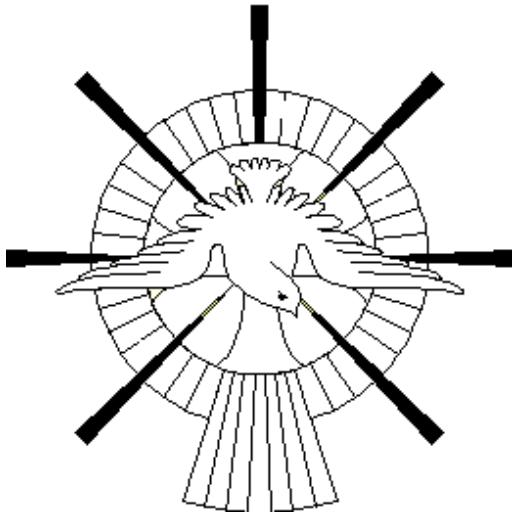


PART ONE

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



HIS GRACE BISHOP METTAOUS,
Abbott of El Syrian Monastery

The First Sacrament

Baptism is a Holy Sacrament by which we are born again by being immersed in water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Baptism has the first rank among the Seven Holy Sacraments, as it is the door by which the believer enters the church and has the right to partake in the rest of the Sacraments.

The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Baptism by being baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him as a dove, anointed Him, then assured it after the resurrection when He said to His disciples: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*** (Matthew: 28:19), ***“He who is baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”*** (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a redemptive Sacrament, necessary for redemption and entry to eternal life according to what the Lord said: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”*** (John 3). It is one of the four redemptive Sacraments: Baptism, Myron, Confession and Communion of the Holy Body and precious Blood of the Lord. Through Baptism, the believer is reborn a spiritual birth from the Water and the Spirit; his first birth being from his parents.

The best time for Baptism is Sunday before Mass, as the priest is fasting because Baptism is death and resurrection, and Sunday is the weekly memory of the Lord's Resurrection. The wisdom of granting the Sacrament of Baptism right before the Mass, is so that the baptised person and his parents may attend the Mass, and receive the Holy Sacraments.

If the priest wants to administer the Sacrament of Baptism at night, such as during Vesper of Baptism Sunday, he must be fasting for nine or seven hours at least, as Baptism is a Holy Sacrament which must not be performed by an unfasting priest. He must also advise the parents to bring the newly baptised person to attend the Mass the following morning to receive the Holy Communion.

Considering that the Sacrament of Baptism is granted only once to the believer in life, by the priest, it is necessary for us to speak as accurately as possible in regards to how the ritual is performed.

We shall first speak about the Absolution of the Woman, the one who gave birth to the child and is presenting her child before the Lord for Baptism.

Secondly, we shall speak about the prayers of Renouncing Satan and confessing Christ and reciting the Apostolic Creed.

Then we shall speak about the Liturgy of Baptism.

And finally, we shall explain the Rite of Baptism, then the discharge of the Baptismal water.

THE RITUAL OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

This is divided into four major parts :

- † Women's Absolution
- † Renouncing Satan
- † Liturgy of Baptism
- † Baptism & Water Discharge

F I R S T

WOMEN'S ABSOLUTION IF SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A MALE CHILD

- 40 days after her delivery, the woman would have recovered from her puerperium and tiredness. Hence, she comes to the church with her baby to ask the priest to baptise him.
- The priest wears the service garment or at least the 'epitrachelion', and the deacons wear their white service garments. Then the priest, deacons, the woman with her child, and family enter into the Baptistery in order for the necessary rites to take place.
- The Baptistery must be wide, furnished and clean, adequate for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, exactly like the altar.
- The removal of shoes is advisable. Ancient rites mention

that the adult who accepts the faith on behalf of the child, is to stand on sheep fur before the bishop or priest, and recite all that is required in a clear voice. The fur is a reminder of the leather garments which the Lord made for Adam and Eve after their fall into sin.

- On the eastern wall of the Baptistery must be placed a large icon of the Baptism of the Lord Christ by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove.
- Near the Baptismal Font a small wardrobe must be placed, containing three bottles of oil which are used in the Baptism. These are the Apocalypse oil, the Ghaliloun, and the Chrism. Every bottle is marked in clear handwriting. Also the ritual books and the cross specified for Baptism are placed, and a clean box containing the red ribbons that are placed around the baptised. If possible, a special crown is also placed therein.
- In the Baptistery, a table must be placed, covered by a clean cover for the child to be placed upon during the anointing of the Holy Myron. The baptised person is signed with 36 crosses of Myron after Baptism.

The first procedure performed by the priest is the prayer of absolution of the woman, and it signifies permission of entry to the church and receiving the Holy Communion after the period of giving birth and puerperium, however, it does not replace the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession. The woman has to sit down with her confession father, to confess her sins done during that period, then he gives her the adequate instructions and finally prays for her the absolution (for forgiveness of her

sins). At the end of the Liturgy she receives the Holy Sacrament with her recently baptised son, as it is not correct for her not to receive Communion with her baptised son.

NOTES:

The woman enters the church and carries out the Sacrament of Confession and receives the Holy Communion if she does not have a monthly period. We advise that the woman choose the days when she does not have her period to request Baptism of her child, so as to be able to receive the Holy Sacraments with her child and accomplish her joy.

If she is menstruating, she is not allowed to receive Communion or any other ecclesiastical Sacrament, but she keeps reading the Holy Bible, fasting and praying with the Agbia in her house.

The order of the Absolution Prayers of the woman is as follows:-

- 1) The priest says: Aleyson Emas (Have Mercy Upon Us O God the Father Almighty).
- 2) The Lord's Prayer.
- 3) The Thanksgiving Prayer with its responses, and upon doing the signs of the cross, he anoints the woman saying, "*...and for Your servant ...*"
- 4) The priest performs the Pauline round of incense after he places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer, and with the known signs, says the Pauline mystery :

“O great and eternal God, with no beginning or end....etc.” He raises incense on Baptismal font and blesses the attendants. One of the deacons read the Pauline (Hebrews 1:8-12). Speaks about the only Son Jesus Christ, ***“Whose throne is forever and ever, with a sceptre of righteousness and justice, who have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness”***, and who said in challenge, ***“Which of you convicts me of sin”*** (John 8:46).

The priest wishes that the baptised child resembles the image of Lord Christ in righteousness and truth, loving virtue and holiness and hating vice and evil.

5) The hymn of the Trisagion is recited then the priest prays the Prayer of the Gospel, and a deacon reads the Psalm 31:1,2, ***“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...”***

✠ By Baptism we get remission of original and actual sins and God forgets them, so we become as pure as Adam before the fall.

✠ Then the Gospel : Luke 2:21-35. Where the circumcision of Jesus is narrated, it is exchanged by Baptism in the New Testament, as Baptism is a spiritual circumcision, as our teacher St. Paul says: ***“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”*** (Colossians 2:11,12). In Baptism the old nature is completely removed,

not only a small part of the body as in the Old Testament circumcision. As man is born with the old nature contaminated by Adam's sin. Also the purification rite is mentioned, which was done for the woman after forty days of her delivery, and which was accomplished by the Lord Jesus and His Mother the Virgin, despite that He does not need such purification as He is the Holiest of Holies, and was born of the Virgin St. Mary by the Holy Spirit, unlike all humankind. He instituted the law and accurately accomplished the law.

- 6) The Three Major Litanies are prayed: Litany of Peace, Litany of the Fathers and Litany of the Congregations, then the Orthodox Creed.
 - 7) The priest asks God to look upon the woman, fill her with the Holy Spirit, purify her from all sins.
 - 8) The attendants pray the Lord's Prayer...and the priest prays the Three Absolutions and the blessing while placing the cross on the woman's head.
 - 9) The priest anoints the woman by the simple oil (Note: It is mostly composed of olive oil, unlike the Myron oil which is composed of some thirty kinds of fragrances. The simple oil is the Apocalypse Oil).
- ✠ The woman is anointed to be healed from any disease, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10). Then the woman becomes ready to enter the church and receive the Holy Communion after the Sacrament of Confession.

NOTES:

The same rite of absolution of the woman is done for a woman who aborted a child involuntarily due to an accident or other, but voluntary abortion is considered murder and necessitates a law of repentance first.

**ABSOLUTION OF THE WOMAN IF SHE GAVE
BIRTH TO A FEMALE CHILD**

The woman comes to the church with her baby daughter after eighty days of delivery, to baptise her. The eighty days for the female child, and forty days for the male child is identified in the Book of Leviticus, Chapter Twelve. Although there may not be an explanation for this difference in the New Testament, we must obey this commandment without argument or complaint, as the Christian Church obeyed this divine order through all eras, and let us remember also the obedience of the Virgin Mary to this divine order. Despite her conceiving Christ by the Holy Spirit in all purity, and delivering Him in a miraculous Virginal birth, she did not come to the temple before completing the days of her purification according to the law of Moses, which is forty days for the male child (Luke 2: 22-24).

NOTES:

The parents must be committed to the period of forty days for the male child, and eighty days for the female child, and must not surpass them for any reason, so they do not sin against their children. This means disregarding the idea of making a vow for

Baptism in certain remote places, or at certain feasts which are months away. The child must be baptised at the specific time, and if a vow is made, they fulfil it at the right time, without delaying Baptism.

The forty days period for the male child and eighty days for the female child, exists in normal circumstances but if the new-born is sick and his parents are afraid the baby will die, they must request the priest to baptise and anoint the baby with the Myron, even if the child is one day old, and under any circumstance (as the priest may not be fasting or unable to baptise him by immersion); the baptism must be carried out quickly, so that the child does not die without Baptism and is deprived from entry or sight of the Kingdom, according to the words of our beloved Saviour (John 3). The method to be followed is that someone, except the mother, should take the child to the church to be baptised. If the baby lives, the Baptism is correct and should not be repeated.

If his parents neglect the Baptism, and the child dies without Baptism, it is the right of the church to impose a punishment on the parents for a period of one year, of prayers and fasting with prostration. They may also be forbidden to receive the Holy Eucharist during this whole year.

But the rite of the woman's absolution is as follows :

1. After eighty days the woman brings her female child to church for Baptism.
2. The priest prays Aleyson Emas, the Thanksgiving Prayer,

and places five spoonfuls of incense into the censer with the known signs, then prays the Pauline mystery, “*O Great and eternal God...*”, he then raises the Pauline incense on the Baptismal font and blesses the attendants.

3. The deacon reads the Pauline Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:12-14), which speaks about how the believing woman is a blessing for her husband.
4. The hymn of the Trisagon is chanted, then the Prayer of the Gospel, and Psalm 44 : “***The queen shall be brought to the king***”, these specific words from the Psalm are chosen, because the child that is to be baptised is female.
5. The Gospel of Luke (10:38-43), speaks about Mary and Martha who were exemplary in their love of God, hearing and practicing His commandments, and offering the service of sacrifice. The priest asks God that the newly baptised female child may emulate them by choosing the right path..
6. The Three Major Litanies: Peace, Fathers and the Congregations, are said, followed by the Orthodox Creed.
7. The same previous prayer is said where the priest requests God to fill the woman with His Holy Spirit, and purify her from sins.
8. This is followed by the Lord’s Prayer, and the priest prays the three absolutions and the blessing while placing the cross on the woman’s head.
9. The priest anoints the woman by the simple oil or

Apocalypse oil, which is present in the Baptism room. Hence, the woman is ready to enter the church and receive the Holy Communion of our God Emmanuel.

S E C O N D

PRAYERS OF RENOUNCING SATAN

PRAYER BEFORE RENOUNCING SATAN

Absolution prayer for the child's mother (whether male or female) : The priest places the cross on the woman's head and prays asking God to absolve and bless the child's mother and make her worthy to share in the Holy Sacraments without falling into condemnation. The woman who gives birth to a child should not receive Holy Communion before her child's Baptism. Hence, this will motivate her not to delay the child's Baptism according to the law (40 days for the male child and 80 days for the female child). In this way, she will receive the blessing of absolution of the woman related to the child's Baptism before their Communion, and this absolution is the legal permission for entry to church and receiving the Holy Sacraments after delivery. He also supplicates unto God to bless the child, and keep him/her to grow in grace, stature, faith, hope and love.

✠ The priest prays the known litany of the Catechumens.

✠ The priest prays for the children proceeding for Baptism

while placing the cross on their heads, asking God to forgive their sins and make them worthy of the pure Sacrament of Baptism, and to enlighten their hearts to see in purity the way of eternal life, and glorify God all the days of their lives.

- ✠ The priest prays on the Apocalypse oil bottle, asking God to let this oil undo the works of devils and their magic, and so become an anointing oil for faith in Christ.
- ✠ Another prayer on the oil is done, asking that this oil becomes a sermon oil to cast away all evil deeds.
- ✠ First, the priest asks the mothers that they have removed any jewellery from their children. He then takes the bottle of oil to anoint the children (males then females) as follows :
- ✠ He anoints the forehead saying, *“I anoint you (Name of the Child) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. A sermon oil for (Name of the Child) in the church of God, one Holy, Universal and Apostolic, Amen.*
- ✠ Then he anoints the heart (chest), hands and back saying : *“This oil abolishes the power of the adversary Amen.”* The deacons respond, *“We ask this from God.”*
- ✠ The priest says a prayer where he glorifies God for His great love to humankind, as He has taken us from darkness to His splendid light, and asks Him to write the names of those children who came forward for Baptism, in the Book of Life, counting them amongst His believers, preparing them temples of the Holy Spirit and granting them growth in faith

and grace and free them from the bondage of corruption, to the freedom of the glory of God's children.

✠ The priest asks about the names of the baptised then prays saying: *“We also ask the Almighty God...for your servants whose names are presented (it is preferable to mention the names ⁽¹⁾ individually) make them worthy to win grace which they require, purify them from sins of the world and free them from bondage of corruption...”*

✠ The deacon says: *“Pray for those whose names are said so that the Lord may make them worthy of the Holy Baptism for the forgiveness of their sins”*. The congregation answers, *“Lord have mercy.”* The priest prays to ask God to make the children worthy of grace.

✠ The mother kneels down facing the East whilst carrying her child (if the person being baptised is old enough, they must kneel). Then the priest prays :

“We also ask perseveringly...God to open their hearts and enlighten them by the light of knowledge.”

“For by calling Your Holy Name, all the powers of the evil adversary perish.”

(1) It is very important to take off everything from the body of the child, to become naked as his mother delivered him/her, like the nakedness of Adam and Eve after breaking the commandment and falling in sin. It is wrong for those things to drop into the Baptismal font which contains water and Myron.

NOTES:

We kneel during these prayers to signify our contrite souls asking of the Lord to free us from the bondage of Satan, like the Phoenician woman who knelt at the feet of Jesus and asked Him to cast out the demon from her daughter (Mark 7:26).

The priest places his hand on the child's head saying :

✠ *“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, I prepare this body for purification...”*, the deacons respond : *“Amen.”*

✠ *“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, may he/she be free from all the devils...”*, the deacons respond : *“Amen.”*

✠ *“In the name of the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, may he/she be purified from all devils...”*, the deacons respond : *“Amen.”*

RENOUNCING SATAN AND RECITING THE ORTHODOX CREED

1. *RENOUNCING SATAN ...*



The mother undresses her child and holds him/her with her left arm, looking towards the West and lifts her right hand, reciting after the priest the following statements of Renouncing Satan (if the baptised is not a child, he recites the Statements personally) :

“I renounce you Satan and all your profane deeds, and all your evil followers, and all your bad debits, all your power, and all your detested worshipping, all your evil traps and your army and your dominion and the rest of your deceit. I renounce you, I renounce you, I renounce you”.

NOTES:

1. Undressing the child reminds us of the nakedness of Adam and Eve when they obeyed Satan and disobeyed the commandment of God, so they were put to shame before Him and hid from Him (Genesis 3:7-10) when they realised their nakedness. Such is what sin and Satan do to human beings, they strip them from all virtues and the protection of grace, and hence put them to shame before others.

2. Facing the West symbolises exile and separation from God, and submission to the dominion of Satan, who was the first to be exiled and separated from God; falling from his angelic rank due to pride.
3. The direction of the West signifies the end, death and darkness, just as how the sun sets in the west. Also, we say about the deceased that the sun of his life has set. The ancient Egyptians built their cemeteries facing West. We notice this in the historical city of Aswan; all the temples are along the eastern banks of the River Nile, while all the tombs in the Valley of the Kings, are situated on the western bank of the River Nile. Likewise, the Pyramids at Giza, which were the once tombs of kings, is situated along the western bank of the River Nile.
4. The West symbolises darkness, for once the sun sets in the west, the sky is replaced with the darkness of night.
5. The West symbolises night and darkness which signify sin and evil. In the Greek language the word for evil : *K a K I a*, and the word for darkness : *X a K I*, are quite similar.
6. Sunset signifies darkness of sin which leads to grief, as the Psalmist said, “*Weeping may endure for a night, (weeping of repentance and remorse) but joy comes in the morning*” (Psalm 30:5). Joy, because of the acceptance of our repentance, and partaking in the Mass and Communion of the Holy Sacrament, and life in the light of Christ.
7. Renouncing Satan means that we are breaking the covenant

with him, which is the covenant of obeying him, which he had with our first fathers. When Adam and Eve submitted to his will and obeyed his evil counsel, they disobeyed God and fell from grace, just like Satan. Hence he grabbed them to do his will. Adam and his descendants became slaves of Satan, after breaking the commandment of God, and thus fell from grace and divine comfort.

8. Renouncing Satan means that the person is refusing to remain under the bondage of Satan, and so refuses all his profane deeds and all his plans and deluding tricks, all his deceit, and deadly lies.
9. Renouncing Satan means casting him out of our lives, and cleaning the body and heart, so that the Holy Spirit can dwell in the pure body and pure heart (which had previously been contaminated by the devil), and so the body becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit.
10. Renouncing Satan means that we are ending all relations with him, hence we shall not accept from him any guidance or seduction or tricks, and we do not accept Satanic deeds, or deal with such people, such as clairvoyances, magicians, and so on.
11. The priest breathes three times on the child, and orders the profane spirit to come out from this child's life, by the order and power of the Holy Spirit. The mother or guardian father should take special notice of this, in order that they may not allow Satan to enter the child's life or have any share with the child in any way.

2. CONFESSING CHRIST AND RECITING THE ORTHODOX CREED...

The mother looks towards the East with her child on her left arm, and raises her right hand to repeat after the priest:

“I confess to you O Christ my God and to all Your redeeming laws and enlivening service and Your life giving works.

I believe in one God the Father the Almighty, and His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ and the Life-Giving Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of the body, and the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church, Amen”.

The priest then asks her three times : *“Do you believe on behalf of this child?”* And three times she responds, *“I believe.”*

NOTES:

1. Facing the East signifies new birth, as the day starts by the rising of the sun in the East, and with sunrise a new day begins.
2. Facing the East signifies light, *“For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

3. As life and light are strongly related, the East became a symbol of life and we encounter this relation in the words of the Psalmist : ***“For with You is the fountain of life; In your light we see light”*** (Psalm 36:9), and, ***“Christ is life and the dayspring from on high”*** (Luke 7:78), and to enlighten those sitting in darkness, He visited us and redeemed us from sin. ***“The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has dawned”*** (Matthew 4:16).
4. The one who leaves the direction of the West and faces the East proves that he hates and renounces sin and its darkness, yearns for holiness and light which are granted in Baptism, a new pure life renewed day by day according to the image of his Creator.
5. He who faces the East proves that he seeks the first heavenly life, as the first paradise was planted by God, a garden eastward in Eden (Genesis 2:8).
6. Christ is the light that shone on us. ***“But to you who fear My Name the Son of righteousness shall arise”*** (Malachi 4:2).
7. The Wiseman saw the star of Christ in the East at His birth: ***“We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him”*** (Matthew 2:2).
8. Isaiah said: ***“Glorify the Lord in the dawning light”*** (Isaiah 24:15), ***“And behold, the glory of the God of***

Israel came from the way of the East” (Ezekiel 43:2).

9. When the mother or the guardian father says, “*I believe for this child*”, they mean they believe in the grace that is granted to the child in the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the grace of sonship to God and the spiritual preparation for the Kingdom of God. This also means that they undertake to teach the child the principles of faith, church tradition and dogmas, as if engraving on stone.

The raising of the hand and the Covenant with the Lord Christ

When the baptised or the child’s parent faces the East and raises their right hand, repeating the words of the covenant with Christ, they are praying for God’s help to fulfil this holy covenant.

NOTES:

Some people say, when the mother turns from the West to the East, she must change her child from her left arm to her right arm, hence this means that she will raise her left hand during the confession for Christ and the reciting of the Orthodox Creed. I believe this is not correct that she raise her right hand while renouncing Satan, and her left hand while confessing Christ. The Baptismal Rites does not imply this, and therefore, I believe the correct position is for the child to remain on the mother’s left arm in both cases, and thus her right hand is raised in both cases.

Raising the hand has various implications. We shall mention a few :

1. When the person requiring Baptism raises the right hand while looking towards the West and renouncing Satan, they must open the palm of their hand as if avoiding Satan as an enemy and destroyer.
2. When the person requiring Baptism raises their right hand while looking towards the East and reciting the Orthodox Creed, they undertake before God to keep what is said, and hence the raising of the hand signifies the undertaking of an oath, just as in court and oath is taken to indicate the seriousness of what the speaker says and the necessity of commitment to this undertaking.

After the Rite of renouncing Satan and the confession of Christ is completed, the deacon says :

✠ *“From God we ask for the blessing of Baptism for the child.”*

✠ *“From God we ask for the baptised to complete his life in rejecting Satan and his evil thoughts and destructive counselling.”*

✠ *“From God we ask God’s providence for the baptised for his struggle as a servant of Christ, keeping His commandments and practicing His will, as he lives truly according to the Gospel of Christ.”*

✠ *“From God we ask providence for the mother or*

guardian father to accomplish their duty in bringing up the child in the fear of God, and warning them to follow in God's path throughout their life."

3. **OTHER PRAYERS**

✠ The priest prays asking God to : *"Establish the obedience of your servants ... give them the power to abandon their past sins, reinforce their faith so nothing will separate them from You. Prepare them on the foundation of Your Apostolic faith, call them to Your pure light. Make them worthy of Your great grace..."*.

✠ They kneel down and the priest prays for them, placing the Cross on their heads saying : *"Enlighten their understanding by the light of knowledge, cast away every magic, seduction and evil deed, and may they deserve the intimacy of the new Baptism and the incorruptible garment and the forgiveness of sins, as You prepare them to be a temple for Your Holy Spirit"*.

NOTES:

Kneeling for the second time may mean a thanksgiving bow for the grace of freedom from the dominion of Satan and sin, and the acceptance of the soul in the Church Community, just as the leper did when he was healed from his leprosy which denoted his sin, ***"He returned and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks"*** (Luke 17:15,16).

✠ The priest takes the holy oil (Ghaliloun) and anoints the baptised on their heart, back and arms with the sign of the Cross saying : *“I anoint you (the baptised Name) by the ointment of joy, opposing all the deeds of the adversary to implant you in the pleasant olive tree, in the One Holy Universal, and Apostolic Church of God”*.

NOTES:

We notice there are three kinds of oil used in Baptism :

1. Simple oil 2. Ghaliloun Oil 3. Myron

✠ Simple Oil: pure olive oil, most probably the oil upon which the Apocalypse Vigil of Easter Saturday was prayed. It helps the Baptised to accept the Word of God and understand the Gospel, and simply accept faith.

✠ Ghaliloun Oil: called an ointment of joy, which helps the soul to rejoice in the Word of God, the acceptance of faith and entry to the Church Community.

Myron Oil: is the Seal of the Holy Spirit, and it is with this oil that the child is anointed after Baptism, on the body; the senses, joints and heart. All the body's organs are sanctified, and hence the body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. The anointing of the Myron are like a royal seal, signifying that this body is a possession of the True King and Lord Jesus Christ. The devil cannot approach it to dwell in it or possess it, as he has no dominion over it. It is possessed by

the Lord Jesus and sealed by His Seal, that is, the sign of the Cross.

- † The priest prays the prayer of the laying of hands on the catechumens (coming for Baptism) after anointing them with the Ghaliloun saying : *“Search the hearts of Your servants who came to the intimacy of Your grace, and if the evil of Satan is hidden in them, declare it, cast it out from the souls and bodies of Your servants, renew their lives so they may wear the garments of salvation and the weapons of undefeated faith, to become Your flock and sons of Your heavenly shelter and heirs of Your incorruptible eternal Kingdom of Christ.”*

- † Then the priest prays : *“Save Your creation from the bondage of the enemy. Accept them in Your Kingdom. Open their hearts to shine by the light of the Gospel of Your Kingdom, and may their lives be accompanied by the angels of light to save them from every conspiracy and every arrow that flies by day and the pestilence in darkness and the terror by night, and cast away from them all intrigues of the profane souls. The wicked soul that worries their hearts, cast it away, make them sleep in Your Holy flock of Your Christ, pure members in the Apostolic Church, pure vessels, blameless souls and children of the light and heirs of the Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ...”*

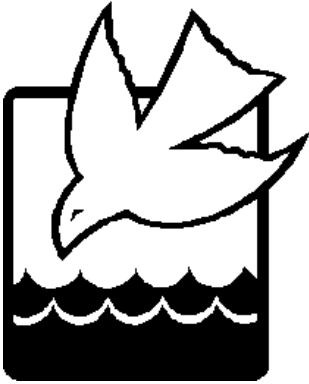
THIRD

SANCTIFICATION OF THE BAPTISMAL WATER

INTRODUCTION

It is called The Liturgy of Baptism, and is similar to the Liturgy of Eucharist. It includes the Thanksgiving Prayer, readings from the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, the Book of Acts, from the Psalms and Gospels. Then the Litanies are said, followed by an inaudible prayer said by the priest while kneeling before the Baptismal Font. The prayer is very moving and spiritual : *“Send Your power from on High and help me to perform the service of this great heavenly Sacrament, and may Christ be imaged in those granted the anointment of the new Baptism from me. Build them on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets that they may never perish. Implant within them truth in Your One Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church to progress in worshipping You ...”*

The prayers continue similar to the rites of the Liturgy of Eucharist, with the priest, deacon and congregation, until such a time when the priest pours the Holy Myron in the Baptismal Font accompanied by three signs of the cross. This is the moment of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and the sanctification of the Baptismal water. Psalm 150 is then chanted while the priest baptises the child. Baptism here replaces the Communion in the Rite of the Eucharist.



Sanctification of the Baptismal water, through prayers, is done to prepare for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and pouring the Myron oil into the water causes the water to become living water, capable by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to grant new birth to the soul and body, and

become effective in the salvation of the baptised, enabling them to walk along the path of salvation, and hence enter and see the Kingdom of God. It also gives the baptised the right to become a child of God and the Church, having the right to partake of all the other Sacraments, such as Repentance, Communion, Matrimony and Priesthood.

St. Cyril the Great resembled the Baptismal water at the moment of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to a bowl with water which is placed on the fire so it gains heat. Likewise, the Baptismal water gains the power and reflection of the Holy Spirit, to be born of God and the Church as spiritual children.

St. John the Baptist says, ***“He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*** (Matthew 3:11). Sanctification of the water is accomplished through the prayer of the gathered church (priest, deacons, congregation), the reading of the Word of God, the signs of the Cross, and finally by the pouring of the Myron into the Baptismal water so that the Holy Spirit dwells on the water grants the baptised person a new nature. ***“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the***

face of the waters, so God created all the creatures, the light, the ferment the earth, the seas, sun, moon, grass herbs, trees, animals, birds and concluded by creating man on His image and likeness. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1).

In Baptism, man is void of any virtue, and his soul is empty because of the original sin, so the Spirit of God hovers over the Baptismal font in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness of truth; just as the first creation was from water and spirit, so also the new creation is from water and spirit, the Baptismal water upon which dwells, the Holy Spirit.

THE RITE OF THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE BAPTISMAL WATER

The baptismal font is filled the clean water. Then the following steps and prayers take place :

- 1 The priest takes the simple oil or Apocalypse oil, and pours it into the Baptismal water three times with the sign of the Cross, and with every sign of the cross, the deacons say, “*Amen*”.
2. He prays inaudibly or quietly : “*Call Your servants to the pure light, make them worthy of this great grace of the holy Baptism, fill them with the power of Your Holy Spirit...*”.
3. Then after bestowing peace, he prays the Thanksgiving Prayer.

4. He places five spoonfuls of incense in the censer together with three signs of the cross, then prays the mystery of the Pauline incense, “*O God the Great and Eternal*”.
5. One of the deacons read the Pauline epistle to Titus (2:11-38) which talks about the difference in attitude of a person before Baptism, in ungodliness and worldly lusts, and after Baptism, living righteously in love and peace with all people. He calls Baptism, “*The regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (3:5).
6. The priest prays the second Pauline mystery, “*O God of knowledge, giver of wisdom...*”, asking God to grant us a mind free of wandering, and a clear understanding that we may learn and understand the teachings of St. Paul, so that we may emulate him in deed, struggle and in faith and receive the glorious unperishable crown.

Then he prays the Catholicon mystery, asking God to help him and his people to walk in the steps of the apostles, and to imitate and share in their struggle for God’s sake, in order to spread the faith and proclaim the good news of the unsearchable riches of God’s mercy, and to bless this vine which His right hand has planted through His holy apostles teachings, preaching and epistles.

7. Meanwhile one of the deacons reads the Catholicon from the First Epistle of St. John (5:5-14), which speaks about overcoming the world by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and about the three witnesses : the spirit, water

and blood, and all these are present in Baptism. Baptism is founded on the Blood of Christ and the atonement of the Cross, the font is filled with water, and by prayer the Holy Spirit dwells upon it. Hence, the presence of all three - the Spirit, the water and the blood - causes Baptism to be correct and effective.

8. The priest prays the Praxis (Acts) mystery, asking God to accept from him this sacrifice of incense, and send down upon him and His congregation in return His abundant mercy, making them pure from all sin, and making them worthy to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. One of the deacons read the Praxis from the Book of Acts (8:26-40), which mentions the incident of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was baptised after he proclaimed the true faith in Jesus Christ saying: ***“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”*** (Acts 8:38), and so St. Philip baptised him by immersion in the nearby river, and then they came up out of the water, just as the Lord Jesus on His baptism, ***“Then Jesus, when He had been baptised, came up immediately from the water”*** (Matthew 3:16).
9. The Trisagon is sung and the priest says the Prayer for the Gospel with its relevant responses.
10. A deacon then reads Psalm 31 (1,2), blessing those whose sins are forgiven and transgression is covered by Baptism. Then the gospel is read from St. John (3:1-21) which narrates the meeting of Nicodemus with the Lord Jesus, and the speech of Christ about the importance of

Baptism and His definite assurance of its necessity for salvation and entering the Kingdom of God, saying: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again (from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God”*** (John 3:3), and, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven”*** (John 3:5), ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”*** (John 3:6), and, ***“We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”*** (1 Corinthians 15:5), but the spiritual person born of the Holy Spirit.

11. During the Gospel reading, the priest prays the mystery of the Gospel : *“O You, who are long suffering, abundant in mercy and true, receive our prayers...”*.
12. The priest then prays the Seven Minor Litanies, as in the Laqqan Prayer, and the Sacrament of Anointing the Sick, and others. These are :

✠ The Litany of the Sick

✠ The Litany of Travellers

✠ The Litany of the air of heaven, or fruits, according to the season. In the period between 12 Baounah to 9 Baba, the Litany of water is said as it is the flood season. In the period from 10 Baba to 10 Tubah, the Litany of plants is said as it is the season of plantation. In the period from 11 Tubah (Epiphany) to 11 Baounah, the Litany of air and fruits is said,

as during this time plants bear fruits and need adequate environment so it flourishes. Then comes the harvest.

† The King's Litany

† The Litany of the Deceased

† The Litany of Oblations

† The Catechumens Litany where the priest asks God to have mercy on them and let His Word abide in their hearts, and make them worthy of the New Birth (Baptism) for the forgiveness of sins, and preparedness for them to become holy temples for His Holy Spirit. These litanies are prayed by the priest raising incense.

13. The priest prays a short prayer saying : *“Send Your holy power to precede the Baptism and prepare Your servants to receive this pure Baptism for the remission of their sins.”*

14. The priest prays for the laying on of hands, that is, he places his hands on the head of the baptised saying, *“Dwell upon them Lord, walk with them and help them in every good deed”*.

15. The priest kneels humbly before the font, resembling the River Jordan. Then the priest prays saying : *“Cleanse my soul and body's profanity, purify me completely. Send Your power from on high and strengthen me to perform the service of this great heavenly sacrament. May Christ be formed in them, who are*

being granted the seal of new birth, from me a sinner”, as if saying with St. Paul : “My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19), “build them on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”, as if saying with St. Paul, “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

16. The priest then prays the three Major Litanies.
17. The attendants pray the Orthodox Creed.
18. The priest takes the Holy Ghaliloun oil, pours some of it into the Baptismal font three times with the sign of the Cross to sanctify the water.
19. The priest prays, *“We ask You our King for Your servants, sanctify them and strengthen them so through this water and oil You abolish all the power of the adversary and wicked spirits, prevent them from perishing...”*.
20. He breathes three times in the water while praying, *“Sanctify this water and this oil to cause new birth, amen. Eternal life, amen. An incorruptible garment, amen.”*
21. He makes the sign of the cross on the water three times saying, *“O God the Pantocrator, touch this water so*

by it and by Your Holy Spirit You may renew the birth of Your servants.”

22. The congregation chants the Espasmos, “*Hail to John the forerunner ... Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Saint Mary*”, then the Liturgy of Baptism Starts.

THE LITURGY OF BAPTISM

1. The priest, while signing the water, says : “*The Lord be with you all*” And the congregation responds, “*And with your spirit*”.

The priest says : “*Lift up your hearts*”. And the congregation responds, “*They are with the Lord*”.

The priest says : “*Let us give thanks to the Lord*”
And the congregation responds, “*It is right and worthy*”.

The priest continues : “*We lifted our eyes to You Lord ... You split the springs and valleys ... You ordered the rock to overflow water for your people...*”

These three sections are prayed by the priest, following the example of the three prayers which follow the bestowal of peace with the sign of the cross : “*The Lord be with you all*”, in the Liturgy of Eucharist.

2. the priest says “*Agios*” three times with three signs of the Cross in the water, followed by “*Holy, Holy, Holy, truly O Lord You are Holy ... grant the water the grace of the Jordan, the power and heavenly comfort. Upon the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit, grant it the blessing of the Jordan, amen ... give it power to become life-giving water, amen..*”.
3. He makes the sign of the cross three times on the water saying, “*Your servants who offered their children to You, receive them ... Keep them in the Orthodox Faith all the days of their lives, grant them unperishable love...*” The congregation responds, “*Our Father who art in Heaven...*”, followed by the priest saying the three absolutions.
4. The priest takes the holy Myron oil and pours a little into the Baptismal water three times, each time with the sign of the Cross to sanctify the water. He does this while saying the three known signs similar to those of the Offering. The deacons respond each time with “*Amen*”. Here the Holy Spirit dwells upon the Baptismal water, and is capable of granting new birth to the baptised person and to purify them from their sins.
5. The priest says the following verses from the Psalms (28: 2,3; 31: 5; 65:11; 50:7,9,10; 132:13), while moving the water with the Cross. The deacons respond after every sentence with, “*Alleluia*”, followed by, “*Glory be to God...*”.

NOTES:

The priest stirs the water with the Cross while reciting the Psalms, resembling the angel who was stirring the water of the pool of Bethesda to gain power of healing, ***“For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water, then whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had”*** (John 5:4).

6. The congregation sings the Communion hymn, Psalm 150, during the Baptism.

F O U R T H

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

1. The deacon or guardian takes the naked child from the West and brings them to the baptismal Font to the left of the priest and gives the child to him.
2. The priest holds the child from under the arms while facing the baby is towards the West.
3. He gradually dips the child into the water, until the child is completely immersed, while saying: “*I baptise you ...* (if the baby’s does not have a Christian name, the priest must give them a name from the Holy Bible, or a saint’s name) ... *in the name of the Father...*”, and this is the first immersion.
4. He lifts the child from the water and breathes into them, then immerses the child again saying: “*And the Son...*”, this is the second immersion.
5. Then he lifts the child from the water and breathes into them again, then immerses the child for the third time in the water while saying: “*And the Holy Spirit*”, and this is the third immersion. Then he lifts the child from the water and breathes into them for the third time.
6. The priest lifts the child by his hands above the Baptismal font with his face downwards so that any water in the baby’s mouth or nose may come out. If the child delays in breathing, the priest may shake them

gently, and breathe in their face to regain normal breathing.

NOTES:

1. We see the priest receiving the child from the left, and then after baptism giving the child to the mother from the right side. This action signifies that Baptism transforms us from the side of rejection, which is darkness, to the side of acceptance, which is the light. The Syrian Fraction mentions, *“Instead of the sin permeating the world, the Son died on the Cross and restored us from the left to the right providence”*.
2. The three immersions in Baptism is in the name of the Holy Trinity : The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for the Lord Jesus taught His saintly disciples, ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”*** (Matthew 28:19,20).

As Baptism is death with Christ and resurrection with Him, through it the believer is granted the blessings of salvation that is accomplished by the death of Christ on the Cross, and as Christ died and was buried for three days, so also immersion of the baptised occurs three times in the Baptismal water, then the child immerges from the Baptismal font as Christ the Lord came out of the tomb. ***“Buried with Him in baptism, in which***

you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).

3. The priest must be careful with the Baptismal water during Baptism, when taking the child from the Baptismal Font, and handing them to the mother, so that no water spills out from the font and is trodden by feet.
4. The mother must take care of the water that is used to wash the towel the baby is wrapped in after baptism, and the baptism clothes the child wears following baptism, as well as the water that is used to bath the baby after the baptism. The water should be disposed of in a spring or well, so that it not be trodden on, for the water contains the holy Myron oil.
5. When both male and female children are presented for baptism, the male child is baptised first, to symbolise man being the head of the woman.

THE RITE FOR DISCHARGING THE BAPTISMAL WATER

If the priest wants to discharge the Baptismal water after Baptism, he washes his hands with some water to clear what clings to them from the Myron oil, then washes around the Baptismal font what was sprinkled from the Baptismal water that contained some Myron, and pours it into the font.

Then the priest prays, “*We ask and entreat Your goodness, O Philanthropic One, O Lord, to return this water to its first nature to be restored to the earth...*”

Then he opens the plug below the Baptismal font so all the water trickles into the reservoir in the ground. Thus the Baptismal rite ends.

NOTES:

1. It is not advisable to keep the Baptismal waters which contain the Apocalypse oil, Ghaliloun oil and Myron oil, without discharge for a long time, otherwise the water, due to the oils, may rot. It is advisable for the Liturgy of Baptism to be prayed at each Baptism and for the water to be immediately discharged after Baptism. In extreme conditions, the water must not be kept in the Baptismal font for more than three days.
2. It is wrong to add new water to the Baptismal water after its sanctification, as we do not add wine to the chalice after the sanctification and transubstantiation.
3. When building the Baptismal font, care must be given to make it deep and wide enough to contain adults of other denominations, who join our Church and are baptised, or certain persons whose baptism, for various reasons was neglected by their parents. Hence during baptism, the priest says, “*If you ... were not baptised, I now baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son*

and of the Holy Spirit”, and immerses the person three times as usual.

If the Baptismal font is not spacious enough to contain an adult, it is possible to provide a large container big enough to make it possible to completely immerse the person according to the Baptismal Rite by immersion. Following the baptism, the container must be broken or only specified for this purpose as it is sanctified and ordained by prayers and Myron poured into it.

4. It is better to build a sink near the Baptismal font for the priest to wash his hands after Baptism, so he does not wash his hands in the font, and for the sink to flow into the same reservoir as the Baptismal font.

THE ADULT BAPTISM IS AS FOLLOWS ...

If the person to be baptised is a man, then after completion of the Rite of Renouncing Satan and recitation of the Orthodox Creed, and the Liturgy of Baptism, the attendants should leave the Baptismal room, so the baptised may undress, and go down into the Baptismal font immersed up to his neck, then the priest comes and dips his head in the Baptismal water three times saying: *“I baptise you ...) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*.

Then the priest leaves the room, and the baptised person arises out of the Baptismal water and dries his body by the prepared towel, then wears his underwear. Then the priest comes and

anoints him with the Myron oil 36 times. Then he dresses in garments appropriate for this happy occasion.

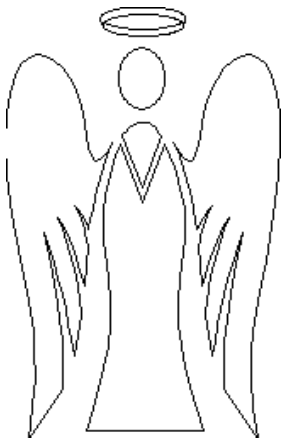
If the person to be baptised is a woman, after the priest prays the Liturgy of Baptism and performs the Rite of Renouncing Satan, the profession and Orthodox Creed, he leaves the room and asks the deaconess to assist the woman to undress, and go down into the Baptismal font immersed up to her neck. Then the priest enters and places his hand on the woman's head (preferably he should be standing behind a curtain) and immerses her in water three times while saying: *"I baptise you ... in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"*. She may wear a white garment specified for this occasion with which she enters into the Baptismal font. Then the priest leaves the room, and the woman arises from the Baptismal font and dries her body with the prepared towel, and clothes herself appropriately for this occasion. The priest comes and anoints her with the holy Myron oil on her external members only, such as on her head, her senses; ears, eyes, nostrils, mouth and both wrists. Thus the Sacrament of Holy Chrism is performed.

THE BAPTISM OF BLOOD

During the days of persecution, many pagans believed in Christ from simply being touched by witnessing the strong faith of the Christians who were martyred for Christ. As a result, these pagans welcomed martyrdom for Christ, even though they had previously not been baptised.

In this situation, the blood which they shed is recognised, and

considered a “Baptism of Blood”. hence, they receive the crown of martyrdom and eternal life. In essence, Baptism is dying with Christ, and these martyrs shed their blood honourably for and with Christ.



Many saints spoke about the “Baptism of Blood”. St Cyril of Jerusalem said, “Whoever does not accept Baptism has no salvation, except the martyrs, who without the Baptism of water are granted salvation by the Baptism of Blood”. When our Saviour was crucified on the Cross, He was wounded by a spear in His side, and water and blood came forth. Likewise, during times of peace, baptism is carried out through water, and during

times of persecution, by blood. The Saviour Himself called martyrdom by blood and Baptism by saying: ***“Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?”*** (Matthew 20:22).

St. Cyril the Great said: “Some received salvation and eternal life without any need for signs from the water, as they were baptised by blood”.

THE BAPTISM OF A DYING PERSON

If a child got sick before their baptism and their parents were frightened the child may die, the child must be baptised even if they are a day old. In this case another person, other than the mother, must take the child to the Church for baptism, and then the priest must anoint the child with the Myron. The Rites mention (in the third chapter) : “If the newly born was in fear of death before the mother is purified from blood, someone else may take the child to be baptised, as the delivering woman must stay away from Church forty days if she delivered a male child and eighty days if she delivered a female child.”

In the occasion of baptising a dying child, it is not possible to be restricted with all the conditions of Baptism, so the child may be baptised by wiping the whole body by water instead of immersion, and if time is limited, the rite of fasting for a priest before baptism may not occur.

If the child dies, their soul will go to paradise as a pure angel, but if the child lives, the baptism must not be repeated, as it is binding. Baptism only takes place once.