

The Basics of Orthodoxy Class 102

St. Gregory of Nyssa Orthodox Church, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Topic 5 pt 1: Holy Chrismation: The Gift of the Holy Spirit (*The Faith*, Chp.13)

“The Mystery of Chrismation is our personal Pentecost, in which we receive the Holy Spirit and become living temples of the All-holy Trinity.”

Christ (“Messiah”, or, “The Anointed”) set the example for all of us:

He was Baptized and afterwards, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, anointing Him to be the Christ (“The Anointed”).

Matthew 3:16-17

¹⁶When He had been **baptized**, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the **Spirit of God descending** like a dove and **alighting upon Him**. ¹⁷And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Likewise, we too, “when we emerge from the baptismal waters, cleansed of our sins, we are **anointed** with the Holy Chrism and **receive** in ourselves the **Spirit** of the Living God,” Who is present in the Holy Chrism. (*Faith*, p. 191)

Chrismation comes from the Greek and Latin term, “*chrisma*”, or, “*chrismatis*”, which means “anointing”, “unction”, and “sacred oils”. The Holy Spirit is “**poured**” out upon men as the ultimate “Unction”, the supreme “**Anointing**”, making us **living temples** of the Living God. We receive the Divine Grace (Presence/Energy/Power/Enablement) of the Holy Spirit.

Old Testament Prophecy:

Joel 2:28-29

²⁸“And it shall come to pass afterward that **I will pour out My Spirit** on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall **prophesy**, Your old men shall dream **dreams**, Your young men shall see **visions**. ²⁹And also on My menservants and on My maidservants **I will pour out My Spirit** in those days.”

Ezekiel 36:25-27

²⁵“Then I will **sprinkle clean water** on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶I will give you **a new heart** and put **a new spirit within you**; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷**I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³But this is the **covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.** ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Numbers 11:29

²⁹“Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the **Lord would put His Spirit upon them!**”

The Promise of the Lord:

John 7:37-39

³⁷“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, Whom those believing in Him would receive; for the **Holy Spirit** was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

John 14:16-17

¹⁶“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷**the Spirit of truth**, Whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

John 16:13-14

¹³“However, when He, **the Spirit of truth**, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

Luke 24:49

⁴⁹“Behold, I send **the Promise of My Father upon you**; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Acts 1:4-5

⁴“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now’.”

Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

New Testament Practice:

Acts 2:1-4

¹“When the **Day of Pentecost** had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Acts 2:38-39

³⁸“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For **the promise** is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call’.”

The Apostles would baptize their new converts and then lay their hands on them so that they too would receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, as promised by the Lord Jesus and by the Old Testament Prophets.

Acts 8:14-17

¹⁴“Now when the **apostles** who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they **sent Peter and John to them**, ¹⁵who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**. ¹⁶For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then **they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit**.

Early Church Practice:

The Bishops, as the Successors to the Apostles, at first reserved for themselves the privilege of bestowing the Gift of the Holy Spirit upon the newly baptized Christians through the laying on of their hands upon the heads of the converts.

The Church in the West continued this practice for centuries, even if it meant delaying the Mystery of Chrismation (known as “Confirmation” in the West) for months (or even years) until the local bishop could get around to everyone.

The Church in the East, **by the 100’s** (2nd Century), started to allow the **presbyters** (“the elders”, “the priests”), as the **delegated representatives of their bishops**, to apply with their own hands, a specially prepared Unction/Anointing Oil upon the head and body of newly baptized Christians. This Unction Oil (“Holy Chrism” or, “Holy Myron”)—which conveys **the Gift of the Holy Spirit**—was already consecrated by the bishop. By this means, in the East, **Chrismation** always immediately follows **Baptism**, as in the example of our Lord in the Jordan River, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and anointed Him to be the Messiah (the “Anointed”, the “Christ”) immediately after His Baptism. Following this pattern, there is no need to wait for the local bishop to make a visit. The Holy Chrism is kept on the Holy Altar Table of every parish, ready for each priest to use. Today, only the Patriarch of a local national Orthodox Patriarchate has the honor of consecrating new Chrism for his local Church, which he distributes to his brother bishops within his Holy Synod, and they to their clergy.

Three Chief Effects of the Holy Mystery of Chrismation:

- 1) “Chrismation bestows upon us the **Spirit of Adoption**, making us the children of God.”
- 2) Chrismation “is our anointing into **the royal priesthood**.”
- 3) Chrismation “is the **pledge of our future inheritance** of the Kingdom of God.”

1) “Chrismation bestows upon us the Spirit of Adoption, making us the children of God.”

Galatians 4:3-6

³“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that **we might receive the adoption as sons**.

⁶And because you are sons, **God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”**”

Romans 8:14-17

¹⁴“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**.

¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but **you received the Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, “**Abba, Father.**”

¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**, ¹⁷and if **children**, then heirs—**heirs** of God and **joint heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

2) Chrismation “is our anointing into the royal priesthood.”

In the Old Testament, there was a prefigurement, a shadow, of the better Gift that was to come later in the New Testament, the New Covenant. Washing, robing, and anointing placed one into the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron.

Exodus 29:4-7

⁴“And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. ⁵Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod. ⁶You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban. ⁷And you shall take **the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him.**”

This **washing and anointing** was a foreshadowing of the Reality to come in the New Covenant. In **Baptism** we are washed in Christ and robed with Christ; in **Chrismation** we are anointed with the Holy Spirit. This makes all Christians to be “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.” (1 Peter 2:9)

We all, as a royal priesthood, are to offer spiritual sacrifices of praise to God at all times, the fruit of our lips **giving thanks** unto His Name (Hebrews 13:15). We are all to let our Light (given in Baptism and Chrismation) shine, so that we might participate in Christ’s

global mission of reconciling all of humanity with God, by being witnesses for Christ to all around us.

Being a part of the “royal priesthood” does NOT mean that everyone and anyone can perform the Holy Eucharist or hear confessions. To be set apart for such pastoral ministry requires yet another “laying on of hands”—Holy Ordination—to receive from the Lord the Grace and power to be either a deacon, or presbyter (“priest”), or bishop.

To equip the Church, the Holy Spirit gives out a “diversity” of special “gifts” to be used for service and ministry within the Church. The Church is one Body, with many members (parts/organs)—but it is the same Spirit “Who works all in all.” (I Cor.12:6) “There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.” (I Cor.12:5)

For more information See **I Corinthians 12:7-11**; and **12:28-30** (these verses will be examined in more detail in the next lesson).

The Holy Spirit gives to some, (but not to all the same), **different gifts**, such as the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; great faith; gifts of healing; ability to work miracles; the ability to prophesy; the ability to discern spirits; the ability to speak other languages (I Cor.12:7-11). Many saints and holy people—both men and women—today have received these gifts.

For the smooth and blessed running of the Church, the Holy Spirit has “appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?” No. (I Cor.12:28-30)

These **gifts of the Holy Spirit** are not to be confused with the “**fruit of the Holy Spirit**”—“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance— (Galatians 5:22-23). These fruits the Holy Spirit desires to harvest on the Day of Judgment from every Christian soul—that Day on which we will be judged by our works, (i.e. by our “fruit”). God, in His mercy, wants to help you grow good fruit in your life so that that you will be pleasing to Him on Judgment Day. Therefore, He offers you His Presence through the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

3) Chrismation “is the pledge of our future inheritance of the Kingdom of God.”

The Holy Spirit is the “**down payment**” on our future inheritance of immortality.

2 Cor. 5:5 “the **earnest** of the **Spirit**” (earnest = down-payment, guarantee)

Luke 17:21 “The kingdom of God is **within** you.”

“The Holy Spirit makes present the kingdom of God as He dwells within those who have been anointed. Through the Spirit we partake, here and now, of the kingdom that is to come.” (*Faith*, p. 197)

I Cor. 3:16-17

“Know ye not that ye are the **temple of God**, and that **the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, Whose temple ye are.”

We must live **holy lives**, with the **help** of the **Holy Spirit**. This is a high calling. “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48)

Hear this quote St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th Cent.) on page 198 of *The Faith*:

“For as Christ after His Baptism, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, went forth and vanquished the adversary, so likewise, having, after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, put on the whole armor of the Holy Spirit, do ye stand against the power of the enemy and vanquish it, saying, ‘I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me’ (Phil. 4:13).”