

MISSÃO ORTODOXA “SÃO JOÃO CLÍMACO”

Oros

of the Holy Great Church of Christ on the Baptism of converts from the West (1755/56)

Many are the means by which we attain our salvation. And these, so to speak, in a ladderlike fashion are interlinked and interconnected, all aiming at one and the same end. First of all, then, is the baptism which God delivered to the sacred Apostles, such being the case that without it the rest are ineffectual. For it says: "Unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." The first manner of generation brought man into this mortal existence. It was therefore imperative, and necessarily so, that another, more mystical manner of generation be found, neither beginning in corruption nor terminating therein, whereby it would be possible for us to imitate the author of our salvation, Jesus Christ. For the baptismal water in the font takes the place of a womb, and there is birth for him who is born, as Chrysostom says;... while the Spirit which descends on the water has the place of God who fashions the embryo. And just as He was placed in the tomb and on the third day returned to life, so likewise they who believe, going under the water instead of under the earth, in three immersions depict" in themselves the three-day grace of the Resurrection, the water being sanctified by the descent of the All-holy Spirit, so that the body might be illumined by the water which is visible, and the soul might receive sanctification by the Spirit which is invisible. For just as water in a cauldron partakes of the heat of the fire," so the water in the font is likewise transmuted, by the action of the Spirit, into divine power. It cleanses those who are thus baptized and makes them worthy of adoption as sons. Not so, however, with those who are initiated in a different manner. Instead of cleansing and adoption, it renders them impure and sons of darkness.

Just three years ago, the question arose: When heretics come over to us, are their baptisms acceptable, given that these are administered contrary to the tradition of the holy Apostles and divine Fathers, and contrary to the custom and ordinance of the catholic and Apostolic Church? We, who by divine mercy were raised in the Orthodox Church, and who adhere to the canons of the sacred Apostles and divine Fathers, recognize only one Church, our holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church. It is her Mysteries [i.e. sacraments], and consequently her baptism, that we accept. On the other hand, we abhor, by common resolve, all rites not administered as the Holy Spirit commanded the sacred Apostles, and as the Church of Christ performs to this day. For they are the inventions of depraved men, and we regard them as strange and foreign to the whole Apostolic tradition. Therefore, we receive those who come over to us from them as unholy and unbaptized. In this we follow our Lord Jesus Christ who commanded His disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit";... we follow the sacred and divine Apostles who order us to baptize aspirants with three immersions and emersions, and in each immersion to say one name of the Holy Trinity;" we follow the sacred Dionysios, peer of the Apostles, who tells us "to dip the aspirant, stripped of every garment, three times in a font containing sanctified water and oil, having loudly proclaimed the threefold hypostasis of the divine Blessedness, and straightway to seal the newly baptized with the most divinely potent myron [i.e. chrism], and thereafter to make him a participant in the supersacramental Eucharist" and we follow the Second... and Penthekte holy Ecumenical Councils, which order us to receive as unbaptized those aspirants to Orthodoxy who were not baptized with three immersions and emersions, and in each immersion did not loudly invoke one of the divine hypostases, but were baptized in some other fashion.

We too, therefore, adhere to these divine and sacred decrees, and we reject and abhor baptisms belonging to heretics. For they disagree with and are alien to the divine Apostolic dictate. They are useless waters, as Sts. Ambrose and Athanasios the Great said. They give no sanctification to such as receive them, nor avail at all to the washing away of sins. We receive those who come over to the Orthodox faith, who were baptized without being baptized, as being unbaptized, and without danger we baptize them in accordance with the Apostolic and synodal Canons, upon which Christ's holy and Apostolic and catholic Church, the common Mother of us all, firmly relies.

Together with this joint resolve and declaration of ours, we seal this our Oros, being as it is in agreement with the Apostolic and synodal dictates, and we certify it by our signatures.

In the year of salvation 1755,

+CYRIL, by God's mercy Archbishop of Constantinople New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch

+MATTHEW, by God's mercy Pope and Patriarch of the great city of Alexandria, and Judge of the Ecumene

+PARTHENIOS, by God's mercy Patriarch of the holy city of Jerusalem and all Palestine