



St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church Pre-Service Training Seminars

The Rites of the Coptic Orthodox Church



Lecture 3 The Sacrament of Confirmation

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Myron, also known as the Holy Anointment, or the Sacrament of Confirmation, or Chrismation, is a holy Sacrament, with which we receive the seal of the Holy Spirit. The word 'Myron' is a Greek word which means 'ointment' or 'fragrant perfume'.

The Lord Jesus instituted it when He said: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom these believing in Him would receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

Confirmation is not only a God-sent sacrament, but also is based on the practice of the apostles whereby they would place their hands on those who had believed and had been baptized so that by the laying on of the Apostles hands these would receive the Holy Spirit. The two Scriptural passages that support this practice are as follows: "Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit," and "when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 8:17;19:6). There is no doubt then that the sacrament of Confirmation is God-sent and is an apostolic practice.

Confirmation is done immediately after baptism. In the past, in its attempt to closely follow the practice of the apostles, the Church practiced Confirmation performed by the Bishop. Because this was not always possible, the Church established the custom of preparing the Holy Chrism to be used by the priests. The Myron oil consists of about 30 kinds of spices and perfumes which have been added to pure olive oil and simmered four times. The filtered oil is then poured into a large container and after the Liturgy of the Sanctification of the Myron, the Patriarch places the old leaven in the Myron recently made, whilst saying certain prayers.

The rites of the sacrament:

The priest anoints the babe with the Holy oil in 36 spots as follow:

- † 8 SPOTS ON THE FACE: forehead, 2 nostrils, mouth, right ear, right eye, left eye, and left ear. (Shape of cross on the face).**
- † 4 SPOTS ON THE TRUNK: heart (upper chest), stomach (navel), upper back, and lower back.**

✠ **6 SPOTS ON THE RIGHT ARM: 2 front and back of the shoulder, 2 front and back of the elbow and 2 fronts and back of the wrist.**

✠ **6 SPOTS ON THE LEFT ARM: the same as before**

✠ **6 SPOTS ON THE RIGHT LEG : 2 front and back of the hip, 2 front and back of the knee and 2 front and back of the foot.**

✠ **6 SPOTS ON THE LEFT LEG: the same as before.**

Those 36 anointments or crosses are very important part of the ritual itself. It is to make sure that the whole body is sanctified to be a Holy temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell in.

There is also a spiritual meaning behind these anointments:

✠ *Anointing the face all around is to sanctify the senses of the person...forehead to sanctify the mind and thoughts.*

✠ *Nose is to sanctify the smell.*

✠ *Ears are to sanctify hearing.*

✠ *Eyes are to sanctify vision.*

We can see the importance of anointing all these parts so the church has to make sure that all the senses of the child is being sanctified to God and the child will be able to keep his senses pure by the grace of the Holy Spirit that dwells in him.

+ Anointing the heart and back is also important as the Psalmist prayed, "Create in me a pure heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10), and, "Examine me O Lord and prove me. Try my mind and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).

Also the wise King Solomon advises us saying, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

+ Anointing the hands is important, as they are instruments of work and contain the sense of touch. We should keep our hands pure from all things that may defile; from touching things that are impure, from partaking in ungodly deeds, from taking part in murder, stealing, and so on.

+ Anointing the areas of the hip joints: these are sensitive parts of the body, for near the inner hips lies the reproductive organs, and the church anoints this area so that the child may lead a life of purity. The sexual organs are called the holy of Holies of the body, and so keeping them pure is required. Through the anointing of the Myron, these organs are protected from sexual immorality, which greatly angers God.

God destroyed the old world because of their profanity, through wiping them out by the flood. Likewise, He burnt the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and judged them to become an example of the fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries, "Those who died in the plague were twenty four thousand" (Numbers 25:9). For this reason, St. Paul our teacher advises every youth saying, "Keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22), for without holiness no one can see the Lord.

+Anointing the feet is to protect them from walking in the way of sin, and from going to corrupt places. Avoiding the way of sin will enable us to live a virtuous life, and finally gain eternal life

After finishing the anointments, the priest places his hand on the child's head, saying, "May you be blessed by the blessings of the heavenly, and the blessings of the angels. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you in His name...After that he breathes into the face of the child while saying "receive the Holy Spirit and be a pure vessel..."

In case of giving this Sacrament to an adult, the priest only anoints the exposed parts of his or her body (the face, the neck and the hands.)

All the lecture is quoted (with some modifications) from:

- ✠ SACRAMENTAL RITES IN THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH "
His Grace Bishop Mettaous"
- ✠ ORTHODOX CATECHISM Basic Teachings of the Orthodox Faith
By Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios
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