

***THE CANON OF THE SACRAMENT
OF HOLY BAPTISM IN THE
ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH***

The Order of the Service:

- Presentation
 - Renunciation
 - Confession of Faith
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- Blessing of water
 - Baptism
 - Chrismation
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- Holy Communion
 - Last blessing
 - Dismissal
 - Presentation on the 40th day

Foreword:

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, a divine instituted sacrament, is the very first of the seven sacraments of the Church, which grants the right to the baptized person to be called a Christian and an adopted child of God.

The space here does not allow me to compare Christian baptism with that of Hellenistic, Babylonian, or Israelite baptismal rites. But based on the New Testament teaching I would like to introduce Christian baptism as it was instituted by Christ and expounded by His Apostles.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5).

The only way, therefore, to enter into the kingdom of God is the baptism performed by water and by the Spirit. The significance of baptism in the New Testament is brought out by the use of various metaphors. A constant theme is that of baptism as a means of cleansing and purification. Baptism brings the baptized person into relationship with the once-for-all saving act of God in Christ. Through faith and baptism, we share in what happened to Christ, and in what He achieved for us. Our identification with Christ takes place in baptism (Gal. 3:27). Christians are also unified with Christ in His death: One has died for all, therefore all have died (2:Cor. 5:14). In baptism, we die and rise again with Christ. We have been united with Him in a death like His (Rom. 6:5). The Christian in baptism, therefore, becomes a sharer or partaker in the death of Christ.

St. Peter compared the water of the baptismal Font to the flood which saves us, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:20). And Christ commands His disciples to Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19). According to the commandment of Christ, the Armenian Apostolic Church has given authority to her priests to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity and immerse the candidate thrice in the water in commemoration of Christ's three days burial. Through baptism the candidate is united to Christ's body where the only bond uniting the different members of the same body is the Holy Spirit. We read in the Epistle of St. Paul, For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).

Baptism is also described in the New Testament, Johannine writings and 1 Peter, as a new birth. You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). The baptized person has the supreme obligation to walk with the Holy Spirit considering himself a fortunate sharer in Christ's death and resurrection. Needless to say, the recipient of the Sacrament, who inherits the right of sonship to become an adopted child of God, becomes also the temple of the Holy Spirit. The same recipient is also honored with the fact that he becomes the brother of Christ, and the visible sign of that brotherhood is the

membership to Christ's body on earth, that is His Church. The baptized Christian always faithful to his membership with his Christ, must maintain the peace and the harmony in the Body of the Lord, that is in the Church.

According to the Armenian Church tradition the administration of the Sacrament of Holy baptism includes also the Sacraments of Chrismation (Confirmation) and of Communion (Eucharist). The three Sacraments administered together form an integral ceremony initiating a new birth in Christ, sanctifying the soul with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and finally making the baptized a shrine of Christ's presence.

The event does not come to an end with the performance of the baptismal rite. Instead, follow-up is necessary. The spiritual welfare of the baptized child is essential. The ministry to children is obviously a ministry to parents who must create the faith of the Church around the newly baptized child. Parents and godparents are called to reflect on the baptismal experience and perhaps take a look at their own lives and opportunities to contribute to the Christian life of the community. Sponsoring children during a baptismal ritual is not a fruitless duty. It is a sacred obligation to constantly observe the spiritual growth of the child guiding him according to the faith of the Church.

Baptism is the gateway to the other sacraments. It is the beginning of a process of growth in to the likeness of the risen Christ. The baptized person must live according to the grace he has received. By baptism each Christian is called to serve his fellow men, according to his circumstances, by prayer and action. The love which the Christian shows to others is a reflection of God's love which is poured out upon Christians in their baptism.

Father Mesrob Tashjian

The Canon of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism

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They shall enter into the chancel of the church saying::

The Lords Prayer

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Priest:

Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the true God.

Psalm 51

Congregation:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; Now and always and forever and ever. Amen

Hymn of the Holy Spirit

The indivisible Trinity and the heavenly power shone forth as a light upon the world; Let us praise Him with song.

The very Holy Spirit came down from heaven and rested upon the Apostles; Let us praise Him with song.

Descending upon the Apostles the mystery of salvation manifested himself as having been known by the prophet; Let us praise Him with song.

Deacon:

Bidding

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord.

For the expiation of sins and forgiveness of transgressions and for the mercy of God to be descended upon this child, Let us beseech the Lord.

Priest:

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

O Lord God, great and glorified by all creatures, this your servant has bowed his/her head and has found refuge in your most powerful and holy name.

Look with mercy, O Lord, upon this child, and by calling of your name, expel and keep away the thoughts, the words, and the deeds, and all the thoughts, the words, and the deeds, and all the deceptions of the evil one who is accustomed to deceive men and make them and make them perish.

Fill this child with your heavenly grace and grant him/her the joy to be named a Christian and make him/her worthy of Baptism of the second birth of the holy Font.

And by receiving your Holy Spirit let him/her be body and member of your holy Church.

And by leading a blameless Christian life in this world may he/she attain all the good things of the world to come with the help of your saints, glorifying your unchangeable dominion.

Now and forever and ever. Amen.

Then the Godfather shall hold the child and bowing down three times shall say thrice:

Upon thee was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me thou has been my God.

At this point everyone at the church will turn to the West for the renunciation:

The Renunciation

Priest:

We renounce Satan and his every deceit, his wiles, his deliberations, his course, his evil will, his evil angels, his evil ministers, his evil agents, and his every power renouncing, we renounce.

Then all shall turn toward the East and the priest shall say: We turn to the light of the knowledge of God.

Confession of Faith

We believe in the all-holy Trinity, in the Father and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the annunciation of Gabriel, in the Nativity of Christ, in His Baptism, in His Passion, in His Crucifixion, in His three day entombment, in His sitting at the right hand of the Father and His awesome and glorious Second Coming.

We confess and we believe.

Deacon:

Alleluia, Orthi. (Praise the Lord. Arise)

Priest:

Peace unto all.

Deacon:

And with our spirit. Listen in fear.

Priest:

To the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. Matthew (28:16-20).

Deacon:

Glory be to the Lord our God. Proschumen. (Let us attend). God speaks.

Priest:

After the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountains to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw Him they worshipped Him; but some doubted.

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

Then they shall enter the chancel and sing:

Hymn

Open the gate of your mercy, O Lord, and make us worthy of your luminous dwellings together with your saints.

Receive us, O Savior, in the mansions prepared for your saints, inscribing our names in the book of life.

O formidable Judge, when you sit at the judgment seat, spare your creatures through the intercession and prayer of the holy ascetics.

Deacon:

Bidding

Again in peace let us beseech the Lord.

Let us beseech the compassionate God, to have mercy upon this child according to his great mercy and make him/her worthy of the washing of the second birth and of the garment of purity.

Let us beseech our Lord, to rank him/her among the faithful who believe in His name, and save him/her by the grace of His mercy.

Almighty Lord, our God, save us and have mercy.

Priest:

Prayer

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Receive, O compassionate God, this child who is being presented to you.

Cleanse his/her mind and his/her thoughts from all the influences of the adversary; and make him/her worthy to be washed of our old sins through the holy Font and to be renewed by the light of Your grace, so that together with us he/she may glorify the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

The Priest and the godfather holding the child, will walk towards the baptismal Font., singing:

Hymn

Christ, the sun of righteousness, rising over the world banished the darkness of ignorance; and after His death and resurrection ascended to the Father from whom He was begotten; together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He is worshipped by the heavenly and the terrestrial; and consequently we adore the Father in spirit and in truth.

Pouring water into the Font crosswise, the Priest shall say:

Alleluia, Alleluia.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, upon many waters.

The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. (Ps. 29:3-4).

The reading is from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. (3:24-29).

So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christs, then you are Abrahams offspring, heirs according to promise.

Deacon:

Alleluia, Alleluia. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1).

Alleluia! Orthi! (Praise the Lord. Arise.)

Priest:

Peace unto all.

Deacon:

And with your spirit. Listen in fear.

Priest:

To the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. John. (3:1-8).

Deacon:

Glory be to the Lord our God. Proschumen. (Let us attend). God speaks.

Priest:

To our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.

Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mothers womb and be born? Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born anew. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit.

The godfather shall take the baby to be undressed and shall bring him/her wrapped in a towel to the Priest.

The Priest shall take the holy Muron and shall make the sign of the cross over the water, saying:

Deacon:

Amen. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Priest:

May this water be blessed and sanctified by the sign of the holy Cross and by the holy Gospel and by the holy Muron and by the grace of this day, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

(Repeat thrice and then say)

Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Then pouring the holy Muron crosswise into the Font, the Priest shall sing:

Hymn

The dove (The Holy Spirit) sent from on high, descending with high sound and like flashing light, fortified the disciples with incombustible fire while they were sitting at the holy upper chamber.

The dove is insubstantial and unreachable; but he knows all the deep secrets of God and taking the same from the Father, tells us about the awesome second coming of Christ. He is consubstantial with the Father.

Blessing in the highest to the Holy Spirit that proceeded from the Father. The apostles drank from the immortal cup of graces and invited the earth to heaven.

The godfather holding the baby in his arms stands next to the baptismal Font facing the priest.

Priest:

Prayer

We beseech you, Lord, to call this servant to the participation and enlightenment of the baptism.

We beseech you, O Lord, to make this servant worthy of your most precious grace whom you have called to the purification and enlightenment of the baptism.

Cleanse him/her from old sins and renew him/her in a new life.

Fill him/her with the power of the Holy Spirit so that he/she may have the renewal of the glory of your Christ.

And to you, the Mighty One, and to your only begotten Son and to the liberating Holy Spirit is befitting dominion and honor, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Then the Priest shall ask the godfather:

Priest:

What is the request of this child?

Godfather:

Faith, hope, love and baptism. To be baptized and justified; to be cleansed of sins; to be freed from demons and to serve God (repeat three times).

Priest:

Be it unto you according to your faith.

Then the Priest shall immerse the child three times into the water, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, saying only once the following invocation:

(Name) the servant of God, coming from the state of catechumen to baptism, is now being baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Redeemed by the blood of Christ from the servitude of sin, he/she becomes an adopted child of the heavenly Father, a co-heir with Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Then taking the child out of the Font, shall say:

Once you have been baptized to Christ, you have put on Christ. Alleluia.

Once you have been enlightened in the Father, the Holy Spirit shall rejoice in you.
Alleluia.

Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn

Thou who are consubstantial with the Father and the Son, ineffable procession of the Eternal Being, this day Thou didst spring as living water in Jerusalem,

Spirit of God, have mercy.

Thou who are co-creator with the Father and the Son, by Thee we creatures were reborn in the waters, this day Thou doest give birth from the waters to the children of God,

Spirit of God, have mercy.

Thou who share the glory of the Father and the Son, and doest search the depths of God, this day Thou didst turn the fools of the world into masters of wisdom,

Spirit of God, have mercy.

The Sacrament of Chrismation

The Priest pours holy Muron in his palm and starts to anoint, saying:

The forehead: This sweet oil, which is poured upon your forehead in the name of Jesus Christ, be a seal of incorruptible heavenly gifts.

The eyes: May this seal in the name of Jesus Christ enlighten your eyes, so that you may never sleep unto death.

The ears: May with this holy anointment you hear the divine commandments of God.

The nostrils: May this seal in the name of Jesus Christ be to you a sweet smell from life to life.

The mouth: May this seal in the name of Jesus Christ guard your mouth and be a strong door for your lips.

The hands: May this seal in the name of Jesus Christ be a cause for benevolence and for all virtuous deeds and behavior.

The heart: May this divine seal cleanse your heart and establish an upright spirit within you.

The back: May this seal in the name of Jesus Christ be for you a shield of strength so that you may quell the fierce arrows of the evil.

The feet: May this divine seal direct your journey towards eternal life so that you may not be shaken.

Then the Priest says:

Peace unto you, O saved one of God, Peace unto you, O anointed one of God.

And the godfather answers:

And with your spirit.

Then the godparents shall dress the child with new white clothes and the priest shall tie the Narode around the neck of the child and shall give two lighted candles to the godfather and sing:

The Hymn of Resurrection

God spoke from on high, hear, O inhabitants of the earth, He came and saved all the creatures so that we may call upon the name of the Lord and praise Him in the highest.

By joining Christ we became the New Israel, the portion of God and co-heirs with Christ, so that we may call upon the name of the Lord and praise Him in the highest.

We have tasted from the table of life for the Lord is sweet; and we have been anointed with holy oil in faith, so that we may call upon the name of the Lord and praise the Lord in the highest.

We have put our trust in you, O Mother and maiden of Christ, intercede for us to that we may call upon the name of the Lord and venerate and honor you.

Priest:

Prayer

Blessed are you, O provident God, that have clothed your servant with a garment of salvation and a robe of gladness, and placed upon his/her head a helmet of redemption and a crown of grace as an indestructible weapon against the adversary.

Therefore we thankfully glorify you together with the Son and Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Peace unto all.

O Lord, omnipotent God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful gathered here bow down their heads before you.

Stretch your invisible Hand and bless them and let the deeds of their hands prosper. And them who are in the state of virginity fortify in their course with temperance and total godliness and keep them in peace.

Nurture this child and make him/her reach to full stature and protect all and every one here present at their homes that they may have the joy and the gladness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to you, the Father and to the Holy Spirit is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

The godparents will bring the child and stand at the chancel before the Sanctuary.

The Priest shall take the Neophyte up to the Sanctuary, reciting Ps. 43.

I will go to the altar of God, to God who makes my youth joyful.

Vindicate me, O god, and defend my cause against an ungodly people.

Then the priest shall bow down and say thrice:

(Name), servant of Christ, coming from the state of catechumen to baptism, and from baptism to worship, now worships before this holy Table, before this holy Altar, and before this holy Font; for he/she has renounced iniquity and has put on the light of knowledge of God.

Then the Priest gives the child to the godfather and shall administer the Holy Communion to the neophyte.

After the Holy Communion the godfather shall give the child to the mother standing at the chancel, and the Priest shall sing the following hymn:

Hymn of the Baptism

O children of the New Zion born from the holy Font, you who are adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, praise the heavenly Father on the day of the holy Virgins birth.

For it was because of the bearer-of-God in whom the curse of the foremother was changed into a blessing.

Priest:

Prayer of Communion

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Glory to you, king eternal, that you have enlarged and replenished your church with the luminous faith of the innumerable souls redeemed through the true knowledge of God in Christ.

Glory to you, that we were made worthy with a second birth for adoption and worthy to partake the Body and the Blood of your Only-begotten.

And now, O Lord, keep this child in the purity of the Holy Spirit so that he/she may spotlessly do your will and sinlessly attain your eternal life.

And now we beseech you, lead the course of this child and fortify him/her in your fear and keep him/her in the obedience of your luminous commandments.

Keep him/her in peace and without sin through the grace and the loving kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with whom to you

O God the Father and to your life-giving Holy Spirit is befitting glory, dominion and honor, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing of Dismissal

Deacon:

Bidding

By the holy Cross let us beseech the Lord that he may thereby deliver us from our sins and save us by the grace of His mercy.

Almighty Lord, our God, save us and have mercy.

The Prayer of the Cross

Priest:

O Christ our God, guardian and hope of all your faithful, protect and keep your people and especially this child under the shadow of your holy and venerable Cross in peace.

Deliver us from enemies visible and invisible. Make us worthy to thankfully glorify you with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

The Lords Prayer

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses. As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Be you blessed by the graces of the Holy Spirit. Depart in peace and may the Lord be with you all. Amen.