

The Holy Mysteries

“... a visible sign of an invisible grace instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sanctification of man.”

– Bishop Joseph de Camillis of Uzhorod (1698)

Baptism

What is the meaning of baptism?

- New birth by water and the Spirit
- Death to sin with Christ and participation in his Resurrection
- Forgiveness of sins; healing and cleansing of our human nature
- Adoption as a child of God
- Membership in the Church

The order of baptism of adults

1. Reception into the catechumenate (in the narthex of the church).
2. Announcement made at the beginning of the Great Fast.
3. At the Divine Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, there are special litanies for the catechumens.
4. Beginning in the fourth week of the Great Fast, there is an additional litany in the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts “for those about to be enlightened.” There are also special prayers of exorcism which the priest prays over the catechumens, outside the Liturgy.
5. At noon on Good Friday, the catechumens make a profession of faith, renouncing Satan and declaring their willingness to serve Christ.
6. On Holy Saturday, during the paschal vigil service of Vespers with the Divine Liturgy:
 - a. The Litany of Peace includes special petitions for the blessing of water, and for the catechumens.
 - b. During the singing of “O Joyful Light”, the priest and catechumens go to the baptistry or font; during the Old Testament readings of the vigil, the catechumens are baptized, then chrismated.
 - c. The priest and newly baptized go in procession back into the church, where “All you who have been baptized” is sung. The priest enters the sanctuary and the service continues with the Divine Liturgy.
 - d. The newly baptized are the first to receive Holy Communion, after the priest and deacon.

The order of baptism of infants

1. Prayers for the newborn child and mother; the child is signed with the cross.
2. The child is received into the catechumate.
3. The child is exorcised and (possibly through sponsors) renounces Satan and promises to serve Christ.
4. Water is blessed.
5. The child is anointed with the oil of catechumens, and baptized (troparion of baptism).
6. The child is chrismated.
7. "All you who have been baptized" is sung.
8. Prokeimenon, Epistle, Alleluia, and Gospel reading for baptism.
9. (The child is tonsured.)
10. Litany of Fervent Supplication, with petitions for the newly baptized.
11. (The child is churchd.)
12. The newly baptized is the first to receive Holy Communion, after the priest and deacon.

The order of emergency baptism

While immersing or pouring water three times over the head of the one to be baptized:
"The servant of God [Name] is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The chants of baptism

Troparion, Tone 8:

O most merciful Christ our God, * you clothe yourself with light as with a garment; grant me a robe of light. (*Parma*: give me a robe of light.)

Prokeimenon, Tone 3 (Psalm 26:1)

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

V. The Lord is the stronghold of my life; before whom should I shrink?

The Alleluia before the Gospel has no assigned tone, and no verses. Any tone may be sung, at the discretion of the priest or cantor.

Chrismation

Through the Mystery of Chrismation - that is, by a symbolic anointing with holy oil - a baptized Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, the principal of movement and growth in the soul.

Usually conferred together with baptism; if performed separately, a portion of the baptismal service is used:

Litany of Peace with special petitions

Chrismation

“All you who have been baptized”

Prokeimenon, Epistle, Alleluia, and Gospel (same as baptism)

Litany and dismissal

Eucharist

The Body and Blood of Christ, which is received by the Christian: “May they bring about the remission of sins, the pardon of transgressions, the communion of the Holy Spirit, the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, confidence in you, not judgment or condemnation.”

Usually received together with baptism and chrismation, then at the Divine Liturgy, and (on fast days) at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

The liturgical books have the following order for the reception of the Eucharist by one who is ill, and this service can be used under other circumstances as well:

“Blessed is our God”

Usual beginning prayers, and the Creed

Troparia: “Accept me today...”

Glory, “Heavenly King, Comforter...”

Now and ever, “O Virgin Mother of God...”

(confession and absolution, if necessary)

“Approach with the fear of God...”

“Blessed is he whom comes in the name of the Lord...”

“O Lord, I believe and profess...”

Distribution of Holy Communion

“Now you may dismiss your servant...”

Trisagion prayers and Our Father (optional)

Troparion of the Day, or Troparion for the sick (Divine Liturgy book, p. 422)

Dismissal

Marriage

The order of crowning

Here is the full order according to the liturgical books:

1. "Blessed is our God..."
2. Betrothal (in the narthex, or as a separate service)
 - a. Prayers for the couple
 - b. Exchange of rings
3. Procession of the priest and couple from the narthex into the church, while Psalm 127 ("Blessed are all who fear the Lord") is chanted.
4. Question of the couple to verify that there are free to marry
5. Litany of Peace, with petitions for the couple to be married
6. The priest wraps his stole around the joined hands of the couple. (Wedding vows may be said, according to local law and custom.)
7. The priest blesses the couple, saying "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder," and the couple are crowned in marriage.
8. Prokeimenon, Epistle, Alleluia, and Gospel reading for crowning
9. Litany of Fervent Supplication, with petitions for the newly married couple
10. Priestly prayer, and Our Father
11. (Ceremony of the common cup)
12. The priest leads the couple around the tetrapod while the troparia of crowning are sung – these are the same as the troparia of ordination.
13. Removal of crowns.
14. Solemn blessing of the couple
15. Dismissal
16. Many Years
17. The newly baptized is the first to receive Holy Communion, after the priest and deacon.

In practice, the Crowning may be celebrated within the Divine Liturgy: the service begins as does the rite of crowning, and the removal of crowns is followed by the Cherubic Hymn and the rest of the Divine Liturgy, at which the couple may receive Holy Communion.

At one time, the office of crowning was celebrated on a weekday or Sunday *after* the Divine Liturgy. Today, then crowning is celebrated apart from the Divine Liturgy, the couple receive Holy Communion after the removal of crowns, and the ceremony of the common cup (if it is used) is moved to the reception afterward.

The chants of crowning

Prokeimenon, Tone 4 (Psalm 20: 3-4)

You have placed crowns of precious stones upon their heads; they have asked life of you and you have given it to them.

V. You have given them a blessing forever,
and have made them glad with the joy of your presence.

Alleluia, Tone 4 (Psalm 11: 8, 2)

V. You, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us.

V. Help, O Lord, for the good have vanished.

Troparia of crowning (Tone 7)

O Lord, O Lord, * look down from heaven and see, * and visit this vineyard and protect this vine * which your right hand has planted.

O holy Martyrs, * you have suffered courageously * and received your reward; * pray to the Lord our God * to have mercy on our souls.

Glory to you, O Christ our God; * glory to the apostles; * joy to the martyrs, * who proclaimed the consubstantial Trinity.

Irmos

Rejoice, O Isaiah! * The Virgin was with child and bore a Son, * Emmanuel. * He is God and man. Orient is his name. * By extolling him * we also praise the Virgin.

Penance (Reconciliation, Confession)

“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. . . . Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:21–23)

"[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, 'I said, "To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity'" (Origen, Homilies on Leviticus 2:4 [A.D. 248]).

The order of confession

Priest: May our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, be in your heart and on your lips that you may confess all your sins worthily, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Penitent: I confess to Almighty God, one in the Holy Trinity, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and to all the saints, and you, Father, all my sins.

After confessing his sins, the penitent says:

Penitent: For these and all other sins which I cannot remember or call to mind, I am very sorry. I have offended God and have angered him against me. I am sincerely repentant and promise with the help of God to better my life. For this I humbly ask of you, Father, salutary penance and absolution.

The priest absolves the penitent, saying:

Priest: May our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, by the grace and mercies of his love for mankind, forgive you all your transgressions. And I, a priest, although unworthy, by his power given me, forgive and absolve you from all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Anointing of the Sick (Mystery of Holy Oil)

“Is there anyone sick among you? He should ask for the presbyters of the church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will save the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed any sins, they will be forgiven.” (James 4:14-15)

The order of anointing

Here is the full order according to the liturgical books:

1. “Blessed is our God...”
2. Usual beginning prayers
3. “Come let us adore the King our God...”
4. Psalm 142: “O Lord, listen to my prayer”
5. Litany of Peace, with petitions for the sick
6. Blessing of oil
7. Prokeimenon, Epistle, Alleluia, and Gospel reading for anointing
8. Litany of Fervent Supplication, with petitions for the sick
9. Holy anointing
10. (The Gospel book is presented to the sick person to kiss)
11. Dismissal

The liturgical books foresee that up to seven priests may take part, with multiple epistles and Gospel readings (introduced or intoned by the concelebrating priests). Our anointing book in English provides three sets of readings.

If a large number of people are being anointed (for example, at a pilgrimage), then appropriate troparia or stichera may be sung during the anointing.

The chants of anointing

Prokeimenon, Tone 1

May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us * who have placed our hope in you.
V. Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting.

Alleluia, Tone 8

V. To you, O Lord, I will sing of mercy and judgment.