



May 3, 2010

Teleturgical Encyclical 23

The Pious Priests of  
the Holy Metropolis of Denver

Beloved in the Lord,

## **Christ is Risen!**

From time to time I receive questions regarding the procedures for receiving converts to the Orthodox faith through Chrismation. Our Holy Eparchial Synod has addressed this subject over the past few months and, at its most-recent Spring meeting, reiterated the basic policies and approved a *Service for the Reception of Converts into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation*.

I am enclosing a small booklet which contains this Service. You are directed to use this form only, and no other, when receiving converts into our Church through Chrismation.

In regard to the theology, Canons, and current practices regarding this matter, please allow me to reiterate our policies so that all things may be done in good order and with consistency in this metropolis, within the Archdiocese, and throughout the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

First and foremost, the normal way that individuals are joined to Christ, and to His Body, the Church, is through the Orthodox Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation. This is our theology.

In practice, there are specific instances in which the Orthodox Church recognizes baptisms performed in certain heterodox churches. This is not a matter to be taken lightly, but has been carefully studied at the Ecumenical Patriarchate and our Archdiocese. It remains a matter under constant scrutiny and review because of the increasing multiplicity of baptismal practices, and locale divergences from stated norms in some ecclesial bodies.

In general, heterodox Baptisms may be recognized if they were done (a) in water, (b) In the “*Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit*,” and (c) by a church or denomination that has an expressed belief in the Most Holy Trinity.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, and therefore our Holy Archdiocese as well as this Metropolis of Denver, generally recognizes a baptism performed in the following heterodox denominations, and converts from these churches are received into the Orthodox Church through Chrismation *only*:

- a. Anglican Communion (Church of England, Episcopalian, etc.)
- b. African Methodist Episcopal (AME)
- c. Assembly of God
- d. Baptist
- e. Church of the Brethren
- f. Coptic Orthodox
- g. Disciples of Christ
- h. Dutch Reformed
- i. Episcopalian
- j. Ethiopian Orthodox
- k. Lutheran
- l. Malankara Syrian Orthodox
- m. Mennonite
- n. Methodist
- o. Moravian
- p. Presbyterian
- q. Roman Catholic  
(including Maronite and Eastern Rite)
- r. Syrian Orthodox of Antioch

Normally, when individuals who have been previously baptized in one of the above-cited heterodox denominations present themselves to be received into the Orthodox Church, they may not be Baptized again. Rather, they are received and joined to the Church simply through the Mystery of Chrismation.

This guidance notwithstanding, pastors should, in each case, carefully inquire and ascertain whether the baptism was in fact done in accord with the three specifications cited above. There are some heterodox denomination pastors and ministers who do not baptize according to the stated norms of their churches. For

instance, some do not baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity, but use some generic formula such as “in the name of the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier.” I discussed this matter, and the variant “formulas,” in my Teleturgical Encyclical 18, dated July 5, 2006. There are also other heterodox pastors and ministers who do may not ‘baptize’ in water but “in the air” or “in the spirit.”

Consequently you must be very cautious whenever inquiring of converts how they were “baptized.” In each and every case you must examine the baptismal certificate or the baptismal transcript; if necessary you must contact the clergyman who performed the baptism. If it cannot be ascertained that the heterodox baptism was done in a theologically recognizable manner, the convert must be properly baptized according to the rite of the Orthodox Church.

Specifically, “Baptisms” performed in the following churches are not recognized, and individuals from these churches must be joined to Christ in the Orthodox Church through Baptism and Chrismation:

- a. Anabaptists
- b. Christian Scientist
- c. Jehovah’s Witness
- d. “Latter Day Saints” (i.e., Mormon)
- e. Quaker
- f. Salvation Army
- g. Seventh Day Adventist
- h. Swedenborgian
- i. Unitarian

In regard to the rite, or service, for the reception of converts through Chrismation that you are to follow, the following guidelines shall apply in all cases in all parishes of this Metropolis.

First, the Chrismation of a convert shall take place immediately before the Doxology at the end of Matins preceding the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Converts are not to be Chrismated after the Gospel, after the Creed, or at any point in the Divine Liturgy. If for pastoral reasons you believe that a Chrismation should take place at another time, such as on an evening, please write to request my blessing and guidance before you make any schedule or commitment.

Second, the enclosed order for the *Service for the Reception of Converts into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation* was approved by the Eparchial Synod of our Holy Archdiocese at its April 20-21, 2010 meeting and is attached. This is the only order of Chrismation that is to be followed in all parishes of the Metropolis of Denver. No other format, such as that contained in the Hapgood Service Book with the renunciations, is to be used.

Please note that I have included in this service the order for tonsuring the newly-Chrismated, a practice established by His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos of blessed memory.

Concerning the issuing and maintenance of Holy Chrism, please note that since the establishment of the Metropolises it has been the responsibility of each Metropolitan to distribute the Holy Chrism received from the Ecumenical Patriarchate through the Archdiocese to his parishes. Should you need a fresh supply of Holy Chrism, please write to me.

Please ensure that your stock of Holy Chrism is clean and fresh; I ask that each of you examine the stock in your altar and ensure that it is so. Holy Chrism is to be stored either on the Holy Altar (usually in, on, or next to the Artoforion) or on the “side altar” (the *skevofylakion* or *diakonikon*). It is not to be thrown into a drawer like some miscellaneous item; this shows disrespect for things sacred and consecrated.

When you receive a new supply of Holy Chrism, make sure it is poured into a clean and appropriate container. I have a supply of small glass bottles with an attached brush that are very suitable for this purpose; if you need one, please write to me with your request.

Do not dilute Holy Chrism with anything else, such as olive oil. We are living in the twenty-first century, and there is nothing hampering your ability to obtain and maintain a fresh supply of Holy Chrism simply by asking me.

Too often Holy Chrism has been poured into the customary metal containers where it is spilled, becomes contaminated, or turns rancid. Holy Chrism is sacred and precious; just as you would not use sour or spoiled wine for Holy Communion, you must not use discolored and tainted Chrism for Chrismation. If the Holy Chrism becomes old, discolored, with no aroma, and/or with very little of it left, you are to pour it in an oil vigil lamp with a fabric wick so that it may be burned.

Incidentally, the same principles that apply to Holy Chrism likewise are applicable to Holy Unction consecrated on Holy Wednesday and reserved for use throughout the year. Each Holy Week you are to dispose of the Holy Unction consecrated the year before by burning it in an oil vigil lamp.

The newly-consecrated Holy Unction is to be reserved in an appropriate bottle with a lid, and it is also stored on the Holy Altar or on the “side altar.” Under no circumstances is Holy Unction to be kept in an open bowl where it will be contaminated by dirt and dust, and where it might be inadvertently spilled.

It should go without saying that if either Holy Chrism or Holy Unction are accidentally spilled, it is to be wiped up carefully with a paper or cloth that is subsequently disposed of properly by burning. Similarly, keep in mind that when drying and cleaning the kolymvithra (baptismal font) after a baptism, any paper or cloths that are used must likewise be disposed of through burning. Under no circumstances shall these holy things be thrown into a trash can and then thrown away with the garbage.

Finally, upon receipt of this letter, Teleturgical Encyclical 14, dated October 20, 2004, which concerned the administration of the Sacrament of Chrismation is canceled and superseded by this present Teleturgical Encyclical 23.

May our Lord, Who has called you to His priestly ministry, bless you and strengthen you to faithfully serve His Church and to properly administer His Holy Mysteries.

With Paternal Blessings,



✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver

Enclosure