



Sacraments

**This section provides a brief summary about
the Sacraments of the
Syriac Orthodox Church**

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Sacrament of Baptism

As infants and young children we were all baptized at church, becoming Christians, a part of God's family. Baptism is a very important event in one's life, a celebration many of us cannot remember because of our young age.

Grandparents, relatives, friends all gather at church to see a baby get baptized by the Bishop or priest. The word baptism means "immerse, to wash," and in Aramaic it is called "Ma'moditho Qadishto." In the Holy Bible we read in the book of Acts 2:38, "*Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit.*"

Every child is held by its Godfather or Godmother. This is a very important role to partake in. It is a responsibility to care for the young child, in all aspects of life. In the Orthodox Church the Godparent is responsible for the child's spiritual well being, and being a role model through faith and action.

The following summary will help you understand the Meaning of Baptism:

- The baptismal ceremony is one of great meaning because Baptism is one of the Seven Sacraments. In the Syriac church it is also referred to as "*the door of the Kingdom of God.*"
- The Godparents, before the start of the ceremony, confess and take Holy Communion. That is for respect and purification.
- Children are immersed in water three times, in the name of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- The child also receives two kinds of oil: the oil of ointment (mesh-ho) which is administered before baptism, and the holy chrism (myron), which confirms the baptized and is administered after baptism)
- The celebrant (bishop or priest) breathes on the child's forehead: this represents the child receiving the Holy Spirit. In John 20: 21-22 the Holy Bible says, "So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you! As the Father has sent me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."
- Every child receives a baptismal certificate, showing the date, location, names of Godparents, and the name of the celebrant who baptizes the child. It is a record of importance, which is about our entrance to God's family and church.
- The Sign of the Cross is made over the baby three times. This represents your belonging to God all throughout your life. With the sign of the Cross the celebrant gives the child the mark of all people who believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As we get older, we still do the sign of the cross to show our faith in God.

Baptism unites us to Christ. It is a passage to the heavenly kingdom of God; it is through baptism we become members of Christ's church. Christ gave the command to His disciples to baptize in His name. (Matthew 28:19)

Sacrament of Holy Eucharist

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist represents the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Body is the Holy Bread and the Blood is the Holy Wine. During the Divine Liturgy we see our priests lift the paten and chalice – the Holy Blood is in the chalice and the Holy Bread in the paten. For as the Savior said, "*For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed,*" and, "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*"

Eucharist comes from the Greek word which means thanksgiving. The origin of the Holy Eucharist is traced back to the Last Supper in which our Lord Jesus Christ instructed His disciples to offer bread and wine in His memory. The Eucharistic liturgy is celebrated in the Church every Sunday, the Day of the Lord, as well as on feast days. When a Christian receives Holy Communion, he receives Jesus Himself and joins with Him.

When we celebrate the Eucharist, we are reminding God also of the sacrifice of His Son, and the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cover our sins. We are also offering ourselves to God, and He in return gives the Resurrection, Life and Health of Jesus Christ to us in His Body and Blood. Thus, we are part of the Body of Christ not only mentally and spiritually, but also physically.

Thus the Holy Eucharist is when we become united with Christ and with each other as a church, for, as St. Paul says:

- ◆ The goal of every Christian is to grow up in every way into Him Who is the head, into Christ, from Whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied...makes bodily growth and up builds itself in love (Eph. 4:15-16).
- ◆ This is so since Christ is the head of the Church, His body, and is Himself its Savior (Eph. 5:23). We become part of the Mystical Body of Christ by our communion of the Holy Eucharist.
- ◆ As St. Paul says: *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 who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16-17).*

So let us humbly prepare ourselves, as loving children, for our participation in the Divine Liturgy, and partake of the most precious Body and Blood of our Lord Savior Jesus Christ. May all of us, the true loving Children of our Living God, love our Lord with all our hearts and serve His church with joy and everlasting life.

Sacrament of Holy Chrism

The Sacrament of Holy Oil is administered during the Baptism of a child. The celebrant during the baptismal ceremony anoints the child with the holy oil. It is essentially the impartation of the Holy Spirit upon the baptized believer. Chrismation immediately follows the Baptism in the Orthodox Church. It is a beautiful liturgical act in which the celebrant anoints the body of the baptized believer in the name of the Holy Trinity.

The Sacrament of Holy Chrism confirms the Christian in his faith and it strengthens him in his fight against Satan. The Holy Chrism (Myron) gives the faithful the strength of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Chrism we are sealed in true faith. Holy Spirit comes to us through the Sacrament of Holy Chrism (Myron).

*The Holy Chrism is the holiest of anointing oils of the Church, also called the fragrance of the Holy Spirit and is used to chrismate the water of Baptism (in the baptismal font), signing in the name of the Holy Spirit.

*It is also used to consecrate church buildings, the altar and the altar stone (Tablitho).

*The Holy Chrism itself is consecrated in the longest of the ceremonies of the Syriac Orthodox Church by the Supreme Head of the Church of Antioch and all the East, His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

*In our church, only the Patriarch consecrates the Holy Chrism. The Bishops alone can transfer it into smaller bottles and fittingly ordained priests can only sacramentally handle it. The Holy Chrism is kept in a special casket in the “Holy of Holies” (madbho) in the church.

*The Apostles of Christ received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost: and on the next day, they consecrated the Holy Chrism using olive oil and spices (John 19:40) collected from the tomb of Jesus Christ.

*Using this Holy Chrism they consecrated the upper hall of St. Mark’s as the first church in Christendom in the name of St. Mary, Mother of God.

*The Holy Chrism of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch has a history dating back to the first consecration by the Holy Apostles headed by St. Peter. Thus, the Holy Chrism used today is always made from the original Holy Oil (the original is always added to the newly consecrated Holy Chrism).

*In the New Testament Church, the Holy Chrism signifies Christ Himself.

Sacrament of Confession

The Sacrament of Confession is a very important spiritual concept for children to understand. As a child you are first introduced to the word “*Sin*” in your Sunday School classes. A sin is when you do something wrong, for example, lying to your parents or saying an inappropriate word. In other words, “moving in the wrong direction.” As a Christian when someone sins, you then pray before God asking Him for forgiveness. We can also learn and memorize the Ten Commandments to help guide us in our everyday lives.

In Sunday School classes you also learn the word “Repent”, this means “to turn away from sin.” For example, if you took something that wasn’t yours, then as a child of Christ you pray and ask for forgiveness, promising God not to do it again and then returning the item to the person it belongs to. This is repentance.

Many children ask “Do we have to confess every time we commit a sin?” To help answer this question a parent must first sit and listen to their child, allowing them to explain what they have done. As a child of Christ, a child must understand that God is always listening and watching us. Now the question “How do we confess or how do we prepare for Confession?”--

- ◆ Read the Holy Bible to help you focus. The Holy Bible is the living Word of our Living God!! Great biblical stories include “The Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5 – 7) and I Corinthians 13.
- ◆ Pray!! Prayer is our direct line with heaven. Prayer is a communication process that allows us to talk to God! He wants us to communicate with Him, like a person-to-person phone call. You can say “The Lords Prayer,” “The Creed,” or another prayer you may have from a religious book at home.
- ◆ Silence: Sometimes it helps for us to be alone. For example, sitting in our bedroom looking at pictures of Jesus or telling God, “Here I am.” Our thoughts are on God and on nothing else.
- ◆ Talk to your Priest. In the Holy Bible it says, “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.” (Acts 19:18). At that time people would come to the disciples and confess. These days, our priests represent God here on earth. Our priests are here to help us through confession.
- ◆ Make a “Good Deeds List.” You can write things that you would like to do to help other people, help the environment, your school or church, or your neighborhood. These types of activities model the Golden Rule, “*Treat others the way you want to be treated.*”

Important Tips For Parents: (for Sacrament of Confession)

Explain to your child what confession is for. You can read books together that are age appropriate which will explain confession to your child. Also, ask your child if they have questions and answer honestly.

Talk about what types of things are sins. A child may not understand what types of things they should confess. For example, family rules such as going to bed at a set time. Children need to understand breaking a family rule is not necessarily something to confess.

It is important to keep in mind your child is just learning about what a sin is. Most young children will not have any major sins. The purpose of confession should be to help a child understand the process of admitting a sin and asking for forgiveness.



Sacrament of Marriage

- ◆ The Sacrament of Marriage was instituted (established) by God. Marriage is holy and was present during the time of Adam and Eve, the first two people created on Earth. As we read in Genesis 1:27 “*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*”
- ◆ God established marriage for the good and happiness of mankind. In marriage a husband and wife help one another, through the happy, sad, and hard times. When people get married God blesses them, and the husband and wife are blessed with children. That is why it is important for parents to bring their children to church every Sunday, “children of God.”
- ◆ St. Paul said that marriage is the holy union between Christ and His church. That is why St. Paul called marriage “a great mystery.” It is a great and holy bond. In a marriage there has to be understanding and agreement.
- ◆ A husband and wife must have faith all throughout their lives, it is only through this that a person sees marriage as a mystery and sacrament.
- ◆ The Sacrament of Marriage is performed by an Archbishop or priest.
- ◆ During the marriage ceremony, we see The Crowning of the Groom and Bride. For as Jesus is called “King” in the Old and New Testament, when the bishop or priest places gold crowns on the heads of the bride and groom, it symbolizes the “kingship” and “queenship” for Christians who are receiving the Sacrament of Marriage.
- ◆ It is the reward, honor, and glory of God which are given to the married couple.

Important Tips For Parents:

1. Explain to your child what marriage is. Also, ask your child if they have questions and answer honestly.
2. Reading Christian books
3. Pray with them



Sacrament of Priesthood

The Sacrament of Priesthood is a sacrament that has been handed down through many generations. It existed in the Old Testament during the time of Abraham, Moses and Aaron (his brother). It was passed onto other Old Testament prophets such as Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and Zachariah. In the New Testament Zachariah's son, John the Baptist, received the Sacrament of Priesthood who then passed onto our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord bestowed the Sacrament to the disciples (John 20: 21-23) who then gave it to the four corners of the earth (successors).

It is important to understand the Holy Spirit plays a very important part in the Sacrament of Priesthood. The disciples received the Sacrament when our Lord breathed on them and said: *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

For a person to receive the Sacrament of Priesthood they must serve God and His church with all their heart. They must believe in God, go to school and learn about Theology (study of religion), and learn about the Rites, traditions, prayers, and history of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

In the Syriac Orthodox Church only males can receive the Sacrament of Priesthood. At a special ceremony, the Archbishop through the invocation (calling) of the Holy Spirit, prayers, and rituals lays his hand and blesses the priest-to-be, and then dresses him in the church vestments (the clothing the priest wears when conducting the Divine Liturgy). This special ceremony is called Ordination.

In the Ordination the priest is entrusted (responsible) for the spiritual well-being of the faithful (church congregation). Duties of a priest include performing the Divine Liturgy and the Sacraments of the church, as well as teaching and counseling the faithful.

Important Tips For Parents:

Create a time in your household for your priest to visit your home and speak to the children. It is very important for children to develop a spiritual and family oriented relationship with the church priest. Not only do the discussions strengthen their connection with the church but it also teaches them the Rites and traditions.

Create a local Bible Study for youth in your area. This activity helps create a youth community with the priest. It extends the Christian teachings from Sunday's Divine Liturgy to a more informal spiritual gathering. Make it a

fun event where families can share refreshments and sweets with one another.

If your child has a question about faith let he/she call the priest. They enjoy answering and teaching children. Contacting the priest does not have to be a formal gathering, they are ready to listen and help. This also makes God happy!



Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is the last sacrament I will be explaining in this Bible Study Focus for children. Over the past year I have briefly described the meaning and importance of each of the Seven Sacraments. I do pray and hope that your children have been learning about the Sacraments and they do continue to grow in God's word.

This Sacrament brings God's grace to those who have a serious illness or have a few days to live. When a bishop or priest administers this Sacrament a sick or dying person is anointed with holy oil while the priest recites absolutions (forgiveness) for sins committed. Therefore, this Sacrament has a very important purpose – for bodily healing and the forgiveness of sins. It is important to understand that administering the sacrament of the anointing of the sick will not automatically heal the person, for this is God's will. Sometimes a sick person does feel better after receiving the Sacrament, but in other cases the person does not recover. The Sacrament gives the faithful person the spiritual strength during their serious illness or to prepare for death.

The chief biblical text for anointing of the sick is James, Chapter 5 verses 14 & 15. *“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”*

Important Tips For Parents:

1. Explain to your child what illness is. Also, ask your child if they have questions and answer honestly.
2. Reading the Holy Bible on a daily or weekly basis. This will greatly strengthen their understanding of the Sacraments.
3. Pray with them
4. Have your child ask the priest if they have questions about this Sacrament or any of the other Sacraments. It is important for a child to have communication with your church priest, it will strengthen their relationship with God and their church.