

*Saint John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit
22001 Northwestern Highway, Southfield, MI 48075*

**THE RITE OF INITIATION INTO THE
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY FOR ADULTS**

**The Canon of the Sacrament of Baptism
of the
Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church**

Կանոն Սուրբ Մկրտութեան Հայաստանեայց Եկեղեցւոյ

Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation (affirmation of the Holy Spirit) and Communion are the most important Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church. The Order of Baptism of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church includes all three Sacraments aforementioned which together are understood as one's Initiation into the Armenian Church.

Jesus Himself received Baptism and the Confirmation of the Holy Spirit when he Himself was baptized by Saint John the Baptist in the Jordan River. By this example, Christ the Lord set a standard by which all human beings can become Children of God.

The Church faithfully and diligently observed Christ's ordinance to baptize all those who wanted to enter the Kingdom of God.

Through Baptism a person enters the Church of Christ, becomes a member of the Body of Christ, and is cleansed of sin.

By Chrismation, the new Christian is sealed and anointed with Holy Chrism oil (called *Muron* in Armenian) and by anointing receives the Divine Energies of the Holy Spirit and is affirmed as a member of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

With Holy Communion, the new Christian is nourished with Christ's Body and Blood and united with Him and the eternal Kingdom of God.

The order of Baptism is a public service. In this rite of Christian Initiation the individual is brought into the fullness of the Church of Christ, welcomed into the fellowship of the community and invited by the priest to a new life with the assurance of salvation.

Baptism is celebrated only once. The Church's Creed, which is the profession of Faith, declares quite clearly that '*We believe in only one baptism for the forgiveness and remission of sins.*'

If Baptism had been administered in any Christian Church in the name of the Holy Trinity—The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—the rite cannot be repeated again. It is accepted as valid and sacramental.

THE GODPARENT(S)

Like the parents, Godparents also take upon themselves the responsibility of guiding their Godchild's journey in life to know God, Jesus, His Son and the power and graces of the Holy Spirit within the family, worshipping and speaking about their common faith as Christians.

In accordance with the Orthodox Faith of the Armenian Church, they promise to instruct their Godchild as good Christians. At one point during the service, the Godparents will declare the Orthodox Faith. Thus the child of God—whether an adult or infant—is taken into the fellowship of the Church where he or she will grow in Christ.

In the ritual of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, the three great Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church are given: **Baptism** by sprinkling with water, **Chrismation** (or Confirmation) by anointing with oil and sealing of the Faith, and **Holy Communion**, the Body and Blood of Christ, which is our meal that connects us with the Lord. The Armenian words for these Sacraments are:

Baptism - *Muhgurdootyoon*

Chrismation -*Troshm* or *Gnoonk*

Holy Communion - *Soorp Haghortootyoon*

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SACRAMENTAL RITE

1. At the Door of the Church

The Presentation, Penitential Psalms and Renunciation of Satan

Godfather and Godmother recite Psalm 22:10

“Upon Thee was I cast from my birth and since my mother bore me, Thou has been my God.”

Renunciation

Priest and Godparents recite:

We renounce Satan and his every deceit, his wiles, his counsels, his goings, his evil will, his evil angels, his evil ministers, his evil agents and his every evil power, renouncing we renounce.

Confession of Faith

Priest, Godparents and Adult being Baptized recite:

Godparents and Individual Being Baptized: We believe in the All-Holy Trinity, in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, in the Annunciation of Gabriel, in the nativity of Christ, in His Baptism, in His Passion, in His Crucifixion, in His three-day Burial, in His Resurrection, His Ascension as God, His sitting at the right hand of the Father and His awesome and glorious second coming, we confess and believe.

2. Entrance into the Church and Rite of Baptism

The individual being Baptized will be asked, “What do you request?” and shall answer, **“FAITH, HOPE, LOVE AND BAPTISM.”**

In Armenian, *HAVADK, HOOYS, SER YEV MUGURDOOTYOON.*

In so doing, the individual is seeking to be Baptized and justified, cleansed of sins, freed from demons, and to serve God.

3. Chrismation with Holy Muron

4. Adoration at the Holy Altar and First Holy Communion

5. Benediction

GUIDELINES FOR THE SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

1. A date shall be set for the Baptism in consultation with the Pastor. Baptisms may take place on any day of the week, except during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

2. The Major Witness of the Baptism, either the Godfather or Godmother (preferably both), must be communicant members of the same faith into which the individual is being Baptized, i.e. Baptized members of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church. If only one of the Godparents is a Baptized member of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, the other Godparent must have been Baptized in the Christian faith.

The Godparents at Baptism, like the parents, accept a responsibility in teaching and sharing the Faith with their Godchild by demonstrating their faith by their own Christian example, by education, and full participation in the life of the Church and parish community.

3. On the day of the Baptism, just before the service, the Pastor will meet with the Godparents to inform them of their responsibilities and instruct them about their participation.

5. Items needed on the day of the Baptism

- An Armenian Cross which will be blessed at the beginning of the service and worn thereafter by the newly Baptized adult.
- One white towel for drying off after the Baptism.
- “The Robe of Gladness,” a white robe which will be worn during the Baptism and Chrismation.
- House slippers to be worn during ceremony.

6. At home after the Baptism, the towel used to dry off and the clothing worn after the Baptism should be laundered by hand in a basin. The water used to wash and rinse the clothing should be emptied into the soil of a garden or lawn, as it contains some of the blessed Holy Muron used during the ceremony.

On Becoming Christian: *Baptism and Life Everlasting*

Baptism, though it is a personal experience, is a public and shared life and witness to Jesus Christ.

Following our entrance into, or conversion to the *Christian Way*, as we proclaim during the sacramental ritual by singing the words... ***putting on Christ***, we are assured of the saving-grace of God in Christ, that if we live according to His teachings and commands until we take our last breath on this earth, we shall inherit eternal life.

This is what being a believing Christian is, i.e., living as Jesus Himself did in every possible way, sacrificing in love, giving of oneself unconditionally, acknowledging that God the Creator is the center of all life. We promise through Baptism that every day —from the time we enter the Christian family (the Church) until our earthly departure — we are committed to show God's presence in the world through our own actions, words and deeds, the fruits of faith.

The reality is that because life on this earth clouds our thinking, lures us away from God, and through fraud and the deception of Satan, who fools us and traps us, we can fall away from the life we were called to through Baptism. We may forget Christ, disclaim Him as Saviour, and adopt alternative ways to find temporary happiness. But the spirit of God which hovered over the waters from the very first day of creation still hovers above us. It is His Holy Spirit ready to reclaim what was and is God's. At every moment, the Spirit of God recovers and rescues the lost, redeems the fallen and renews in us His hope.

Commitment to a "Life in Christ" born at Baptism is sustainable when we turn and return to Him for guidance, direction, with trust and with faith that God Our Father will grant and fulfill our prayers, hopes and desires when we ask Him. Jesus said, "***Knock and it will be opened to you, ask and it will be given to you.***" It is never too late to return and believe again.

Keeping an open mind and heart to God's ever-saving grace makes possible the journey that Baptism launches: ***To become a child of our Heavenly Father, a joint heir with Christ and a Temple of the Holy Spirit, redeemed from slavery to sin, and to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and Life Everlasting.***