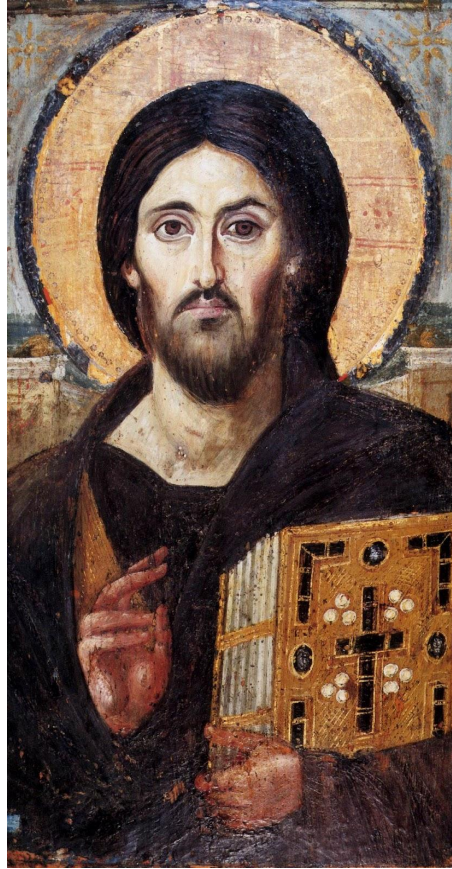




Sunday School of the American Dioceses
of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

6th Grade

Our Sacramental Life



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Lesson 1: The Journey of Salvation

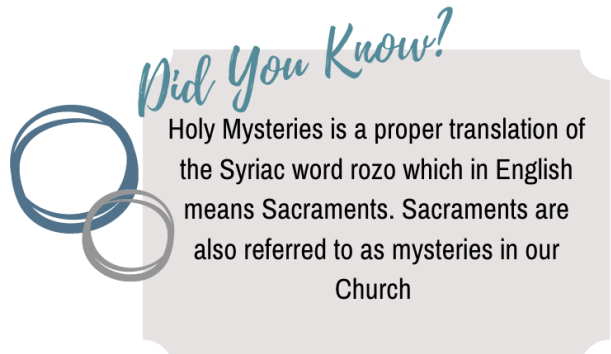
Lesson Goals

- *I can understand God's love to save all people. I can build the path towards redemption and salvation for generations to come.*
- *I can explain the involvement of the Holy Trinity in creation, the uniqueness of the creation of human beings, and God's expectation of humans.*
- *I can explain why God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden after their fall.*
- *I can appreciate the role of Sacraments in our salvation journey.*
- *I can name the Orthodox Sacraments and briefly describe them.*

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” – St. John 3:16

Let's imagine a beach lifeguard suddenly sees someone drowning at sea and springs into action to save that person. The lifeguard may swim out to the person in need, dive deep underwater and pull them to the surface. Then the lifeguard might put the rescue buoy on the person and pull them to the shore. On the shore, the person who was in the water might need medical attention (like CPR) to regain consciousness.

Now share, when would you consider the person saved? Would it be when the lifeguard first took hold of them and brought them to the surface? Would it be when they make it to the shore? Would it be when the person finally woke up and realized everything that had happened? It is not possible to pinpoint a single moment when the drowning person was saved. Instead it was all of those actions by the lifeguard that saved the person. Similarly, our Lord saw that we were perishing, came down to us, and by the Cross returned us back to the shore. At the shore, our souls needed more healing and mending by the Holy Spirit. And perhaps afterwards, we woke up to understand everything that God has done for us. There was not a single moment when we were saved, but instead all of those moments are part of our salvation. Salvation is more than the forgiveness of our sins. Salvation is a lifelong journey of experiencing the grace of God until we reach the Kingdom. We are all in the process of being saved. When you were baptized, you were born again to eternal life. Each time you



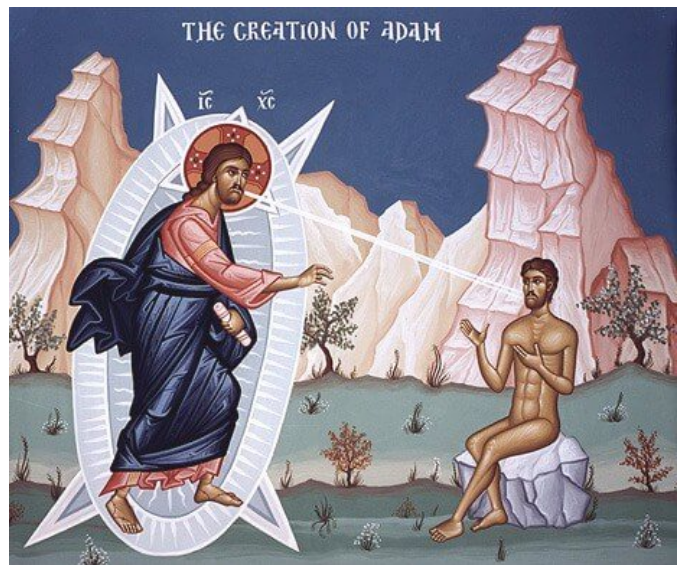
receive the Holy Qurbana, it is part of your salvation process. For those who receive the Sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, Confession, or Anointing of the Sick, each Sacrament is part of their journey towards the Heavenly Kingdom. The Sacraments of the Church that we receive are all ways in which we participate in the divine grace of God.

God wants us to be redeemed from our sin because He loves us a lot. He shows us the path to be born again so that we may receive the gifts of eternal life and Salvation. Through the Church, the Holy Apostles provided us with that path: the Holy Sacraments or Mysteries. To understand why we need the Sacraments, we have to look into the creation story, Adam's fall, and later events. You may have learned about those events in your previous grades. In this lesson, you will go deeper, so that you have a better understanding of God's love for us.

The Creation Narrative

We believe that God created the universe and everything in it, and that His creation is good. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are full of details. In chapter 1 verses 1-28, we read the following:

- God made heaven and earth
- The earth was invisible, unfinished, and covered with darkness and water (deep)
- The Spirit of God hovered over the waters
- God spoke everything into existence by saying, "Let there be...", and immediately these were created: stars, dry land, plants, living creatures, etc.
- He created all these things on days 1-5
- God created man on the 6th day by saying, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."



Unlike the rest of creation, God created man and woman differently. He did not speak man into existence; instead, He created man with His hands. Genesis 2:7 says, *"Then God formed the man out of dust from the ground, and breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* And, after God created man, He placed him in a special place, the Garden of Eden.

From the story of man's creation, we learn that each of us is a unique and special creation. Some important points to remember:

- You are made in the image of God by God's very touch.
- You are a part of the earth, the material universe.
- You have God's breath of life.
- You are born of God and are a child of God

You are created in the image of God and that can **never** be taken away from you. A work of art always has the signature of its creator. God has made you beautiful, unique, and cherished. You are also a work of art still in progress. You are made in the image of God, but are still growing more in His likeness each day. Day by day you are growing in perfection. By the working of the Holy Spirit, you are growing towards perfect love, goodness, and wisdom.

You are Made for Communion with God

The Qolo (hymn) is from the prayers for the Departed Clergy and paints a beautiful picture of the communion God wants with us.

*God created Adam and
Sat down, contemplating him
He saw how fair and like the
Creature was to Creator*

*The earthly one came and went
Through the trees of Paradise
The angels marveled
At how he was exalted*

God wanted people to commune with Him eternally, but man broke it by disobeying God. In the Garden of Eden, man showed his disobedience by eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then God reminded Adam and Eve of the eternal communion that they had now lost for all mankind. In Genesis 2:19, He said, "*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground from which you were taken. Earth you are, and to earth you shall return.*"

The Communion Squandered: Was it a Punishment?

After their fall, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God because they were ashamed and knew that they had disobeyed God. Can anyone really hide from our omniscient and omnipresent God? No one can. We may try to hide our sins. Sin isolates us, but God calls us out of hiding and into communion with Him and with other people.

Because Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God cast them out of Paradise. Sadly, they lost the close intimate communion they had with God in the Garden. Why did God expel them from the Garden? Was it a punishment for their disobedience? Let us analyze the event for answers:

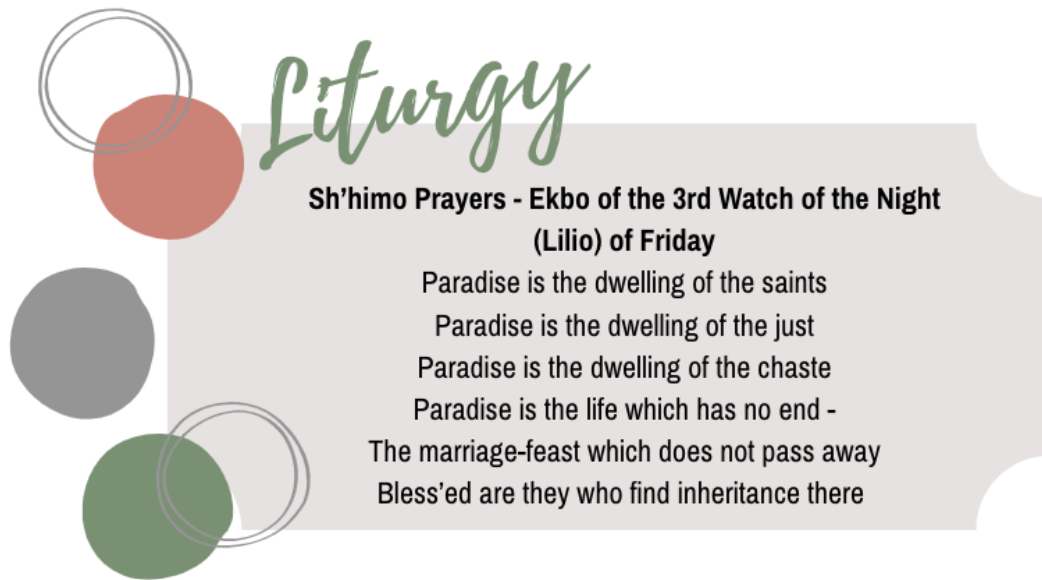
1. **Adam did not acknowledge his sin:** Even though God knew the answer, He asked Adam, "Where are you?" Why did God ask that question? He asked it to make Adam aware of his sin. It is like how your parents may ask, "What are you doing?" when you have been caught doing something wrong. They ask it to make you aware of the consequences. Adam gave the excuse that he was hiding because he was naked, rather than honestly saying the actual reason: he had sinned by eating the fruit which he was told not to eat.
2. **Adam did not confess:** He did not accept the responsibility for sinning; instead, he blamed God for giving him Eve who had given him the fruit.
3. **Adam did not repent:** Even though God made Adam aware of his sin, he neither acknowledged nor confessed it. He did not apologize to God.

Since Adam did not confess and did not ask for forgiveness, he remained in sin. God did not want Adam, who was in sin, to eat from the Tree of Life because then he would remain out of communion with God forever. God did not want that to happen because He always wanted to be in communion with His creation.

About the Tree of Life: whoever eats its fruit will live forever in whatever state they are in, holiness or sinfulness. If a sinful person eats its fruit, they would live in sin forever and be unable to be saved.

Thus, the answer to the question, 'Why did God cast out Adam and Eve from the Garden?' is: God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden not as a punishment, but out of love. He did not want all people (Adam and Eve and all future descendants) to live in sin forever and to be separated from Him (Genesis 3:22). He wanted us to be redeemed and brought back into communion with Him; and, for that He was ready to sacrifice His Only Begotten Son.

Redemption of Humanity



After Adam, generations of humans were born outside Paradise and continued in sin. God worked to bring humanity back into communion with Him throughout those generations. He made a covenant with Abraham; He sent prophets, judges, and kings to care for the Israelites. And, if they went astray, He sent foreign kings to rule over them.

Then the time came for God, the Father, to send His Only-Begotten Son to redeem humanity from the diseases of sin. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man that humanity may regain its life through Him (St. John 1:4). He redeemed humanity through His crucifixion and gave us life through His resurrection.

Through His life, Jesus showed us the way to eternal life. In John 14:6, He says, "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*" Jesus made Baptism in Water and Spirit as the means to enter the Kingdom of God (St. John 3:5); He shared Himself with us as the living bread that came down from heaven (St. John 6:47-58). After His Resurrection, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on His disciples (the Apostles). He sent them out with the mission of spreading the Good News of redemption to all people (St. John 20:21-22). The Apostles spread the Good News and prepared the Church to continue that mission.

Orthodox Mysteries (Sacraments)

When Christ trampled death by His death, He didn't do it just for Adam and Eve. He destroyed death for you too. Your journey on that path to salvation is continuous. The Apostles handed that path to the Church; the Church then gave us Mysteries (Sacraments). The Mysteries, along with other elements such as prayers, worship, feasts, etc., are important for your salvation.



One of the saints of our Church, St. Geevarghese Mar Dionysius of Vattasseril, wrote a book on the Holy Sacraments. In that book, the *Quintessence of Religious Doctrines (Mathopadesa Saarangal)*, Malankara Malpan (teacher) Geevarghese Vattasseril described the sacraments as follows: "The Holy Sacraments are decreed and instituted by our Lord as essentials for the salvation of mankind and are the very visible rituals of His invisible grace."

As stated, Sacraments are also known as Sacred Mysteries. They are a window through which we can have a brief glimpse of the divine. Take for example the sacrament of baptism. Through it, you were born again. When you went into the baptismal font, you died to this temporary world and when you came out of the waters, you were born again to eternal life (Romans 6:3-9; Colossians 2:12). We see the invisible grace of God in these visible sacraments. The things we cannot see with our eyes, we are able to see through the prayers in the Mysteries of the Church. We experience the grace of God in the Mysteries through our other senses too: touch, taste, smell, and hearing.



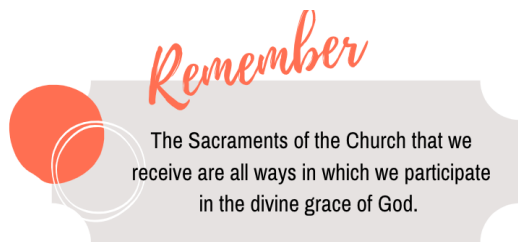
The Mysteries (Sacraments)

There are many Sacraments which the Holy Church offers to us. First seven in the list are for individual salvation, although Holy Matrimony and Holy Ordination are optional.

1. **Holy Baptism:** For the hope of life and the remission of sins and being born again.
2. **Holy Chrismation:** The sweet fragrance of Christ, the mark and seal of the true faith and the perfection of the gift of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Holy Qurbana:** For partaking in the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, The Tree of Life's Fruit.
4. **Holy Confession:** For repentance, admission and absolution of sins - we admit, but only God cleanses of our sins.
5. **Holy Matrimony:** For union in the journey to the Heavenly Kingdom and building of goodness and learning selfless love while leading each other to salvation.
6. **Holy Ordination:** The offering of a person by The Church and blessing him with spiritual grace to administer the Holy Sacraments.
7. **Holy Unction:** For anointing the sick to heal their soul as well as their body from diseases.
8. **Consecration of a Church:** For the sanctification and dedication of a church building as God's Temple.
9. **House Blessing:** For blessing a person or family's house.
10. **Burial:** For mourning the separation of soul and body and preparing a person's soul for a peaceful journey to Paradise.
11. **Daily and Festal Prayers:** For consecrating the daily moments of our lives to the Lord. All worship services, daily and special prayers, intercessory prayers, feasts, blessings of objects that we use are sacramental. For us as Christians, our life itself is a sacramental journey.

Summary

Holy Sacraments were ordered and established by Jesus Christ for our journey towards Salvation. Just like Adam and Eve, we are created in God's image and are always growing in His likeness, becoming more perfect day by day. We are also created to have communion with God. When we sin, we have turned away from God and it causes us to be isolated. But the Lord calls us out of hiding and into communion with Him and with others. The Holy Mysteries are there for us to receive that grace of God and help us in our journey out of sin and into growing in virtue. Our Lord gave us the Holy Mysteries



because of His love for us. It is the same love that compelled God the Father to send His Son Jesus Christ for our salvation. He rescued us from a death which would have forever separated us from God. The same love also compelled Him to send the Holy Spirit to help us discover His image in us, to grow in His likeness and to guide us to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to be made in the image of God and to grow in His likeness?
2. Why is it important for us to partake in Mysteries or Sacraments?
3. What would you like to understand about Mysteries or Sacraments by the time this school year finishes?
4. When partaking in Holy Communion, how does receiving His Body and Blood bring us closer to Him?

Lesson 2: Born Again

Lesson Goals

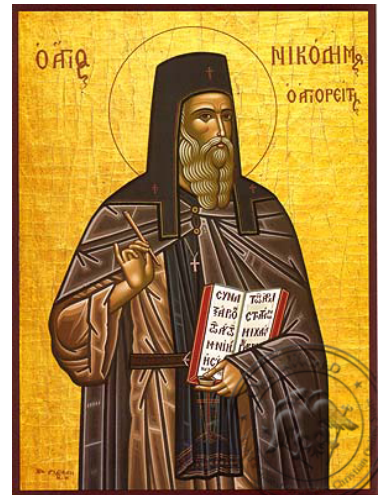
- *I can understand the need for baptism.*
 - *I can explain the Church's position on infant baptism.*
 - *I can explain the role of a Godparent.*
 - *I can identify parts of the Baptism service.*
-

The Need for Baptism

Just imagine visiting another country in the world. Each country may have their own rules on who can come into their country. All of the countries will require that you have a passport, and some countries like the US, Canada, and India may require that you have visas for specific purposes to enter their country.

Baptism is like the passport and visa needed to enter into the Kingdom of God, but the good news is that you do not need another document. You just need to put faith in Jesus Christ, renounce Satan, and be willing to lead a life that is led by Jesus Christ.

This is what it means to be "born again". In St. John chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus, a religious leader of the Jews, that no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again. Nicodemus misunderstands and he asks Jesus "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus then goes on to explain to Nicodemus that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he can not enter the Kingdom of God." Baptism is our entry into life in the Kingdom of God through water and Spirit, **the HOLY SPIRIT**.



When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in His own image and gave them a paradise in which they could enjoy a perfect relationship with Him. He gave them free will as well. Unfortunately, they used that free will to disobey God by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As a result, they were forced to leave the Garden of Eden and could no longer live in perfect communion with God.

Even though we are personally not guilty of the sin of Adam and Eve, we have inherited the tendency to sin and it is much easier for us to sin, than not to sin. With

complete obedience, Jesus lived to redeem this “fallen nature” of human beings.

Through baptism, our fallen nature is put to death as we share in the death of Christ symbolized by being immersed in water. Then we rise from the water as a new being (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12).



Jesus Christ was able to save us from sin and instructed His disciples to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (St. Matthew 28:19). That tradition has been passed down from the Apostles to our fathers in order to baptize us and to be servants in His kingdom.

Infant Baptism

The Orthodox Church believes in and follows infant baptism, as was taught by the Apostles and practiced in the early Church. They taught that we should not allow sin any opportunity to grow in people. Christians should be sanctified and consecrated as infants.

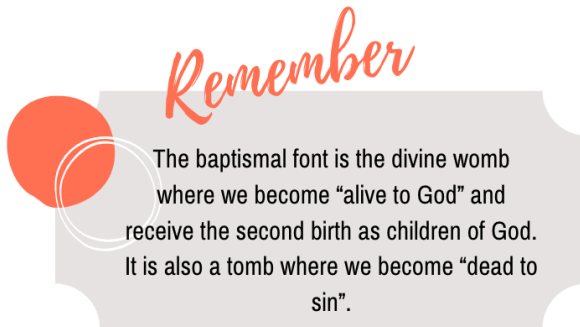
After the death of Jesus, Peter exhorted *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call”* (Acts 2:38-39). As the adults converted, their entire families (including children) were baptized.

The Jewish practice of circumcision of male children on the eighth day after birth (Genesis 17:10-13; Leviticus 12:3) was a preview of Christian baptism. Like the Israelites who traveled with their families through the Red Sea and escaped captivity in Egypt, baptism is the water through which the baptismal candidate escapes the captivity of sin. This was one example told to us by the Apostles and proves that redemption was offered to both adults and children.

We believe we are saved by God’s grace, the power of the risen Christ, and not by our human actions. Baptism is not an act of the individual or the priest. It is a divine act of God and we are participants. St. John the Baptist received the Holy Spirit while in his mother’s womb and was already called by God for a higher purpose. We know young children are vaccinated early to protect them from sickness and diseases. Likewise, infant baptism helps redeem a baby from the sickness of sin and lays the foundation for a relationship with God.

Through baptism we are all adopted as God's children. Through baptism, seeds of faith are planted. Seeds are then nurtured by living a Christian life in the Church.

Baptismal Font



Catechumens

Catechumen means 'one who hears' or, 'the learner'. In the early Church, they were adults (Jews and Gentiles) who believed in the Apostles' teachings. They learned from their spiritual fathers about Jesus and were allowed to take part in the first part of the Holy Qurbana. They would participate in the hymns and hear the word of God through the Old Testament, Epistles, Gospel readings, and an explanation of the Word by the bishops or priests. They would leave the Church after reciting the Creed and could not participate in the Second part of the Holy Qurbana until they had received baptism.

In our parishes today, we often see more baptisms for babies who are born into Christian families than adults. In cases where the baby cannot speak, the Godparent represents the child and speaks on behalf of the child during the baptism ceremony.

Role of the Godparent

Being chosen as a Godparent is both a huge honor and also a great commitment. The Godparent accepts responsibility for watching over the person's spiritual growth. The Godparent also prepares themselves through fasting, prayer, and Holy Confession.

In the case of an infant, the family brings the infant to the priest for this perfecting Sacrament. They speak on behalf of the child being baptized. During the service they renounce Satan and accept Christ on behalf of the child.

After baptism, the Godparent along with the parents take responsibility to bring the child up in faith and to teach them in the teachings of the Church. They act as a good role model and teach the baptized child how to live a godly life and to live according to the Church's customs.

Parts of the Baptism Service

The service begins with Introductory prayers, Bible readings and Inscription of the baptismal name, which means that their name is now written in the Book of Life (Phil 4:3, Rev 3:5). As God breathed the breath of life into Adam's nostrils (Gen. 2:7) and Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the Apostles (St. John 20:22), the priest now breathes upon the child's face to prepare them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Renunciation of Satan and acceptance of Jesus Christ: After prayers of exorcism, the Godparent and the child while facing West holds the child's left hand with their left hand and on their behalf, rejects Satan out loud 3 times. Next, the Godparent and the child turn to the East. The Godparent holds the child's right hand with their right hand and accepts Jesus Christ out loud 3 times.

The Nicene Creed is then recited as a statement of Faith.

Anointing: The child is anointed with the "Oil of Gladness" (Psalm 44:8 OSB). This means that Jesus Christ has come to fill the child with joy, peace and happiness and to lead the baptized child from darkness to light. The child is now healed from sin and made worthy of adoption as God's child.

Preparation of the Baptismal font: Hot and cold water are poured into the baptismal font. This symbolizes life (warm water) and sin (cold water), just like the two streams (warm & cold) of the River Jordan. The priest then pours Holy Chrism into the water, representing when the Holy Spirit descended into the water at Jesus' baptism. The priest prays over the water asking for God's spiritual blessing, and to remove any sinful nature and for the resurrection of the new man (sinless self) in the baptized child. Thus, the baptismal water gets sanctified. During this time, we sing the song, "Of this baptism, John spoke: 'I baptize you with water. But the one who is to come Will baptize with the Spirit.'"

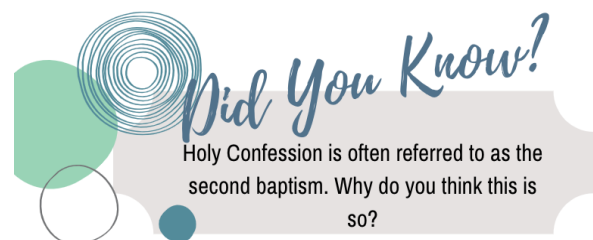
Removal of garments: This symbolizes removing the old man (sinful self).
Immersion: This is the main action in baptism. The baby is either immersed underwater 3 times or has water poured over their head 3 times. The body is washed in the water to show rebirth. Triple immersion stands for the 3 days Jesus spent in the tomb and for the Holy Trinity in whose name we are baptized.
Chrismation: This is the second sacrament where the candidate receives the Seal of the Holy Spirit by the priest's anointing with the Holy Chrism (Mooron). The priest anoints every part of the baptized child's body. This makes the body holy and dedicated to the service of God, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
Crowning: The baby is then clothed in new white garments symbolizing divine purity. Through Baptism the child enters into the Royal Priesthood. The crown is placed on the child's head to represent kingship. The baptized child has now been adopted as a child of the Most High.
Holy Qurbana: After baptism, the candidate can now receive the Holy Qurbana. We sing the song, "The fruit – Adam did not taste - in Paradise is Placed with joy today - in your mouth."

The infant is taken into the altar room to kiss the four corners of the Holy Altar. Adam was not able to partake of the tree of Life and was driven out of the Garden of Eden because of his sin. Through baptism the new Christian becomes eligible to eat from the Tree of Life (which is The Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ) and is able to re-enter into the Paradise (the altar).

Baptism is Just the Beginning

Just as the Prodigal Son returned from sin and his Father clothed him with righteousness, we are adopted by God and clothed with His righteousness through baptism. This is the start of our life in Christ.

We need to continue on this journey to become one with God (Theosis). Baptism



cannot be repeated, as recited in the Creed “there is only one baptism for the remission of Sins”. For sins committed after baptism the Church recommends Holy Confession (“baptism of tears”).

Reflection Questions

1. Is it sufficient to believe in God without getting baptized? Why or why not?
2. Can adults be baptized into the Orthodox Church?
3. What is the role of Godparent apart from our parents?
4. Why is the order of the service of Holy Baptism the way that it is?
5. In the Service of Holy Baptism, after the one being baptized renounces Satan and confesses their belief in Christ the entire congregation recites the Nicene Creed together. What is the significance of this moment?

Lesson 3: Becoming God's Temple

Lesson Goals

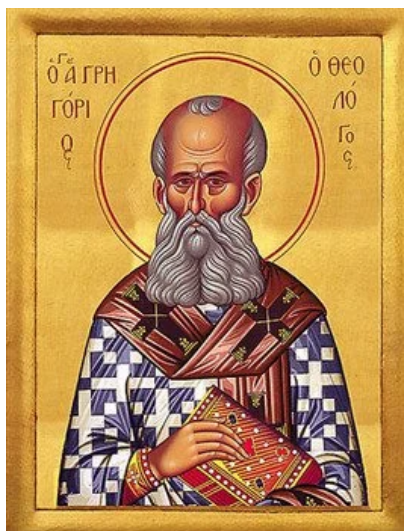
- *I can make the connection that chrismation sets my body apart for the service of God, and consecration of the Church sets apart a physical building for the service of God.*
- *I can understand that the faithful who are actively participating in the consecration service for the Church building are also being set apart for the service of God*
- *I can better relate why the service of the Chrismation happens right after the service of the Holy Baptism.*

When we hear “temple of God” we usually think about the Old Testament place of worship in Jerusalem that was destroyed in the 1st century. Although historically correct, there is a much deeper meaning that Christians should understand about God’s temple and its importance to our spiritual growth.

The Temple of God

In the Book of Genesis, we read that God created man out of “*dust from the ground*” (Genesis 2:7) and placed him in a “*garden eastward in Eden*” (Genesis 2:8). We also read that God created us in His image and thus, together with God we are to grow in His likeness (Genesis 1:27-28).

Being in the very presence of God is a sacred space. It is where we are simply able to connect and communicate with Him. This invitation to God’s Holiness is basic to our Orthodox theology. The Garden of Eden was the first



sacred space, created and set apart from the rest of the world. Here Adam and Eve were always in communion with God. In this

Paradise, there was nothing separating man from God—not even clothes! To be this close and fully in communion with God required man and woman to be pure, holy, and sanctified.

When sin and death entered the world (Genesis 3), man became separated from God. This separation was not a punishment but a consequence of the action of man as well

Think

What is St. Gregory the Theologian trying to say in this quote?

as an act of mercy by God. If Adam and Eve had not been banished, what would have been the dire consequences? St. Gregory the Theologian states that the humans, who were separated from God through sin can have a termination of sin through death. Thus, the sinful human becomes not everlasting. In other words, expulsion from the Garden of Eden was a much more merciful solution. This banishment was temporary too because our loving God already had a far greater redemptive plan in mind. God turned death into a mercy because through death there is an end to living in sin, while if we lived forever, we would have been staying in sin forever.

God still loved us. His plan for salvation was to save us from death so that we could return to be forever in communion with Him. As it is written in Psalm 10:4 (11:4), *“The Lord is in His holy temple; The Lord, His throne is in heaven;”*. God had a choice to rest on His throne but the next pages of Scripture show a beautiful story of how much God loved us and brought us back into communion with Him.

God began to bring His people together as Israel. He worked through the prophets Noah, Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. With Moses, we see a more intentional teaching towards His people (the Church) on how to return to communion with God. From Exodus 25-40, we see God gives to Moses clear instructions on how to create His sacred space for closer communion with His people. God gave specific measurements and construction details on how to build the tabernacle (Exodus 25:1-27:21). Through Moses, his brother Aaron and his sons, God established the priesthood (Exodus 28:1). We read how those chosen priests had to purify themselves and be consecrated with holy oil.

But this was no ordinary oil!
“Furthermore the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Also take for yourself aromatic spices, the flower of costly myrrh—five hundred shekels’ worth—and fragrant cinnamon—half as much, two hundred and fifty, and two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling calamus, and five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. You shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil.” (Exodus 30:22-30)



How serious was this? Aaron had two sons Nadab and Abihu. But they did not listen and offered incense in their own manner (Leviticus 10:1-3). The Scriptures are not clear why they did this but the result was clearly written - *"So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."*

This was not an unjust punishment but rather the consequence of disobedience. God's teaching to His people was to prepare and be humble and obedient because through these actions, Aaron and his family would have been purified and sanctified. In their disobedience, they entered into the sacred space in an unholy and unprepared manner. God's warning (similar to the Garden of Eden) was not that He would kill them, but that they would die. This is exactly what happened! This is the fear and trembling with which we approach God's Holiness. It is not because we fear a God who is unloving and angry. Our worthiness and readiness to be before God is very important.

Centuries later, King Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem as *"a house of prayer for all nations"* (Isaiah 56:7). God interacted with His people through the priest, with very strict teachings, and specific attention to worship details. However, God's people remained unfaithful. This temple was destroyed too (Jeremiah 52:12-13) and then it was rebuilt as the second temple. Sadly, this place of worship, also, became so corrupt and blasphemous that Christ Himself eventually had to clear out all the money changers (St. John 2:15-16; St. Matthew 21:12-13).



We are the Temple

God never wanted a building to be the only place that He is in communion with His children. The Almighty God clearly stated that the idea that He would be limited to one space is laughable! From 3 Kingdoms 8:25 (1 Kings 8:27): *"But will God indeed dwell with men on earth? If the heaven and the heaven of heaven will not be sufficient for You, how much less even this temple I built in Your name?"*

St. Paul asks a very direct and important question to the Church: *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are"* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

There are two unions that are very important to our spiritual growth:
*the mystery of the union of Christ & His Church
*the union of God & ourselves through Christ .

God's Temple is where we meet God and through Christ we become one with God. When St. Paul says the Church is the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), he means that we become Him both individually and together with the Church's faithful members.

We know that in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, we are invited to be part of the priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) and given entry into God's Kingdom. Through Holy Chrismation, we are granted the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide our daily lives. These two Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation) cannot be separated because life in the Church means the indwelling and union with the Holy Spirit. Every Sacrament of the Church is perfected by the Holy Spirit. Through these sacraments, we become a part of the Church which is the body of Christ.

From the beginning of time, God's plan for us was to always be in communion and in complete unity with Him. He made us special in His image and likeness. He continued to always love us, even after sin and death entered the world. In the words of St. Ephrem, "had the serpent been rejected, along with the sin, they would have eaten of the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge would not have been withheld from them any longer. From the one they would have acquired infallible knowledge, and from the other they would have received immortal life. They would have acquired divinity in humanity; and had they thus acquired infallible knowledge and immortal life, they would have done so in this body". St. Ephrem is explaining here that if Adam and Eve had rejected the temptation set forth by the serpent, then they would have been able to eat from both trees and achieved divinity (theosis) in this body. However, this was never meant to be since Christ was ordained to save the nations from before time.



Remember

These two Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation) cannot be separated because life in the Church means the indwelling and union with the Holy Spirit. Every Sacrament of the Church is perfected by the Holy Spirit. Through these sacraments, we become a part of the Church which is the body of Christ.

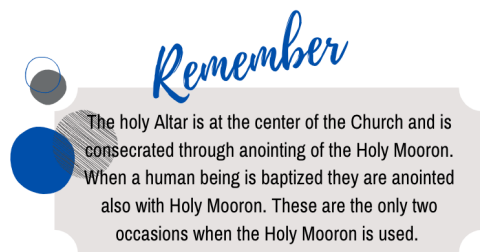
The Consecration of the Church

Now, we can begin to see this amazing connection that God dwells in the Church and also within each of us. Baptism is the Sacrament where we enter the Holy Church. After

renouncing Satan and committing to Christ, we receive God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us and also, by partaking of His Body and Blood. A Church building also undergoes the same cleansing, purification, and sanctification as a person who has been baptized during the consecration ceremony.

Being in full union with Christ forever is salvation for an Orthodox Christian. This union is possible in this world and in the world to come, and it manifests in our sacramental life. Sacramental life is realized because there is a Holy Altar available in the Church. The holy Altar is at the center of the Church and is consecrated through anointing of the Holy Mooron. When a human being is baptized they are anointed also with Holy Mooron. These are the only two occasions when the Holy Mooron is used. In short, the consecration service is the baptism and chrismation of the church. Conversely, Holy baptism and chrismation is the consecration of a human being.

Solomon's Temple consecration (3 Kingdoms 8:61, 1 Kings 8:63) is still the model for Church consecrations today. Today, these ancient practices are fulfilled and even adapted through Christ. This is because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is simply the same God we worship today during Holy Qurbana.



The Sedro during the second part of the Church Consecration service vividly describes this connection:

"The prophets have prefigured this Church. Moses, the head of the prophets has prefigured this by the tent of the Israelites. Solomon, the ocean of wisdom has seen her in advance. Isaiah, the glorious among prophets said 'Wake up, your light has come near. The Lord's light will shine upon you'. David said 'Forget your people and the house of your father, the king has desired your beauty'. Much is written about this Church. Her eyes have become red. Her garments are bright. There are many that praise her. Her architects are wise. Her children are princes. Her mysteries are hidden and her operations are incomprehensible. The Lord of the universe is her bridegroom. John the Baptist is her servant. Prophets are her guests. Apostles belong to her bridal chamber. Martyrs are her guests. Her wedding took place in darkness and under the cloud. Unlike the Hebrew Church, she is hallowed by the Father, extolled by the Son, and protected by the Holy Spirit. Gentiles enter here and sing praise. Along with them do we also cry aloud, 'Lord, remember Your holy Church and elevate her tower of salvation. May eternal tranquility remain in her. May

enriched peace guide her. By Your grace, grant enthusiasm to our blessed pastors, motivation to the administrators, righteousness to the kings, justice to the judges, unity to the priests, purity to the deacons, acceptable repentance to the sinners, and blessed memory to the faithful departed.”

This prayer reminds us that the consecration service of the Church is more than just sanctifying and making a physical building holy. As members of the Body of Christ, we are also anointed and made new again when we participate in the service. The Church is both a sacred place of worship and the body of the faithful worshippers. Together we are the Body of Christ: purified, blessed, sanctified, set apart and made holy. This is both our duty and calling to remain holy and in communion with God through sanctification.

Holy Chrism

Chrismation is receiving the Seal of the Holy Spirit. The priest anoints every part of the body of the Baptized with the Holy Chrism. The body is made holy and dedicated to the service of God with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This same Chrism is also used in the consecration of the Church building for the same purpose.

Holy Chrism is also called the Holy Mooron. This is a special oil and is different from other blessed and holy oils used during different services of the Church. The Greek word Moorōn means “unguent, ointment, perfume, sweet oil, and chrism”, and in Syriac it is called ܡܘܪܘܢ ܩܕܝܫܐ (“Holy Moroon”), Mooron Qadisha in Syriac, or ܐܝܬܐ ܕܡܘܪܘܢ (“Anointing Oil”).

HG Ayub Silvanos in his doctorate thesis explains the sacredness which this Holy Oil is prepared: *“In the Syrian Orthodox Church, mixed oil becomes the Mooron oil when the Holy Spirit hovers over it as the Patriarch conducts special canonical liturgies, which sanctify the oil - The Sanctification of the Mooron. “It is consecrated at the third hour, for it indicates Christ, who (Himself) indicates the Trinity: the Father who anoints, and the Son who is anointed and the Spirit who fulfills the role of oil.”*

The use of Mooron oil in post-baptismal anointing and in the consecration of churches, altars, altar stones (tablito) and vessels, indicates the presence of God in these places or objects. This oil perfects the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a person, when they are anointed with it. Mooron oil is usually kept in a special casket in the ‘Holy of Holies’ (Madbeho) in the church for use at baptism ceremonies.” Only the priest is allowed to touch it.

The preparation of the Holy Mooron is the longest ceremony in the Church. It is a detailed process which is led by the head of the Church, His Holiness the Catholicose, the

entire Holy Episcopal Synod, along with 12 priests, 12 deacons (mshamshono), and 12 subdeacons. Chrism is made from around 40 different ingredients from around the world. There is no set rule as to how often this ceremony must be conducted. It is not done frequently and in recent times, generally once every ten years.

Chrismation

As mentioned in our prayers, Chrismation is “the sweet fragrance of Christ, the mark and sign of true faith and the perfection of the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Chrismation is receiving the Seal of the Holy Spirit. The priest gives the baptized the Seal of the Holy Spirit by anointing him or her with the Holy Chrism.

The priest anoints every part of the body of the baptized. The body is made holy and dedicated to the service of God with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Baptism has its perfection in Chrismation. After Jesus Christ’s baptism, He is full of the Holy Spirit. He quotes prophet Isaiah, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor"(St. Luke. 4:18).

Chrismation is our participation in the anointing of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. In the Sacrament of Chrismation, the Holy Spirit descends and anoints the baptized. Just as Church was endowed with this great gift on the day of Pentecost, so are we at Holy Chrismation.

Jesus told His disciples before His ascension to heaven that they would receive the Holy Spirit. He asked them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the 'promise of the Father'. We read about the coming of the Holy Spirit in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-4). Being anointed by the Holy Spirit reminds us of how in the Old Testament the priests, prophets and kings were chosen and anointed for a special work to be done for God in the world.

The Holy Spirit blesses us with the grace to fulfill our duties. In Chrismation, we are all made the 'priests of the whole creation'. As St. Peter teaches, we become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Holy Chrismation is the ordination of the baptized to be a 'Christian'. Our bodies become the temple of the Holy Spirit, housing God in each of us (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20). The Holy Spirit lives within us, giving us the strength of God to fight temptation and live a

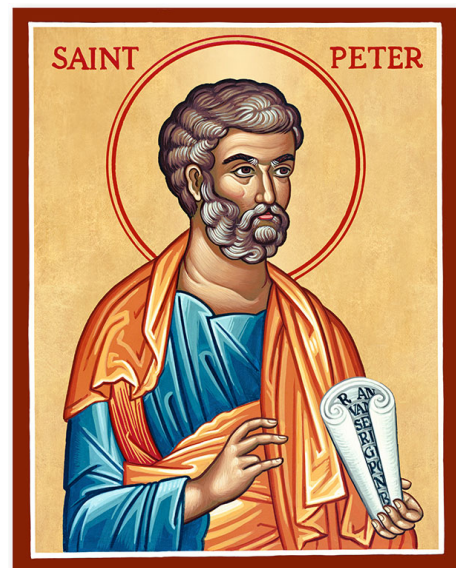
life worthy of the Eternal Kingdom. The Spirit works within us as our inner guide and teacher. St. John makes this clear in 1 John 2:27.

If we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and obey His guidance, we will grow in the grace of God. If we ignore His guidance, the Holy Spirit will grieve. Church history teaches us that the saints of the Church grew in the grace of God by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were full of the Spirit and wisdom and used it, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:17-18).

The Living Stone

St. Peter makes a wonderful connection to bring together these teachings of the person and the Church. In 1 Peter 2:4-10, he states that Christ is the foundation and the "living stone" and then expands:

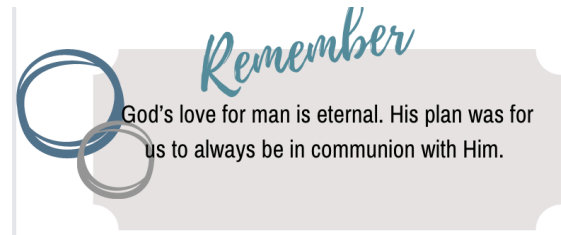
"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, *"Behold, I lay in Zion; A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."* Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, *"The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,"* and *"A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense."*



St. Peter reminds us of how special we are! "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

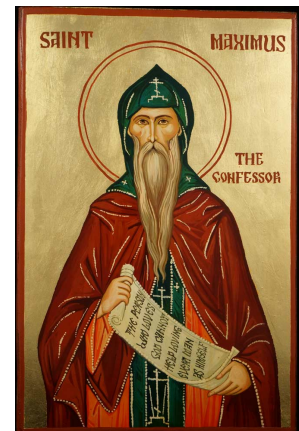
Summary

God's love for man is eternal. His plan was for us to always be in communion with Him. Our place in creation is unique and special. To be One with Christ requires us to be holy and pure. Fr. Baby Varghese observed that "the function of liturgical space is precisely to place us before the Holy Trinity and the throne of Christ". This represents a return to the closeness and unity we had with God in the first chapters of Genesis. Our Baptism brings God closer to us. The consecration of the Church creates a sacred space. The Holy Altar is where we worship. We are close to God and receive the Holy Body and Blood of Christ from the Holy Altar. This return to communion is made possible through the actions of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.



St. Paul challenges us directly with the question, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Corinthians 3:16-4:5).

Approaching God in any manner in an unworthy or unholy manner brings death. This is not because God is vindictive or an angry God, but rather it is a "death of consequence". God's love and holiness must be understood to be a blessing for those who are obedient to Him. The opposite happens to those who reject or dishonor God's ways. There are many comparisons that help us understand this teaching better. For example, the same fire that destroys metal with impurities can also act on pure metal so that it can be shaped and made into the most beautiful objects. Another example used by Maximus the Confessor illustrates how God acts on those who are prepared and unprepared in different manners: "God



is the sun of justice, as it is written, who shines rays of goodness on simply everyone. The soul develops according to its free will into either wax because of its love for God or into mud because of its love of matter. Thus, just as by nature the mud is dried out by the sun and the wax is automatically softened, so also every soul which loves matter and the world and has fixed its mind far from God is hardened as mud according to its free will and by itself advances into its perdition, as did Pharaoh. However, every soul which loves God is softened as wax, and

receiving divine impressions and characters it becomes the dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22)”

We remind ourselves during Holy Qurbana that “The One Holy Father, the One Holy Son, and the One Holy Spirit, alone is holy”. To approach this holiness requires effort from us, both for repentance and sanctification.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the significance of Holy Chrism and why is it used?
2. What do we receive in the Sacrament of Holy Chrismation?
3. How is the Holy Chrism made?

Lesson 4: The Sacrament of the Kingdom

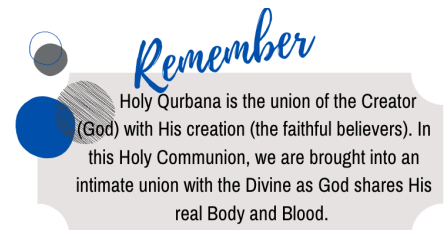
Lesson Goals

- *I can understand that Holy Qurbana is heavenly worship that both the living and the departed participate in.*
- *I can discover a deeper understanding of how and why we prepare ourselves to receive the Holy Qurbana.*
- *I can explain the importance and significance of believing that the Eucharist is the real Body and Blood of Christ.*

In the Service of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, we sing a deeply meaningful hymn as the newly baptized receives the Eucharist for the first time:

*"The fruit – Adam did not taste - in Paradise is
Placed with joy today - in your mouth"*

Only those who are Baptized in the Church can receive the Holy Qurbana. St. Paul teaches us that this is not a rule of exclusion but to protect anyone who is unprepared from receiving the Eucharist in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27). Here is the deeper meaning of this Mystery of the Church: Holy Qurbana is the union of the Creator (God) with His creation (the faithful believers). In this Holy Communion, we are brought into an intimate union with the Divine as God shares His real Body and Blood.

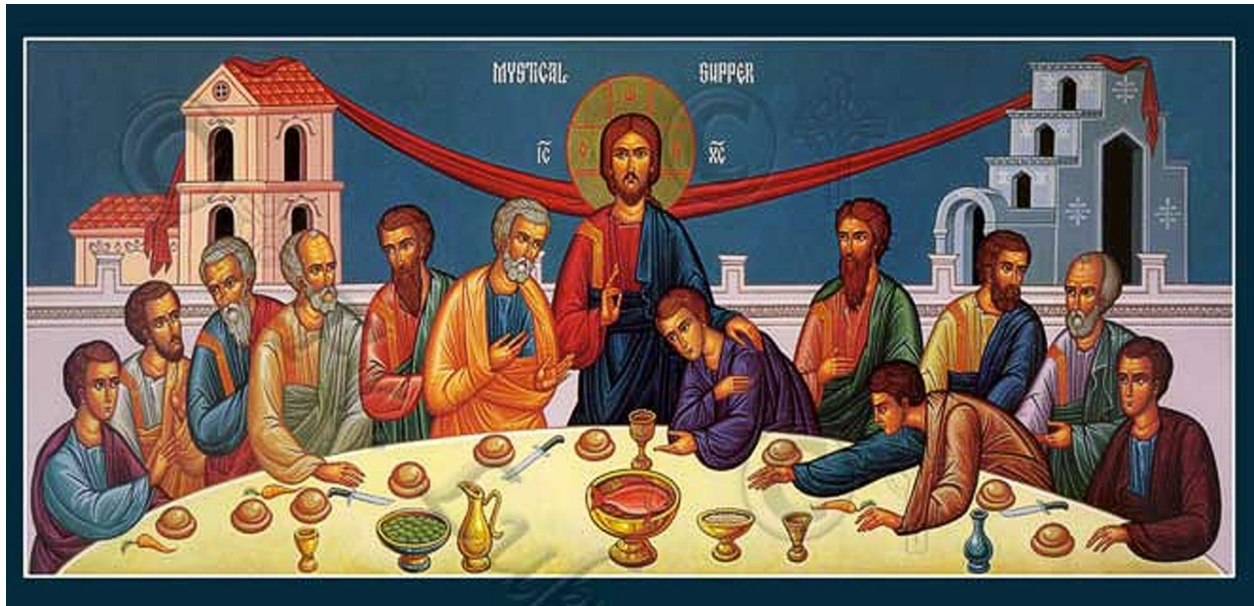


But as the hymn reminds us, there is even more to this holy and sacred Mystery, as it brings both the living and the departed together in communion.

The Mystical Supper

On the eve of our Lord's Passion, He brought His disciples into the upper room and first established the Holy Eucharist (St. Matthew. 26:17–30, St. Mark. 14:12–26, St. Luke. 22:7–39 and St. John. 13:1–17:26). *"And He took bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' And likewise the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'"* (St. Luke 22: 19-20).

We hear these same words recited by the priest during the Holy Qurbana. At the Holy Table, we fully participate in the Passover meal. The Holy Qurbana is not simply bread mixed with wine, nor does it simply “symbolize” Jesus Christ. As our Lord showed us, we are directly receiving Jesus Christ into our bodies. As we clearly read in St. John 6:53-58, the Holy Qurbana is the living Jesus Christ Himself.



“Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”

Sharing a common meal and offering thanks to God was common in the Old Testament long before Christ offered us the Mystical Supper. Before the release of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, our Lord had established the Passover meal through the Holy Prophets Moses and Aaron (Exodus 12). Once freed, they were instructed to “observe it as an ordinance forever,” (Exodus 12: 14) as a reminder of their release from slavery.

When looking at Jewish tradition, we see that it is celebrated in this same way even today, as a remembrance of their ancestors’ freedom from slavery. It is this same Passover meal which Christ, the One who created the first Passover, celebrates with His disciples.

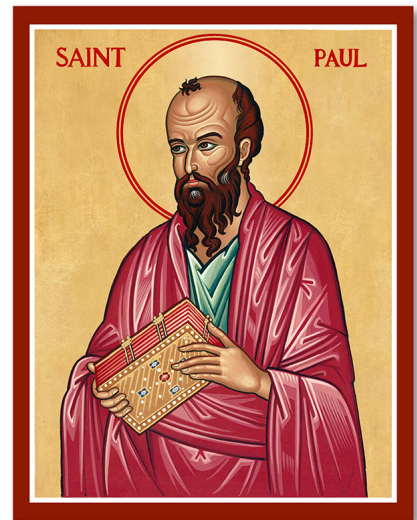
Christ established the bread and wine as His own Body and Blood. Now we are freed not only from physical slavery, but from the spiritual slavery of sin and death as well.

The Holy Eucharist



How can one say that one's hand or leg is part of one's own body? There is a central nervous system and central blood distribution system that connect individual members of the body with the entire body. A part of the same blood mass that flows to one's head flows to one's legs too. Similarly, a part of the same bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ is received by every individual member of the community. Just as the part of the same Body and Blood of Christ is present in each individual member of the community the same Christ connects each individual member of the community with each other in a mystical fashion. As St. Paul teaches, *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we all partake of the one bread"* (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). St. Paul emphasizes that we are all participating together in the Holy Eucharist, and this makes us one in Christ. Our participation in the Holy Qurbana makes us one in Christ.

Not only we, the faithful living, come into communion with Christ and with each other, but also we are in communion with all of our faithful departed. All who faithfully prepare and receive the Body and Blood of Christ are united in Christ. The hymns we sing as we receive Holy Qurbana remind us of this truth:



*The Lord has spoken,
"I will dwell in them
Who eat My Body
And My living Blood.*

*He who receives Me
Purely and in faith
And keeps my commands
Is Indeed My friend.*

*I will dwell in them
Who receive as food
My Holy Body
And My Blood as drink."*

St. Justin Martyr teaches us the greatness of this gift: "For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Savior being incarnate by God's Word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the Word of prayer which comes from Him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus". Said otherwise, the same way Jesus has become the Incarnate Word of God, the Word of prayer mystically transforms the bread and wine into the real Body and Blood of our Lord. By participating in this Holy and Divine Mystery, we unite with both Christ and with each other. Christ taught and set forth the Holy Communion for us to follow and believe.

Among the many names we have for this sacrament, another is "The Holy Eucharist". The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning 'thanksgiving.' We give thanks to God, and celebrate His life. We rejoice because we are given the One who is the Life.

Remember

Receiving Holy Qurbana is not just an action we take when we come to Church. It is both a renewal of and a commitment to our life in Christ. Father Alexander Schmemmann challenges us to have this approach in every part of our lives, in offering everything back to God, because everything truly belongs to Him.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann said "The only real fall of man is his noneucharistic life in a noneucharistic world." As Christians living in a world which values pride and selfishness, we are called to offer back to God what He had first given to us. Receiving Holy Qurbana is not just an action we take when we come to Church. It is both a renewal of and a commitment to our life in Christ. Father Alexander Schmemmann challenges us to have this

approach in every part of our lives, in offering everything back to God, because everything truly belongs to Him. This is how we can learn how to live a Eucharistic (thanksgiving) life.

The Live Coal

In Isaiah 6, we learn of a very special moment before the Incarnation of our Lord. The heavens opened to Isaiah (Isaiah 6:3) and he saw the Heavenly Throne with the Seraphim surrounding the Altar singing “Holy! Holy! Holy!” It is not a coincidence that this is our experience in the Divine Liturgy too. We sing after the Pre-Sanctus Prayer, “

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty by whose glory the Heaven and earth are filled, Hosanna in the highest!”

Today, our experience is more intimate than that of the Prophet Isaiah. A Seraph, using a tong placed “burning coal” on the lip of Isaiah, saying “*Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.*”(Isaiah 6:7) We are now not limited to just the touch of the coal, the Body and Blood of Christ, but are able to fully consume the Holy Communion. With preparation, reverence and wonder, we receive and consume the same fiery coal in our mouth. We listen closely, as the Priest prays and gives “the atoning live coal of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” to us. The Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has thus led to His redemption and purification of the world in a more personal way.

The Body and Blood

When we gather at church on Sundays and feast days, we are there to partake and consume the *Body and Blood of Jesus Christ*. But why do we gather physically in one place to participate in the Divine Liturgy? The Divine Liturgy is not just something we do or consume as part of a checklist of our faith as Orthodox Christians. Instead, when we partake of the Holy Eucharist, we confess and affirm the faith of the Apostles, the holy priesthood, the Holy Sacraments and the Church as the true Bride of Christ. As Fr. Schmemmann wrote, “The Eucharist is communion with the whole Church.” The Holy Eucharist is important because it is the sacrament from which the Church’s entire activity flows.

When we come to church on Sundays, we come together with all our fellow parishioners, all Orthodox Christians in the world, all of creation, our faithful departed, the saints, the Apostles, and the angels. Together we come before the Throne of God to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice and to partake of His Body and Blood, the sacrifice that was given for the world. We call this togetherness the living Community of faithful.

Often it has been taught that the Divine Liturgy is a reenactment of the life of Christ. However, this is an incomplete representation of what the Divine Liturgy is. We are not to be passive audience members, but active participants in the Divine Liturgy and in the Body and Blood of Christ. We are not just observers of the Liturgy, but are there to directly witness and to be filled with Life itself.

In St. Cyril of Alexandria's 1st letter to Nestorius, which was also included in the Holy Ecumenical Council of Ephesus, he explains the importance and unifying nature of the Holy Eucharist. According to St. Cyril when we participate in the Holy Eucharist, we accept the flesh of Jesus Christ, but *"not as common flesh do we receive it; God forbid: nor as of a man sanctified and associated with the Word according to the unity of worth, or as having a divine indwelling, but as truly the life-giving and very flesh of the Word himself. For he is the life according to his nature as God, and when he became united to his flesh, he made it also to be life-giving."*



St. Cyril says that by partaking in the Eucharist, we are confessing that we are believers in Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. The priests confess this in the Divine Liturgy after the prayers of the institution. He asks for God's mercy for himself and the congregation, as together we confess these truths about Christ. St Cyril (and the whole Church by way of the Ecumenical Council) states that we are sanctified because of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ. He ends with the most important point: we are made worthy to receive the Body and

Blood of Christ because the Body and Blood of Christ, the Holy Qurbana, gives us *life*.

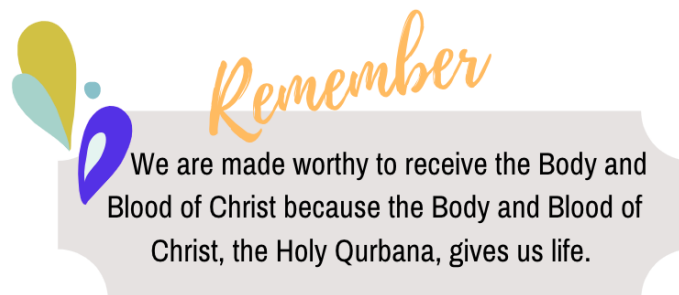
So, why do we gather in the church every Sunday? To approach Life and to receive Life itself. As members of the Holy Church, God allows us to approach His Body and Blood, with reverence, fear, and preparation. We approach, so that we might have life.

The public celebration of Divine Liturgy is separated into two major parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Anaphora or 'lifting up' of the Body and Blood of Christ. In between these two parts, a significant event takes place, the confession of the Nicene Creed. It is the statement of faith given to us by the holy fathers through the Ecumenical Councils and the life of the Holy Church.

Why is the Creed being confessed as a community before the Anaphora? When we participate in the Holy Qurbana, we as a community and as the single Body of Christ, are saying that we believe and confess the faith of the Holy Church. Only with this confession of faith, can we bring ourselves to participate in the Body and Blood of Christ. We receive the Fruit of Life that the Church gives us because we believe everything that the Church proclaims. This is why, in the ancient Church, catechumens and those who were not members of the Church would leave the sanctuary during the Nicene Creed. They understood that the Anaphora was only for those who confess the faith of the Holy Church.

When we partake in the Divine Liturgy and receive the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, we are saying as a community and as a single Body of Christ that we believe what both the Apostles and the Saints believed, and all that Christ taught. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in our mouth, we are making a statement of faith through our actions that we believe and live by what the Church has taught us from all eternity. As a community of believers, we are confessing that we are united in Christ, in His Death and Resurrection and the Truth that the Church gives to us through its life and teachings.

Coming to church on Sundays and participating in the Holy Qurbana shall not be a mere weekly routine. Actions and words said in the Holy Qurbana reveal the greatest of all the sacraments and the Church's life-giving Mystery. Receiving the Holy Qurbana is a *confessional* act by the entire church community. We renew our promise to be faithful followers of the Holy Church and the Faith given to us through Christ, the Head of the Holy Church.



Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to prepare ourselves for the Holy Qurbana? What are some ways that we prepare for Holy Qurbana?
2. If someone were to say: "Can we simply just stay at home and pray and read scripture?" How would you respond? Are they even the same thing?
3. Can you find any patterns from the Old Testament in the Holy Qurbana?
4. What are we confessing or saying that we believe when we participate in the Holy Qurbana?
5. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann observed that "The Eucharist is the mystery of the Kingdom, the fullness and manifestation of the Church as the age to come." Can you explain this in your own words to a friend?