

PART ONE:
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

ADULT INITIATION INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

Baptism and the Holy Spirit

1 In the Gospel of John (3:1-21), we find the story of a man named Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, who met with Jesus secretly by night and spoke to Him at length. The religious rulers of Israel and members of the Sanhedrin had rejected Jesus, but Nicodemus believed that Jesus had been sent by God. During one of their conversations, Jesus said to Nicodemus: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew (from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3). Not being able to grasp the meaning of Jesus’ words, Nicodemus asks naively if we are to re-enter our mother’s womb to be born again. Jesus then replies: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5). In other words, Jesus makes it clear that to enter the kingdom of God a person must be born again from above. This re-birth in Christ is the Mystery of Baptism.

2 At the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (a feast commemorating the time when God dwelt in a Tent among His people in the wilderness for forty years and provided them with water), Jesus stood up and proclaimed, *“If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”* (John 7:37-38). Jesus was speaking about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from His own heart, as if from a rock, which would take place at His death and Resurrection – the hour of His glorification. Those who would believe in Him would receive in Him the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the Mystery of Baptism.

3 At the Last Supper, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, *“Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent”* (John 17:1-3). The hour of glorification had arrived.

4 Crucified upon the cross and knowing that all was now accomplished by Him in obedience to the Father, Jesus said, *“I thirst”* (John 19:28). These words express His infinite love for mankind, His desire to save every human being, to draw all mankind to Himself. This thirst is satisfied only by the conversion of souls throughout history and time, souls who respond to His invitation with faith and receive His gift with love. Then, *“He bowed His head and gave up His spirit”* (Jn 19:30).

5 When the soldiers came and saw that Jesus was dead, they did not break His legs. *“But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came*

out blood and water” (John 19:35). According to the Fathers of the Church, this piercing of Jesus’ side is a symbol of the outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit received in the mysteries of Baptism and Eucharist; and the entrance of believers into the Ark of Salvation, the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God – the Church.

6 At the time of the Flood, Noah and those who were saved from death and destruction entered the ark through the one and only door, located on the side of the ark (cf. Gen 6:16; 7:1). However, with the coming of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, those who are to be saved from sin and eternal death must enter into the new Ark of Salvation – Christ Himself, through the one and only door – the Holy Spirit. In the Mystery of Baptism, through the Holy Spirit, those who believe receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation as they enter into the Body of Christ, the Church, to be nourished by the most-precious Body and Blood of Christ Himself in the Mystery of the Eucharist.

Baptisms at Pentecost

7 On the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church on earth, the Apostle Peter stood up and addressed the crowd that had gathered. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he spoke at length about the Lord, Jesus Christ, the prophecies and signs concerning Him, about His death and Resurrection; and upon hearing his words, the people were cut to the heart. They turned to Peter and to the other apostles and said, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

8 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:38-39). Many accepted Peter’s words and believed in the Lord, Jesus Christ. They were baptized; and about 3,000 souls were added to the Church that day.

9 In his first address (Acts 2:14-36), the Apostle Peter made it very clear, that faith, repentance, baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are essential for salvation. One must repent and be baptized to receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Importance of Baptism

10 The most important and necessary sacrament of the Christian faith is the Mystery of Baptism. In his *Catecheses*, St. Cyril of Jerusalem (†386) says the following to those preparing for baptism: “A great thing is baptism, before which you stand. It is the ransom of captives, forgiveness of sins, death to sin, regeneration of the soul, bright garment, holy inviolable seal, chariot to heaven, the joy of paradise, guarantee of the kingdom, and the gift of sonship.”

11 As the first of the Holy Mysteries, Baptism is the key, or door, which admits a person into the fullness of new life in God. In Baptism, the person is united to Christ, risen from the dead. The old person dies with Christ on the cross, and a new

persona arises with Christ in His Resurrection. Spiritually re-born of the Father as a beloved child of God, the newly baptized person enters into a new life with God.

12 Baptism is also a personal covenant with God. A covenant is the total and irrevocable giving of self as a “gift” to another. In the covenant established by baptism, God grants the greatest gift possible: the gift of His own divine Life. The newly-baptized person receives the sanctifying gift of the Holy Spirit and is united to the life of Christ, to participate in the divine and eternal Life of the Most Holy Trinity. At the same time those who are baptized pledge to live their lives as an irrevocable gift to God, in accordance with the commandments of God.

13 Baptism is a mystery and a life-long process. It begins with evangelization, the response of faith, repentance and conversion and continues with spiritual purification, illumination, discipleship, friendship, love and intimate communion with God.

THE PROCESS OF ADULT INITIATION

14 The full program of Adult Christian Initiation in the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church (also referred to in general as *The Catechumenate*) is a process, lasting anywhere from one to three years. It consists of four distinct periods (or phases) of time and formation: the Pre-Catechumenate; the Catechumenate; Sacramental Initiation; and Mystagogy.

I. The Pre-Catechumenate

15 The Pre-Catechumenate is a time of inquiry, focusing on evangelization. It begins when a candidate comes forward and expresses his/her desire to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good News of salvation and eternal life, and possibly, to be initiated into the Church. Presented in a series of leaflets, the program of evangelization includes topics such as: Who is Jesus? What is faith? What do Christians believe? How do Christians live? How does God speak to us? Why the Church? What happens after death? How can I make the most of my life? During the *Pre-Catechumenate*, the parish priest meets with the candidate on several occasions. The program of evangelization is presented to the candidate by priest himself, or by an assigned catechist, and the process of initiation into the Church is explained. Upon completion of the program, if the candidate expresses his/her desire to continue and to be received into the Church, a sponsor is selected, a catechist is assigned, and final preparations are made to enroll the person as a *catechumen* (which means “learner,” or literally, “one who listens”).

II. The Catechumenate

16 *The Catechumenate* is a spiritual journey in three parts or stages, during which candidates prepare for their final initiation into the life of the Church. The journey begins with the Rite of Reception into the Catechumenate, which usually takes place on the Sunday of All Saints (first Sunday after Pentecost). Each candidate

comes forward with his/her sponsor and assigned catechist, to be announced to the congregation, to be officially enrolled as a catechumen, and to receive the Holy Scriptures – the word of God. The first part of the Catechumenate focuses on the reading of Sacred Scripture: the Gospels and selected passages of the Old and New Testaments.

17 The second part of the Catechumenate begins in September on the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross. In the context of the assembly, the catechumens are entrusted with a copy of the Symbol of Faith, and formal weekly catechesis begins. During this time, each Article of Faith is explained and memorized on the basis of a Scriptural presentation of the History of Salvation, beginning with the Book of Genesis and ending with the Book of Revelation.

18 The third and final part of the Catechumenate takes place during the forty days of the Great Fast and Holy Week. Those who wish to be fully initiated into the Church by Holy Pascha, submit their names to the parish priest. On the Sunday of Forgiveness (or earlier), their names are announced to the congregation (second announcement), and in the context of the assembly, they are entrusted with copy of the Lord's Prayer and the final preparation begins. Catechesis is now focused on the spiritual and moral life: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, Good Works (prayer, fasting and almsgiving), the *Rite of Exorcism* and the final confession of sin. The Catechumenate officially ends on Holy Friday, with the *Rite of Completion*.

III. Sacramental Initiation

19 Sacramental Initiation is the celebration of the Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation and the Most Holy Eucharist, during which each candidate is purified, illumined and united to God by the divine action of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with the earliest tradition of the Church, the sacramental initiation of adults takes place on Holy Saturday, at the Vigil Service of Holy Pascha (Easter Sunday).

IV. Mystagogy

20 Mystagogy is the "post-baptismal instruction," which begins with the *Rites of the Eighth Day* on Thomas Sunday (the first Sunday after Holy Pascha) and may last anywhere from three to six months. The focus during this time is the mystagogical explanation of all seven Sacramental Mysteries, personal and liturgical prayer, the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit, virtues, vocations and service in the Church.

PASTORAL DIRECTIVES

SPONSORS & CATECHISTS

Selecting a Sponsor

21 According to the most ancient tradition of the Church, a person who is about to be received into the Catechumenate must approach together with a baptized Christian, who has agreed to serve as his/her sponsor. The chosen sponsor must be approved by the pastor. If the candidate is unable to find someone, then it becomes the responsibility of the pastor to seek out and to assign an appropriate sponsor for the candidate.

22 The Church has also set certain conditions on choosing a baptismal sponsor. In accordance with the Eastern Code of Canon Law (Canon 685), a sponsor must be:

- 1) fully initiated into the Church through the Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation with holy myron, and Holy Eucharist;
- 2) be a member of the Catholic Church, living a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken;
- 3) have the intention of fulfilling the responsibility of sponsor;
- 4) not be the father or mother of the child;
- 5) not be bound by excommunication, suspension or deposition.
- 6) not be less than sixteen years of age, unless the parish priest considers that there is just reason for an exception to be made.

Duties of a Sponsor

23 Sponsors are called to serve their “spiritual children” as life-long mentors and spiritual guides. They agree to journey together with their assigned catechumens, not only during the Catechumenate and the Sacramental Initiation, but also during the period of Mystagogy and in all post-baptismal days and years to come.

24 Together with their assigned candidates, sponsors are obligated to attend all sessions of catechetical instruction.

25 Sponsors are called to spiritually assist their assigned candidates with increased personal prayer, fasting and acts of mercy.

26 Sponsors are to set a good example of Christian living for their candidates. They are to be mentors and role models for the following:

- 1) a love for prayer and commitment to daily prayer;
- 2) a love for the word of God, the Holy Scriptures;
- 3) respect for others and a reverence for God;
- 4) a love for the Sacraments, especially for the Eucharist;
- 5) knowledge and understanding of Church teaching;
- 6) the importance of forgiveness, mercy and loving-kindness;

- 7) the virtues of faith, hope, charity, sacrifice, patience, perseverance, commitment, loyalty, honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness.

Catechists

27 In addition to a sponsor, a commissioned catechist will be assigned to the candidate by the Church. The catechist is responsible for adherence to the program of formation, and for providing both pre-baptismal and post-baptismal faith instruction.

28 The following persons may serve as a catechist: a bishop, a priest, a deacon, a religious brother or sister, or a trained lay person.

29 A commissioned catechist is someone who has completed the necessary training, and has been officially recognized and blessed by the Church to serve as a catechist.

30 The preparation of Adults for Christian Initiation is a vital concern of God's People, the Church. Every parish community is responsible not only to nourish its members, but also to pass on to others the Faith it has received from the Apostles. It is strongly recommended that programs be established in all parishes, in which laity can be trained as catechists to assist the pastor in the preparation of adult candidates for baptism.

31 The formation of a baptismal team as a distinct pastoral ministry is also highly recommended. Those dedicated to this ministry would be responsible for the entire Christian Initiation Program for Adults on the parish or eparchial level.

THE RECEPTION OF BAPTIZED NON-CATHOLICS

32 According to Canon Law, every parish priest has the right to receive any non-Catholic baptized adult into the Catholic Church, with proper doctrinal and spiritual preparation (CCEO Canon 898.2).

Eastern Non-Catholics

33 A member of the Christian faithful of an Eastern non-Catholic Church (baptized and chrismated) is to be received into the Catholic Church with only the profession of the Catholic faith, after appropriate doctrinal and spiritual preparation has taken place, according to each one's condition (CCEO Canon 897).

34 To ensure the fulfillment of Canon 897, the parish priest shall personally meet with the candidate on two separate occasions:

- 1) To become acquainted with the candidate's faith journey, and to explore the reasons or motivations behind the desire to be received into the Catholic Church;

- 2) To obtain a copy of the Baptismal Certificate; and if applicable, to obtain a copy of the Marriage Certificate;
- 3) To assess the candidate's level of faith knowledge, understanding and personal commitment to Christian life;
- 4) To recommend an appropriate program of doctrinal and spiritual preparation, including participation in the Mystery of Repentance (Confession);

35 Upon completion of the assigned program of doctrinal and spiritual preparation, the candidate is to be received into the Catholic Church by simply professing that he/she is now Catholic, reciting the Baptismal Creed together with the faith community at the Divine Liturgy and receiving Holy Communion.

Other Denominations

36 When a baptized member of Christian faithful from another non-Catholic Church wishes to be received into the Catholic Church, the parish priest should personally meet with the candidate on two separate occasions:

- 1) To become familiar with the candidate's faith journey, and to explore the reasons or motivations behind the desire to be received into the Catholic Church;
- 2) To obtain a copy of the Baptismal Certificate and information about the candidate's ecclesial community, so as to determine the validity of the baptism in accordance with hierarchal directives;
- 3) To assess the candidate's level of faith knowledge, understanding and personal commitment to Christian life;
- 4) To discuss and approve the selection of a sponsor, and to assign a catechist;
- 5) To recommend an appropriate program of doctrinal and spiritual preparation.

37 If the baptized candidate is unfamiliar with the material of the Pre-Catechumenate (the program of evangelization), he/she may be asked to work through it privately, with the assistance of their assigned sponsor or catechist.

38 Validly baptized non-Catholics are not to be received as catechumens. The Rite of Reception is omitted. However, if the baptism has proven to be invalid due to improper form, then the candidate should be received as a catechumen with the Rite of Reception.

39 If the baptized candidate is unfamiliar with the Bible, he/she may be called forward on the Sunday of All Saints to receive a copy of the Holy Scriptures, together with the assignment of reading through the four Gospels and other selected passages of the Old and New Testaments.

40 In most cases, baptized candidates are to be entrusted with a copy of the Symbol of Faith on the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross in September; and

a copy of the Lord's Prayer on the Sunday of Forgiveness. Together with their sponsors, they are obligated to attend all weekly sessions of catechetical instruction.

41 For baptized non-Catholics, the Rite of Exorcism is usually omitted. Instead, they are prepared for Confession. During Holy Week, they are to renew the grace of their Baptism by participating in the Mystery of Repentance, receiving full absolution of all sins committed from the time of their Baptism.

42 Validly baptized non-Catholics are to be received into the Catholic Church with the Mystery of Holy Chrismation, administered on Holy Saturday at the Vigil Service of Holy Pascha.

43 The final rite of tonsure and ablution may be omitted for baptized Christians received into the Catholic Church on Holy Saturday. However, in most cases, they are expected to attend the post-baptismal catechetical sessions associated with the period of Mystagogy.

THE PRE-CATECHUMENATE

Evangelization

44 For un-baptized adults (ages 14 and up), the first step towards Christian initiation into the Church is the Pre-Catechumenate – a period of evangelization, personal inquiry and reflection. Those who respond to the Holy Spirit present and working in their lives, manifest a sincere desire to come to know Christ personally, to learn more about the Christian faith, or even to be initiated into the Church. When they come forward to express this desire to the Church and agree to follow a program of evangelization, the period of the Pre-Catechumenate begins.

45 The program of evangelization (faith inquiry) consists of a series of twenty leaflets, which introduce the inquirer to the person of Christ, the Revelation of God, the Good News of salvation and eternal life, Christian faith and the life of the Church. The parish priest may choose to personally work through this program with each inquirer, or he may assign this responsibility to a catechist or pastoral assistant. If there are several inquirers, it is recommended that they meet with the instructor as a group, and work through the program together.

46 Furthermore, it is recommended that larger parishes organize an annual course of Faith Inquiry (10-12 weekly sessions), thereby providing a basic introduction to the Christian faith for anyone who might be interested. The atmosphere at each session should be welcoming, hospitable and non-threatening, allowing for questions and dialogue. As an extension of hospitality, the parish may wish to provide supper for the participants prior to each session.

Request for Baptismal Preparation

47 At some point during the Pre-Catechumenate period, whether at the very beginning or closer to the end, an adult inquirer (14 years of age or older) may

verbally request to be received as catechumen, and to begin formal preparation for Baptism.

48 In response to the request, the parish priest shall personally meet with the candidate on two separate occasions:

- 1) To become better acquainted with the candidate's faith journey, and to explore the reasons or motivations behind the desire to be received into the Church;
- 2) To provide the candidate with an overview of the adult initiation process;
- 3) To discuss and approve the selection of a sponsor;
- 4) To assign a catechist;
- 5) To ensure that the Pre-Catechumenate program of evangelization has been completed (20 leaflets);
- 6) To confirm the date when the Rite of Reception is to take place;
- 7) To formalize the request with signing of the form document titled: "The First Announcement." For those who have not completed their fourteenth year, the written consent of parents (or guardians) is required in order to proceed.

THE CATECHUMENATE

PART 1

Sacred Scripture

The Rite of Reception

49 New candidates are to be received into the Catechumenate on the Sunday of All Saints, the first Sunday after Pentecost.

50 The candidates and sponsors assemble in the narthex, facing east towards the holy altar. The priest, fully vested, enters the sanctuary and opens the royal doors. He then proceeds to the narthex and greets the candidates. The Rite of Reception takes place at in the narthex, individually over each candidate, at the threshold of the entrance into the holy place (nave).

51 The Rite of Reception into the Catechumenate consists of the following elements:

- 1) The priest breathes gently upon the face of the candidate three times, in silent acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit is already there, working in the life of that person and guiding him/her towards Baptism;
- 2) The priest then make the Sign of the Cross over the candidate three times, to signify that Christ is already taking possession of this person.
- 3) Finally, the priest places his hand upon the head of the candidate and recites the Prayer of Reception.

52 Once all the candidates have been received into the Catechumenate, the priest leads them in procession into the holy place, as the congregation sings the opening hymn. Together with their sponsors, the catechumens take their assigned places among the congregation. The priest enters the holy altar and begins the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

The First Announcement and the Presentation

53 After the homily, as the priest announces the names of the newly received catechumens to the congregation, they come forward to the ambo, together with their assigned sponsors and catechists. This is the “First Announcement.”

54 The newly-received catechumens are then presented with a copy of the New Testament and entrusted with the assignment to attentively read through the four Holy Gospels and other selected passages from the Old and New Testaments.

55 The catechumens, sponsors and catechists remain at the ambo, as the priest continues with the Insistent Litany and the Litany of the Catechumens, after which they are dismissed and return to their places.

56 With the Rite of Reception, the new catechumens are now obligated to attend the Liturgy of the Word every Sunday and to listen attentively to the readings and the homily. They are to complete their first personal reading of the four Gospels and other selected Scriptural passages by September 1st (14), the beginning of the new Church year.

57 Sponsors are also obligated to attend the Sunday Liturgy together with their assigned catechumens. They are to help them become acquainted with the Divine Liturgy, to discuss with them the Sunday readings and homily, to check up on their progress with daily prayer, Scripture reading, and to assist them with any questions that they may have.

58 The names of the newly received catechumens, their sponsors, catechists, and the date of reception are to be recorded in a separate Catechumenate Register.

Part 2

The Symbol of Faith

59 The second part of the Catechumenate program, with formal weekly instruction, begins on the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. After the homily, the catechumens are asked to come forward, together with their sponsors and catechists. Then the parish priest entrusts the catechumens with a copy of the Symbol of Faith, which summarizes the catechetical instruction they will receive during several months. Each of the twelve articles will be explained in depth, on the basis of a Scriptural presentation of salvation history.

60 The program of weekly catechesis on the Symbol of Faith begins with the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and is to be completed by Meat-

Fare Sunday, prior to the Great Fast. By this time, the catechumens are expected to have memorized the Symbol of Faith.

61 Catechumens who wish to continue and to be fully initiated into the Church by Holy Pascha, are submit their names to the parish priest.

Part 3

Christian Life

62 The third and final part of the Catechumenate program takes place during the Great Fast and Holy Week.

63 On the Sunday of Forgiveness, after the homily, the priest announces before the congregation the names of those who are to be initiated into the Church at the Vigil of Holy Pascha. This is the “Second Announcement.” As each name is announced, the candidates come forward to the ambo, together with their sponsors and catechists. Then priest then entrusts each candidate with copy of the Lord’s Prayer. After the Insistent Litany and the Litany for the Catechumens, the candidates, sponsors and catechists are dismissed and return to their places.

64 During the Great Fast, the program of catechesis focuses on spiritual and moral life: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, and Good Works (prayer, fasting and almsgiving).

65 On the Sundays of the Great Fast, the catechumens may be invited to come forward to the ambo and kneel for the reading of the Holy Gospel.

66 The Great Fast is a season of intense preparation, both for catechumens and for the faithful. In their final preparation for Baptism, catechumens are called to intensify their prayers, fasting and almsgiving, while the Church continues to pray for them. At the same time, the faithful prepare themselves for the renewal of their own Baptism, by reflecting upon their own commitment to Christ, renewing their baptismal vows, and by renewing their “baptismal garments” in the Mystery of Penance.

The Rite of Exorcism

67 To belong to God, one must be completely separated from Satan. The first act of the Christian life is a renunciation, a challenge. No one can be Christ’s until he has first faced evil, and then become ready to fight it. The exorcisms mean this: to face evil, to acknowledge its reality, to know its power, and to proclaim the power of God to destroy it. The exorcisms announce the forthcoming baptism as an act of victory.

68 The Rite of Exorcism consists of three prayers of exorcism (deliverance), which are recited by the priest over each catechumen. Through these prayers, the priest asks God to “empower” the soon-to-be-baptized Christian to triumph over Satan and all his evil spirits.

69 Rite of Exorcism is performed over each catechumen individually and privately, on the Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast (St. John of the Ladder). This may take place on Saturday evening, after Great Vespers, or on Sunday, after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

70 After the Rite of Exorcism on the Fourth Sunday, beginning the following day, Monday of the Fifth Week, until the day of their baptism on Holy Saturday, catechumens are encouraged to devote their time to increased prayer, fasting, abstinence and penance. The Christian writer Tertullian (+ 225 AD), writes the following regarding catechumens and their final preparation during the Great Fast: "It is necessary that those who are about to receive the Sacrament of Baptism devote themselves to frequent prayers, fasting, prostrations and prayerful vigils, and that they also confess their past sins."

Confession of Sins

71 During the fifth and six week of the Great Fast, catechumens are to be instructed on how to make a good examination of conscience and a good confession. During Holy Week, they are to meet privately with the parish priest to confess their past sins. The confession ends with a prayer of repentance. The priest may assign a further penance. However, the prayer of absolution is not recited over catechumens. The forgiveness and cleansing of all sins is to take in the Mystery of Baptism.

The Rite of Completion

72 The completion of the Catechumenate is celebrated with a special rite known as *the Rite of Completion*. This takes place on Holy Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion and His final victory over sin, death and the dominion of Satan. It may take place privately at 3:00 pm (after the Ninth Royal Hour), before the Cross and Tomb of Christ. However, that may also take place publically, during the Service of Vespers and Veneration of the Shroud, immediately after the reading of the Passion Gospel.

73 The concluding rite consists of the following important elements: the final exorcism prayer; the renunciation of Satan; the oath of allegiance to Christ, the profession of faith, worship of the Trinity, the final blessing and prayer.

The Beginning Prayer

74 This is the final public prayer of exorcism over the catechumen. The priest prays, asking God to bind the life of the catechumen closely to his/her guardian angel; that this angel of light be a life-long companion, a true friend, a faithful guide and protector from all evil.

Renunciation of Satan

75 The catechumens face toward the west. Since the sun sets in the west and its light is overcome by darkness, the west has served as a fitting symbol of evil. The

west has also been known to be a symbol of death, for the ancient Greeks believed that the gates to Hades were located somewhere far in the west.

76 The exorcism prayers have given catechumens the freedom to renounce Satan, to challenge and to reject him. Further and deeper conversion to God now begins with a formal and public renunciation of Satan – a rejection of all darkness in order to face God Who is Light.

77 The act of facing west and renouncing evil is an act of freedom, the first act of a person being liberated from the enslavement of Satan. St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes that, *“When you renounce Satan, you utterly break all covenants (ties) with him.”* One can be sure that Satan will not forget this renunciation and challenge. War has been declared and the spiritual battle begins.

78 During the renunciation, the adult catechumens raise their hands and hold them outstretched to form a human cross, as a sign of their imminent deliverance from the enslavement of Satan. After the Exodus, when Israel crossed the sea as if on dry land, *“Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained”* (Exodus 14:26-28). In the same way, with the act of rejecting Satan, all his works and his angels, the catechumen is now being freed from the power and influence of the Enemy, in order to be united with Christ in the Mystery of Baptism.

The Oath of Adherence to Christ

79 The catechumens now turn to face the east, where the sun rises in glory and splendour. Thus the east is a fitting symbol of Christ Himself, Who is the *“Light of the World”* (John 8:12). The east is also a fitting symbol of Christ’s glorious return at the end of this age: *“For as the lightning flashes from the east and is seen even to the west, this is how the coming of the Son of Man will be”* (Mt 24:27). Finally the east is also a symbol of Paradise and the kingdom of God, for the Garden of Eden was planted by God somewhere in the east.

80 The act of turning towards the east, to face the east, is an outward sign of personal conversion to Christ. It expresses the catechumen’s desire to be united with Christ and to worship Him alone, as King and God. It is also an expression of the desire to return once again to Paradise, to enter into the kingdom of God and to partake of the *“Tree of Life”* (Gen 2:9; 22-24).

81 The *Oath of Adherence to Christ* is a formal and public profession of personal attachment to Christ. It is an enrollment into the ranks of those who serve Christ, as their King and God. One could say that the oath is similar to the one taken by soldiers, who profess their allegiance to their country and to their king.

Profession of Faith

82 By reciting the Symbol of Faith (the Baptismal Creed), the catechumens now make a public profession of their faith in the one true God. In the recitation of the

Creed, God is acknowledged as being one in essence, yet three in Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

83 This Symbol of Faith was stated and accepted by the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 AD) as the official Creed of the entire Universal Church. It was further expanded at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (387 AD) and is therefore known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, or simply, the Nicene Creed. It consists of twelve Articles, which are foundational dogmas for the Christian Faith.

Worship of the Trinity

84 Immediately after the Profession of Faith, the Oath of Adherence is repeated once again. This repetition emphasizes the fact that the oath proclaimed is an unconditional commitment to Christ, a total surrender of one's life to the Most Holy Trinity; an eternal covenant of faithfulness, obedience, love and service.

85 The oath is now confirmed with the seal of worship. The candidate bows in worship before the Most Holy Trinity, while saying: *"I bow down before the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence and undivided."* The act of "bowing down" is an immemorial and universal symbol of reverence, faithfulness and love.

Final Blessing and Prayer

86 With the final blessing and prayer, the Catechumenate and its preparation for Baptism has come to a formal end. Now, everything is ready for the great act itself: the immersion into the very death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SACRAMENTAL INITIATION AT THE PASCHAL VIGIL

87 Adult baptisms are normally celebrated on Holy Saturday, at the Vigil Service of Holy Pascha. The Paschal Vigil begins with Vespers, which includes several readings from the Old Testament. It continues with the Baptismal Service (if Baptisms are to take place), the Liturgy of the Word, and ends with the Liturgy of the Eucharist according to St. Basil the Great.

88 The Service takes place in the later afternoon or early evening, before the Holy Shroud and the Tomb of Christ. It marks the end of Holy Saturday and the beginning of a new day: the day of Resurrection.

89 The prayers, readings and liturgical poetry provide profound reflections on the events of Holy Friday, Holy Saturday and Holy Pascha: the victory of the cross, the descent of Christ's Soul into Hades, the burial of His Body in the tomb, the Sabbath's rest, the lament of Hades, the release of imprisoned souls and the glorious Resurrection of Christ.

90 By definition, a Vigil is a time of on-going prayer in watchful preparation. Thus the Vigil of Holy Pascha only begins with Vespers and Divine Liturgy on the Eve (a two hour service). It continues throughout the night and is completed in the early morning with the celebration of Resurrection Matins and Divine Liturgy.

Vespers

91 The stichera sung at Psalm 140, provide poetic commentary on the lament of Hades, whose power has been destroyed. As His Body was laid to rest in the tomb, the Divine Soul of Christ descended into Hades, shattering the gates of brass, filling Hades with Divine Light and releasing all the souls that were held captive.

92 There are a total of ten possible Old Testament readings that relate in one way or another to Baptism and the Mystery of Holy Pascha. In a parish setting, however, for pastoral reasons only two of the ten readings are usually taken. The first reading is Exodus 13:20-14:32, the Crossing of the Red Sea. The second reading is Daniel 3:1-51, the Three Holy Youths and the fiery furnace. The first reading points to Baptism and Holy Pascha; the second reading is an example of faithfulness, which points to the Baptismal Oath of Allegiance to Christ.

Baptismal Service

93 The title “Order of Baptism” or “Baptismal Service” always refers to the celebration of two Mysteries: Baptism and Chrismation together. In the context of one continuous service, Chrismation always follows immediately after Baptism.

94 If the Baptism is to take place in the holy place before the tomb, the Baptismal Service follows immediately after the reading from the Prophet Daniel and related troparia.

95 If there is a separate Baptistery, there are two possibilities: 1) the faithful proceed to the Baptistery at the conclusion of Vespers; or 2) the Baptismal Service begins in the Baptistery at the same time that Vespers begins in the Holy Place (both services take place simultaneously).

Blessing of Water

96 The Baptismal Service begins with the blessing of water as a symbol of life, a symbol of death and destruction, and a symbol of cleansing, purification and sanctification. All three symbols of water are important and integral in understanding the Mystery of Baptism. Blessed by the priest, the waters of the baptismal font shall become for the candidate the waters of new life and re-birth; death and destruction; cleansing, salvation and sanctification.

A Symbol of Life

97 From the beginning of time, water has been an important source and symbol of life. Without water, life on earth would not exist. Where there is water, there is life.

98 According to the Book of Genesis, water was one of the first elements to be created by God: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:1-2).

99 The Father breathed His Spirit upon the face of the waters, imparting to them the ability to sustain life. In those waters God was about to create new life; and from them every living creature would emerge. To this day, every human being is created, formed in, and born out of the water of a mother’s womb; and continues to live upon earth because of water.

100 Now the moment of a new creation approaches. Remembering the first moment of creation, the priest again breathes gently upon the face of the waters and invokes the Holy Spirit to descend upon them, to sanctify them and to make them “life-giving,” so that the person immersed into them will be spiritually re-created as if in a womb; and born again anew, as a new creation and child of God. As the waters are blessed, the baptismal font truly becomes a divine womb and a source of new life. With this understanding, baptismal fonts are often made in the form of a womb.

A Symbol of Death, Destruction and Salvation

101 Although water is life-giving, it can also be life-taking and destructive. Thus water is also a powerful symbol of death, destruction and salvation.

102 In the Book of Genesis, Chapters 6-9, by means of water and the Flood, God brought to death and destruction the wickedness of all mankind, which had filled the earth. For a short time, the world was cleansed of its sin; but the righteous were saved by means of an ark, a symbol of the future Church of Christ and the salvation of mankind. On board were the righteous Noah, together with his family and all the creatures that he had brought with him. By means of water, the righteous were saved, while sin and iniquity were destroyed.

103 In the Book of Exodus, Chapter 14, water was used once again as an instrument of death, destruction and salvation. The winds blew all night and the Red Sea parted, allowing Moses and the people of God to cross to safety as if on dry land. Meanwhile, as Pharaoh’s army attempted to cross the sea, the winds changed and the waters returned, drowning and destroying the entire force of the enemy. By passing through the waters, the People of God were saved, while the enemy was completely destroyed.

104 In the Book of Psalms, water is specifically referred to as being a symbol of death. In Psalm 68, we find a prayer of a man who is suffering and on the verge of

death: "Save me O God, for the waters have risen to my neck. I have sunk into the mud of the deep and there is no foothold. I have entered the waters of the deep and the waves have overwhelmed me... Save me from the waters of the deep lest the waves overwhelm me. Do not let the deep engulf me nor death close its mouth on me" (Psalm 68:1-3, 15-16). The words of this psalm may have possibly been on the mind, heart and lips of the Lord, Jesus Christ, as He died upon the cross and His soul began its descent into Hades.

105 With his hand, the priest traces the sign of the cross in the waters, so that they may become the waters of death, destruction and salvation; a means of entry into the mystery of the cross itself. Thus the person immersed into the waters shall be immersed into the cross, the very death of Christ. Having died with Christ, he/she shall be buried with Him, in order to rise with Christ in His Resurrection. As the waters are blessed, the baptismal font takes on further meaning. In addition to being a womb, it shall also be a tomb - a place of death, burial and resurrection.

A Symbol of Cleansing

106 Finally, since water is used daily for washing or bathing, it serves as a fitting symbol of cleansing, purification and sanctification.

107 In the Book of Exodus (38:8), a laver (washing basin) of bronze was made and set up between the altar and the Tabernacle of testimony. Before serving at the altar or in the Tabernacle, Moses, Aaron and all the priests were required first to wash their hands and feet with water from the laver.

108 As the priest blesses the waters, he prays that the Lord God will send upon them the grace of redemption and the blessing of the Jordan, so that empowered by the Holy Spirit, they may become waters of forgiveness, cleansing, healing, protection and holiness. Thus the person baptized by them shall be immersed into the love and mercy of God; for the forgiveness of all sins, the cleansing of the soul, for the healing of the spirit, and for the protection and sanctification of the whole person. As the waters are blessed, the baptismal font takes on a third level of meaning. In addition to being a womb and a tomb, it shall also be a fountain – a laver where sins are forgiven and a person is made holy in the sight of God.

109 It is important the water (and oil) be blessed at each Baptism rather than using water blessed at Theophany or some other occasion. This blessing at each Baptism – as prescribed by tradition – heightens our appreciation for the physical and material in God's work of salvation. God's presence in matter is frequently denied today and so this blessing is particularly relevant.

Blessing of Oil

110 After the water has been blessed, the priest now blesses some olive oil, which will be used to anoint the candidate in preparation for Baptism. It is a final confirmation of God's reconciliation and peace, as well as His protection and deliverance from all evil.

111 In Genesis, Chapter 8, we find the first mention of an olive tree branch. After the rains had stopped and the earth was completely covered by the Flood, Noah decided to send forth a dove from the ark, to see if it would provide any evidence that the waters were beginning to recede. The dove returned after seven days with an olive branch in its beak (*Gen 8:6-12*), indicating that the waters were subsiding and that land would soon appear. But on a deeper level, the dove with the olive branch brought news of something much more important.

A Sign of Reconciliation and Peace

112 The olive branch offered to Noah by the dove was a sign of God's reconciliation with mankind. The Flood was over and the destruction of human sin and iniquity was complete. The olive branch also announced a new beginning in mankind's relationship with God and the establishment of a new covenant. God would no longer use the waters to destroy mankind, but only to save it.

113 As the dove with the olive branch in its beak hovered over the ark and alighted upon it, the experience of the sign brought forth joy and gladness to Noah and to all his family.

114 The priest breathes upon the oil and signs it in the form of a cross. He then prays that the Lord God bless the oil by the power, action and descent of the Holy Spirit; that it becomes a sign of God's reconciliation, bringing peace, joy and gladness to all who are anointed with it. Thus the oil, once blessed, is known as the *Oil of Gladness*.

A Sign of Deliverance

115 The olive branch offered to Noah by the dove was also a sign of God's protection from the evil. Noah and all those in the ark had been saved by the goodness and providence of God.

116 As the priest makes the sign of the cross over the oil and blesses it, he prays that by the power and action of the Holy Spirit, it may become an "armor of righteousness" for protection and deliverance from all evil. Those who are anointed with this oil are assured that through Baptism they will be entirely freed from the dominion of Satan and united to God in the Holy Mysteries. Thus the oil, once blessed, is also known as the *Oil of Exorcism*.

A Sign of the New Covenant

117 The dove with the olive branch in its beak, hovering over the ark, was a sign of the covenant that God would establish with mankind through Noah. However, the hovering dove also became a foreshadowing of the New Covenant, to be established through Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

118 After the Flood, God established a new covenant with Noah and all the future nations of the earth. Further on in time, He established a covenant with Abraham and his descendants; and finally with Moses and God's chosen people. All these

covenants of old were but merely a preparation for the new and eternal Covenant of love, which God had planned to establish with mankind, through the blood and the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

119 Under the Old Covenant with Israel, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given only to a selected few. However, with the New Covenant, the gift of the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon all peoples and nations of the earth (Acts 2:1-21; Joel 2:28-32). Those who would respond to God's invitation with faith and repentance would receive the fullness of the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation; and thus become children of God and heirs of His kingdom.

120 As the priest signs and blessed the oil, he prays that by the power and action of the Holy Spirit, it will become a sign announcing God's New Covenant and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who are anointed with this oil, are assured that their preparation for baptism is fulfilled and complete. They are ready to be baptized and to enter into a new and eternal Covenant with God; a Covenant which shall bestow upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, the enlightenment of truth, the forgiveness of all sins and life everlasting. Thus, the oil once blessed, is also known as the *Oil of Catechumens*.

Anointing with Holy Oil

121 First, the blessed Oil (of Gladness, Exorcism and Catechumens) is poured out upon the baptismal waters in the form of a cross, as a confirmation that God's blessing upon them is complete. This is to emphasize that while water can destroy life, in this case it graciously serves to give life. The waters of the baptismal font have truly become the waters of the Jordan, sanctified by the presence of Christ, delivered and protected from all evil, anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit in order to bring forth new life, immersion into the death and Resurrection of Christ, granting the forgiveness of all sins. In acknowledgement, all that can be said is simply this: "Alleluia," which means "Praise the Lord!" Blessed be God, Who illumines and sanctifies everyone who comes into the world.

122 The Holy Oil is then used by the priest to anoint the body of the candidate: his/her forehead, breast, back, ears, hands and feet. According to St. John Chrysostom, the catechumens are "anointed with oil from head to foot, as athletes of Christ preparing to enter the spiritual arena, or as soldiers receiving spiritual armour against the enemy's weapons."

123 In ancient times, soldiers would put on their armour before battle, because the armour provided protection for their body during combat. Likewise, wrestlers and athletes would anoint their bodies before entering the arena of competition, so that they would not be easily grasped by their opponents. In the same way, candidates for baptism are anointed with oil as a sign that they are putting on God's grace and protection, so that the enemy will have great difficulty taking hold and overtaking them in the arena of spiritual warfare.

124 All the senses are anointed with oil - spiritual and physical sight, smell, taste, hearing and human touch - that they may be open to God, while remaining closed to the influence of the evil one.

Holy Baptism

125 The essential Rite of Baptism consists of immersing the candidate into the baptismal waters thrice (or pouring water over the head of the candidate thrice), while exclaiming: "The servant of God [name], is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." The person who immerses the candidate or pours water is the one who must say the words of Baptism. Immersion is historically and theologically the most authentic form of baptism.

126 The person is immersed into water as if into a womb, in order to be re-created by *God the Father*, the Creator all things, to be born again (anew) from above as His beloved child, as a royal member of His household and thus, an heir to His kingdom.

127 The person is immersed into water as if into death and a tomb, in order to be united with *God the Son*, in His death upon the cross, His burial and Resurrection to a new life. This is the new and Holy Pascha, a passage (*Pesach* is Hebrew for "passage" or "Passover") from sin to righteousness, from death to eternal life. This marks the death of the "old man" enslaved to sin, and the resurrection of a "new man," free to live by the grace of God in the victory won by Christ Jesus. In the words of St. Paul: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His we shall certainly be united with Him in a Resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he Who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Romans 6:3-8).

128 The person is immersed into water as if into a fountain or a bath, in order to be cleansed and sanctified by *God the Spirit*, Who grants the forgiveness of all sins and clothes the newly-baptized person in a robe of light and righteousness. In the words of St. Paul: "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God" (2 Cor 6:11).

129 When we make the sign of the cross we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Note that the words are almost identical with the baptismal formula. Thus the sign of the cross is meant to be a daily reminder of the mystery of our Baptism. We were immersed into water and into God: in the name of the Father – to be born anew as a beloved child of the Father; in the name of the Son – to be immersed into His death on the cross, to be buried with Him and to rise with Him in His Resurrection to a new life; and finally, in the name of the

Holy Spirit – to be sanctified by the Spirit and to become a temple of His in-dwelling Presence.

Robe of Light

130 Before entering the baptismal waters to be immersed into Christ's death and Resurrection, the outer garments of the candidate are removed, just as Christ was stripped of His garments before being crucified upon the cross.

131 The outer garments are removed and set aside, as a sign that the "old self" is being stripped away. That "old self" who was disobedient to God and a slave to sin is now being removed; and the former way of life is being set aside. The person now enters the baptismal waters in order to be born anew, to die and to rise with Christ, to "put on Christ" (Gal 3:27), and to become a new person in Christ.

132 Emerging from the font, the one baptized is immediately clothed in a white garment, as a sign that the person has "put on Christ" and has risen with Christ. It is an expression of the purity and brightness of the soul, which has been cleansed of all sin and sanctified by God's grace. As the visible body is clothed in white, so the whole person has been invisibly clothed with the beauty of God's grace, glory and light! In the words of St. John Chrysostom: "From the moment we are baptized, the soul, being cleansed by the Spirit, shines more brightly than the sun."

133 The clothing in a "robe of light" is one of the links between the Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation. We near the conclusion of the Rite of Baptism, but we also prepare for what shall follow immediately - the Rite of Chrismation. In the Old Testament, according to the Law of Moses, those who were to be consecrated as priests were first washed and cleansed in water; they were robed in white linen; and then finally consecrated as priests with the anointing of holy chrism oil (Exodus 30:22-33). In the New Testament, consecration to the service of God as a member of the Royal Priesthood follows the exact same order: first, the divine cleansing of Baptism, the clothing in a white garment, and the final anointing with Holy Chrism.

134 In the Early Church, newly-baptized adults (neophytes) wore their white baptismal garments for all weekday services following Holy Pascha, hence the name "Bright Week."

Baptismal Candle

135 After being clothed in a white garment, a lighted candle is passed on to the neophyte by the priest.

136 This simple action serves a reminder that the Christian Faith has been passed on to the neophyte by the Church and her members. The newly baptized person is now responsible not only to keep this Faith alive and growing within his/her own heart, but also to pass it on to others. Faith is a gift that is received, in order to be shared.

137 The candle also serves as reminder that the person has “put on Christ” and has risen with Christ to live a new life, in accordance with the Gospel. This means that the light of Christ’s Presence must shine within and through the life of the newly baptized person, bringing the light of truth into the darkness of the world. In the words of St. Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20-21).

“For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. It is the same God Who said, ‘Let there be light shining out of darkness,’ Who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory on the face of Christ” (2 Cor 4:5-6).

“God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5b-7).

Holy Chrism

138 The word “chrism” comes from the Greek word *chrisma*, which means “unction, or anointing.” Chrism therefore is a special “anointing oil.” It was used in the Old Testament to consecrate liturgical objects and priests for the service of God.

139 It was the Lord God Himself Who commanded Moses to prepare chrism oil and to use it in a special way. The Lord said to Moses: “Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh . . . and of sweet-smelling cinnamon . . . of aromatic cane . . . of cassia . . . and of olive oil a hin; and you shall make of these a sacred chrism oil blended as by a perfumer; a holy chrism oil it shall be. And you shall anoint with it the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, and the table . . . and the lampstand . . . and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering . . . you shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests” (Exodus 30:22-30).

140 As a perfumed mixture of oil and various aromatic spices, the chrism signifies the presence of the Holy Spirit and all His gifts. On Holy Thursday each year, bishops prepare and consecrate chrism oil (myron), invoking the Holy Spirit to descend and empower it with His divine Presence. The sanctified chrism is then sent to all parishes, to be used by priests to seal the gift of the Holy Spirit upon those who have been baptized. This anointing with chrism and the sealing of the gift of the Holy Spirit is called the Mystery of Chrismation.

141 According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the consecrated holy chrism must be treated with utmost respect. He writes: “Take care not to imagine that this chrism is anything ordinary. In the same way as the bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is no more ordinary bread, but the body of Christ, so

the holy chrism is no longer ordinary . . . after the epiclesis, but the charism (gift) of Christ, made efficacious of the Holy Spirit by the presence of His divinity.”

Holy Chrismation (Anointing)

142 The priest dips his thumb into the holy chrism. He then places his hand upon the head of the newly-baptized person and begins the anointing with holy chrism. The sign of the cross is traced over the body as the priest anoints the forehead, the nostrils, the mouth, the eyes, the ears, the breast, the hands, and the feet, while saying the words: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

143 When Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan, as He came up from the water, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God was seen descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And a voice was heard from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16-17). In the same way, through Holy Chrismation, the person who has come up from the baptismal waters is sealed with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, while the Father looks down from heaven upon His new creation and announces: “This My beloved son(daughter), in whom I am well pleased.”

144 Holy Chrismation is sometimes described as a personal Pentecost for those newly baptized. The Spirit of God, Who descended upon the apostles in tongues of fire on Pentecost day, has descended upon the one who was baptized and now anointed with holy chrism. He comes invisibly, yet with no less power and reality.

145 The word “Christ,” comes from the Greek “*Christos*,” which means “anointed one.” In the Mystery of Chrismation, a baptized person becomes a “christ,” an “anointed one.”

Sealed by the Spirit

146 A “seal” is a special stamp, which acts as a signature. When a king sets his seal upon a letter or document, it means that it carries his signature, his approval and authority. It has truly been sent by the king, because it carries the imprint of his seal.

147 In Holy Chrismation, God the Father sets His seal, the Holy Spirit, upon the soul of the newly baptized person. The imprint of the Holy Spirit leaves a permanent and indelible mark of God’s approval and authority. The person is marked as one who belongs to God, set apart for God, consecrated for the service of God.

148 Anointed with holy chrism, the person is now sent forth to serve the Lord: as a prophet, one who hears the word of God and proclaims it to the people; as a priest, one who offers a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; and as a shepherd, who leads others to God and His kingdom. Every Christian is a “christ,” an “anointed one,” who shares in the mission of Christ.

149 Those who are baptized and chrismated become members of a holy nation and a chosen people of God. In his first letter, the holy Apostle Peter writes: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9). The earthly nations to which we belong are seen for what they really are: temporal communities that can claim only relative allegiance.

150 As beloved sons and daughters of the kingdom, those who are anointed with holy chrism become royal members of God’s household and therefore, heirs to His kingdom. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes: “When we cry “Abba, Father,” it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:15-17).

151 Chrismation also consecrates the baptized as new members of God’s Royal Priesthood. The Church therefore is a holy nation of priests, consecrated by God to serve a priestly role: to hear the word of God proclaimed in the holy place (nave) and to announce it to others in the world; to profess Christ as the High Priest and the Perfect Sacrifice; to teach the faith; to intercede for others in prayer; to worship God before the holy of holies (the altar or sanctuary), offering to God a perfect sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. In sum, all members of the Royal Priesthood, and not just the ordained, are called to bring the world to God and God to the world. This is the wonderful role of the Royal Priesthood.

The Liturgy of the Word

Baptismal Hymn

152 Immediately after Chrismation, the procession of the newly baptized takes place while the faithful sing the Baptismal Hymn: “All you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.”

153 This procession celebrates the new life in Christ and serves as an outward sign that the way is clear for participation in the Divine Banquet. Baptism and Chrismation have transferred the person from the world (symbolized by the narthex) into the kingdom of God on earth (symbolized by the holy place). Now, the Mystery of the Eucharist will transfer the person from earth to heaven itself. At the moment of Holy Communion, a person enters the true Holy of Holies (symbolized by the sanctuary and holy altar) and stands before the very throne of God in heaven.

154 If Baptism and Chrismation have taken place in a separate baptistery, then the newly baptized, robed in their white baptismal garments and carrying their candles, are led in procession from the baptistery into the holy place (nave) to join the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist. As they enter the holy place, the faithful sing the Baptismal Hymn: “All you who have been baptized into Christ”

155 If the baptism has taken place in the holy place (nave), the procession takes place around the baptismal font three times, forming a circle, which has a beginning but no end. This liturgical action symbolically conveys the reality that Baptism inaugurates an eternal unity with Christ.

Scriptural Readings

156 The first New Testament reading is taken from the epistle of the holy Apostle Paul to the Romans (Rom 6:3-11). Here, St. Paul proclaims that they we are no longer slaves to sin, because we have died to sin in order to live for God. In Baptism, we have been immersed into the death of Christ, we have been buried with Christ and we have risen with Christ to a new life for God.

157 The second reading is taken from the holy Gospel according to the evangelist Matthew (Mt 28:1-20). In the very proclamation of the Gospel, it is Christ Jesus Himself, risen from the dead, Who commissions the newly baptized person to go forth as His disciple and missionary: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you . . ." The final promise given by Jesus is fulfilled in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist: "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

158 After the reading of the Gospel, the Liturgy of the Word ends with intercessory prayer (the Insistent Litany), and the dismissal, if the Eucharist is not celebrated.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist

159 The Greek word *charis* means "grace" or "gift." The Greek prefix *ev* denotes something good. So the word *Ev-charis* would literally mean "good gift," or "good giving." Today, the Greek word *evcharistos* means "thank you" and the word *evcharistia* means "thanksgiving."

160 The Liturgy of the Eucharist is a perfect way of saying "thank you" to God for everything. By remembering the Mystical Supper, the Sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, His death and Resurrection, Ascension and Second Glorious Coming, these saving moments become truly present to the faithful, as the gifts of bread and wine are transformed by the Holy Spirit into the precious and life-giving Body and Blood of Christ. As these moments of salvation become present realities, now, the faithful worship God the Father "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23), offering a perfect sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving through Christ Jesus.

161 The Liturgy of the Eucharist is also God's way of completing the Baptismal Covenant and renewing His perfect and infinite gift to those who receive Him. That gift is the very Life of God. In Holy Communion, the baptized receive the Risen Lord Jesus Christ Himself, God-man, His most-precious Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. They receive the Holy Gifts as Life, for it is not the dead body and blood, but the Resurrected Christ, given as everlasting Food. Partaking of a portion of the

Holy Gifts, the person enters into the eternal and divine life of the Most Holy Trinity. The greatest treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Eucharist.

162 Baptism and Chrismation at the Easter Vigil is immediately followed by the celebration of the Eucharist according to St. Basil the Great and the reception of Holy Communion.

163 As people of the Resurrection, the faithful gather every Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. Sunday is the first and eighth day the week. It is the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and appeared to His apostles. With the weekly celebration of the Divine Liturgy, from Sunday to Sunday the faithful proclaim the victory of Christ's Paschal Mystery, His death and Resurrection, until He returns in glory at the end of this age. At every celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord Himself, risen from the dead, appears to His disciples under the veil of bread and wine.

164 It is the solemn obligation of every true Christian to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days. This, however, should not be seen as an imposed obligation, but as a privilege, indeed, it is an act of love, an expression of faithfulness, loyalty and love for God. The Church invites and strongly encourages the faithful to receive Holy Communion every Sunday, on feast days, and if possible, even on weekdays, though one should never approach the Chalice as a matter of simple routine or only because others are doing so.

165 The celebration of the Divine Liturgy and reception of Holy Communion requires spiritual preparation, which should include the following: acknowledgment of unworthiness to receive, the examination of conscience, an act of forgiveness, an attempt to reconcile (if possible) with anyone whom we have consciously offended, Holy Confession if necessary, personal prayer and an effort to follow the Eucharistic Fast.

166 As bodily nourishment restores physical strength, so the Divine Eucharist strengthens the human soul, which tends to be weakened in daily life. In Holy Communion, as Jesus revives the human heart in its love and devotion, He also helps it break free from disordered attachments and to be rooted in Christ alone. Indeed, by re-ordering our attachments, even our bodies are healed.

Options for Celebration

A. Vespers, Baptismal Service and Eucharist

167 This is the full Paschal Vigil (about two hours in length). If the Baptisms are to take place in the holy place, then the Baptismal Service begins at the conclusion of Vespers. After the Mystery of Chrismation has been administered, the service continues with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist according to St. Basil the Great.

168 If the Baptisms are to take place in a separate baptistery or chapel, there are two possible options.

- 1) If there is only one priest available to celebrate the Paschal Vigil, everyone proceeds from the holy place to the baptistery (or chapel) and the Baptismal Service takes place there. Upon conclusion, everyone returns in procession to the Holy Place to continue with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- 2) If two priests are available to celebrate the Paschal Vigil, one priest begins the Vespers Service in the Holy Place together with the faithful, while the second priest begins the Baptismal Service (at the same time) in the Baptistery. If necessary, additional Old Testament readings can be taken by the faithful in the Holy Place, until all the Baptisms are completed. The neophytes are then led into church, clothed in their white garments and carrying their baptismal candles, while the faithful welcome them into the Church with the singing of the Baptismal Hymn: *“All you who have been baptized into Christ.”* Together with the faithful, they proceed to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

B. Vespers and Baptismal Service

169 In parishes where it is not possible to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist or for other pastoral reasons, it is recommended that Vespers be celebrated together with the Baptismal Service, followed by the Liturgy of the Word and Final Dismissal. To complete the Christian Initiation, the neophytes (newly-baptized) are to receive Holy Communion the following day, at the Divine Liturgy on Holy Pascha.

C. Baptismal Service and Eucharist

170 If a parish does not have adequate cantors to lead the Vespers Service, it is recommended that the Paschal Vigil begin immediately with the Baptismal Service, followed by the Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist according to St. Basil the Great.

Additional Guidelines

Baptism and Chrismation

171 The Mystery of Baptism and Chrismation is administered only once and is never repeated. However, Canon 14 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council gives the following instruction:

“When there are no reliable witnesses, who without doubt could confirm that the child was baptized, and if the child cannot give a definite answer if his(her) baptism occurred or not, then it is permissible to baptize the person conditionally. In these situations, the following wording is to be used: “If he(she) has never been baptized, the servant of God [name] is now baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

172 Baptisms are to take place in a specifically designated baptistery (a chapel or building with an appropriate font or pool); or in the holy place (the nave) with a movable font.

173 The blessing of water and oil is an essential part of every Baptismal Service. It should not be omitted. Previously blessed water or oil should not be used.

174 It is the preference of the Church that baptisms be administered by triune immersion. However, baptisms may also be conferred by the triple pouring of water over the head of the candidate, as the priest pronounces: “The servant of God [name] is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” If the Baptism is administered by pouring, an appropriate font must be used, allowing the proper blessing of the baptismal waters and oil.

175 Holy Chrism should normally be stored in the Artophorion upon the altar, and brought out only when the Mystery of Chrismation is to be administered.

The Baptistery

176 The baptistery is also called the *Kolybethra*, the pool of immersion in the death of Christ, or the river “Jordan,” sanctified by the Baptism of the Lord in the Holy Spirit, which thus becomes the water of death to sin. The ancient traditions, of both the East and the West, show great variety in the form of the baptistery. However, they all had the common characteristic of representing the tomb in which, immersed to die together with Christ, the baptized re-emerges resurrected together with Him by the work of the Spirit of the Father.

177 The baptistery should normally be placed outside the Church proper, because it is only after the Baptism and Chrismation with holy Myron that the neophyte becomes fully part of the Church and thus can enter the temple of which it is a symbol. Where it is impossible to place the baptistery outside, because of the structure of the old buildings, then it should be at least located near the entrance of the church.

Eucharist and Holy Communion

178 At the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the neophytes, their sponsors and catechists, are to be invited to approach Holy Communion first, before the Communion of the Faithful.

179 In the case where there is danger of death, the Baptismal Service may be celebrated outside the church in the most reasonable place, given the circumstances, i.e.: a hospital room, a chapel, or an Intensive Care Unit. The priest should bring with him a portion of the reserved Holy Gifts, so that the person may receive Holy Communion immediately after Baptism and Chrismation.

180 At the conclusion of the Paschal Vigil, the neophytes are to be welcomed by the parish community with the singing of the “Polychronion” (Many Happy Years).

Final Responsibilities

181 The blessed baptismal water should be poured out upon the grounds surrounding the church. The oil of catechumens is to be poured into the oil of a vigil lamp and burned.

182 The holy chrism is to be returned to the Artophorion.

183 When new holy chrism oil is received from the bishop after being consecrated on Holy Thursday, the old chrism oil should be poured into the oil of a vigil lamp in the church and burned.

184 It is recommended that baptismal certificates be presented to neophytes on Thomas Sunday, after the Rites of the Eighth Day.

THE FINAL PERIOD OF MYSTAGOGY

185 The term *Mystagogy* means the “revelation of the mysteries.” Mystagogy is simply “post-baptismal instruction,” during which the Sacramental Mysteries are explained in detail and their deeper meaning is uncovered.

186 *Mystagogy*, the fourth and final phase of Adult Christian Initiation, officially begins on Thomas Sunday (the Sunday after Holy Pascha) with the *Rites of the Eighth Day*.

The Rites of the Eighth Day

187 The Rites of the Eighth Day serves as a reminder of the great graces received the previous week in the Mysteries Baptism and Chrismation. It consists of two combined rites, known as *ablution* and *baptismal tonsure*. These are imparted to neophytes at the ambo or tetrapod, before or after the Sunday Divine Liturgy on Thomas Sunday.

188 At the rite of ablution, using water and a sponge, the priest gently washes the neophyte at the places where Holy Chrism was applied to the body the previous week. The ablution serves as a reminder that the person has been justified, illumined, sanctified and washed in the Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation.

189 The baptismal tonsure consists of cutting four locks of hair in a cruciform pattern: at the front of the head, at the back, and on either side. The tonsure serves as a sign that the baptized person has been consecrated to God in the Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation, to serve Him as a member of the Royal Priesthood. He/she is to be a “living sacrifice” of love for God, holy and acceptable to the Lord. The hair that is cut is a symbol of “self-sacrifice” and “self-offering” to God. It is whole-burnt in the censer.

190 In his letter to the Christians in Rome, the Apostle Paul writes the following: “I appeal to you . . . by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1-2).

Post-Baptismal Instruction

191 The duration of post-baptismal instruction may last anywhere from four to six months. In some cases, it may be extended for the duration of a whole year. In essence, every day after Baptism is “post-baptismal,” and therefore, in reality, the period of Mystagogy continues to the end of one’s life on earth.

192 In addition to a detailed explanation of the seven Sacramental Mysteries, the program of post-baptismal instruction should also include: personal and liturgical

prayer, the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit, virtues, vocations and service in the Church.

193 During the period of Mystagogy, it is important for catechists and sponsors to assist neophytes in discovering their own gifts and talents for ministry in the Church, and to encourage them to take on an active role of service within their parish communities.

