

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

Studies in the Faith

The Sacramental Life of the Church

(Part 1)



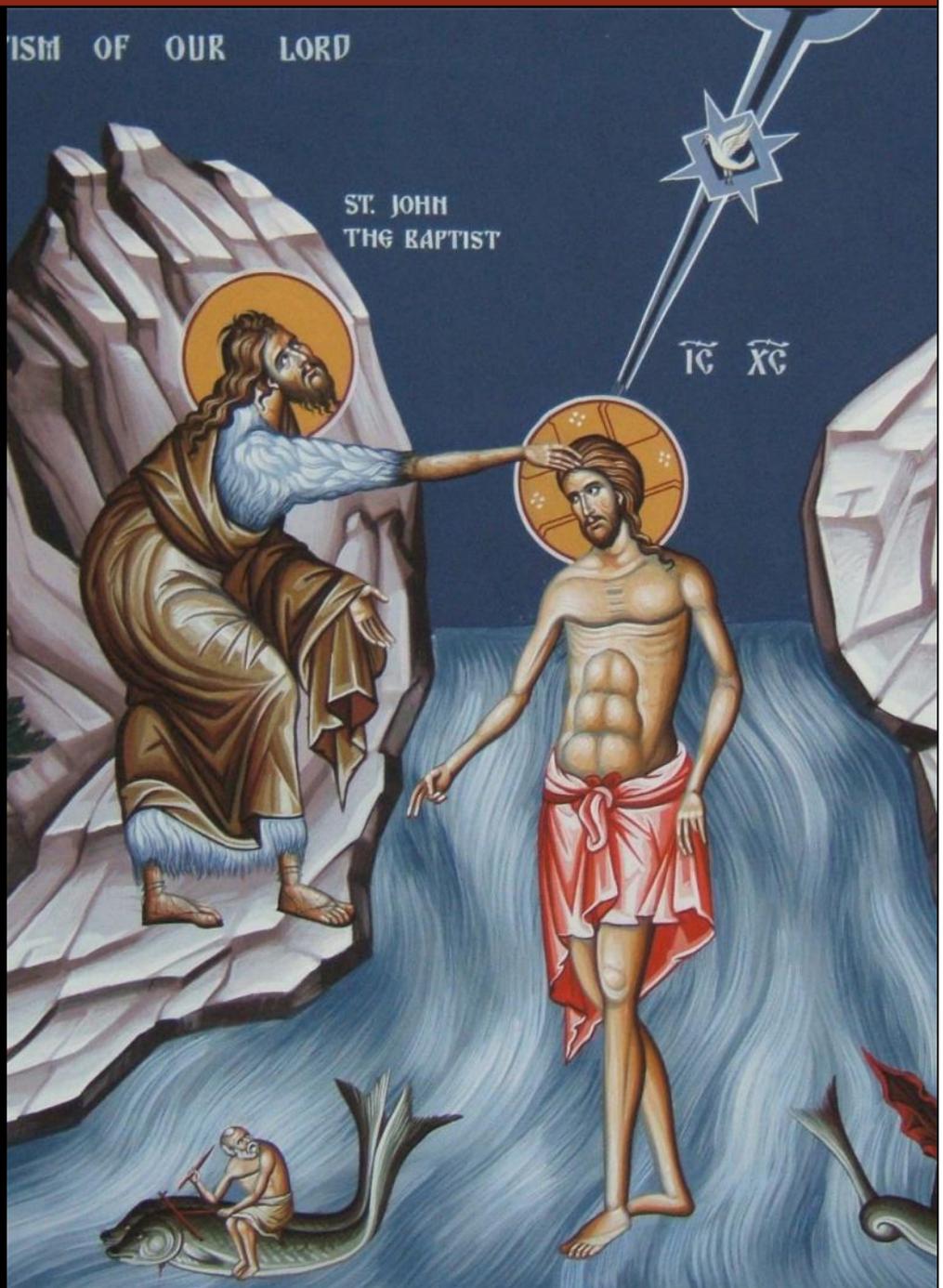
**GREEK ORTHODOX
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OF THE
ASSUMPTION**

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THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE CHURCH

"Growth in prayer has no end," Theophan informs us. "If this growth ceases, it means that life ceases." The way of the heart is endless because the God whom we seek is infinite in the depths of His glory. The Jesus Prayer is a signpost along the spiritual journey, a journey that all of us must take.

(From The Jesus Prayer by Fr. Steven Tsichlis)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

The Orthodox Church: by Timothy Ware, Pages 99-121 and 257-272.

The Sacramental Life of the Church: by Fr. Alciviadis Calivas, Th.D., Pages 9-20 of this booklet.

SACRAMENTS: AN EASTERN ORTHODOX UNDERSTANDING

To begin with, the word sacrament is found nowhere in the Scriptures. The Latin term *sacramentum*, meaning "to make holy", was a legal term belonging to the language of Roman jurisprudence. It referred to the oath taken by a Roman soldier upon his enlisting in the army. Given the above, Tertullian (160-225 AD) applied the word to Baptism, asserting that each Christian's reception of the rite thus enlists him in Christ's army.

While the use of the word sacrament came to be widely accepted in the West, Eastern Christianity did not accept Tertullian's application of it. Instead the Eastern Church used the word *mustrion*, a Greek scriptural word. The English word mystery comes from the Greek Hellenistic word *mustrion*. In scripture the word *mustrion* gives emphasis to God's entire scheme of redemption through the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ. Through the mysteries of the Church we share in our Lord's scheme of redemption—we share in the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Hence, as mysteries, the sacramental life of the Church cannot be explained.

Given this broader understanding, Eastern Orthodox Christians refuse to limit the mysteries of the Church to either two or seven. Anything which reveals God's Redemptive Mystery through words, acts, symbols, Christian relationships, etc., qualifies as a mystery of the Church.

Because Jesus is the Sacrament which makes all Sacraments possible, every sacrament finds its unity in Him. No one sacrament, therefore, can be isolated from the others, nor is each sacrament administered to perform a different "job." Each sacrament manifests Christ in His wholeness, not "pieces" of His power. Each brings union in and with the one Lord. For example, Baptism reveals God's union with us through Christ; Chrismation manifests God's union with us through the Spirit's indwelling within and among us; and the Eucharist actualizes the reality of God's union with us as the Body of Christ. In essence, what Christ is to us at Baptism, He is to us in Chrismation and the Eucharist. The purpose of all Sacraments is to unite us to Christ.

If sacraments reveal and manifest the presence of God and His union with men, they must be communal. God Himself is Three Persons in communion, and His union with men is through Christ in the Church Community. Hence, the sacraments cannot be given to the "unconnected" individual; no sacrament can exist apart from Christ Who dwells within His body.

SACRAMENTS

1. The Orthodox Church uses the word "*mysterion*" instead of sacrament to denote the divinely instituted rites which bestow upon the faithful God's sanctifying divine grace. The word *mysterion* essentially means "incomprehensible".
2. The Orthodox Church recognizes seven Sacraments:
 - Baptism (Matthew 28:18-20, John 3:5, Romans 6)
 - Chrismation (Acts 8:17, I John 2:27)
 - Holy Eucharist (Matthew 26:26-27, John 6:51, 6:56, 1 Cor 11:23-29)
 - Confession (Matthew 4:17, 18:18, John 20:22-23, 1 John 1:9)
 - Ordination (Acts 6:6, I Tim 4:14)
 - Marriage (John 2:1-11, Eph. 5:32, Romans 7:2)
 - Holy Unction (James 5:14-15)

No, God's grace is not limited to these seven. What are some other services of the church in which God's grace is manifested? Consecration, Blessing of the Waters, Blessing of a Home, the Funeral Service, Vespers and Matins Services, private prayer life, etc., just to name a few.

The Orthodox Church has never limited the Sacraments to seven. The number seven is symbolic and is used to indicate the perfection of grace where seven sacraments were identified: Fr. Co-niaris states: "The number seven was adopted only in the seventeenth century under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. This was done in opposition to the Protestant Reformers who recognized but two Sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist. All the sacraments find their fulfillment and ultimate expression in the Holy Eucharist."

3. The mysteries of the church prepare the faithful for the future life, but they also make that life real, here and now. We are given a foretaste of the things to come through them. Through the sacraments God shares His life with us, redeems us from sin and death and bestows on us the glory of immortality. All these Sacraments were ordained either by Christ Himself or through His Apostles, as can be seen through the scriptural references, so that our image and likeness may be transformed into His image and likeness so that we may attain Sainthood. As such, the sacraments are not symbolic.
4. The mysteries are completely operative and effective when two basic conditions are observed: First, the ministers of the mysteries, the bishop and/or priest, must be canonically ordained and in canonical order with the Church. Second, they must be "ordained" to conduct the prescribed rites of the Church. The mysteries of the Church are not in any way affected by the sins of the priest. Christ is the celebrant through His representative, "*antiprosopof*".
5. In principle, the Orthodox church does not see the same fullness in the sacraments performed outside the Church. Yet she does not consider these actions of other Christians as lacking totally in spiritual power and substance. The Sacraments of other Christians are disfigured to the measure that Christ and His teaching have been kept or distorted. These Christians may be considered, in a lesser or greater degree, as peripheral members of the Orthodox Church. That is why we receive through Chrismation those who have been baptized in other Trinitarian faiths.
6. It is important to emphasize the human factor in the operation of the Sacraments since salvation is accomplished by God in cooperation with humanity. The incorporation of man into God and his union with God require cooperation of two unequal, but equally necessary forces: divine grace and human will. So the full effectiveness of the sacramental life is made manifest to a greater or lesser degree by the spiritual awareness, the faith and the devoutness of the participants. Yet no one, unless he has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, is left without some measure of grace, since "the sun rises and shines" upon all.

7. Why do you think the Church uses "material things" to administer the Sacraments?

8. What determines how the Sacraments are administered?

BAPTISM

Scriptural References: St. Matthew 3:13-17, 28:18-20, St. John 3:5, Romans 6

Purpose: Baptism engraves upon and imparts to each person anew the image of God distorted by the effects of Adam's sin.

The triple immersion in, and emersion out from the baptismal waters is laden with meaning. Baptism is both a death and a new birth. As St. Paul so beautifully states in his Letter to the Romans, the baptismal waters destroy one life and beget another: the death of the old man, who is in solidarity with Adam, is subject to sin and death, and the birth of the new man, who now is in union with Christ.

As such, age is not a condition for baptism.

- Scriptural references
- Age of reason is to limit God's grace to our ability to reason. You cannot restrict the Holy Spirit.
- Baptism is not performed in a vacuum but upon the explicit profession of faith by parents and sponsors.
- Baptism unites the believer not only with God but with the Church in which God dwells.

THE THREE PRE-BAPTISMAL RITES

There are three rites for infants which are closely linked to baptism:

1. Prayer for the birth of a Child.

The Church expresses thanksgiving for the safe birth. Blessing the newborn infant, the Church anticipates its new and second birth through water and the spirit.

2. Prayer at the signing of a Child when it receives a name on the eighth day after birth.

The newborn child is given a Christian name from its parents. The Christian name is a sign of the child's new identity with the faith community. Today the name is given at the baptism.

3. The Forty Day Blessing.

The newborn child is brought to the Church in imitation of the New Testament event, when Mary, the Theotokos, brought the infant Christ into the Temple to fulfill the requirements of the Law. On this day the mother is blessed and the infant "Churched", or accepted as a peripheral member of the Church, until it is fully incorporated into his/her new life through baptism.

THE BAPTISMAL RITE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Baptismal Rite of the Orthodox Church consists of three major parts:

- The first part is preparatory in nature and is referred to as the "Prayers for the Making of a Catechumen". It contains prayers of exorcism, the renunciation and condemnation of the devil, the acceptance of Christ, the recitation of the Nicene Creed and a call to baptism and is usually performed in the narthex or alcove of a church.

- The second part is the actual baptismal service. The focus is on the baptismal font. The service takes place around the baptismal font. The initiate is first anointed with the "oil of gladness". The anointing is both a sign of healing of his/her fallen nature and of his/her becoming an athlete for Christ and is also a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal waters.
- After the baptism the Christian is then robed in a white garment, which is symbolic of the regeneration, newness and his/her future immortality.
- The Christian is then Chrismated.
- Tonsure symbolizes a sacrificial offering that does not require the mutilation of the human body. It also symbolizes complete servitude and obedience to Christ while denouncing the secular world.
- The baptismal font is circled three times singing Galatians 3:27.
- The Christian receives his/her first communion

There is such a thing as an "emergency" baptism whereby any person who is baptized in the name of the Trinity can be baptized. Aerobaptism.

CHRISMATION

Scriptural References: Acts 8:17, I John 2:27

Purpose: While baptism restores God's fallen image in man, Chrismation makes us partakers of His Holy Spirit.

Chrismation is very much associated with and related to the baptismal rite. Chrismation is not so much the "second mystery" following Baptism but is rather the mystery that fulfills baptism since the Holy Spirit through Chrismation bestows upon the Christian the very source of life and illumination. Holy Chrism is therefore the visible tabernacle of the Holy Spirit.

Chrismation causes a mysterious new and hidden life to flow in us. It imparts to persons the energies and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3 and Gal 5:22).

During Chrismation the priest states, "The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit" Chrismation is called the seal. The neophyte receives Holy Spirit as the source, the pledge and the seal of unending life. Anointed with the oils of Chrism, we are marked forever as the sheep and soldiers of Christ. We belong to Him and His Holy Church.

Through Chrismation Christians who have been baptized in other faiths who want to become Orthodox are received into the Orthodox Church.

The Chrism is a mixture of olive oil, balsam, wine, and some forty aromatic substances, symbolizing the fullness of sacramental grace, the sweetness of the Christian life and the manifold and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Chrism is always consecrated on Holy Thursday. This rite belongs to the bishop, and its administration to the presbyters. Each head of a self-governing church has the right to prepare and consecrate Chrism.



BAPTISM & CHRISMATION REVIEW WORKSHEET

BAPTISM

Scriptural References:

Purpose:

Facts:

CHRISMATION

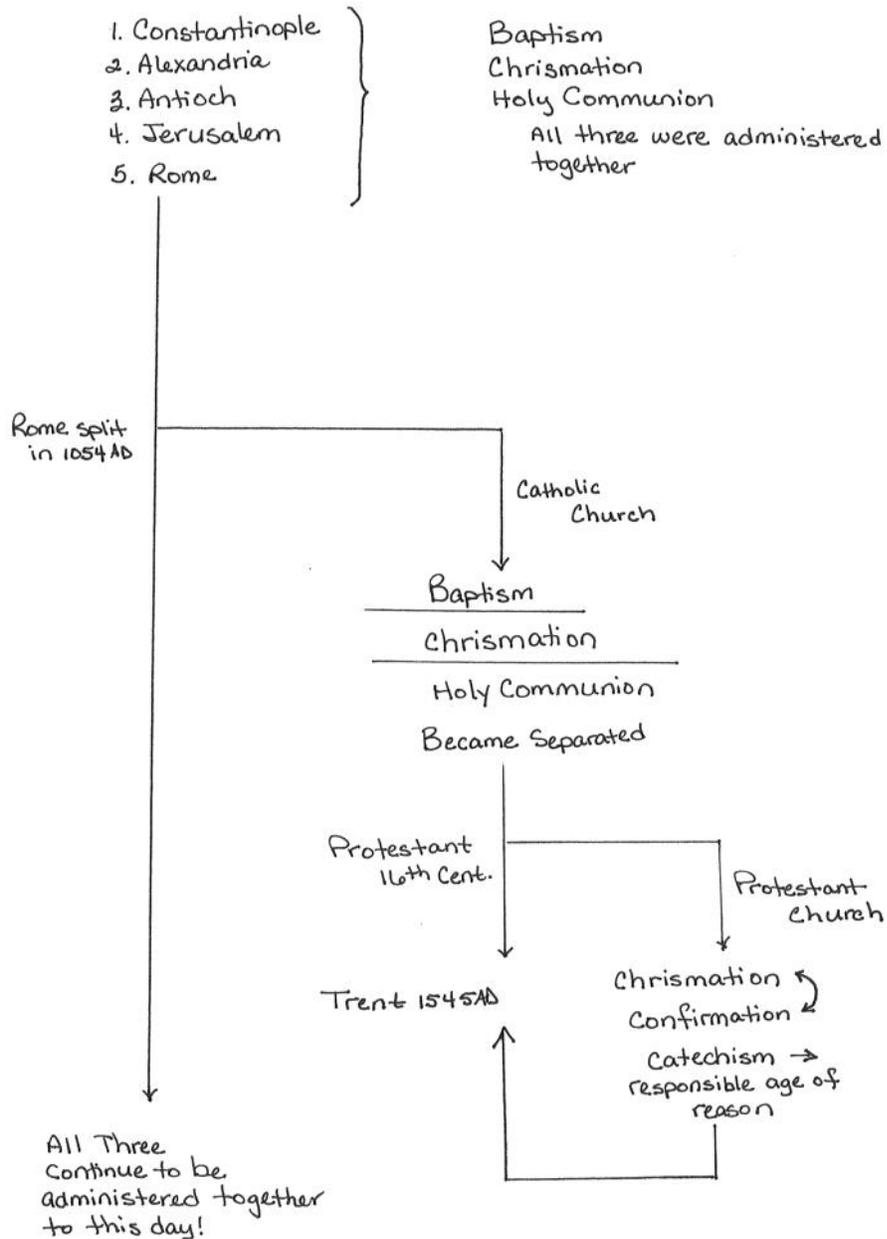
Scriptural References:

Purpose:

Facts:

SESSION CHECK LIST

- Attended class
- Completed Worksheets associated with the Session
- Read pages 99-121 and 257-272 of The Orthodox Church, by Timothy Ware.
- Read the attached article, The Sacramental Life of the Church, by Fr. Alciviadis Calivas, Th.D., pages 9-20.



The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church

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Holy Cross School of Theology

The life and character of an Orthodox Christian is in large measure shaped, nourished, and enriched by the liturgy or worship of the Church. Replete with biblical readings, imagery and expressions, the texts of the liturgy set forth in doxological form the Church's authentic and living tradition. In the liturgy, the Orthodox Christian is in constant touch with the fundamental truths of the faith. Worship becomes a theology of fervent prayer, a living sacrifice of praise of a biblical people, a vision of the spiritual world, a betrothal with the Holy Spirit, and foretaste of the things to come.

Paschal in character and essentially eschatological in spirit, Orthodox worship while continuously rehearsing the mighty works of God in history, joyously celebrates the kingdom of God already come and already given to us as the pledge of our salvation through the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The infusion of God's life. The powers of the Kingdom already experienced in the Church are manifested through the divine mysteries or sacraments offered in faith. It is through these, as through windows, that the risen Christ enters this dark world to put sin and corruption to death and introduce abiding and immortal life.

God's life is infused into the present age and mingled with it, without change or confusion, through the mysteries. God touches, purifies, illumines, sanctifies and deifies human life in his uncreated divine energies through the mysteries. Christ becomes everyone's contemporary in the mysteries. All that He did one and for all for the salvation of the world has now passed over into the mysteries. Thus, the mysteries become the various manifestations of our Lord's saving power, and the means by which Christ is present and works in his Church. 'As the Church is the perpetual extension of Christ, so the mysteries are the power by which the Church sanctifies people' (Ch. Androutsos).

A preparation for the future life. The mysteries prepare the faithful for the future life, but they also make that life real, here and now. We are given the vision and have the foretaste of the things to come through them. They introduce us continuously and in various ways to the transforming power of God, which communicates salvation, i.e., the cure of our fallen humanity and the elimination of the germ of mortality." In them we encounter Christ, in order to be Christ. We enter upon a decisively new reality: in Christ we learn to become fully conscious of what it really means to be human. Encountering God, we also see the power of evil, whose force invades, pervades and distorts the image of God in us. Allied with Christ, we share in his victory over sin and death; the power of divine love overcomes evil in us and makes us anew into children of God and heirs of his Kingdom.

The meaning of the word "mystery". Each mystery is directly rooted in Christ. Christ himself is the primordial mystery (John 1: 1-18), and the very celebrant of all the mysteries. The Orthodox Church uses the Greek word *mysterion*, instead of sacrament, to denote the divinely instituted rites which manifest and communicate sanctifying divine grace. The word *mysterion* essentially means anything hidden or incomprehensible. It has been applied by the Church to the essential beliefs and doctrines of the faith and appears several times in Holy Scripture; its chief meaning is linked to the hidden and secret will of God related to the salvation of the world, now manifest in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word (Logos). "And since the Church is to proclaim that mystery and communicate it to the people, the essential acts by which she is accomplishing this are also called mysteries. Through all these acts we are made participants and beneficiaries of the great mystery of salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ" (Rev. Alexander Schmemmann).

Transmitting grace by visible means. The holy mysteries are at once inward and outward in character. Redeeming and sanctifying grace is transmitted by visible means. "The theanthropic nature of Christ is extended both to his Church and Her means of grace' (D. Constantelos). This embodiment of spiritual realities in material form is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation and the ultimate redemption of matter. It is consistent with the very nature of the Church as the divine-human institution and the continuing mystery of Christ's presence in history. It also affirms the basic "goodness" of nature and recognizes the psychosomatic nature of humankind.

The material elements, signs and gestures used in each mystery, are living symbols that relate to the realities of our human experiences. Material things are made into vehicles of the Spirit, and are adequate in each case to express deeply and amply the mysterious power of divine grace (e.g., bread and wine, the uniquely human food, once blessed and consecrated become the food of immortality, the Body and Blood of Christ).

The mysteries, while physical in their outward expression, are not mere symbolic rites. The outward signs of the mysteries convey grace tangibly not of themselves but by the very presence of the Holy Spirit in them. And the grace given is not at all ambiguous or symbolic but real and actual, in order to truly recreate and perfect each person in the image and likeness of God.

Commenting on the real presence of the divine energies in the holy mysteries St. John of Damascus notes the following: "But if you inquire as to how this takes place, it is enough for you to know that it is effected by the Holy Spirit. The manner of the change can in no way be understood. But one can put it well thus, that just as in nature, bread, by eating, and wine and water, by drinking, are changed into the body and blood of the eater and drinker, yet not becoming a different body from the former one; so the bread of the Table, as also the wine and water, are supernaturally changed by the invocation and presence of the Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ, and are not two, but one and the same."

Divinely ordered institutions. The effect of holy mysteries is not based upon the personal faith and moral character of the clergy, not in their "use," nor in the faith and good will of the recipients, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. For the mysteries derive their power from God and not from men; they are not mere human inventions. They are divinely ordered institutions, by which God in his unsearchable wisdom and ineffable glory and love is transfiguring the world in and through his Spirit-led Church by restoring to all things and all relationships their true meaning, purpose and destiny, and communicating divine life and love to all persons who freely hear and respond to the call of his Son.

Human response. It is important now to emphasize the human factor as well, since salvation is accomplished by God in cooperation (synergy) with humanity. "The incorporation of man into Christ and his union with God require cooperation of two unequal, but equally necessary forces: divine grace and human will" (Lev Gillet). The holy mysteries are neither magical nor mechanical operations. As the seed gives forth according to the ground into which it was planted, so the full effectiveness of the sacramental life is made manifest to a greater or lesser degree by the spiritual awareness, the faith and the devoutness of the participants. Yet no one, unless he has blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, is left without some measure of grace, since the sun rises and shines upon all.

The holy mysteries are continually embracing, taking up and transforming the deepest and most fundamental human experiences. Intensely personal and at the same time intensely communal, the holy mysteries continuously and simultaneously renew the spirit of persons "who have put on the new man, which was created according to God, in righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4: 24); they prepare the saints for the work of the ministry, until all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature manhood, and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4: 12-13).

As each holy mystery has its outward signs, which manifest the work of the Spirit, so each Christian life, sharing in the power of the holy mysteries, itself becomes a sacrament. As God permits and to the extent the will is sensitized, the mind is illumined and the heart is energized and made pure. Those who are Christ's live and walk in the Spirit and the Spirit bears fruit in them: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control (Gal. 5: 22-25).

The number of the Mysteries. In recent centuries, the Orthodox Church has recognized seven mysteries for sacraments: baptism; Chrismation; the Eucharist; penance; the priesthood; marriage; and the anointing of the sick (*Euchelaion*).

While the New Testament does not specifically enumerate the holy mysteries, it is clear that the Apostolic Church received people through baptism and Chrismation (confirmation); celebrated the Eucharist at least weekly on the Lord's day; readmitted penitents through an act of penance; selected and ordained her minis-

ters; sanctified the union of husband and wife; and extended the healing ministry of Christ to those in need of divine succor. It is evident, therefore, that the Church gave special attention to these acts from the beginning, despite the absence of explicit testimony from Scripture, the early Fathers or the Ecumenical Councils.

The mysteries are founded upon the words and actions of the Lord in Scripture and are, in a particular way, a continuation and an extension of his saving ministry. Among them, baptism and the Eucharist hold a preeminent position. While emphasizing the importance of the holy mysteries, Orthodox theology is careful not to separate or isolate them from the Church's many other rites of blessing, consecration and passage. "Between the wider and narrower sense of the term 'sacrament' (mystery) there is no rigid division: the whole Christian life must be seen as a unity, as a single mystery or one great sacrament, whose different aspects are expressed in a great variety of acts, some performed but once in a man's life, others perhaps daily" (Kallistos Ware).

How the mysteries become operative. The Church, moved by the Holy Spirit, prescribes the manner of the administration of the holy mysteries. The mysteries are operative and effective when two basic conditions are observed. First, the ministers of the mysteries, the bishop and/or priest, must be canonically ordained and in canonical order with the Church. Second, they must be "ordained" to conduct the prescribed rites of the Church, not because they contain "magical" powers in themselves, but because the rites express the faith and the mind of the Church concerning these saving acts.

The rites contain prayers, petitions, Scripture readings, hymns, gestures and liturgical actions. Rooted in the New Testament and shaped by the historical process in the crucible of the living and dynamic community of faith—the Church—the rites embody the vision of the new life, confirm the real presence of divine grace, and communicate salvation and sanctification to the believers prepared to receive these divine gifts.

Sacraments outside the Church. In principle the Orthodox Church does not see the same fullness in the 'sacraments' performed outside the Church. Yet, she does not consider these actions of other Christians as lacking totally in spiritual power and substance. Here, the Church applies the doctrine of economy and sees these acts in the light of the Lord's words "no man who performs a miracle using my name can at the same time speak ill of me" (Mk. 9: 38). The 'sacraments' of other Christians are disfigured to the measure that Christ and his teaching have been kept or distorted. These Christians may be considered, in a lesser or greater degree, as peripheral members of the Orthodox Church. The center of the operation of the Holy Spirit is the historical and visible One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

BAPTISM

Baptism is the initial and essential mystery and an absolute, decisive action for the Christian. The benefits of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection are mediated to the believer through Baptism. Baptism engraves upon and imparts to each person afresh the image of God distorted by the effects of sin, an image continuously disfigured by the accumulated wrongdoing and wrong thinking of Adam's progeny and imitators.

The baptismal font becomes at once a tomb and a womb: "at the self-same moment you die and are born; the water of salvation is at once your grave and you mother" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem). The triple immersion in and emersion from the baptismal waters is laden with meaning. Baptism is both a death and a new birth. The water destroys one life and it begets another. It drowns the old man and raises up the new. The liturgical act gives expression to two realities: the death of the old man, who in solidarity with Adam, is subject to sin and death, and the birth of the new man, who in his union with Christ, is provided with new members and faculties in preparation for the life to come.

The beginning of a process of becoming. Age is not a conditional factor in baptism. As in Christian antiquity, the Church continues to baptize both adults and infants. As a matter of fact, infant baptism is the norm in most instances. However, such baptisms are not performed in a vacuum, but upon the explicit profession of faith by parents and sponsors and especially the very community itself, gathered to celebrate the mystery, each time reaffirming its faith, pledging itself to provide an environment of continued Christian witness for its members regardless of age and circumstance. Baptism is the process of constant becoming. The conversion of the heart

or continual repentance is the daily experience that makes life Theo centric and oriented towards God's Kingdom.

Baptism unites the believer not only with Christ but with his people, the Church. One is baptized into the community of faith to share its life, its values, and its vision. Baptism, by bringing us into the glorified life of Christ and making us part of his deified humanity, integrates us into the Church, his body, where the business of dying and rising is daily experienced in ascetic discipline in the life of prayer and in the Eucharist.

Pre-baptismal Rites for Infants. The Orthodox Church has three rites for infants which are closely linked to baptism. The first rite is for the mother and child on the first day of birth. In this rite the Church expresses her thanksgiving for the safe delivery of the mother and her joy at the appearance of a new life. Blessing the newborn infant the Church anticipates its new and second birth through water and the Spirit (John 3: 5). A second rite is conducted on the eighth day after birth, when the new born child receives its name from its parents. The child is given a Christian name as a sign of its new identity with the faith community. The third rite is conducted on the fortieth day after birth. The new-born child is to be brought to the Church in imitation of the New Testament event, when Mary, the *Theotokos*, brought the infant Christ into the Temple to fulfill the requirements of the law. On this day the mother is blessed and the infant "churches," or accepted as a peripheral member of the Church, until it is fully incorporated into her life through baptism.

The Baptismal Rite. The baptismal rite of the Orthodox Church consists of three major parts. The present single rite is in fact a coalescence of several separated but interdependent rites, which were performed over the course of several days and weeks when the order of the catechumenate was once in full force.

The first part is preparatory in nature. It is usually referred to as the *catechesis*. It contains the prayer for the making of a catechumen; prayers of exorcism; the renunciation and condemnation of the devil; the acceptance of Christ; the recitation of the Nicene Creed; and the call to baptism.

The second part is the Service of Baptism proper. It focuses almost entirely on the baptismal font. It includes a series of petitions; a prayer of invocation for the consecration of the baptismal waters, so that they may be given the power of spiritual fecundity; and an anointing of the candidate with the "oil of gladness." In the case of the candidate the anointing is both a sign of healing of his fallen nature and of his becoming an athlete for Christ. In the case of the font, the anointing is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the baptismal waters.

When these rites have been completed the candidate is baptized by the officiating bishop or priest with three immersions and emersion using the liturgical formula "the servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father. Amen. And the Son. Amen. And the Holy Spirit. Amen." The three fold immersion becomes the adequate sign of participation in Christ's three day burial and resurrection.

The newly illumined Christian is then robed in a white garment, the symbol of regeneration, newness, kingship, and future immortality. The white garment, which is the color of royalty, symbolizes the gifts of baptism and reminds the neophyte of his responsibility to remain whole and be faithful to the baptismal pledge.

At this point the mystery of the holy Chrism (*myron*) is administered. The neophyte is anointed with the consecrated oils by the celebrant using the liturgical formula "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Chrism is applied to the sense and other parts of the body in the pattern of the Cross, signifying the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit takes the neophyte beyond the restoration of the fallen nature. The continuous presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the constant, progressive, personal growth of the Christian into the image and likeness of God. He or she is also given a cross to wear.

In the ancient Church baptism was immediately followed by the celebration of the Eucharist. The newly illumined Christians, holding lighted candles proceeded from the baptistery with the clergy to the nave of the Church to join the faithful for the Eucharist. Vestiges of this ancient practice form the next sequence of actions in the baptismal rite. A procession around the font, with the singing of "As many as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia" (Gal. 3: 27) is followed by the reading of two excerpts from the New Testa-

ment: the Epistle to the Romans (6: 3-11) explains the meaning of baptism; and the Gospel of Matthew (28: 16-20) recalling the command of the Lord to the Church to instruct and baptize. The neophyte then receives Holy Communion.

After a set of petitions called the "Fervent Litany," the neophyte participates in three additional rites. These were originally conducted on the eighth day after baptism; they now form the last part of the baptismal rite. The celebrant washes the neophyte's forehead as an indication that the visible signs of the mysteries (the oils, et. al.) must now become inner realities and the very essence of life. This is emphasized with the laying on of hands upon the candidate and the tonsure. Through the laying on of hands, the neophyte and those concerned for his growth in Christ, are reminded that the Christian is armed with the Holy Spirit to war against all adverse powers. The tonsure, or cutting of the hair, indicates both a sacrificial offering that does not require the mutilation or humiliation of the human body and a sign of servitude and obedience. The new Christian proclaims his willingness and readiness to negate the world with its false values and to serve God with faithful devotion.

CHRISMATION

The mystery of Chrismation (Confirmation) is anchored in the events of Jesus' baptism and the outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost, yet, in the Lord's declaration "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3: 5).

There is both an intrinsic unity and a distinction between the mysteries of baptism and chrismation. They are intimately related theologically and liturgically. Chrismation is not so much the second mystery, as it is the very fulfillment of baptism. While baptism incorporates us into Christ's new risen existence, chrismation makes us partakers of his Spirit, the very source of this new life and of total illumination.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit. Chrismation causes a mysterious new and hidden life to flow in us. It imparts to persons the energies and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11; 2-3 and Gal. 5: 22). "To some the Holy Spirit is given that they may be able to benefit others and edify the Church by speaking of the future or by teaching mysteries or by freeing men from disease with a single word. To others, however, He is given in order that they themselves may become more virtuous and shine with godliness or with an abundance of sobriety, love or humility" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas).

Chrismation is called the seal (*sphragis*). The neophyte receives the Holy Spirit as the source, the pledge and the seal of unending life. Anointed with the oils of Chrism, we are marked forever as the sheep and soldiers of Christ. We belong to him and to his holy Church. Thus chrismation, once canonically performed, cannot be repeated. Chrismation is also a sacrament of reconciliation. People who come to Orthodoxy out of certain heretical confessions and schismatic churches are received through the mystery of chrismation. The ritual anointing "validates" through "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" a Christian baptism performed in irregular circumstances-i.e., outside the canonical boundaries of the Church" (John Meyendorff).

The holy chrism. The chrism that is used for the ritual anointing is a mixture of olive oil, balsam, wine, and some forty aromatic substances, symbolizing the fullness of sacramental grace, the sweetness of the Christian life and manifold and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit. The chrism is also called the holy Myron. Chrism, prepared and consecrated periodically on Holy Thursday, is the antitype, the visible tabernacle of the Holy Spirit.

By ancient custom the right to prepare and consecrate the chrism belongs to the bishop and its administration to the presbyters. Each autocephalous Orthodox Church has the right to prepare and consecrate chrism. The Patriarchate of Constantinople, as the senior jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church, prepares and distributes the holy *myron* to other Orthodox jurisdictions.

THE EUCHARIST

The Eucharist or Divine Liturgy is the central mystery of the Church. It is at once the source and the summit of her life. In it, the Church is continuously changed from a human community into the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and the People of God. The Eucharist, according to St. Nicholas Cabasilas, is the final and greatest of the mysteries "since it is not possible to go beyond it or add anything to it. After the Eucharist there is nowhere further to go. There all must stand and try to examine the means by which we may preserve the treasure to the end. For in it we obtain God Himself, and God is united with us in the most perfect union."

Every sacred mystery makes its partakers into members of Christ. But the Eucharist effects this most perfectly: 'By dispensation of His grace, He [Christ] disseminates Himself in every believer through that flesh whose substance comes from bread and wine, blending Himself with the bodies of believers, to secure that, by this union with the Immortal, man too may be a sharer in incorruption' (N. Cabasilas).

A continuous Pentecost. Each Divine Liturgy is a continuation of the mystery of Pentecost. It is the renewal and the confirmation of the coming of the Holy Spirit who is ever present in the Church. In a prayer of the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the following is found: "Make us worth to find grace in Your presence so that our sacrifice may be pleasing to You and that Your good and gracious Spirit may abide with us and with the gifts here presented and with all Your people." The worshipping community prays earnestly that it may continue to be Spirit-bearing ("send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here presented") and that the consecrated gifts may become a communion of the Holy Spirit.

The Messianic Banquet. In the present age, between the two comings of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Divine Liturgy is always the Messianic banquet, the meal of the kingdom, the time and place in which the heavenly joins and mingles with the earthly. The Eucharist initiates humankind, nature, and time into the mystery of the uncreated Trinity. The Divine Liturgy is not simply a sacred drama or a mere representation of past events. It constitutes the very presence of God's embracing love, which purifies, enlightens, perfects, and deifies (2 Peter 1: 4) all "those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19: 9), i.e., all who through Baptism and *Chrismation* have been incorporated into the Church and have become Christ-bearers and Spirit-bearers.

In the Divine Liturgy we do not commemorate one or another isolated event of sacred history. We celebrate, in joy and thanksgiving, the whole mystery of the divine economy from creation to incarnation, especially "the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father and the second glorious coming." Thus, in experiencing the reigning Christ in the Divine Liturgy, the past, present, and future of the history of salvation are lived as one reality in the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

Partakers of divine nature. The Eucharist "is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, the flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father in His graciousness raised from the dead" (St. Ignatios of Antioch). In it we are offered Christ's deified flesh, to which we are joined, in order to partake of divine life without confusion or division. In the Eucharist, Christ acts to make us His own Body: "The Bread of Life Himself changes him who feeds on Him and transforms and assimilates him into Himself" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas). Thus, eternity penetrates our finitude. Men, women and children are invited to share in the Trinitarian life of God: "by this flesh [of Christ in the Eucharist] our community is raised to heaven; that is where this Bread truly dwells; and we enter into the Holy of Holies by the pure offering of the Body of Christ" (St. Gregory Palamas). The life of the Trinity flows and dwells in us through "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13-14). We become God-bearers.

The local church. The mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ is fully realized in the Divine Liturgy, for the Eucharist is Christ crucified and risen, in his personal presence. Every local Church, living in full the sacramental life, is the "miracle of the new life in Christ lived in community and is built upon and around the Table of the Lord. Whenever and wherever the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, in the context of doctrinal unity and canonical norms, the local Church possesses the marks of doctrinal unity and canonical norms; the local Church possesses the marks of the true Church of God: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. These marks cannot be

long to any human gathering; they are the eschatological signs given to a community through the Spirit of God" (John Meyendorff).

The Eucharist unites the members of the Church, both Christ and to one another: "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread: (1 Cor. 10: 17). Sharing in the life of Christ and revived by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes an epiphany of divine love. "If union is in truth with Christ and with one another, we are assuredly also united voluntarily with all those who partake with us" (St. John of Damascus).

The Term "Divine Liturgy". The divine Liturgy is the sacred rite by which the Orthodox Church celebrates the mystery of the Eucharist. This title for the Eucharist is derived from two Greek words, *theia* and *leitourgia*. The word *theia* means "pertaining to God;" hence divine. The term *leitourgia* comes from two words; *leitōs* (people) and *ergon* (work), hence "the work of the people" or "a public service, act or function." The word *leitourgia* was used in Greek antiquity to describe those services and acts which were performed for the benefit and common interest of all, including acts of worship. It was in this latter religious sense that the word found its way into the vocabulary of Scripture and the Church. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament the word was applied to the Temple services and the functions of the priests. In the New Testament, where the word appears infrequently, it describes the saving work of Christ (Heb. 8: 6) and Christian worship (Acts 13: 21). In the Apostolic Fathers and later tradition the word was applied to worship. By the fourth century, the word *leitourgia*, together with adjective *theia* (i.e., Divine Liturgy) had become the technical term for the mystery of the Eucharist. The word Eucharist in turn means thanksgiving. It takes its name from the great prayer of consecration (*Anaphora*) pronounced by the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy.

The origins of the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is composed of two parts, the first of which is referred to as the *Synaxis*, or the *Proanaphora*, the Liturgy of the Word, or the Liturgy of the Catechumens), and the second as the Eucharist (the Offering, the Liturgy of the Mystery (Sacrament) or the Liturgy of the Faithful). The *synaxis* or *Proanaphora*, in its basic, classical shape, is a Christianized version of the synagogue service. The Eucharist is derived from the words and actions of the Lord at the Last (Mystical) Supper.

The connection of the Divine Liturgy to the prayer service of the synagogue and to a Jewish household or fraternal ritual meal must be understood against the backdrop of the nascent Christian community. The Lord and his apostles and the first Christians were Jews. It is clear that the Church will be characterized forever by its Semitic origins. It is equally clear that the Church has close ineradicable connections with Hellenism. The Church was born in Jerusalem, but grew up in the Hellenistic world. Her Liturgy, art and theology are radiants with the imperishable traces of this double experience. "It is true that the Christian liturgy and the Eucharist especially, is one of the most original creations of Christianity. But however original it is, it is not a sort of an *ex nihilo* creation. To think so is to condemn ourselves to a minimal understanding of it" (Louis Bouyer).

The Eucharist itself was instituted by Christ at the supper on Holy Thursday to perpetuate the remembrance (*anamnesis*) of his redemptive work and to establish a continuous intimate communion (*koinonia*) between himself and those who believe in Him. The actions and words of the Lord concerning the bread and wine formed the basis for the Eucharist, the chief recurrent liturgical rite of the Church. The nucleus of every eucharistic rite consists in four actions: the offering and the placing of bread and wine on the holy Table; the anaphora or great eucharistic prayer, which includes the words of institution and the invocation of the Holy Spirit to change the gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ; the breaking of the consecrated Bread (i.e. the fraction); and the communion of the consecrated elements by the people of God.

At first the Eucharist was celebrated within the context of an evening community meal, referred to as the agape or love feast. By the end of the first or the beginning of the second century the celebration of the Eucharist was separated from the community meal and transposed to the early morning hours.

The development of the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is a complex act of rhythmic movement, sound and spectacle characterized by a deep sense of harmony, beauty dignity and mystery. It is structured around two solemn entrances, which today are abbreviated forms of earlier more elaborate ceremonies; the great eucharistic prayer (Anaphora); and the distribution of Holy Communion. An elaborate *enarxis* (opening rites), and a

series of dismissal rites (*apolyxis*) embrace the whole action.

The first or "Little Entrance," the entry of the clergy and the people into the Church, once marked the beginning of the Synaxis. The Little Entrance is a solemn procession with the Gospel accompanied with entrance hymns. The second or "Great Entrance" once marked the beginning of the Eucharist. It is a solemn procession with the gifts of the bread and wine that are to be offered and consecrated. The elements used for the offering are prepared by the clergy. The service of preparation (*Proskomide*) is performed at the Table of Preparation (*Prothesis*) before the *enarxis*. It is here, after the preparation of the bread and the cup and the commemoration of the saints, that the celebrant also commemorates the faithful, both living and dead, by name.

The verbal and non-verbal elements of the Divine Liturgy are fitted together harmoniously, so as to weave a pattern of prayer that addresses and inspires the whole person, body and soul. The principle behind the development of its ceremonial splendor rests upon the notion that our earthly worship ought to reflect the joy and majesty of heavenly worship. On the verbal side of the liturgy, we hear eloquent prayers of praise, thanksgiving, intercession and confession; litanies, petitions, acclamations, greetings and invocations; hymns, chants, psalmody and creedal statements as well as intoned Scriptural lessons and a homily. On the side of the non-verbal, we are involved with solemn processions and an assortment of liturgical gestures. The eyes are filled with the graceful actions of the servers, as well as the sight of the Lord and his saints gazing at us from the icons. The nostrils are filled with the fragrance of incense, and the heart is grasped by the profound silence of the divine presence. People touch each other gently, saying "Christ is in our midst," when called upon to "love one another" before the offering of the gifts. With one voice and heart they also recite the Creed and recommit themselves to the Orthodox faith into which they were baptized. And participating in Holy Communion the faithful "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 33).

The basic outline of the Divine Liturgy is anchored in the New Testament. Ritual and text evolved gradually; the several elements of the liturgy developed unevenly and at different stages. Its structures were expanded, augmented and adorned with chants, prayers and various ceremonials. By the tenth century the eucharistic rites of Constantinople, the chief see of the Orthodox East, has become more or less crystallized. The process of growth, modification, and adaptation has been relatively slow ever since. By virtue of its prestige the rites of Constantinople first influenced and finally replaced all other rites in the Orthodox East. Since the end of the twelfth century, with minor variations that reflect local customs, the Liturgy of Constantinople has become the sole common rite of all Orthodox Churches.

The Three Liturgies. Constantinople was the magnificent crucible in which several liturgical traditions mixed. Out of this synthesis came three liturgies which were distinctly Constantinopolitan. Firmly rooted in God's written word and strongly influenced by the patristic experience, these liturgies take us to the heart of God's glory and *philanthropia*.

The Liturgy of St. Basil was, until the twelfth century, the chief liturgy of Constantinople. Its anaphora is probably the most eloquent of all liturgies, east or west. Powerful in its unity of thought, theological depth and rich biblical imagery, it was celebrated every Sunday and great feast day. Now it is used only ten times during the year: on the five Sundays of the Great Fast, on the vigils of Pascha, Christmas and Epiphany, on Holy Thursday and on the Feast of St. Basil, January 1.

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is shorter and less rhetorical than that of St. Basil. It is distinguished for its simplicity and clarity. At first it was probably the weekday liturgy of Constantinople. Gradually it superseded and replaced the Liturgy of St. Basil. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is now celebrated at every Eucharist assembly unless the Liturgy of St. Basil or the Presanctified is to be celebrated.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified is not a full Divine Liturgy in that it does not contain the anaphora. This Liturgy is now used on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast and on the first three days of Holy Week. It is comprised of Vespers, the solemn transfer to the holy Table of the elements of Holy Communion consecrated at the Divine Liturgy the previous Sunday (or Saturday), and the order of the distribution of Holy Communion as in the other liturgies.

According to local custom three other ancient liturgies are also used by Orthodox Churches on the occasion of the Feast day of the Saints to which their authorship is traditionally attributed. These are the liturgies of St. James (Iakovos), the ancient liturgy of Jerusalem; St. Mark, the ancient liturgy of Alexandria; and St. Gregory the Theologian, an ancient liturgy of Cappadocia and Alexandria.

The Celebrants of the Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy is a corporate action of the whole people of God. The eucharistic assembly presupposes the presence and active participation of clergy and laity, each with their own essential and distinctive ministry, role and function. The chief celebrant of the Eucharist is the bishop or presbyter, without whom there can be no Eucharist. The bishop or priest acts in the name of Christ, who is the one true and unique High Priest.

Reception of Holy Communion. Eucharist belongs to and is shared by those who have been baptized into the Church and who hold a common faith in the bond of love. Thus, only those Orthodox Christians in full communion with the Church may partake of the Holy Gifts. It is expected that every baptized and confirmed Orthodox adult, child and infant be a regular and frequent recipient of the holy communion. It is presupposed that adult and children communicants have fasted from the evening meal prior to receiving Holy Communion at the morning Eucharist.

Care must be taken that one approaches the chalice with spiritual understanding: "Let not everyone come to receive it, but only those who are worth, 'for the holy gifts are for the holy people of God' Those whom the priest calls holy are not only those who have attained perfection, but also those who are striving for it without having yet obtained it....that is why Christians, if they have not committed such sins as would cut them off from Christ and bring death, are in no way prevented, when partaking of the holy mysteries, from receiving sanctification.....for no one has holiness of himself; it is not the consequence of human virtue, but comes for all from him and through him" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas).

THE MYSTERY OF PENANCE

The mysteries of initiation introduce us to the life-long process of grasping accepting and choosing to follow the values of the Christian life. Christians, born anew in Baptism, are expected to govern their lives by the power of God. They are to undertake the noblest deeds and "holding fast to both faith and virtue... formed by both into the blessed likeness of Christ" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas). The Church, however, has never considered Baptism to be an automatic guarantor of continuous salvation. It is only the beginning of the life in Christ. Its full effects are derived when the baptized are disposed to persevere and preserve the treasure to the end. The process of healing and restoring our damaged, wounded and fallen nature is on-going.

God is recognized to be continuously loving, merciful and longsuffering towards his creation. He accepts all repentant sinners tenderly and rejoices greatly in their conversion. There are no limits set to the exercise of his loving-kindness and forgiveness. All sins are forgivable, save one: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Here we are confronted not with the powerlessness of God, but with an unrepentant and callous heart.

Through the mystery of repentance God embraces a repentant lapsed Christian with his love, in order to forgive him and reconcile him to the Church. But, for this to occur, the sinful Christian must first have a sense of his unfaithfulness to God, contrition of heart, and determination to amend. This must be followed by the confession of his sins before the authorized clergy of the Church. Both the interior repentance and the verbal acknowledgment of concrete sins are indispensable conditions for true forgiveness and reconciliation. Confession is the opening of one's conscience before God and the witness of the Church. "Did you commit sin? Enter the Church and repent for your sin; for here is the physician, not the judge; here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins" (St. John Chrysostom).

Who administers Penance? A bishop or designated confessor priest administers the mystery of Repentance. Confessions are usually heard in the Church or in some other convenient and suitable place. The penitent and the confessor see each other face to face. The confessor identifies with the sinner and bears with him the consequences of his sin as he prays for him. Just as a perceptive physician seeks to heal wounds, he heals sins:

he offers counsel, and may prescribe remedies (penances) that look to the preservation of the spiritual health of the penitent. Such "penances" are not punitive in nature, but remedial. They do not constitute an essential part of the mystery. Penances may include such things as spiritual reading, fasting, increased prayer, prostrations, charitable works, and exclusion from Holy Communion for a specified time.

The confessor pronounces judgment upon the sin and not over the sinner. As a caring spiritual father he prays for the sinner and manifests to him the mercy and love of God. When the penitent has completed his confession, the confessor beckons him to kneel and, placing his hands upon his head, reads the prayer of absolution, by which the forgiveness of God is pronounced and bestowed. For it is God who is the forgiver and the healer of the penitent, not the human confessor.

Penitence is essentially a healing ministry, since sin is viewed primarily as a disease that needs to be healed, rather than a crime that needs to be punished. And since everyone is susceptible to the wiles of the devil, a regular examination of the conscience deepens self-awareness and quickens the sensitivity of the heart. For this reason many persons as a matter of course have a father confessor who shares their concerns in the on-going process of spiritual development and growth.

PRIESTHOOD

Jesus Christ is the one, true priest of the Church. Through his perfect self-offering, Christ continues to unite fallen humanity to God and is the unique High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant. Both the royal priesthood of all believers and the ministerial priesthood have their sources in Christ the High Priest.

The priestly ministry of Christ is perpetuated in the Church by the ministerial priesthood, existing in the three essential ministries of bishop, presbyter and deacon. These are set apart by the grace of ordination to serve the Church; to preach, teach and shepherd the people of God; to celebrate the sacred mysteries; to preserve correct doctrine; and to keep the body united in the love of Christ. The ministerial priesthood belongs to the very essence and structure of the Church, having been established by the Lord himself. The gifts and functions once given to the Apostles are transmitted to the ordained ministers through the mystery of the Priesthood in the rites of ordination.

Functions and duties. The Bishops are the successors to the Apostles, the chief shepherds and administrators of the Church and the guardians and teachers of the true faith. They are also the celebrants and ministers of the mystery of the priesthood. While the right to choose the ministers of the Church belongs to all the clergy and the people, the bishop alone has the authority to ordain and appoint ministers and to consecrate churches. As a sign of the collegiality of the episcopacy, three bishops (or at least two with the consent of a third) ordain a bishop. In all other ordinations, one bishop suffices. Since the sixth century bishops have been selected from the celibate clergy. Presbyters (priests; and deacons, however, are permitted to marry but only before ordination. Hence, married men may be ordained, but priests and deacons may not marry. A widower can be elected and ordained a bishop.

Presbyters (priests) share in the functions of the episcopacy. They shepherd and administer local parishes, they teach and celebrate the holy mysteries for the edification of the people of God, and take counsel with the bishop concerning the affairs of the diocese. Most parish priests are married, but it is not unusual for celibate clergy and monastics to serve local churches.

Deacons assist the bishops and presbyters in the execution of their pastoral liturgical and teaching duties. In earlier times, women were also ordained as deaconesses. The order, however, fell into disuse by the twelfth century.

Minor Orders. Besides the three "major" orders, the priesthood includes several "minor" orders: sub-deacons, readers, chanters, and acolytes. The ordination of such minor orders is conducted outside the sanctuary and at any communal worship service, but never within Divine Liturgy. The enthronement of a bishop or the bestowal

of honors and the appointment to an office are also conducted outside the framework of the Divine Liturgy.

Ordination Rites. The ordination of the major orders is held during the course of the Divine Liturgy. Bishops are ordained before the scripture readings and Anaphora. This is to indicate that a bishop is the primary expounder of the faith and celebrant of the mysteries. A presbyter is ordained immediately after the Great Entrance and before the Anaphora, because he too is a celebrant of the mysteries. A deacon is ordained after the consecration of the Gifts and before Holy Communion, because he assists at the liturgical services and administers Holy Communion.

The consent of the whole Church is a necessary requirement for ordination. At every ordination rite both the candidate and the assembled clergy and laity, and the celebrating bishop are asked to give their assent with the *antiphon (Keleuson)*. After the ordination, the new cleric is clothed with the vestments of his order and installed in his new position amidst the acclamation "he is worthy" (*axios*) by the assembled faithful. The primary signs of all ordination rites are the prayers and the laying on of the hands upon the heads of the candidate by the bishop. There is a distinction between the rites of ordination for the major and minor orders. The term *cheirotonia* (to stretch out the hand) designates the rites of ordination for the major orders, while the term *cheirothesia* (to place hands) is used to designate an ordination to the minor orders.

The Character of the Priesthood. Those called and ordained to serve the Church are referred to as "clergy" (*kleros*), because they are chosen and set apart. The character of ordination is indelible. Therefore, ordination is never repeated, even in the case of clergy who have apostatized or have been defrocked, and are received again into the Church.

The male character of the ordained priesthood is a basic tenet of Orthodoxy. The priesthood belongs to Christ and those ordained to perpetuate his priesthood are his icons. The bishop (or priest) is not simply a delegate or a vicar of an absent Christ, but the one through whom Christ renders himself present to his Church.

The clergy do not possess an intrinsic personal holiness because of their ordination. Rather, they strive to acquire it, like all Christians, but with a greater urgency through ascetic effort. The clergy ought to embody the love of Christ and manifest to the community the essentials of the Christian life. Conversely, the clergy need to discover in their flock the presence of Christ. In this mutual witness each assists the other to become a living member of the body of Christ.

MARRIAGE

A Christian Marriage. Orthodox theology has always presented Christian marriage as something absolutely unique, and indeed, eternal. In marriage, human love "is being projected into the Kingdom of God" (John Meyendorff), reflecting the intimate union between Christ and the faithful which St. Paul speaks of (Ephes. 5). Married life is a special vocation which requires the grace of the Holy Spirit; and it is this very grace which is conferred in the Marriage Service.

The contemporary Marriage Service of the Orthodox Church is itself divided into two parts: the office of betrothal and the office of crowning. In the first, the rite includes the exchange of rings, demonstrating that both partners enter into marriage of their own volition. At the second, "crowns" placed upon the heads of the partners signify the grace of the Holy Spirit. These crowns are crowns of both joy and martyrdom. Because the couple has been united for eternity, there is joy; but because every marriage involves enormous self-sacrifice on the part of each partner, both also become "martyrs" in their own right.

The complete love each of the partners has for the other should be the motivating factor in Christian marriage. In such a context, marriage exists not only for the procreation of children, but also that a mutual love may be expressed, sustained and extended to others. While it is not to be denied that God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, children must always be considered a gift from God and not the sole reason for marriage. Certainly, children do contribute to making marriages an authentic image of the Trinity; and St. John Chrysostom spoke of the family as "a little Church".

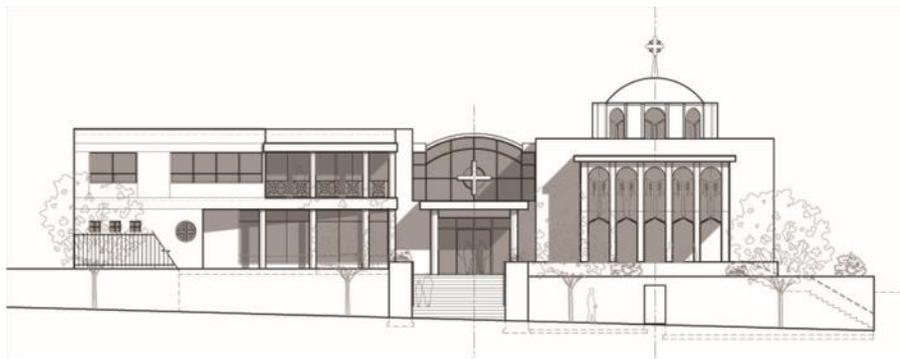
Divorce. Because marriage implies a decision of free will on the part of both partners, there will always be the possibility of error. When a marriage fails, the Orthodox Church has generally declared that a true marriage had in fact never existed, i.e., the bond did not demonstrate its necessarily eternal character. It would not be totally accurate, however, to say that the Orthodox Church grants divorces, although such a practice has crept into the practice of some local Churches. Divorce is actually a civil matter which recognizes the breaking of a legal contract; the Church can merely recognize that an attempt at building up a true marriage has failed.

Without going into an exhaustive analysis of the historical and canonical developments, it should be mentioned that the Orthodox Church today normally allows the laity three attempts at establishing a true marriage. A fourth marriage is positively forbidden. Clergy, however, are permitted to marry only once and this must be prior to ordination. Finally, it remains only to comment upon the penitential character assigned to a marriage rite in which both partners are being married for the second or third time. A special service exists for these situations in which the prayers are more somber and the entire service far more subdued. In this way, the Church reminds both the partners and the entire people of God that one lasting marriage is the Christian norm.

UNCTION

"Is there any sick man among you? Let him send for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him. The prayer offered in faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him from his bed, and he will be forgiven any sins he has committed" James 5: 14-15). So St. James describes the anointing of the sick, providing the apostolic foundations for the sacrament of unction, or more properly, "the oil of prayer," (*euchelaion*). In keeping with the biblical injunction, the Orthodox order for the celebration of this sacrament calls for a group of presbyters to be present at it but this requirement is only of secondary importance. Nor is it required that the person receiving the sacrament be mortally ill as some have supposed. Bodily healing as well as the forgiveness of sins are the primary purposes of this sacrament and only in cases of immanent death can it be considered a preparation for it.

Orthodox theology has always stressed the unity of body and soul and this means that there can be no sharp dichotomy between physical and spiritual; the readings and prayers used in the rite of unction certainly do not assume that physical healing is assured after the anointing. Healing is requested but only within the framework of repentance. The anointing symbolizes ultimate pardon in the face of sickness and even death, physical results of the spiritual disease of sinfulness. Unction itself has frequently been associated with penance as a single action and in some instances it has even superseded penance. The popular public celebrations of unction on Holy Wednesday in many Orthodox churches might be interpreted as a substitute for actual confessions of sins by individuals in preparation for the paschal Eucharist. Needless to say, anointing is meaningless without true contrition. ■



"Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God"