

Baptism and Confirmation

Objectives

To understand the spiritual significance of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and to become familiar with the rituals associated with them.

References

The Sacraments of the Church by H. G. Bishop Mettaous (Abbot of El-Syrian Monastery)
Book 1 (Baptism) and Book 2 (Confirmation)

No Salvation Outside the Church (H. G. Bishop Gregorious)

Baptism (Comparative Theology) (H.H. Pope Shenouda III)

Scriptural Verse

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3: 5)

Lesson Guidelines

1. Institution of the Sacrament of Baptism

Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament (Matthew 28: 19, Mark 16: 16, and John 3: 5)

2. Ritual of the Sacrament

- Women’s Absolution
- Renouncing Satan
- Liturgy of Baptism
- Baptism and Water Discharge
- Different types of oil used in Baptism
 - **The Simple Oil:** Absolution of the mother, 1st prayer to the child and beginning of the baptismal water consecration.
 - **The Ghaliloun Oil (Oil of Joy):** the child is anointed after mother renounces Satan and confesses Christ. It is also used to sanctify the baptismal water.
 - **The Myron Oil:** added to the baptismal water for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit so that it becomes capable of granting new birth and forgiveness of sins.

3. Baptism by Immersion

- Jesus Christ was baptized by immersion “Came up from the water” (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10).
- Immersion three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28: 19-20).
- Full immersion represents death and resurrection with the Lord (Colossians 2:12).
- It washes away sins and washing needs dipping in water.
- The early churches had immersion fonts, which contradict baptism by sprinkling.

4. Baptism of Children

- It ensures children's salvation and eternal life as they are born with the fallen nature due to the original sin.
- It gives them the opportunity to practice the life of the church from childhood.
- We obey the Lord's saying: "Let the children come to Me...." (Matthew 19:14).
- Children are in the stage of believing everything so they do not refuse or reject the faith.
- The Bible mentioned baptism of whole families, e.g. the jailer at Philippi (Acts 16:31) and the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16).
- There are no verses in the Bible that contradict the baptism of infants.
- We baptize children based on the belief of their parents like the children of the Old Testament who enjoyed salvation through circumcision, the blood of the lamb during the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea.

5. The Importance of Baptism

- Salvation is complete through baptism (Mark 16:16).
- Through baptism, we receive the second birth with water and Spirit (John 3:3-5).
- Baptism washes away sins (Acts 2:37-38; 22:16).
- Baptism is dying with the Lord Christ and rising with Him (Philippians 3:10, Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12).
- Baptism gives us a new life (Romans 6:4).
- Through baptism we put on Christ "God's image" which we lost through the "original sin" (Galatians 3:27).
- Through baptism we become members of the church "Same effect of circumcision in the Old Testament" (Colossians 2:11-12).

6. Symbols of Baptism in the Old Testament

- Noah's Ark (1 Peter 3:20, 21)
- Circumcision (Colossians 2:11, 12)
- Crossing the Red Sea (1 Corinth. 10:12)
- Jerusalem's people represented as a bride who is washed and consecrated to the Lord (Ezekiel. 16:8,9)

7. Institution of the Sacrament of Confirmation

Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament (John 7:37- 39, Acts 8:14-17, Acts 9:2- 6)

8. Ritual of the Sacrament

- Performed right after Baptism
- Anointment Rite
- History of Making the Myron

9. Other Rituals

- Dressing the child in a new set of white clothes and tying a red ribbon across their chest, which denotes his/her new and pure life as a soldier for Christ.

- Proceeding around the church as in the Resurrection Procession as he/she is risen with Christ.
- Commandment for Parents and Godparents as the child now belongs to the church and the parents are just guardians for the commandments of the church.

Conclusion

Baptism is an imperishable, redemptive (necessary for salvation) and curative sacrament (cures from original sin and all sins committed before baptism). Confirmation is a mystery where the Holy Spirit dwells to fortify against sin and evil and provides victory in spiritual struggles.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. What is the importance of being born again to a Christian life?
2. If baptism is necessary for salvation, were the people in the Old Testament baptized?
3. Can you find examples in Scripture of famous people who were baptized and confirmed in the faith? (St. Paul -Acts 9:3 –20, Cornelius - Acts 10: 30 – 48, the people of Samaria - Acts 8:5 –17).