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Baptism: August 17, 2003



**EXPLANATION OF THE
CEREMONY**

✦ SYMBOLISM & TRADITIONS

As with all sacraments, each action and component holds symbolic meaning, with a basis in ancient traditions.

- **The Sponsors (Godparents).** The use of sponsors dates back to Christian persecution by the Romans. Sponsors were provided to instruct children in the faith in the event that the parents were martyred.
- **The Font.** The baptismal font is the “Divine Womb” in which the child receives a second birth. The descent into the baptismal font symbolizes burial, and the emergence symbolizes resurrection.
- **Immersion.** According to ancient practice, there is required immersion in water (not sprinkling or pouring of water) to denote the washing away of sin. The triple immersion symbolizes the three days Christ spent in the tomb, as well as the Holy Trinity.
- **The Oil.** The child is anointed with olive oil before the immersion. This custom had its beginning among ancient Greek wrestlers, who anointed their bodies with oil so opponents could not maintain a grip. In baptism, the child is anointed to elude the grip of sin.
- **The Clothing.** The removal of clothes signifies the casting off of sin. Nakedness without shame also refers to the sinless state of man in Paradise. After baptism, the child is dressed in new white clothes to signify the purity of the soul washed from sin, as well as the garment of light man wore before the Fall.
- **The Candles.** Baptism is the sacrament of entrance into light. In the early Church the baptismal candle was lit in the Church for major life events, such as marriage, and was lit as death approached as well. The candle is a symbol of the perseverance of the baptized soul until Christ's return.

✦ THE PREPARATORY RITE

The sacrament of Holy Baptism is preceded by a preparatory rite which takes place in the narthex (entrance) of the church. This is to show that the child has not yet "entered" the Church. The rite consists of six elements:

1. **The Catechumenate.** The Priest breathes on the child to be baptized (the *catechumen*), makes the Sign of the Cross, lays hands upon the child's head, and says a prayer to expel "the ancient deception" and unite the child to the Church.
2. **Naming of the child.** The child is given a Christian name. This expresses the Church's acceptance of the child as an individual, as well as the new life the child receives through baptism.
3. **The Exorcism.** This consists of four prayers commanding the devil and powers of darkness to depart from the child and entreating that a Guardian Angel be given to the child.
4. **The Renunciation of the Devil.** The priest and godparents, holding the child, turn to the west (regarded by the ancient Greeks as the location of the gates of Hades) and renounce Satan on behalf of the child. The godparents spit three times as a sign of this renunciation.
5. **The Adherence to Christ.** The priest and godparents then turn back to the east (which symbolizes the region of light), and the priest asks the godparents to accept Christ on behalf of the child. The godparents declare three times that the child will be united to the church.
6. **The Recitation of the Symbol of Faith.** At this point, the godparents recite the confession of faith contained in the Nicene Creed. This creed was a sign of recognition among the early Christians that distinguished the true members of the Church.

✦ STEPS OF THE CEREMONY

At this point, the sacrament of Holy Baptism itself begins. The sacrament consists of the following elements:

- **The Great Litany**
- **The Sanctification of the Water.** The Priest signs the water three times, immersing his hand, making the Sign of the Cross, and anointing it with oil.
- **Unction With Oil.** The priest blesses olive oil and applies it to the child's forehead, breast, back, hands, feet, and ears. The godparents cover the child's entire body with the oil.
- **Triple Immersion in Water.** The Priest baptizes the child. The Priest immerses and then raises the infant up again three times. The Priest then places the child in a new linen sheet held by the godparents.
- **Chrismation.** The Priest anoints the child with the Holy Chrism (blessed oil, with white grape wine and a number of aromatic substances symbolizing the grace-bestowing gifts of the Holy Spirit.) The Priest anoints crosswise the child's forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, hands and feet.
- **Vesting.** The child is then dressed, and the Priest invests the newly baptized child in the new garment.
- **Procession.** The Priest then leads the child and godparents three times around the font. This circular dance reflects the belief that the angels in heaven are expressing their joy. Tradition states that at this moment a guardian angel is assigned to the child.
- **The Tonsure.** The child, having received an abundance of blessings through the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation and having nothing to give to God in return, offers part of its hair, as a first-offering to God. The Priest cuts four locks of hair from the child's head in the form of a cross.
- **The Holy Eucharist.** Immediately following Baptism and Chrismation, the neophyte becomes a full member of the Orthodox Church and may receive the sacrament of Holy Communion.

✦ TEXT OF THE SERVICE

The Priest enters the Altar and arrays himself in white vestments. While the candles are being lit, he takes up the Censer, goes to the Font, and censens round about. And giving up the Censer, he makes a Reverence.

Priest: Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy. (*After each petition*)

Priest: For the peace from above; for the salvation of our souls; let us pray to the Lord.

- For the peace of the whole world; for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all; let us pray to the Lord.

- For this holy House, and for them that with faith, reverence, and the fear of God enter therein; let us pray to the Lord.

- For our Most Reverend Archbishop (*Name*), for the venerable Priesthood, the Diaconate in Christ; for all the Clergy, and for all the people; let us pray to the Lord.

- That this water may be hallowed by the might, and operation, and descent of the Holy Spirit; let us pray to the Lord.

- That there may be sent down upon it the Grace of Redemption, the blessing of the Jordan; let us pray to the Lord.

- That there may come down upon this water the cleansing operation of the Supersubstantial Trinity; let us pray to the Lord.

- That we may be illumined with the Light of Knowledge and Piety through the descent of the Holy Spirit; let us pray to the Lord.

- That this water may prove effectual for the averting of every plot of visible and invisible enemies; let us pray to the Lord.

- That she that is about to be baptized herein may become worthy of the incorruptible Kingdom; let us pray to the Lord.

- That she that now comes to holy Illumination, and for her salvation; let us pray to the Lord.

- That she may prove to be a child of Light, and an inheritor of eternal blessings; let us pray to the Lord.

- That she may grow in, and become a partaker of the Death and Resurrection of Christ our God; let us pray to the Lord.

- That she may preserve the garment of Baptism, and the earnest of the Spirit undefiled and blameless in the terrible Day of Christ our God; let us pray to the Lord.

- That this water may be for her a laver of Regeneration unto the remission of sins, and a garment of incorruption; let us pray to the Lord.

- That the Lord may listen to the voice of our prayer; let us pray to the Lord.

- That He may deliver her and us from tribulation, wrath, danger, and necessity; let us pray to the Lord.

Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Your Grace. Calling to remembrance our all-holy, pure, exceedingly blessed glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints; let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life to Christ our God.

Priest (inaudibly): Let us pray to the Lord. O compassionate and merciful God, Who tries the heart and reigns, and Who alone knows the secrets of men, for no deed is secret in Your sight, but all things are exposed and naked in Your eyesight: do You Yourself, Who perceives that which concerns me, neither turn away Your face from me, but overlook my offenses in this hour, O You that overlook the sins of men that they repent. Wash away the defilement of my body and the stain of my soul. Sanctify me wholly by Your all-effectual, invisible might, and by Your spiritual right hand, lest, by preaching liberty to others, and offering this in the perfect faith of Your unspeakable love for humankind, I may be condemned as a servant of sin. Nay, Sovereign Master that alone are good and loving, let me not be turned away humbled and shamed, but send forth to me power from on high, and strengthen me for the ministration of this Your present, great, and most heavenly Mystery. Form the Image of Your Christ in her who is about to be born again through my humility. Build her on the foundation of Your Apostles and Prophets. Cast her not down, but plant her as a plant of truth in Your Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Pluck her not out, that, by her advancing in piety, by the same may be glorified. Your Most Holy Name, of Father, and of Son, and of Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

The Blessing of the Baptismal Waters

The Priest reads aloud: Great are You, O Lord, and wondrous are Your works, and no word will suffice to hymn Your wonders. (3 times) For by Your Will have You out of nothingness brought all things into being and by Your power sustain all creation and by Your Providence direct the world. You from the four elements have formed creation and have crowned the cycle of the year with the four seasons; all the spiritual powers tremble before You; the sun praises You; the moon glorifies You; the stars in their courses meet with You; the Light hearkens unto You; the depths shudder at Your presence; the springs of water serve You; You have stretched out the Heavens as a curtain; You have founded the earth upon the waters; You have bounded the sea with sand; You have poured forth the air for breathing; the

angelic Powers minister unto You; the Choirs of Archangels worship before You; the many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, as they stand and fly around You, veil themselves with fear of Your unapproachable Glory; for You, being boundless and beginningless and unutterable, did come down on earth, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; for You O Master, through the tenderness of Your Mercy, could not endure the race of men tormented by the devil, but You did come and saved us. We confess Your Grace; we proclaim Your beneficence; we do not hide Your Mercy; You have set at liberty the generations of our nature; You did hallow the virginal Womb by Your Birth; all creation praises You, Who did manifest Yourself, for You were seen upon the earth, and did sojourn with men. You hallowed the streams of Jordan, sending down from the Heavens Your Holy Spirit, and crushed the heads of dragons that lurked therein. DO YOU YOURSELF, O LOVING KING, BE PRESENT NOW ALSO THROUGH THE DESCENT OF YOUR HOLY SPIRIT AND HALLOW THIS WATER (3 times). And give to it the Grace of Redemption, the Blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a loosing of sins, a healing of sicknesses, a destruction of demons, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic might; and let them that take counsel together against Your creature flee there from, for I have called upon Your Name, O Lord, which is wonderful, and glorious, and terrible unto adversaries.

And he signs the water thrice, dipping his fingers in it; and breathing upon it, he says:

LET ALL ADVERSE POWERS BE CRUSHED BENEATH THE SIGNING OF YOUR MOST PRECIOUS CROSS (3 times). We pray You, O Lord, let every airy and invisible specter withdraw itself from us, and let not a demon of darkness conceal himself in this water; neither let an evil spirit, bringing obscurity of purpose and rebellious thoughts, descend into it with her that is about to be baptized. But do You, O Master of All, declare this water to be water of redemption, water of sanctification, a cleansing of flesh and spirit, a loosing of bonds, a forgiveness of sins, an illumination of soul, a laver of regeneration, a renewal of the spirit, a gift of sonship, a garment of incorruption, a fountain of life. For You have said, O Lord: "Wash, and be clean; put away evil from your souls." You have bestowed upon us regeneration from on high by water and the spirit. Manifest Yourself, O Lord,

in this water, and grant that she that is to be baptized may be transformed therein to the putting away of the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to the putting on of the new, which is renewed according to the Image of Him that created her, That, being planted in the likeness of Your death through Baptism, she may become a sharer of Your Resurrection; and, preserving the Gift of Your Holy Spirit, and increasing the deposit of Grace, she may attain unto prize of her high calling, and accounted among the number of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven, in You our God and Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be all Glory and Might, together with Your Eternal Father and with Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Priest: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

The Priest breathes thrice upon the Oil and signs it thrice, while it is held by the Godparent.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mercy.

The Blessing of the Oil

Sovereign Lord and Master, God of our Fathers, Who did send to them in the Ark of Noah a dove bearing a twig of olive in its beak as a sign of reconciliation and salvation from the Flood, and through these things prefigured the Mystery of Grace; and thereby have filled them that were under the Law with the Holy Spirit, and perfected them that are under Grace: do You Yourself bless this Oil by the power (*sign of the cross*) and operation (*sign of the cross*) and descent of the Holy Spirit (*sign of the cross*) that it may become an anointing of incorruption, a shield of righteousness, a renewal of soul and body, and averting of every operation of the devil, to the removal of all evils from them that are anointed with it in faith, or that are partakers of it. To Your Glory, and to that of Your Only-Begotten Son, and of Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Let us attend.

The Priest, singing Alleluia thrice with the People, makes three Crosses with the Oil upon the water.

Priest. Blessed is God that enlightens and sanctifies every man that comes into the world, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir. Amen.

The Priest pours some Oil into the hands of the Godparent. He then takes Oil and makes the Sign of the Cross on the child's forehead, breast, and between her shoulders, saying:

The servant of God Zoe is anointed with the Oil of Gladness, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

And he signs her breast and between her shoulders, saying:

For healing of soul and body.

And on the ears, saying:

For the hearing of Faith.

And on the feet, saying:

That he (she) may walk in the paths of Your commandments.

And on the hands, saying:

Your hands have made me, and fashioned me.

The Baptizing

When the godparents have anointed the whole body, the Priest baptizes her, holding her erect, and looking towards the East:

The servant of God Zoe is baptized in the Name of the Father. Amen. And of the Son, Amen. And of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

At each invocation the Priest immerses her and raises her up again. After the baptizing, the Priest places the child in a linen sheet held by the Godparents.

The Choir sings Psalm 31: Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (3 times.) Blessed is the man whom the Lord imputes not sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile. Because I have kept silence, my bones waxed old through my crying all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me. I was turned into lowliness while the thorn was fastened in me. My sin I have acknowledged, and my iniquity I have not hid. I said, "I will confess against myself my sin unto the Lord." And You forgave the ungodliness of my heart.

For this shall everyone who is holy pray to You in a seasonable time; moreover in a flood of many waters shall the billows not come nigh to him. For You are my refuge from the tribulation which surrounds me. O my rejoicing, deliver me from them that have encircled me. The Lord says: "I will give you understanding, and will teach you in this My way which you shall go; I will fix My eyes on you. Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. With bit and bridle would you bind their jaws; lest they come near to you." Many are the scourges of the sinner, but with mercy shall I encircle them that hope on the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you that are upright of heart. Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

The Priest says the Prayer of Confirmation: Blessed are You, Lord God Almighty, Fountain of Blessings, Sun of Righteousness, Who made to shine forth for those in darkness a light of salvation through the manifestation of Your Only-Begotten Son and our God, granting unto us, though we are unworthy, blessed cleansing in Holy Water, and divine sanctification in the Life-effecting Anointing; Who now also has been well-pleased to regenerate this Your servant newly illuminated through Water and Spirit, giving her forgiveness of her voluntary and involuntary sins: do You Yourself, Sovereign Master, Compassionate King of All, bestow upon her also the Seal of Your omnipotent and adorable Holy Spirit, and the Communion of the Holy Body and Most Precious Blood of Your Christ; keep her in Your sanctification; confirm her in the Orthodox Faith; deliver her from the Evil One and all his devices; preserve her soul, through Your saving fear, in purity and righteousness, that in every work and word, being acceptable before You, she may become a child and heir of Your heavenly Kingdom. For You are our God, the God of Mercy and Salvation, and to You do we send up Glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

And after the Prayer of Confirmation, the Priest chrismates the baptized and makes the Sign of the Cross with the Holy Chrism (Holy Myron) on the forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, breast, the hands, and feet. At each anointing and sealing, he says:

THE SEAL OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AMEN.

The Priest invests the baptized in a new clean robe, saying:
Clothed is the servant of God Zoe with the garment of righteousness, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Troparion, in Tone 8: A robe of divine light bestow upon me, O You that for vesture array Yourself with Light; and bestow many mercies, O Christ our God, who are plenteous in mercy.

Then the Priest, together with the Godparents and child, circumambulate around the Font, three time; and each time sing:
As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia.

Glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia.

Priest: Louder.

Choir: As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia.

Priest: Let us attend.

The Prokeimenon in Tone 3: The Lord is my light and my salvation; of whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the Protector of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?

Priest: Wisdom!

The Epistle

The Reader: The Reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans. (Rom. 6:3-11)

Priest: Let us attend.

The Reader: Brethren, 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 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. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The

death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he gives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Priest: Peace be to you that read. And to your spirit.

Choir: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Priest: Wisdom! Let us attend! Let us hear the Holy Gospel. Peace be to all (*Sign of the cross*).

Choir: And with your spirit.

The Gospel

Priest: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. Let us attend. (Matt. 28:16-20)

Choir: Glory to You, O Lord; Glory to You.

Priest: At that time, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded to you; and lo, am with you always, to the close of the age. Amen.

Choir: Glory to You, O Lord; Glory to You.

The Ablution

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: You that through Holy Baptism have granted forgiveness of sins to this Your servant, bestowing on her a life of regeneration: do You Yourself, Sovereign Master and Lord, be pleased that the Light of Your countenance evermore shine in her heart; maintain the shield of her faith against the plotting of enemies; preserve in her the garment of incorruption, which she has put on undefiled and unstained; preserve in her the Seal of Your Grace, being gracious unto us, and unto her according to the multitude of Your compassions, for glorified and blessed is Your all-honorable and majestic Name: of Father, and of Son, and of Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: Sovereign Master and Lord our God, Who through the baptismal Font bestows heavenly Illumination to them that are baptized; Who has regenerated this Your servant bestowing upon her forgiveness of her voluntary and involuntary sins; do You lay upon her Your mighty hand, and guard her in the power of Your goodness. Preserve unspotted her pledge of Faith in You. Account her worthy of Life everlasting and Your good favor. For You are our sanctification and to You do we send up all Glory; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. Peace be to all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Priest: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: She that has put on You, O Christ, with us bows her head unto You; ever protect her a warrior invincible against them who vainly raise up enmity against her, or, as might be, against us; and by Your Crown of Incorruption at the last declare us all to be the victorious ones. For Yours it is to have mercy and to save, and unto You, as to Your Eternal Father and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-creating Spirit, do we send up all Glory, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Priest loosens the child's garment, and, joining the ends of these, he soaks them with clean water and sprinkles the child, saying aloud:

You are justified; you are illumined.

And taking a new sponge dipped in water, the Priest wipes her head, the breast, and the rest, saying:

You are baptized; you are illuminated; you are anointed with the Holy Myrrh, you are hallowed; you are washed clean, in the Name of Father, and of Son, and of Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Tonsure

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: Sovereign Master and Lord our God, Who honored man with Your own Image, providing him with reason-endowed soul

and comely body, that the body might serve the reason-endowed soul; for You did set his head on high, and therein planted the greater number of the senses, which impede not one another, covering the head that it might not be injured by the changes of the weather, and did fit all the members serviceably thereunto, that by all it might render thanks unto You, the excellent Artist; do You Yourself, O Sovereign Master, Who by the Vessel of Your Election, Paul the Apostle, to do all things unto Your Glory, bless this Your servant Zoe, who is come now to make offering the firstlings of hair shorn from her head; and bless her Sponsor; granting them in all things to be diligent followers of Your Law, and to do all those things that are well pleasing unto You, for a merciful and loving God are You, and to You do we send up all Glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Priest: Let us bow our heads before the Lord.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

Priest: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

The Priest lays his right hand upon the head of the child and prays:

O Lord our God, Who through the fulfillment of the baptismal Font have, by Your Goodness, sanctified them that believe in You: do You bless this child here present, and may Your blessings come down upon her head; as You did bless the head of Your servant David the King through the Prophet Samuel, so also bless the head of this servant Zoe, through the hand of me, the unworthy Priest, visiting her with Your Holy Spirit, that as she goes forward to the prime of her years, and the gray hairs of old age, she may send up Glory to You, beholding the good things of Jerusalem all the days of her life.

For to You are due all glory, honor and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Priest cuts her hair in the form of a Cross, snipping off four locks of hair, front, back, and over each ear, saying:

The servant of God Zoe is shorn in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great mercy. We beseech You, listen, and have mercy.

Choir: Lord have mercy.

Priest: Again let us pray for mercy, life, peace, health, and salvation for the servants of God, the newly illumined Zoe, the Godparents, and all those who have come here together for this holy Sacrament. For You are a merciful and loving God, and to You do we send up all Glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Glory to You, O Christ our God and our hope; glory to You.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen. Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy; Lord have mercy. Master, bid the blessing. He Who deigned to be baptized in the Jordan by John for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of Its all-pure Mother, of the holy and glorious prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, of the holy, glorious all-praiseworthy Apostles, (*Name of Saint whose name the child has received*), and of all the Saints; have mercy and save us as our good and loving Lord. Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...

Choir: Amen.

THE THREE SACRAMENTS IN THE CEREMONY

✦ **Baptism**

Baptism is a beginning, and an entry into the church. It washes away all sins; after a person is baptized and chrismated, all sins are remitted, and the baptized is illumined with the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

✦ **Chrismation (confirmation)**

In the Orthodox Church, chrismation is administered immediately following baptism. In this sacrament, a newly baptized child receives the Holy Spirit.

Chrismation is the ordination of the laity. The Greek word for *confirmation* (“chrisma”) means *anointing*. One anointed with “chrisma” becomes “Christos” (that is, *the anointed one*), which is the meaning of the name Christ. Thus, by this sacrament we are made Christians or “other Christs.” According to Orthodox belief, every baptized lay person is ordained a priest by this sacrament and becomes a deputy or an ambassador for Christ in this world.

✦ **Communion**

The new life given in baptism is renewed again and again in the Eucharist. Holy Communion is given to the infant immediately following baptism to provide nourishment for the spiritual life the neophyte has just received.

In the early church, Baptism and Confirmation were not administered in the church, but in a separate edifice called the *baptisterion*. Following chrismation, the newly baptized, wearing their white robes and carrying candles, were led by the clergy to the church for the celebration of the Eucharist. This is the origin of the procession with the newly baptized infant around the baptismal font just before the neophyte is given the Sacrament of Communion.