

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

**LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:**

ANGELS
BUILDINGS
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CALENDAR
CHRISMATION
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DIVINE LITURGY
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ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
ESPERINOS
FASTING
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GLOSSARY
GREAT, HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA
HOLY ANOINTING
HOLY BAPTISM
HOLY COMMUNION
HOLY ICONS
HOLY MATRIMONY
HOLY ORDERS
HOLY SCRIPTURES
IN THE UK
"IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!"
LITURGICAL YEAR
MONKS AND NUNS
MUSIC OF LITURGIES
ORTHROS
OTHER CHRISTIAN CONFESSIONS
PRAYER AND WORSHIP
RELIGIONS
REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION
SAINTS
SOCIAL MEDIA
SOME FOODS
VESTMENTS
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR SUNDAYS?
WORLDWIDE FAMILY

All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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"The Orthodox Church.....has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from
"Encountering the Mystery."
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Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Chrismation (‘Confirmation’)



His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew at the preparation of the Holy Myron (Oil of Chrism). He is assisted at the Patriarchate by Hierarchs and clergy from the Orthodox Churches throughout the world, together with specially chosen lay people.

A Holy Mystery (sacrament) can never be fully explained yet can be entered into without that full understanding our human reason so often demands. We can experience mystery with all its blessings through the Divine grace by participating in the life of the Church. Intellect alone cannot provide what man needs but through faith and the divinely instituted practices he is aided on the path to salvation.

The newly baptised having been incorporated into Christ at Baptism, now receives in Chrismation the gift of the Holy Spirit which is the individual's personal Pentecost by which he or she is 'ordained' into the priesthood of all believers and by virtue of the divine gift is called to live and confess the Christian way.

Chrisma (Gk. χρίσμα) means anointing. The one anointed with chrism becomes christos, that is, the anointed one, which is the meaning of the name Christ.

"The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

With those words a person is Chrismated immediately after Baptism within the one service or, if being received from another tradition where a recognised baptism has taken place, as a separate mystery or sacrament of initiation.

"The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen. "

The priest says this each time as he anoints the child or adult with the the oil of Chrism making the sign of the cross on the forehead, chin, cheeks, nostrils, mouth, ears, chest, legs, feet, hands and back.

The oil of chrism (Myrrh) is sanctified to be used in the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Chrism (Confirmation). Thus it becomes a visible means of the bestowing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon those who are baptised.

In the early years of Christianity this bestowing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon those who were baptised was done by the 'laying on of hands' of the Apostles (Acts 8:14-17). However, when the churches throughout the world had multiplied and the number of those who had been baptised increased substantially, the anointing by Holy Myrrh was introduced and replaced the laying on of hands. Exactly when is not known but it was most likely in apostolic times. "In lieu of laying of hands, this was given by the Apostles to those baptised in Christ." Symeon of Thessaloniki.

The Holy Myrrh was introduced mirroring the existing practice in the Old Testament (Exodus 30:22-25) and is prepared from oil and a variety of fragrant essences.

Approximately every ten years the preparation for and blessing of the Holy Myrrh takes place from the Sunday of Palms until and including Great and Holy Thursday by the Ecumenical Patriarch who informs the Primates of Orthodox Churches throughout the world and extends to them and other Hierarchs, an invitation to attend and participate. This rich ceremony takes place at the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul). As well as bishops and clergy, lay people have an important role in this ceremony. The Chrism is taken throughout the world and a small container (see below) will be found in all Orthodox churches, often kept on the Holy Table (altar).



Holy Myrrh is also used for the reception of converts into the Orthodox Church and for those who have fallen away; for the dedication of churches; the consecration of holy altars; the consecration of the holy Antimensions; and for certain other instances of ritual. It was also used to anoint Orthodox monarchs during their coronation.



The Sacrament of Chrismation rests with a bishop but in practice is administered by a priest using the Holy Myron with permission.

The service of receiving previously baptised non-Orthodox Christians by Chrismation includes their saying the following:

"Today, I...N... by the grace of God and my own free will, having received proper instruction, join by the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit the Orthodox Church and do confess before God and man that: (*recites the Nicene Creed*). I further confess, agree with and accept the seven Ecumenical Councils and their decrees as well as the traditions of our Orthodox Church, through whose prayers I seek to be made worthy of the honour of becoming a servant of the Lord, carrying out his commandments and being well-pleasing to him in everything, through the grace and love of mankind of our Saviour Jesus Christ to whom is due all glory and power. Amen"