

## Recommended Reading

Coniaris, Anthony M. *Sacred Symbols That Speak, Vol. II*. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1987.

Harakas, Stanley S. *The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers*. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1988.

Matthew the Poor & Athanasius Al-Maqay. *The Birth from on High*. Springfield, VA: St. Cyril of Alexandria Society Press, 2015.

Moore, Lazarus. *Baptism as Thirty Celebrations*. Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1990.

Pomazansky, Michael. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. Platina, CA: Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984.

\*Schmemmann, Alexander. *Of Water & the Spirit*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974.

\* Highly recommended.

## Allusions to Chrismation in the New Testament

**Acts 8:14-17.** Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then *they laid hands on them*, and they received the Holy Spirit.

**Hebrews 6:1-2.** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of *laying on of hands*, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

**II Corinthians 1:21-22.** Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has *anointed* us in God, who also has *sealed us and given us the Spirit* in our hearts as a guarantee.

**I John 2:20-27.** But you *have an anointing* from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the *anointing [chrisma]* which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same *anointing [chrisma]* teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

## **The meaning of the “seal” in chrismation (from Anthony Coniaris)**

1. The seal means supreme authority – the official mark of God's claim upon that person.
2. The seal is a signature of God upon us as His new creation (as an artist might sign his painting).
3. The seal is a security, making secure that which is within.
4. The seal means that God is sincere in His promise (cf. Eph. 1:13-14).
5. The seal is a promise that God will continue the redemption He initiated in baptism.
6. The seal means ownership – as a slave was marked by his owner in ancient times.
7. The seal is designed to awaken the spiritual senses – all 5 senses are anointed, signifying that our whole body is consecrated to serve the Lord.
8. The seal imparts the Holy Spirit to us.
9. The seal ordains us into the priesthood of all believers (the ordination of the laity).
10. The seal prepares us for spiritual combat.
11. The seal strengthens us and takes us beyond baptism to open to us the door of theosis (becoming like God in Christ).
12. The seal allows us to share in the anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit (chrismation is the fulfillment of baptism).

# **We Inherit the Results of Adam's Sin, Not His Guilt**

**by Abbot Tryphon**

The doctrine of original sin as espoused in the West is foreign to Orthodoxy, yet this in no way suggest that we do not need to be born again (born anew). We believe, as did the Early Church Fathers, that we inherit only the results of Adam's sin, not his guilt. This is known as ancestral sin because the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, resulted in our inheritance of death, sickness, and an inclination toward evil. Christ's death on the Cross has its power, not in an atoning sacrifice, but in the conquering of the power of death. Death is trampled down by death. Death is trampled down by death. It is by Christ's Resurrection that a way was made for us to be transformed by contact with the Living God, thus becoming His children by adoption.

Although we do not refer to ourselves as "saved," as do evangelical Christians, we nevertheless believe that we are in need of salvation. Salvation is a process, not a one-time commitment. Our understanding of ancestral sin is distinct from the concept of original sin and the hereditary guilt that requires a substitutionary atonement sacrifice; this separates us doctrinally from Western Christianity.

Had the Fall never happened, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Logos (Word), would still have become incarnate and taken on our nature. For it is through this condescension by our Creator God of taking on the nature of what He created that we are given the opportunity of being deified.

Our journey into the heart culminates in theosis, whereby we are joined in everlasting communion with the very God Who created us. St. Athanasius of Alexandria said, "The Son of God became man, that we might become god." In II Peter 1:4, we read that we have become "partakers of the divine nature." St. Athanasius further says that theosis is "becoming by grace what God is by nature."

# Homily on “The Baptism of Infants” – Seven Questions, Seven Answers

His Grace, Michael ~ Bishop of New York & the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

## **Question # 1: Many non-Orthodox ask: Why does our Church baptize infants?**

**Answer:** Our Church has always taken seriously the commands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Who tells us: “Unless one is baptized of water and the Spirit (that is, baptism and chrismation), he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (John 3:5). And He Himself asserted to His Apostles: “Let the little children come unto Me, and do not hinder them, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

## **Question # 2: Are there examples of infant baptism in Scripture?**

**Answer:** There are, in fact, examples of whole households, whole families being baptized: Lydia and her household, the first converts in Europe, in Acts 16:15; the Philippian jailer and “all his family” in Acts 16:33; Paul himself baptizing the household of Stephanas in I Corinthians 1:16. “Household” means the head of the family, the spouse, the children and the servants. Nowhere is it mentioned that infants were excluded from this first mystery of salvation. Naturally in the first few decades of the Christian Church, which is the period of time chronicled in the New Testament, adult baptism was the norm; but it is clear from these examples that those newly initiated adult Christians did not hesitate to bring their children to be baptized.

## **Question # 3: Shouldn't a child be baptized after he can confess Christ for himself?**

**Answer:** Nowhere in the Scripture does it say that we “should not baptize anyone until they reach the age of 7... or the age of 12... or the ‘age of reason.’” The notion of withholding baptism until someone is able to understand the faith and express one’s belief in a reasonable way comes from the Scholastic period of Western church history – a school of thought which implies that the infinite mysteries, works, and mercies of God can be understood and categorized by the human mind. This Scholastic approach to the Christian faith is alien to the apostolic, Orthodox understanding of the Faith. Christ died for everyone; we baptize everyone, even infants and children, whom Christ came to save. This is expressly affirmed in the writings of the earliest Church Fathers, as we shall hear in a moment.

## **Question # 4: What exactly is accomplished in infant baptism?**

**Answer:** Holy Baptism is the entrance into the Church, and into the life in Christ. Just as circumcision was the rite of entrance into the community of faith in the Old Testament, so Baptism is the Christian “rite of initiation.” St. Paul wrote to the Colossians that Baptism is a “circumcision of the heart,” and he concluded that Christians are “buried with Christ in baptism, wherein ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). If infants were welcomed into the Old Covenant community of Israel, why

would the New Covenant community, the Church, be less generous? It is important to understand that the Orthodox Church not only baptizes infants, She also communes them. After all, our Lord said, "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 on the last day" (John 6:53-54). No mother would deny her baby milk – or medicine – even though the baby is not capable of asking for milk or medicine. God forbid, then, that we should deny an infant the life-giving spiritual food and spiritual medicine of the Lord's Body and Blood. The Church, our Mother, gives Her children what She knows they need – whether they have learned to ask for it or not. The criterion for membership in the Church is not age or mental capacity – it is Baptism.

**Question #5: Was infant baptism really the practice of the ancient Church of undivided Christianity?**

**Answer:** Yes. From as far back as anyone can determine, the early Christian Church always baptized the children of Orthodox parents. St. Hippolytus takes this for granted in his work *The Apostolic Tradition*, as he describes the rite of Baptism in the second century: "At the hour in which the cock crows, they shall first pray over the water.... the water shall be pure and flowing, that is, the water of a spring or a flowing body of water. Then they shall take off all their clothes. The children shall be baptized first. All the children who can answer for themselves, let them answer. If there are any children who cannot answer for themselves, let their parents answer for them, or someone else from their family. After this, the men will be baptized, and finally, the women...." And Origen tells us "The Church received from the Apostles the tradition of baptizing even infants." St. Polycarp, the holy martyr who was himself a disciple of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian, indicated that he was baptized very young when he said to his persecutors on the day of his execution, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and He never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" St. Irenaeus, writing in the second century, tells us: "For He [Christ] came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things...." And St. Gregory the Theologian, addressing Christian mothers, insists upon the baptism of infants: "Do you have an infant? Do not give time for harm to increase. Let him be sanctified in infancy, and from youth dedicated to the Spirit. Do you fear the seal because of the weakness of nature, as someone faint-hearted and small in faith? But Anna even before giving birth promised Samuel to God, and after his birth she quickly dedicated him and raised him for the sacred garment, without fearing human weakness, but believing in God."

**Question #6: If Baptism is also done to wash away personal sins – or the stain of "original sin" – then what sin can a baby possibly be guilty of?**

**Answer:** An infant or a small child does not come to the font guilty of personal sins. The Orthodox tradition does not teach the notion of "original sin" in the Western sense

that we share personally in the sin of Adam and Eve. Our tradition speaks instead of “ancestral sin.” We have inherited a broken human nature – broken by the consequences of the fall of Adam and Eve, our first ancestors, from the Garden of Eden. In Baptism, that brokenness is healed and the relationship with God that was ruptured in the Fall, is restored for the newly baptized person – whether a baby, an adolescent, or an adult – with the potential to grow ever closer to Christ, nourished by God’s Word and the Sacraments, in His Household – the Church.

**Question #7: Where does the practice of “godparents” come into the picture?**

**Answer:** It is vital that parents recognize their responsibility for the raising up of the baptized infant in Christian faith and virtue – and that they seek the help of a worthy sponsor. We read this instruction of St. Dionysius the Areopagite from his work, *On The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: “It was pleasing to our divine instructors to allow infants also to be baptized, under the sacred condition that the natural parents of the child should entrust him to someone among the faithful who would instruct him well in divine subjects and then take care for the child as a father, given from above, and as a guard of his eternal salvation.” How important for us is this instruction which comes from the ancient Church! From it we see what responsibility the godparent or sponsor of the baptized person takes upon himself – and how careful parents need to be in choosing a sponsor. This indeed is our task, in the words of John Chrysostom: “To educate ourselves and our children in godliness.”

# The Historical Case for Infant Baptism

## by Fr. Lawrence Farley

Christian baptism is about conversion, as a quick look at the Orthodox liturgical texts reveals. Questions are addressed to the candidate, requiring him or her to renounce Satan, and to seal this renunciation by spitting upon him. Next, questions are addressed to the candidate, requiring a statement of union with Christ, which the candidate utters and then seals by bowing down in prostration to Christ, and by confessing the Nicene Creed. Clearly, the baptism of such adult converts is the historic norm, and no one disputes this. The question is: can this rite of conversion also be applied to infants and those too young to answer for themselves? Is it allowable for sponsors to make the required responses on the little one's behalf? For the Christian Church not only grows by making converts, but also by those converts having babies. After the baby is born, what is to be done with the wee one? If the New Testament texts talking about the baptism of babies are few, there are even fewer texts talking about the dedication of those babies—in fact there are none. And since the New Testament is not a rule-book governing every aspect of the Church's life (like a set of Ikea assembly instructions), such an absence of direction about what to do with babies is hardly surprising.

Obviously the Orthodox Church baptizes babies, regarding such an exception to the rule of convert baptism as apostolic. Some people disagree (usually those people who do indeed regard the New Testament as a kind of rule book), and they often denounce the practice of infant baptism as “Constantinian”, which term they use as kind of Anabaptist swear word. Admittedly, many things began to change with the advent of the first Christian emperor, but the practice of baptism was not among them. And when you think about it, why should it have been? What Constantine did was simply to call off the dogs of persecution, and make it clear that he favoured the Christians, letting them practice their faith freely. Given this new freedom, why would those Christians make substantive changes in their faith? If they kept that faith even to the point of martyrdom and death before Constantine, why would they change it after he allowed them to practise it freely? Anyway, it will be helpful to look at the surviving historical record to see whether or not Christians baptized infants prior to the Peace of Constantine. We leave to one side for now a discussion of the New Testament texts about the baptism of households (Acts 11:14, 16:31), since people dispute whether the Jewish practice of the proselyte baptism of households (which included babies) has any relevance here.

The first voice we encounter in the record of history is that of Tertullian (d. 220), the feisty North African lawyer and apologist. He denounced the practice, and was distinctly unimpressed when people defended it by citing the text, “Let the children come to Me” (Matthew 19:14). “Let them come,’ he retorted, “while they are growing up, while they are learning, while they are instructed why they are coming. Let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ” (*On Baptism*, chapter 18). Anabaptists tend to like Tertullian, but what is not often appreciated is that this text is evidence for the practice of infant baptism in North Africa in the late second century, not evidence against it. For why would Tertullian inveigh so passionately against

something that no one ever did? The North African Christians allowed the baptism of infants, and Tertullian argued that they should not.

Next we look at the witness of Origen, the Church's first (and controversial) systematic theologian, who flourished in Alexandria and Palestine and who died in 254. He clearly knew of infant baptism, and approved of it. In one of his sermons on Luke's Gospel, he says that "Little children are baptized 'for the remission of sins'...Yet how can this explanation of the baptismal washing be maintained in the case of small children, except according to the interpretation we spoke of earlier? 'No man is clean of stain, not even if his life upon the earth had lasted but a single day'...For this reason, even small children are baptized." We may or may not agree with Origen about the rationale for baptizing infants, but there is no doubt that the Church of his day did indeed baptize them. And this practice was not recent in his day. Origen writes, "the church had a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to infants" (from his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*). Whether or not the practice actually went back to the apostles (which I maintain it did), at very least it went back beyond living memory in Origen's day, and this places it very early indeed.

We may also look at the document known as *The Apostolic Tradition*, and ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235). Scholars now debate whether or not it was actually a liturgy used in Rome in that time, but at very least it represents the thought of its day. And this thought took for granted: (1) that most baptisms were of converts, and (2) that small children could also be baptized. The relevant bit from the document reads, "First baptize the small children. And each one who is able to speak for themselves, let them speak. But those not able to speak for themselves, let their parents or another one belonging to their family speak for them. Afterward baptize the grown men, and finally, the women" (*Apostolic Tradition* chapter 21). Here we see that the small child's inability to speak for itself was not a problem; the parents or sponsors simply gave the responses (just as they do in Orthodoxy today).

One more voice may be heard—that of St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258). A fellow bishop named Fidus knew that infants were baptized, but thought that perhaps the baptism should be deferred until the eighth day of the infant's life on analogy with Jewish circumcision, perhaps because St. Paul called baptism "the circumcision of Christ" in Colossians 2:11. Cyprian met with sixty-six of his fellow North African bishops in council, and considered Fidus' suggestion of waiting until the eighth day to baptize infants. Cyprian and the council unanimously rejected the suggestion, and said that the infant should be baptized immediately after birth, on the second or third day. This indicates a well-established practice in North Africa—so well established in fact that the only debate was whether to baptize the baby right after birth or to wait for eight days. Practices of and rationale for the baptism of infants varied from place to place (especially in the East), but no one denied that it could be done.

This quick survey of church history reveals that for whatever varied reasons it was allowed, the Church did indeed allow babies to be baptized even before Constantine gave us a break. One can still debate the wisdom of the practice if one wishes, but of its historical pedigree there can be no doubt.