israel, it included the whole of Israel: men, women, and children.

- Noah's whole household was taken into the ark with him (Genesis 7:1)
- Abraham had his whole household circumcised (Genesis 17:23)
- The entire household of every family was taken out of Egypt, and God's institution of the Passover specifically included the children (Exodus 12:24–28).

The pattern of the Old Testament covenants formed the framework for the Apostles understanding of the covenant that Christ made through baptism. If the Early Church had the *autonomous* model of οἶκος then St. Paul would have expressed that of primary concern for parents was in securing the salvation of their children since it was thought that Christ's return was imminent. However, the New Testament offers no instruction or directives for parents to work towards the conversion of their children. Rather St Paul wrote that baptism, as the new covenant connects all the family members organically as they all participate in the Body of Christ<sup>8</sup>.

## Adult Baptism - Will I be Baptized or Chrismated?

Those who were never baptized, or who were baptized in a church that does not use a Trinitarian formula<sup>9</sup>, are received through Baptism and Chrismation. For those who have been baptized in a Church, in water, using the Trinitarian formula (i.e., "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit") it is the practice of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that those candidates ***are not to be rebaptized*** and are received into the Orthodox Church through the Sacrament of Chrismation with the anointing of Holy Chrism<sup>10</sup>.

## Selection of a Sponsor<sup>11</sup>

When an adult desires to join the Orthodox Church the first step is for that person to establish a relationship with an Orthodox community. Since the Orthodox Church believes that salvation in isolation

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<sup>7</sup> Some have argued that the translation of the Greek term "οἶκος" as 'household' or 'family' does not necessarily include children. An excellent and concise examination of infant baptism is the book *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* by J. Jerimias, Westminster Press, 1961

<sup>8</sup> Source: *Biblical and Theological Foundation of the Family* by Joseph C. Atkinson, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Examples include Church of Later Day Saints, Unitarian/Universalist and Apostolic Pentecostals

<sup>10</sup> See Section 7a on Chrismation.

<sup>11</sup> For the selection and role of the Godparent for infants see Section 7a, Role of the Godparent.

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is not possible as it is contrary to the command of Christ<sup>12</sup>, it is vital that the candidate finds a community that will advance their spiritual development. Although an Orthodox Catechism is an important part of joining the Orthodox Church, it is only the beginning of learning how to be an Orthodox Christian.

Once the candidate has found a community and a priest, they would then select a sponsor (Greek ανάδοχος) who will be responsible, along with the priest, to help the candidate through their catechism process. The sponsor's role is to serve as a spiritual mentor and guide, assisting the candidate to integrate into the life of the Church. The sponsor must be an Orthodox Christian who reflects the conduct of an Orthodox Christian and can assist and support the candidate in their spiritual journey. This is why the first step for the candidate is to establish a relationship with an Orthodox community so that they are able to develop relationships in the parish that will help the candidate choose a person with whom they feel comfortable with and can serve as an appropriate mentor.

## Choosing a Baptismal Name

It is also the role of the sponsor to aid the candidate in selecting their new name. This name represents the candidate's new identity in Christ and is used when receiving Holy Communion. It is typically the practice of the Greek Orthodox Church that the person takes the name of a Saint of the Church or an event (i.e. Feast Day) of the Church. Thus, pagan names or those inappropriate to Christianity are not allowed<sup>13</sup>. The idea being that the candidate chooses a name that reflects the ideals they seek to emulate in character and behavior. Also, the saint does not have to be Greek or Russian as there are many Irish, English, Scottish, etc., saints recognized by the Orthodox Church, although generally those are saints who were canonized prior to the split between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Some databases that offer a library of saint's names are

[http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saintfeast\\_search](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saintfeast_search)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Eastern\\_Orthodox\\_Russian\\_saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Eastern_Orthodox_Russian_saints)

<http://www.synaxarion.org.uk/index.html>

[http://www.oodegr.com/english/istorika/britain/British\\_saints.html](http://www.oodegr.com/english/istorika/britain/British_saints.html)

**The Rite of Baptism** An Orthodox Baptism is an expression of 3 sacraments in one service:

1. Baptism – into the Christian faith
2. Chrismation – into the Orthodox Faith
3. Holy Communion – as a new member of the Body of Christ

This is different from the Catholic Church as these sacraments are performed at separate times.

In the Catholic expression, **baptism** normally occurs when the person is a young child or infant.

**Chrismation** is administered to the child before they receive their first Communion, generally at about the age of twelve, and **confirmation** where they receive Holy Communion at the Age of Reason. The Orthodox Church does not support the recent theology of Age of Reason and therefore sees no need to separate these individual actions over time so that the child receives all three sacraments in a single service.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 22:39, Galatians 6:2, Romans 12:5

<sup>13</sup> Examples include names of Greek, Roman or Norse gods or names such as Sun, Moonchild, Gaia or Wolf.

# Sacrament of Baptism

In the Orthodox Church there are seven separate steps that constitute the Sacrament of Baptism in the Orthodox Church.

1. Starting in the back of the church in the Narthex, the person or baby stands with their Godparent(s)<sup>14</sup> and is given their own particular name by which they will be baptized. This name expresses the person's new life in Christ and is usually the name of a Christian saint or a Christian event, however it cannot be a pagan or mythological name. By choosing the name of a Saint, we honor and express our gratitude to a Holy Person for their dedication to the faith and provide the person with an example to strive for and also a patron saint interceding for the person in times of distress and danger. This is also when God assigns a guardian angel to stay with the person until the end of their life.
2. The person is then brought, together with the sponsor to the Baptismal Font and is anointed with oil which has been blessed by the priest. This is for protection and a renewal of the soul and body, and symbolic of the anointing performed on royalty "*becoming a priest on the order of Melchizedek*", and the ancient medical use of oil for healing, (in this case a spiritual healing).
3. The infant is placed into the water, or if an adult, leans over the baptismal font<sup>15</sup>. The Baptismal Font represents the River Jordan where Jesus was baptized. Different churches perform baptism in different ways... some priests sprinkle water onto the person being baptized, especially if they are older and other priest fully immerse the baby in the water.
4. The Priest then cuts four small pieces of hair from the child's head in the form of a Cross. This act called "tonsuring" is the first offering to God since there is nothing else the infant (or the adult) can offer to God. In the ancient times hair is a symbol of strength so by giving their hair, the person promises to serve God with all their strength.
5. The person or baby is then Chrismated<sup>16</sup> (known sometimes as Confirmation) with the oil of Χρίσμα (Chrism) and is the fulfilment of Baptism. The Priest anoints the newly baptized infant with the Holy Chrism saying, "*The servant of God (name) is sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, Amen*". According to Orthodox belief every baptized person, when they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit become a true soldier for Christ."
6. Then the Priest with the Godparent, parents, and the child, walk around the Baptismal Font three times while the priest sings, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." We sing because the Orthodox believe that at this moment the angels in heaven are expressing their joy that a new soul is now part of the Body of Christ.
7. Immediately following Baptism and Chrismation, the person who is now a full member of the Orthodox Church, like every member of the Church, receives Holy Communion.

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to the Article in the Catechism entitled "The Role of the Godparent" for a complete discussion of the Orthodox Godparent's purpose and responsibilities.

<sup>15</sup> Although some Orthodox Churches have installed a full size baptistry which the candidate can fully immerse.

<sup>16</sup> In the writings of the Fathers of the Church, the term Chrism came to be associated with a special kind of oil used in religious ceremonies and functions, especially during the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. Chrism consists mainly of olive oil and balsam along with other fragrant flowers and is also used for other services such as the anointing of the holy altar during the consecration of a new church.

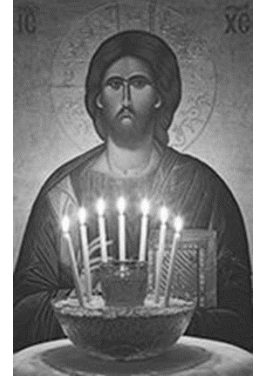
# Sacrament of Baptism

VIDEO



# Sacrament of Holy Unction

**History** In ancient times and specifically in the East oil was a staple commodity grouped together with other staples such as corn and wine. However, oil was especially significant as it had many other uses besides consumption by providing heat, light, medicine, and was even used as perfume. In addition, oil came to have ritual significance with early Pagans anointing people with oil for rite of exorcism, consecration, or burial. Other examples of oil being considered as part of a ritual is the crowning of the victor at the Olympic Games with an olive wreath and that certain regions in Greece considered the olive tree as a gift from the goddess Athena<sup>1</sup>.



In the Old Testament we see that among the Jews the same usages for oil and that anointing of persons and objects with oil was widespread in ancient Israel and surrounding areas. While the Jews had the same utilitarian uses for oil, similar to the Pagans, the use of oil in ritualistic and sacramental ways was more defined. Oil was used in the making of a covenant<sup>2</sup>, formally elevate someone's legal status, the release (χειραφέτηση) of slaves, the transfer of property, the betrothal of a bride, or for the rehabilitation of persons afflicted with certain skin diseases.

## Oil for Anointing and Relation to Messiah

Oil was also used for the anointing of a king<sup>3</sup> ( ) and the consecration of a priest (Ex 29:7). The attribute נִשְׁחָ (nashi'ah) – anointed one) came to designate the king and the high priest and, by extension, other divinely appointed positions. Eventually it was applied to the idea of the messiah, Χρίστος (Christos) in Greek.

## New Testament Uses for Oil

During the time of Christ oil was being used in similar ways as was done in ancient times. The Gospel of Mark (6:13) records of anointing performed for healing. Mary Magdalene anoints Christ with oil in preparation for His burial (John 12:1-8). And Christ refers to Himself as the Anointed One, referring to Isaiah,

He [Christ] went to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read,<sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me (ἐχρίσεν με) to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the scroll... and said to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*

Luke 4:16-21

After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the apostles continued to proclaim Him as the "Anointed One" and also continued the practice of using oil to anoint the sick establishing the sacrament of Holy Unction.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Oil and Pagan Defilement*, Sidney Hoenig, Jewish Quarterly Review, Vol 61, No. 1, 1970

<sup>2</sup> Hos. 12:1

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 1:39, 1 Sam 16:13

<sup>4</sup> James 5:14

# Sacrament of Holy Unction

Among the writing of the Holy Fathers we find testimonies of the Mystery of Unction in Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, Origen, and later by Saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria who wrote prayers for the healing of the infirm which helped establish the rite of Holy Unction. One of the earliest written records of Holy Unction is a 3<sup>rd</sup> century text which is still in use at the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

## Purpose and Use of Holy Unction

The Sacrament of the *Anointing of the Sick*, or *Holy Unction* as it is also known, is for healing of physical, emotional, or spiritual illness. As with the sacrament of Chrismation, the oil is also used in Holy Unction is a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. While not part of the baptismal rite in the Protestant Church, Holy Unction is recognized as a sacrament in both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

It has long been recognized by the Church that serious illness can impact both the physical and spiritual strength of the sufferer. As such “anointing” was prevalent in the Early Church and was practiced from apostolic times as a a) sacramental rite for recovery from illness, b) prepare the believer for their entry into Christian faith or c) strengthen and prepare those who are terminally ill for their journey to the eternal kingdom. (ref. James 5:14).

However, many people associate the sacrament of Holy Unction with recovery from illness and tend to think of the sacrament as a “magic potion” which cures all ills. Oftentimes it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing and in such cases the anointing of the sufferer sanctifies and unites them to Christ. In this way the suffering of the person may not be unto the death of his soul, but for eternal salvation in the Kingdom of God.

## Extreme Unction and Orthodoxy

It was not until around the 9th century that the Catholic Church adopted the practice of Extreme Unction with the sacrament being regarded as “last rites,” usually postponed until death was imminent. The Second Vatican Council (1963) of the Catholic Church addressed the usage of the sacrament of Extreme Unction taking a more lenient approach stating,

*“Extreme Unction,” which may also and more fittingly be called ‘anointing of the sick,’ is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived.”*

For the Orthodox, the sacrament of holy unction is not reserved for the moment of death and therefore **does not** have the practice of “last rites” as is sometimes thought. In fact, in cases where a person is clearly in the final moments of his earthly life, the Church has special prayers for the “separation of soul and body” which is administered in “extreme” cases.

## Other important notes regarding Holy Unction

- Holy Unction should be given to those persons who are conscious<sup>5</sup> and understand what they are receiving, although in certain cases the “*economia*” of the Church allows the sacrament to be administered to unconscious or heavily sedated patients.
- The Orthodox and Catholic Church do not permit the priest to anoint someone who has already died and from which the soul has already departed. In this case Orthodoxy requires that the priest would offer the prayers for the dead through the Trisagion service. Thus, the family

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<sup>5</sup> As is the case with receipt of Holy Communion.

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should not wait to the last minute to have a loved one anointed and instead contact the priest earlier before the person become terminally ill.

- Also, unction may not be performed during the time a person is undergoing ecclesiastical penance, since unction is a sacrament.

## Order of the Service of Holy Unction

While the service of Holy Unction can be performed at any time during the year and can even be performed at the request of a parishioner or their family, traditionally the service of Holy Unction is celebrated on Wednesday of Holy Week. The order of the service is as follows.

### 1. Introductory Prayers and Psalms 143 & 51

These Psalms speak of confessing our sinfulness before God and ask Him to cleanse us and make a "new and right spirit within us" (Psalm 51:10).

### 2. Canons and Troparia to the Saints

In this series of verses that are read or sung, we ask God to show mercy upon us and cleanse our souls, to drive away all evil powers, to grant salvation to those who are sick or suffering, and to grant us the healing of our souls and bodies and to renew our lives so that we may bless, thank and glorify Him forever. Prayers are also offer in recognition for saints who have helped the sick and suffering, and to those who have been martyred for the glory of God - and to the Mother of God to intercede for us for the salvation of our souls.

### 3. Epistle and Gospel Lessons and Prayers

There are seven sets of Epistle and Gospel readings and prayers focusing on repentance, remission of sin, watchfulness and for the healing of body and soul.

- |                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. James 5:10-16                | Luke: 10:25-37   |
| 2. Romans 15:1-7                | Luke 19:1-10     |
| 3. Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8 | Matthew 10:1,5-8 |
| 4. II Corinthians 6:16-18, 7:1  | Matthew 8:14-23  |
| 5. II Corinthians 1:8-11        | Matthew 25:1-13  |
| 6. Galatians 5:22-6:2           | Matthew 15:21-28 |
| 7. I Thessalonians 5:14-23      | Matthew 9:9-13   |

### 4. Prayer of the Oil

*Lord who, in thy mercies and bounties, heals the disorders of our souls and bodies, do Thou, the same Master, sanctify this Oil, that it may be effectual for those who shall be anointed therewith, unto healing, and unto relief from every passion, every malady of the flesh and of the spirit, and every ill; and that therein may be glorified Thy most Holy Name, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

### 5. Prayer of Anointing

*Prayer of Anointing O holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies, Who sent Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to heal every infirmity and deliver from death, heal these Your servants from their ailments of body and soul, and endow them with life by the grace of Your Christ, through the intercessions of our all-holy Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary; by the power of the precious and life-giving Cross; the protection of the honored bodiless Powers in Heaven; by the supplications of the honored, glorious Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist; the holy, glorious and all-laudable Apostles; the holy, glorious and victorious Martyrs; our saintly and God-bearing Fathers; the holy Unmercenaries and Healers, Cosmas and Damian and*

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*of all the Saints. For You, our God, are the source of healing, and to You we ascribe glory; to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.*

# Sacrament of Chrismation

## Defining Chrism

In the Orthodox Church, the Holy Chrism or Myron (in Greek Ἅγιος Μύρον) is used in the celebration of the sacrament of Chrismation. Holy Chrism was introduced to the Christian Church from the existing Old Testament practice given in Exodus.

*"The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the finest spices -- 12 pounds of liquid myrrh, 6 pounds of sweet-smelling cinnamon, 6 pounds of sweet cane, and 12 pounds of cassia (all weighted according to official standard). Add one gallon of olive oil, and make a sacred anointing oil, mixed like perfume.'" (Exodus 30:22-25)*

Today Holy Chrism is prepared from oil and another fragrant essences, which symbolize the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit that the chrismated Christian receives. At the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, where Holy Chrism is prepared, there is an official list of 57 different kinds of fragrances, from which the Holy Chrism is made. Over the years Holy Chrism has been known by many names, such as oil of Thanksgiving, oil of anointing, Chrism, Chrism of thanksgiving, and holy and great myrrh. Today, the terms used are "Holy Myrrh" or "Holy Chrism."

## Defining Chrismation

In the sacrament of Chrismation we receive the Holy Chrism or Myron as *"the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."*<sup>1</sup> If baptism is our personal participation the death and resurrection of Christ, then chrismation is our personal participation in Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us. Chrismation is a visible sign of the transmission of gift of the Holy Spirit to those who are entering into the Orthodox Church. In the Roman Catholic Church the sacrament of Holy Chrism is referred to as Confirmation.

**History of Chrismation** During the early years of Christianity, the transmission of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the baptized were given by the Apostles through the laying on of hands<sup>2</sup>. When the Early Church spread throughout the world and the number of the baptized increased, it was not possible to continue the practice of Laying on of hands, so the Apostles introduced the use of sanctified Chrism. The Holy Chrism was sanctified by the Apostles and was continued thereafter by the bishops through the Apostolic Succession<sup>3</sup>.

## Uses of Chrism

While in ancient times chrism was used to anoint the Orthodox kings during their crowning, today Holy Chrism is used for different reasons,

- a) To formally join the non-Orthodox to the Orthodox Church.
- b) To rejoin those who have fallen away from the Orthodox Faith and seek to return to the Orthodox Church.
- c) To consecrate holy churches, altar tables, objects, and utensils, and for other sacred ceremonial circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor 1.21–22

<sup>2</sup> Acts 8:14-17. This "laying on of hands" (χειροτονία) is still used today during the ordination of Deacons, Priests, and Bishops.

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Chrism in the Eastern Orthodox Church by Pavlos Menesoglou, Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1972

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The sacrament of chrismation is always done in the Orthodox Church together with baptism, whereas in the Roman Catholic Church baptism and chrismation (also called confirmation) are separated into different rites.

Chrismation, as the seal of the Holy Spirit, is not to be confused with the Oil of Anointing which is done earlier in the baptismal service prior to chrismation for the purpose of the healing of soul and body and is symbolic of the anointing of the candidate into a “royal priesthood.” (1Peter 2:9) However just as in the Oil of Anointing the candidate is also anointed with Holy Chrism on all parts of their body.

## Preparation of Holy Chrism

Unlike the Catholic Church where the chrism is prepared on a yearly basis during Holy Week at a “Chrism Mass,” in the Orthodox Church, chrism is made only when supplies run short. And rather than being prepared by bishops of the local dioceses, chrism is prepared only by the Patriarchate of each Orthodox jurisdiction. produces chrism roughly once every 10 years.



The ingredients are different between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches with the Orthodox using an ancient formula

of the Jewish prophets and patriarchs as described above. Chrism is prepared by the bishops of the Patriarchate during Holy Week beginning on Holy Monday and culminating in the Divine Liturgy on Holy Thursday to show that the gift of the Spirit was originally given to men through the apostles of Christ, whose formal successors in the world are the bishops of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

Each parish will have a small container (fig x) which contains Holy Chrism and can request a resupply of Holy Chrism from their diocese.



## Will I be Baptized or Chrismated?

It is the practice of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America that those who have been baptized in a Church, in water, using the Trinitarian formula (i.e., "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit") are not to be rebaptized and are received into the Orthodox Church through the Sacrament of Chrismation with the anointing of Holy Chrism. Those who have never been baptized, or who were baptized in a church that does not use a Trinitarian formula<sup>5</sup>, are received through Baptism and Chrismation.

## Selection of a Sponsor and Choosing Chrismated Name

See Section 7a, *Baptism*.

## Order of the Service of Chrismation for the Reception of Converts

This service can be done within the context of the Divine Liturgy or can be performed as a separate rite by either a priest or a bishop. While each particular expression of Orthodoxy (Greek, Russian,

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 8.14; 19.1–7

<sup>5</sup> Examples include Church of Later Day Saints, Unitarian/Universalist and Apostolic Pentecostals

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Antiochian, etc.) may have small variations in the sequence of performing the sacrament of Chrismation the words of institution are the same.

**1. Candidate's Statement of Desire to Enter the Orthodox Faith** - The first part typically begins before the start of the Divine Liturgy in the Narthex with the candidate's statement of desire to enter and abide in the unity of the holy Orthodox Faith. The priest or bishop, laying his hands on the candidate and says,

*In Your Name, O Lord, God of truth, and in the Name of Your Only-begotten Son, and of Your holy Spirit, I lay my hand upon Your servant, \_\_\_\_\_, who has been found worthy to flee unto You, and to take refuge under the shelter of Your wings. Remove far from him (her) his (her) former delusion, and fill him (her) with the faith, hope and love which are in You; that he (she) may know that You are the only true God, with Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Your Holy Spirit. Enable him (her) to walk in all Your commandments, and to fulfill those things which are well-pleasing to You; for by doing these things, he (she) shall find life in them. Inscribe him (her) in Your Book of Life, and unite him (her) to the flock of Your inheritance. And may Your holy Name be glorified in him (her), together with that of Your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and of Your life-creating Spirit. Let Your eyes ever regard him (her) with mercy, and let Your ears attend to the voice of his (her) supplication. Make him (her) rejoice in the works of his (her) hands, and in all his (her) generation; that he (she) may render praises unto You, may sing, worship and glorify Your great and exalted Name always, all the days of his (her) life. For all the Powers of Heaven sing praises unto You, and Yours is the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.*

**2. Renunciation of false doctrines and previous oaths** – The candidate is asked if they renounce (out loud) heretical and false doctrines and any oaths to other previous faiths.

**3. Reading of the Nicene Creed** – If the sacrament is being performed during the Divine Liturgy, then after the renunciation of false doctrines and oaths the candidate and his/her sponsor takes their seats in the pews until the reading of the Creed. At this point the candidate and sponsor will come forward to the steps of the Solea and read the Creed out loud.

**4. Profession of Faith** - The candidate is then asked if they profess (out loud) the acceptance in key doctrines of the Orthodox Church.

- a) Acceptance of the Apostolic and Ecclesiastic Canons framed and established at the Seven Holy Ecumenical and Provincial Councils, and the other Traditions and ordinances of the Orthodox Church.
- b) Acknowledgement that the Holy Scriptures must be accepted and interpreted in accordance with the belief which has been handed down by the Holy Fathers, and which the Holy Orthodox Church, our Mother, has always held and still does hold.
- c) Belief and confession of the seven Mysteries of the New Testament instituted by the Lord Christ and His Church, to the end that, through their operation and reception, we may obtain blessings from on high.
- d) Belief and confession that in the Divine Liturgy, under the mystical forms of the holy bread and wine, the faithful partake of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto the remission of sins, and unto eternal life.
- e) Belief and confession that it is proper to reverence and invoke the Saints who are with Christ, according to the interpretation of the Holy Orthodox Church; and that their prayers

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and intercessions before God are received unto our salvation: and the veneration of their relics, glorified through incorruption, as precious memorials of their virtue.

- f) Belief and confession that the icons of Christ our Savior; and of the Ever-virgin Mother of God, and of the other Saints are worthy of being possessed and honored; not unto idolatry, but that, through contemplation thereof, we may increase in piety, and emulation of the deeds of the holy persons represented by these icons.
- g) Belief and confession that the prayers of the faithful which are offered up to God, and more especially when accompanied by the oblation of the bloodless sacrifice, for the salvation of those who have departed this life in the faith, are favorably received, through the mercy of God.
- h) Belief and confession that power has been given by Christ our Savior to the Orthodox Catholic Church to bind and to loose: and that whatever, by virtue of that power, is bound or loosed on earth will be bound or loosed in heaven.
- i) Belief and confession that the Foundation, Head, and Great High Priest and Chief Shepherd of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church is our Lord Jesus Christ; and that bishops, pastors and teachers are appointed by Him to rule the Church; and that the Guide and Pilot of this Church is the Holy Spirit.

**5. The Chrismation** - The priest or bishop anoints the Candidate, tracing the Sign of the Cross on the forehead, the eyes, the nostrils, the lips, on both ears, the breast, the hands and the feet, and saying each time, *"The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

At this point if the Chrismation is being done within the Divine Liturgy the candidate and sponsor would return to their pews and the Divine Liturgy would continue until the time for receipt of Holy Communion. At this point the candidate and sponsor would receive Holy Communion first.

# The Role of the Orthodox Godparent

## What is a Godparent?

Within the sacrament of baptism, the practice in the Orthodox Church is that every person, whether child or adult, shall have a Godparent(s) at the time that they enter the faith through Holy Baptism and Chrismation. While the official term in English is "sponsor," in Greek it is ανάδοχος. This is a combination of ἀνα (to lift up) + δοχεία (vessel or container), thus the word literally means "the one who lifts up out of the (baptismal font.)"

To be a Godparent(s) is a great honor and carries with it a tremendous responsibility. In fact, Orthodox theology sees the Godparent-Godchild relationship as stronger than the blood relation. This is because the Church asks the Godparent(s), together with the parents, to take up the responsibility of leading souls along the narrow path of salvation which leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, the role of the Godparent(s) is not to be minimized or trivialized and needs to be taken seriously.

St. Theophan the Recluse says, *"There is no holier act. What better thing can we offer our children than to lead them to our Lord and teach them to imitate Him in their life."*

The sponsor(s), by accepting to be a Godparent(s), accept the sacred responsibility of guiding the child into the understanding and practice of the teachings of the Orthodox Church. The Godparent(s) speaks for the child, if they are not old enough to speak for themselves, by publicly reciting the Nicene Creed during the Baptism and renouncing the devil and his angels. The Godparent(s) pledges themselves to guide their Godchild and to be a good example of an Orthodox Christian.

## Should I/we be a Godparent(s)?

The challenge of raising up a child in the teachings of God is perhaps far more difficult today as there are many more obstacles and temptations, such as social media, internet, and charged political discourse. Because of the awesome responsibilities and obligations that come with being a Godparent(s), one should carefully consider if they are willing to be committed to this responsibility. It is Orthodox belief that the Godparent(s) will be accountable to God as to whether or not he or she has fulfilled their duties.

Prospective Godparent(s) must know their faith, or at least be in the process of learning their faith and be committed to a life in Christ. One problem today is that people who are called upon to be Godparent(s) do not know their faith well and/or are not regular participants in the life of the Church. Consequently, this results in a child who may never know anything about Jesus Christ and the Church and ends up leaving the church or even worse abandoning the faith.

## Background of the Catechism and the Role of the Godparent(s)

### The Catechism

In the early Church emphasis was placed on the education of the faithful of those who desired to enter into the Christian faith. As Christianity spread in a pagan world, the need to teach individuals before their baptisms became crucial. The systematic instruction, which was a preparatory stage for baptism, was, and is, called "catechism." The word *catechism* is from the Greek word κατηχέω which means to teach orally as most of the instruction in the Early Church was done orally due to the expense of written texts and the illiterate nature of most of the catechumens.

During catechism the "catechumen" learned the basic elements of the Christian faith and moral life. One of the earliest catechisms is found in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Didache which contained teachings on topics such as baptism, Eucharist, fasting, sin, prayers of Holy Communion, meeting on the Lord's Day and the importance of watchfulness for the Second Coming of Christ.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century we see the bishops of the Church publishing catechisms such as the ProCatechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and the Great Catechism of St. Gregory of Nyssa. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the West there were the catechetical instructions of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

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## Role of the Godparent(s)

In the Early Church in the time of the Apostles the term used for someone who was training up a catechumen in the faith was called "sponsor," (Greek ἀνάδοχος<sup>1</sup>) which is still used today in the Orthodox and Catholic Church and some Protestant churches. During this early time Christianity was undergoing persecutions so the primary function of the sponsor was to confirm the integrity and sincerity of the adult (normally, although whole families were being converted – Acts 16:15). This was necessary to protect the Early Church against infiltrators to the community of believers by persecutors. The candidate was introduced by one of the faithful, to be examined by a Bishop or Elder who was in charge of the catechumen process, to ensure clear spiritual motives on the part of the person. Other than in cases of urgency, baptism was not something that was rushed. Not only did the candidate need to understand the teachings of Christ and the Church, but he/she also had to be living by them.

## Late Roman Empire: Baptism Sponsors

When Constantine declared Christianity legal, it became less important for the sponsor to vouch for the sincerity and motives of the candidate seeking conversion. The focus now shifted to leading the person through the process of preparation for baptism. For those coming from a pagan, or non-Christian culture, the preparation for baptism and christening was a complete catechism in Christian beliefs and practices. The baptism sponsors were the person's guide in learning about Christian faith, theology, sacraments, and how to lead a Christian life.

## Early Middle Ages: Baptism and Christening

As more and more people in the East and the West converted to Christianity adult conversion from paganism became rare and the practice of infant baptism became more widespread with Christian parents wanting to have their young children baptized. With this trend the idea of formal Godparent(s) became more prevalent. Godparent(s) were chosen by the parents of the infant to be baptized. It was during this period that the Church began to expect the Godparent(s) to help the parents raise the child in a Christian manner, and would take over raising the child in the event that the parents were absent, died, or neglected their obligations.

## How should one go about choosing a Godparent(s)?

1. Parents should exercise great care in selecting Godparent(s) for their children. While they should avoid selecting atheists or agnostics, they should also use caution with regards to those who are lukewarm toward the Church or live a significant distance from the child so that they cannot be a consistent presence in their life. These situations obviously defeat the purpose of the role of a Godparent(s).

2. Parents should not choose Godparent(s) because they feel obligated, or because they think that if they don't ask a certain person or couple that they will be offended. Oftentimes parents choose a Godparent(s) out of guilt or obligation with disastrous results. And Godparent(s) can be selected from outside the parent's family and can be friends or those people whose life and education the parents feel would serve well the role of Godparent(s).

Due to this awesome responsibility, it is perfectly fine to politely decline to be a Godparent(s) if you feel you cannot meet the obligation of being a Godparent(s) or are not educated well enough to guide the child or the adult. As future opportunities present themselves you may find yourself in a position to be a worthwhile Godparent(s).

3. Originally all Godparent(s) were required to be active Orthodox who are part of an Orthodox community. Today, with more inter-Christian marriages the requirement is that at least one of the Godparent(s) must be

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<sup>1</sup> The word ἀνάδοχος literally mean to "lift up out of a vessel" and referred to the sponsor receiving the child from the priest as the baby is lifted out of the baptismal font.

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Orthodox. The child can receive a Christian example and inspiration to their Godchild from both the Orthodox and non-Orthodox sponsors, with the Orthodox partner addressing the salient differences of Orthodoxy. The Godparent(s) should make a faithful commitment to join the struggle with the parents, guided by the Church, to raise the infant carefully and prayerfully.

It should also be noted that an Orthodox Christian who has not had their marriage blessed in the Orthodox Church or, if divorced, has not received their Decree from the Spiritual Court, are excluded from exercising the privilege of serving as a Godparent(s), since they are not considered to be in good standing with the Church.

4. The person(s) who are selected as Godparent(s) should be of an age of reason and moral responsibility (at least 18 years of age).

## **What are some other things that are expected of the Godparent(s)?**

1. It is typically tradition that the Godparent(s) buy the baptismal outfit and a cross for the infant.
2. After the baptism it is customary for the Godparent(s) to bring the infant (or accompany the newly illumined adult) to receive Holy Communion with the lit baptismal candle for the next three Sundays. It is a good practice for the Godparent(s) to continue to take the child to Holy Communion as often as possible.
3. A faithful Godparent(s) will make the effort to maintain close contact with their godchild, building up their relationship. The main focus, however, is the progress of the child in the knowledge and practice of the Christian life and should strive to provide the example of a Christ-like life. When possible, the Godparent(s) should make time with their Godchild to pray, fast, read from Holy Scripture, and participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Remember that the Godparent(s) carries on the command of Christ to His Apostles, *"Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*
4. Godparent(s) are encouraged remember the sacred and joyous moment of Baptism by participating in "Godparents' Sunday", which is a National Observance by the Greek Orthodox Church in America. This event reminds Godparents of their responsibility and relationship to their Godchild.
5. It is also customary for the Godparent(s) to honor the occasion of the Godchild's name day, birthday or baptism day, with items such as icons, a Bible, and religious books or video games that will be helpful in building up the spiritual life of the child. These are the most important, but it is not wrong to give other things as well that the child would enjoy but be careful that they are spiritually appropriate. This means use care when selecting video games, books, or phone apps.