

Chrismation

- ✦ In the sacrament of Chrismation we receive “the Sign/Sealing of the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- ✦ The Greek word for Confirmation is “chrisma” which means anointing. The one anointed with chrisma becomes christos that is, the anointed one which is the meaning of the name of Christ.
- ✦ If Baptism is our personal participation in Pascha, the death and resurrection of Christ; Chrismation is our personal participation in the Pentecost- the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us. Just as the Eucharist is a person’s Mystical Supper, so Chrismation is a personal Pentecost.
- ✦ Chrismation is the “ordination of the laity.” According to Orthodox belief, every layperson is “ordained” into the priesthood of the laity by this Sacrament.
- ✦ In Chrismation, the person receives the “power from the Most High.” (acts 1-2), the Gift of the Spirit of God, in order to live the new life received in Baptism. One is anointed, just as Christ the Messiah is THE Anointed One of God. Thus, through Chrismation we become a “christ” – notice the small “c” - a son of God, a person upon whom the Holy Spirit dwells, a person in whom the Holy Spirit lives and acts-as long as we want It and cooperate with It’s powerful and holy inspiration. And therefore, it is only after our Chrismation that the Baptismal procession is made and that we hear the Epistle and the Gospel of our salvation and illumination in Christ.
- ✦ After the Baptism and Chrismation the newly received into God’s family is tonsured. The tonsure, which is the cutting of the hair from the head in the sign of the cross, is the sign that the person completely offers himself to God. Hair being the symbol of strength (Judges 16:17).
- ✦ The Mystery/Sacrament of Chrismation (called Confirmation in the West), is always done in the Orthodox Church together with Baptism.
- ✦ This differs from the West which looks at these two sacraments occurring separately and given other interpretations.
- ✦ Chrismation, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, is celebrated (NOT a performance) in the Orthodox Church by anointing parts of the person’s body (forehead, chin & cheeks, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, feet, heart and back) with a Mystical Oil called Holy Chrism. This oil, also called Myrrh (myron) is prepared by the Bishops of the Church on Holy Thursday – approximately every 10 years the reserve of the Holy Myrrh nears depletion. It is used in Chrismation to show that the gift of the Spirit was originally given to men through the Apostles of Christ whose formal successors in the world are the Bishops of the Church. (Acts 8:14, 19:7).

- ◈ The anointing of the *forehead* signifies the sanctification of the mind, or thoughts.
- ◈ The anointing of the *chest* signifies the sanctification of the heart, or desires.
- ◈ The anointing of the *eyes, ears, lips* signifies the sanctification of the senses.
- ◈ The anointing of the *hands* and *feet* signifies their sanctification to good works and the walk in the way of His commandments.
- ◈ Together with being baptized and Chrismated, the newborn child is also “churched” prior before the 2 Mysteries that were discussed.
- ◈ The rite of churching imitates the offering of male children to the temple according to the Law of the OT, particularly the offering of Christ on the 40th day after His birth (Luke 2:22). Because of this fact, Baptism in the Orthodox tradition came to be prescribed for the 40th day or thereabouts. In the NT Church both male and female children are formally presented to God in the Church with special prayers said at this time.
- ◈ Also at this time, once more in imitation of OT practice, the mother of the newborn child is also “churched.” Here we have the specific example of the purification ritual of Jesus’ mother Mary (Luke 2:22). In the Orthodox tradition the churching of the mother is her re-entry into the assembly of God’s people after participation with God in the holy act of birth and after her separation from the Liturgy during her confinement. Thus, the mother is blessed to enter once more into communion with the mystery of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Divine Liturgy of the Church from which she has been absent. (It used to take the mother six weeks to recover from the birth of a child).
- ◈ “A layperson who without serious excuse misses the divine services of the Church for three consecutive Sundays should be excommunicated” - Canon 11 Sardica (343 AD); Canon 80 of the 6th Ecumenical Council.