

**THE HOLY MYSTERIES**  
**AS WAYS OF DIVINE GRACE, WHICH INCORPORATE US**  
**IN**  
**GOD'S KINGDOM**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE HOLY MYSTERIES AS THE MEANS OF DIVINE GRACE**

The work of Grace is accomplished in all sinners who do not oppose its action, through certain ways, which were instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Holy Disciples and Apostles. These ways comprise the channels through which the Holy Spirit transmits the necessary supernatural support and strength to create the Regeneration and the new Creation within those who receive them, and which enables them to progress even more in the newness of Life in Christ.

Without disregarding the power and necessity of prayer, as well as the preaching of the Divine Word, we do not include them in the special ways by means of which Divine Grace is transmitted and which are the only God-instituted Mysteries.<sup>1</sup> Prayer and the hearing of the Divine Word are part of the preparation Grace and the future growth of the newness of Life in Christ, but the transmission of this life and the creation of the new Creation in Christ takes place through the Holy Mysteries.

These Holy Mysteries draw their saving Power from the death on the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They are not as common as prayer and the knowledge of the Divine Will, but are the actions of the Holy Trinity within the Holy Orthodox Church. And in the Old Testament the Holy Mysteries were prefigured but lacked Grace or any other Supernatural substance. On the contrary the Holy Mysteries of the Divine *Economia* in Christ are performed within the Holy Orthodox Church as the main, common and necessary channels of Divine Grace, which have within them the Power that makes them active and effective even in situations when those partaking of them, do not resist them. Even more so, without the participation in these Holy Mysteries, the work of prayer and Divine Word remains incomplete because only through the Holy Mysteries is one incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ and becomes a partaker of the Redemption in Christ.

**1. The Ways of Divine Grace are God-instituted Rites**

The term “*ways of Grace*” is not found in Holy Scripture but generally prevails in Christian Theological literature signifying the God-instituted Rites, which as Divine Gifts

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Damalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 78-82. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 88-89.

lead towards piety and the newness of Life in Christ. Through these Rites Divine Grace is transmitted to the faithful, which regenerates them and makes them grow “...to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> These Mysteries are characterized as being God-instituted because they were instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who is the Leader of the Orthodox Church. From Him and His Sacrifice on the Holy Cross, they received Supernatural and Sanctifying attributes.

And it is true that only two of the Holy Mysteries, that of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist, were instituted directly by our Lord and Master. However, taking into consideration that the rest of the Holy Mysteries were passed down to the Church by the Holy Apostles, once again their institution is attributed indirectly to the same Lord, since His Disciples, in organizing the Church, always had as their guideline the inseparable Teachings of Christ, to Whom they always wanted to prove themselves as faithful co-workers, stewards and guardians.

Besides, in the words and actions of our Lord, we find the central core around which all Holy Mysteries were formed through the Enlightenment of the Holy Spirit Who guided the Holy Apostles to complete understanding of the Teachings of the departed Master. Thus, in the words of Christ concerning the insoluble marriage,<sup>3</sup> the Authority of the keys of Heaven<sup>4</sup> with which He vested His Apostles and the practice of the “...anointing with oil (of the sick) in the Name of the Lord...,”<sup>5</sup> we find the Divine foothold and the Holy Mysteries of Marriage, Confession and Repentance, Priesthood, Chrismation and Unction.

When we assign the Institution of the Holy Mysteries to the Lord, we must keep in mind that this Institution comes down to the determination of the details of the order of the Mystical Rites. Nonetheless, if we then accept that the Lord promised the Apostles the Grace of the Holy Spirit through a certain relationship, leaving the Guidance of the Helper Who alone would remind and teach them ‘all’ the saving Truth in order to organize the visible part of certain Mysteries, once again the Divine Institution of the Holy Mysteries remains unassailable.<sup>6</sup>

According to the above, since the Holy Mysteries were instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and were determined by Him as ways of granting and transmitting Divine Grace, it is obvious that the use of these Mysteries is necessary and absolutely essential.

And assuredly, we cannot say that the Holy Spirit is limited by these Mysteries to the extent that in extraordinary situations He cannot grant His Gifts and Graces without them. On the contrary, it is accepted that the Holy Spirit is the Ruler of all and even without these Mysteries He can act. This is manifested when the Holy Apostles were Regenerated and finally Ordained by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them on the Day

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<sup>2</sup> Ephes. 4:13.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. 19:6.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. 16:19; 18:18. John 20:22-23.

<sup>5</sup> James 5:14.

<sup>6</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 296.

of Pentecost, thus proving that “...*the Saviour baptized the Apostles in the Holy Spirit and fire,*<sup>7</sup> when ‘*suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.*’<sup>8</sup>”<sup>9</sup> This is also manifested in the case of Cornelius the centurion<sup>10</sup> and all those in his house: “...*while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the Word.*”<sup>11</sup> Even in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, at the time of Martyrdom when a Catechumen was not yet received in the Church through the Holy Mystery of Baptism, by the calling upon the Name of the Holy Trinity as their blood was flowing, they were Baptized with their own blood. This type of Baptism is called the ‘*Baptism of Martyrdom*’ and is considered as the most perfect and honorable way of Baptism, as imitating the Baptism of Christ on the Cross.<sup>12</sup> There is also a “*Baptism in the air*” which is still in use within the Orthodox Church, according to which new born babes who are in danger of dying are Baptized if no Priest is available. The Orthodox parents or doctor or nurse or any layman regardless of age or sex, may Baptise the new born by raising it up and down three times in the air, calling upon the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. These extraordinary ways of Baptism reveal that the Holy Spirit is not restricted by any typical orders.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit uses these Mysteries according to the Divine definition and institution, as ways to transmit Divine Grace, which regenerates and creates the new Creation. Thus they are essential and necessary for the incorporation of all men into the spiritual Body of Christ, in order to progress and grow in the newness of the Life in Christ and to be Sanctified within the Church. Thus, the Holy Mysteries are the main channels and means of Divine Grace.

## **2. Prayer and the Preaching of the Word as Secondary Ways**

Concerning prayer, we shall note that no one is allowed to ignore its importance and power since our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, urges us to: “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened...*”<sup>13</sup> and “...*how much more will your Father Who is in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?*”<sup>14</sup> Even the major part of the Holy Mysteries consists of prayer but it is obvious, as in the case of the centurion Cornelius, that prayer prepares the soul at first to receive the work of Divine Grace, guiding it to the Faith, the Saviour and the Baptism. When the faithful through Baptism and the Mysteries of Holy Chrismation and Eucharist are incorporated into the spiritual Body of Christ, they receive through it the special Power, of which our Lord assured us, that “...*in that day...*”<sup>15</sup> when the Holy Spirit, through His descent will inaugurate the New Age of Grace by which we will

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<sup>7</sup> Matth. 3:11.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:2.

<sup>9</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, III, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 440.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 10:1-48.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 10:44.

<sup>12</sup> Matth. 20:22-23.

<sup>13</sup> Matth. 7:7-8.

<sup>14</sup> Matth. 7:11.

<sup>15</sup> John 16:23.

participate through the Holy Mysteries, “...you will ask in My Name...”<sup>16</sup> and “...the Father Himself Who loves you...”<sup>17</sup> “...will give you in My Name, because you have loved Me, and have believed...”<sup>18</sup> in Me. As the prayers and alms of Cornelius could not assure him Salvation in Christ without receiving Baptism, likewise for every man prayer prepares him to receive Divine Grace, which transmits Adoption and Regeneration to him by receiving the Holy Mysteries.

The same can be applied to the preaching of the Divine Word. No one can deny that the Grace of the Holy Spirit influences the hearing of Divine preaching, stimulating their interest and enlightening them with the understanding of the Teachings, as in the case of St. Lydia, the “...seller of purple from the city of Thyatira...” when “...the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”<sup>19</sup> St Paul declared that “...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”<sup>20</sup> Hence the questions: “How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?”<sup>21</sup> St Peter also assured us that the Orthodox Christians “...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.”<sup>22</sup> St. James, the Brother of God, urged us: “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.”<sup>23</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews presents “...the Word of God...” to be “...living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”<sup>24</sup>

The Word of God spread through preaching into the hearts of those who listen, remains fruitless if the action of Divine Grace of the Holy Mysteries is not added to the advice given by the preaching. For without participation in them, no matter how much man is moved by the hearing of the Divine Word, he will remain alien to Christ and the Salvation through His Blood.<sup>25</sup> The preaching of St Peter on the Day of Pentecost clearly informs us of this. Those who “...were cut to the heart...” were urged by St Peter and the rest of the Holy Apostles, to “...repent, and let every one of you be Baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>26</sup> After Baptism they received forgiveness of their sins and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. It is obvious then, that, if they had not been Baptised, the hearing of the Divine Word of God would not have had any effect upon them.

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<sup>16</sup> John 16:26.

<sup>17</sup> John 16:27.

<sup>18</sup> John 16:23.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 16:14.

<sup>20</sup> Rom. 10:17.

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 10:14-15.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 1:23.

<sup>23</sup> James 1:21.

<sup>24</sup> Heb. 4:12.

<sup>25</sup> Androutsos, *Symbolique*, p. 282. Leeming, *Principles*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 2:37, 38.

No one should misuse the case of Cornelius, according to which as St Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the Word of God, because this case is particularly extraordinary. It is very important to realise that even after the descent and the outpouring of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, St Peter did not consider it unnecessary to Baptise them all as he “...commanded them to be Baptised in the Name of the Lord.”<sup>27</sup>

On the one hand the hearing or reading of the Divine Word of God influences mankind according to the skills of those who preach or the writers who interpret the Word; whereas, on the other hand, it influences them according to their capability of receiving, hearing or reading the Word of God and their willingness to accept and practice it. The preachers are not always the leaders of the Apostles, nor is it the work of all to become preachers. Nevertheless, Divine Grace, which is granted through the Holy Mysteries, is not influenced by moral status or worthiness of the officiator because at that moment God Himself is the One Who is celebrating the “*Mystagogia*.” In addition, the effectiveness of the Mysteries is manifested not only to those intellectuals who participate in them, but to infants as well, and generally speaking, to all those who do not oppose the Grace of God. This, however, does not apply to the hearing of the Word because only those who are in a position to follow it, can benefit from it.

### **3. The Holy Mysteries as Gifts**

According to the above, the Word of God can be considered only as secondary and to be numbered generally among the ways of Divine Grace. The Divine Mysteries instituted by Christ Himself and His Holy Apostles, are the only methods of Sanctification within the Church.

Truly, prayer and preaching of the Word of God are found in the Old Economia. Prayer was exercised not only in the public worship of the Synagogue, but also in private and was addressed by all the God-lovers and all levels of the faithful. The Book of Psalms is a book of prayers. The Word of God appears to be preached by God-called and God-inspired men, Patriarchs and Prophets - all those who appeared from the time of Noah and Moses until Malachi - and was read in the Temple of the Lord and in the Synagogues.

The Divine Mysteries are the exclusive inheritance of the New Economia of the Divine Grace, according to which, after the Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit was sent into the world.

The Mysteries in the Old Testament are mentioned as such: the Circumcision, the Paschal Lamb, the Bread of Prothesis, the Rites of Cleanliness and Purification and the Sacrifices of Atonement. All these can be characterized only as types and shadowy

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<sup>27</sup> Acts 10:48. Cf. St John Chrysostom, *To Acts*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 183 and 184.

prefigurations of the Holy Mysteries of the New Testament, which have real and Divine effectiveness and which are more elevated than the prototypes.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Jewish Rites of Purification through the washing with water could not free any one from sin, but only from the stains of the body and for the cleanliness of the flesh,<sup>29</sup> not Sanctifying spiritually. On the contrary, our Baptism is much greater, filled with Divine Grace, for it frees one from sin and cleanses the soul through the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Circumcision prefigures the “...*Circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in Baptism.*”<sup>30</sup> The Circumcision of the Old Testament worked towards the putting aside of the flesh, whereas Baptism is the putting aside of sins, while the anointing through Holy Chrismation that Orthodox Christians receive, is the symbol according to which, in the Holy Scriptures, kings and Prophets were anointed. Although for them it worked typically, for Orthodox Christians it works truly because we are actually anointed by the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament there was also the Bread of Preparation or Prothesis, but it came to an end, whereas according to the New Testament the Heavenly Bread and the Saving Cup Sanctify the soul and body. The basin that was in the Temple also symbolised Baptism. So how can they be compared to our Divine Mysteries? Consider the differences that separate the Passover of the Old Testament to that of the Lamb of God, Who takes up the sins of the world, and Whose Sacrifice on the Cross was offered once and for all as an Everlasting Sacrifice. Our Passover<sup>31</sup> consists of “...*Christ, our Passover (Who) was Sacrificed for us.*”<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. The Holy Mysteries Receive their Power from Christ’s Sacrifice

It was necessary to present the Sacrifice offered for us by the Lamb of God and then to receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Before Christ was Crucified and Ascended into Heaven “...*the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*”<sup>33</sup> It was to be poured forth from on High after the Cross because before then, we were enemies,<sup>34</sup> having sinned and consequently, were deprived of the Gift of God. When the Sacrifice was offered for us, not only did we receive the Enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as did the Prophets of the Old Testament, but He now dwells and abides within us causing us to become temples of God contrary to the Prophets, of whom none ever became a temple of God.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the Source from which the Divine Mysteries of the New Testament receive their supernatural Power, which is distributed to those who partake of them, is the Sacrifice on the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who

<sup>28</sup> St Augustine, *In Psalm LXXIII*, 2, in Migne, *P.L.*, 36, 931. Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 267.

<sup>29</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To the holy and saving Baptism of our Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 366.

<sup>30</sup> Col. 2:11-12. Cf. Rom. 2:25-29; 3:1, 30; 4:9-12; 15:8. 1 Corinth. 7:19. Gal. 2:7-9, 12; 5:6, 11; 6:15. Ephes. 2:11. Phil. 3:3-5. Col. 3:11.

<sup>31</sup> St Ecumenius, *To Hebrews* 9, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 119, 337. Kalogeras, *Maria*, 2, 406. St John Chrysostom, *To the holy and saving Baptism of our Saviour Jesus Christ*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 366. *Ibid*, *To Genesis*, Homily 39, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 53, 368. St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXI, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1193 and 1100. *Ibid*, *Catechesis*, III, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 433.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Corinth. 5:7.

<sup>33</sup> John 7:39.

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 5:10.

<sup>35</sup> St John Chrysostom, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 284. St Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 757.

reconciled us to God the Father<sup>36</sup> and Who became the reason for sending the Holy Spirit into the world, by Whom we were “...anointed...” and “...sealed...” giving “...us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”<sup>37</sup>

This Truth was proclaimed by St Irenaeus who observed that if Christ did not truly suffer, He would have no Grace, due to that lack of suffering.<sup>38</sup>

St John Chrysostom, interpreting the supernatural Event of the piercing of the Lord’s “...side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out...,”<sup>39</sup> observed that “...not only these fountains accidentally came out, but because from these two the Church was composed, and those who participate in the Mystagogy are healed being Regenerated through water, and being fed through (His) Blood and Flesh. Hence the Mysteries receive their beginning.”<sup>40</sup>

Earlier than this, the great Father of the Orthodox Church, Methodius of Olympus referred to the Church as the Lord’s “Wife.” He presents her as being created from His Side, just as Eve was once created from the side of Adam,<sup>41</sup> and receiving from His Side some kind of Power enabling the growth of all those who are formed in her.<sup>42</sup>

St Augustine speaking of Baptism, observed that this is the Saving Water because it is Sanctified through the Name of Christ Who shed His Blood for us from this and through His Cross, the Water is Sealed.<sup>43</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem accepts that the outpouring of the Blood and Water from the Side of Christ are symbols of the Saving Baptism and from which the Church was born. “As Eve was made from the side of Adam, likewise are we from the Side of Christ.”<sup>44</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MEANING AND NATURE OF THE MYSTERIES

The word “*Mystery*” (Sacrament) means a hidden and silent Truth, which is revealed through Divine Revelation. This term was introduced into Theological and Liturgical terminology signifying those God-instituted Rites, which comprise the visible aspects of Divine Grace, not merely symbolising it but invisibly and with Supernatural Creative Action transmitting it. Having been instituted by Christ Himself, they have value and

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<sup>36</sup> Rom. 5:10. 2 Corinth. 5:18-20.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Corinth. 1:21, 22.

<sup>38</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book III, ch. 18, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 936. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 242.

<sup>39</sup> John 19:34.

<sup>40</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 85, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 463. *Ibid*, in Migne, 51, 229.

<sup>41</sup> Gen. 2:21-22.

<sup>42</sup> Methodius, *Symposium*, III, 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 18, 73.

<sup>43</sup> St Augustine, *Sermo* 352, § 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 39, 1551.

<sup>44</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XII, § 11, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 788.

Power, being the active means of Divine Grace whereby the old nature corrupted by sin is removed from those who are worthy. They raise the New Creation in Christ by transmitting the Newness of Life in Christ. Thus the Holy Mysteries have invisible Supernatural Powers that inscribe the inexhaustible Saving results in the inner man, Regenerating and causing all those who faithfully, sincerely and honestly approach and participate in them to progress in the New Life.

### 1. The Meaning of the Term “Mystery”

The first meaning of the term “Mystery” is derived from the Greek verb “μύειν” (meaning “...to close the eyes or the mouth as instruments of transmitting or seeing the hidden things...”) according to which it is “...a hidden and Mystic Thing.” During the Roman period the term signified the Militant Oath that soldiers vowed at their Enlistment in the Roman Army and which was generally referred to as the “*Sacramentum*.” In Roman Law the term “*Sacramentum*” means the Covenant that was placed in the temples by those who disputed it.

In Holy Scripture, in both Old and New Testaments, the term is used 45 times. It means the secret Will of God that is related to the Salvation of mankind “...according to the Revelation of the Mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest by the Prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the Commandment of the Everlasting God.”<sup>45</sup> In other cases it refers to a hidden and symbolic institution, such as that of Marriage symbolising the Union of Christ with the Church<sup>46</sup> or some kind of narration, such as in the case of King Nabuchodonosor<sup>47</sup> or a certain symbolic name, such as the Mystery of the Seven Stars mentioned in the Book of Revelation,<sup>48</sup> or even the Mystery of the name of the great city of Babylon.<sup>49</sup> In any case, nowhere in Holy Scripture is the term “Mystery” used, meaning a Sacred Rite by means of which Supernatural Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit is transmitted through material symbols.

Even up to 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian writings, the term preserved its classical meaning, signifying something secret, hidden and Sacred. St Ignatius of Antioch proclaimed that the Death of our Lord Jesus Christ is “*the Mystery*” of our Salvation because “...through Him and His Death (which some deny), the Mystery through which we came to believe, and because of which we patiently endure, ... we might be found to be Disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Teacher.”<sup>50</sup> Also in his letter to the Ephesians he wrote: “...now the Virginity of Mary and her giving Birth were hidden from the ruler of this age, as was also the Death of the Lord – three Mysteries to be loudly proclaimed, yet which were accomplished in the Silence of God.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Rom. 16:25-26.

<sup>46</sup> Ephes. 5:32.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel 2:18, 27 and 30.

<sup>48</sup> Rev. 1:20.

<sup>49</sup> Rev. 17:5.

<sup>50</sup> St Ignatius, *To Magnesians*, 9, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 95.

<sup>51</sup> St Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, 19, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 92.

Tertullian also used the term generally, referring to Christian Teaching as a “*Mystery*,” especially the Teaching concerning the Holy Trinity as well as the whole Christian Faith and the entire Work of Salvation. (“*Sacramentum Oikonomia*”) Furthermore he spoke of Holy Baptism and Eucharist as Mysteries,<sup>52</sup> commenting that “...*the body is Washed in order to Clean the soul; the body is Anointed in order to Sanctify the soul; the body is Sealed in order to Strengthen the soul; the body is covered by the laying on of the hands in order to Enlighten the soul by the Holy Spirit; the body eats the Flesh and Blood of Christ, in order that the soul would be fed by God.*”<sup>53</sup>

St Cyprian used the term “*Mystery*” (“*Sacramentum*”) in a general meaning, to manifest the different institutions of Christianity, especially those of Baptism, Chrismation, Divine Eucharist, Repentance-Confession and Ordination.<sup>54</sup>

## 2. The External and Internal Aspect of Mysteries

Although the Mystery has an external and perceptible aspect, simultaneously it includes an internal and Supernatural Reality, which is not conceivable or understandable to our physical senses as only through Faith is it accepted. The Mystery is the visible Sign of the invisible Grace of God, which is outpoured upon the Faithful having been instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ whereby each Faithful receives Divine Grace.<sup>55</sup> It consists of the natural and the Supernatural.<sup>56</sup> It is the material symbol that upholds the immaterial Grace of God, which works towards the Salvation of man.<sup>57</sup> Holy Mystery is not restricted to special Ceremonies alone but extends to all Divine Truths of Christian Faith.

St John Chrysostom explained that Divine Mystery is those things that are normally unseen but which, through Faith “...*we see differently and we believe differently. This is our Faith about the Mysteries.*” Concerning the Truths of Faith, he observed, “...*I hear that Christ was Crucified and I admire the Philanthropia; the unbeliever hears and he thinks about the weakness. I hear that He became a servant and I admire the Dominion. He (the unfaithful) hears and thinks about the dishonour. I hear that He died and I am astonished, that He came under Death and was not held but dissolved Death; he (the unfaithful) hears and suspects weakness. Differently am I and the unbeliever disposed about these.*” Particularly with regard to Sacred Rites that are the ways of the Grace, St John Chrysostom noted that “...*the unbeliever hears of the Bath (Baptism) and he thinks simply of water; I do not see only what is seen but the Cleanliness of the soul through the*

<sup>52</sup> Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, XX, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 20. Ibid, *Adversus Praxeam*, II and XXX, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 180 and 220. Ibid, *De Baptismo*, 13, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 323. Ibid, *Adversus Marcianem*, IV and XXXIV, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 442. Ibid, *De resurrectione carne*, C, IX, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 806. Ibid, *De coron. militiae*, III, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 79.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, *De resurrectione carne*, VIII, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 852.

<sup>54</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola 70 Ad Januarium*, § 3, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1082. Ibid, *EpiSt 73 Ad Jubaen*, § 20 and 21, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, (?). Ibid, *De unitate Ecclesiam*, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 528. Ibid, *de lapsis*, c. 25, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 500. Ibid, *EpiSt LXIII*, § 14, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, (?).

<sup>55</sup> Mogilas, A, 99, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, p. 635.

<sup>56</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch 15, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> St Athanasius of Paros, *Epitome*, p. 344, in Jugie, *Theologia*, v. II, p. 14.

*Holy Spirit. He (the unbeliever) thinks only of the bath of the body; I believe that the soul becomes Clean and Holy ... For I do not judge the events only by their appearance but through the eyes of the mind.*”<sup>58</sup>

St Augustine in a similar manner expressed his opinion by referring to the Mysteries as “*Sacramentalia*.”<sup>59</sup> He distinguished the internal aspect of the Mysteries from their external aspect, observing that the Mystery itself is different to that of the Power of the Mystery.<sup>60</sup> Thus the Bread and the Cup of Divine Eucharist are called Mysteries because in them we see other aspects that are contemplated at the time, the Fruit of which is spiritual.<sup>61</sup> Similarly concerning the Water of Baptism, which is visible. It Washes away the contamination of sin from the body and this Bath signifies whatever is acting within the soul.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, the external event is different to that of the context of the Mysteries. Some aspects are seen while others are thought. Whatever is seen has a physical aspect whereas whatever is thought bears special Fruit.<sup>63</sup>

This combination of sensual and material with invisible and spiritual aspects within the Mysteries correspond completely to the fact that man consists of both matter and spirit. And as he consists of two elements, body and soul, he receives double Purification: the spiritual through the invisible aspects and the physical through the body.<sup>64</sup> God wanted to grant His Grace not only invisibly - although this was not impossible for Him to do because for anything He Wills He does – but through some visible Signs as well, thereby assuring His Promises to His Elect. Because mankind consists of two elements, God granted two methods of transmitting His Divine Grace - through matter and through the Holy Spirit.<sup>65</sup>

St Gregory of Nyssa observed that in Baptism “...*sensible Water is offered to the body...*” whereas “...*upon the soul the invisible Spirit is called to descend in an indescribable manner...*” “...*and the Water cleans the body, whereas the Spirit Seals the soul in order that, through the sprinkling of the heart and the Bathing of the body, we approach God.*” Similarly at the Anointing “...*the visible myrrh Anoints the body, whereas the Holy and Life-giving Spirit Sanctifies the soul.*”<sup>66</sup>

### **3. Holy Mysteries as Symbols & Bestowers of Divine Grace**

Thus the Mysteries are Signs and Ways, Symbols and Bestowers of Divine Grace. In these spiritual and Supernatural nature rule over the perceptible and material. The

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<sup>58</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 7, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 55-56.

<sup>59</sup> St Augustine, *De catech. Rudibus*, § 50, in Migne, *P.L.*, 40, 344-345. Ibid, *Sermo* 227, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1099-1100. Ibid, *Sermo*, 228, § 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1102.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, *In Johannis evangelium. Tractatus* XXVI, § 11, in Migne, *P.L.*, 35, 1011.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, *Sermo* 272, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1246.

<sup>62</sup> St Augustine, *In epistola Joannis ad Parthos. Tractatus* VI, § 11, in Migne, *P.L.*, 35, 2026.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, *Sermo* 272, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1247.

<sup>64</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, III, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 429.

<sup>65</sup> Kritopoulos, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 524.

<sup>66</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *To the day of the Lights*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 581. St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXI, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1092.

Mysteries are perceptible Signs that symbolise the invisible Divine Grace, which is transmitted to the Faithful and which stimulate their Faith assuring the Truthfulness of Divine Promises. Hence the “...*Bath through Water...*” can be characterised as being symbolic “... *of the Washing of the soul, which cleans every stain of evil.*” Furthermore, in Baptism we symbolically “... *insinuate the three day Burial of Christ...*” and being Baptised “...*we do not die in reality, nor we are buried, nor we are really raised having been crucified, but the imitation is in image.*” It can be said of the transmission of the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Divine Eucharist that “...*in the type of the bread the Body is offered to you and in the type of the wine is the Blood of Christ is given to you...*” “...*in order that in the different elements you partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, becoming of the same Body and the same Blood with Him.*”<sup>67</sup>

Considering that the elements that are used in the Holy Mysteries remain unchanged in their nature, even after the Blessing and Perfection of Divine Mystery, we must not be surprised when the bread used in the Divine Eucharist is referred to, especially before its Consecration, as the “...*Image of the Body of the Only Begotten...*” and be assured that indeed “...*this Bread is the Image of the Holy Body...*”<sup>68</sup> or that the elements used for the Consecration are called “...*antitypes of the Body and Blood of Christ.*”<sup>69</sup> However, even after the Consecration we hear some Holy Fathers stating that “...*we are Commanded to eat not bread and wine but the antitype of the Body and Blood of Christ...*”<sup>70</sup> and they generally speak of “...*antitypes of the precious Body and Blood.*”<sup>71</sup>

The Mysteries are real ways, active bestowers and channels of Divine Grace, through which and by which it is transmitted to those who partake of it. They are the Mysterious Energies<sup>72</sup> and Actions of God within the Church for the Salvation of the world.

St John Chrysostom proclaimed that “...*Christ did not deliver us anything material but through material things, He gave us the spiritual.*” Referring specifically to Holy Baptism he observed that “...*through perceptible thing the Gift is offered, but the content is spiritual, the Birth and the Rebirth, in other words the Regeneration.*” Emphasising the necessity by which the spiritual was combined with the perceptible, he added “...*if you were bodiless, they would have been delivered to you naked; but, because the soul is engaged with the body, the spiritual are delivered to you through perceptible things.*”<sup>73</sup>

The previously mentioned Holy Fathers used the terms “*type*” and “*antitype*” to clarify their opinions and exalt, especially the internal aspect and Supernatural Attributes of the Holy Mysteries. Thus, St Cyril of Jerusalem, concerning the bread and wine used in Divine Eucharist, stressed that it is prohibited for anyone to comment on the flavour or

<sup>67</sup> Origen, *To John VI*, § 17, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 257. St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, II, §§ 4 and 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1081. Ibid, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, IV, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1100.

<sup>68</sup> Report of Serapion, in Rauschen, *Fiorilegium*, p. 29.

<sup>69</sup> In the Divine Liturgy of St Basil, the Great, before the consecration.

<sup>70</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, V, § 20, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1124.

<sup>71</sup> St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 8, To his sister Gorgonia*, § 18, in Migne, *P.G.*, 35, 809. *Apostolic Diatagae*, V, 14, 7, in *B*, v. 2, p. 85; VI, 30, 2, *B*, v. 2, p. 116; VII, 25, 4, *B*, v. 2, p. 125.

<sup>72</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book II, ch. 30, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 820. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 177-178.

<sup>73</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 743.

quality of the bread and wine because they “...are the Body and Blood of Christ according to the Despotie Decision...” by which we become of “...the same Body and the same Blood...” of Christ. We should never judge by “... the taste ...” but the Faith must inform us “...without any hesitation...” that we are deeply honoured to receive “...the Body and Blood of Christ.” In addition, he literally and clearly proclaimed that the Water of Holy Baptism, “...the simple water, receives the Power of Sanctification by the Invocation of the Holy Spirit and Christ.” Therefore he urged all who would be Baptised to be careful “...when they descend into the Water...” not to pay attention “...to the simple water but to the Action of the Holy Spirit...” from which they receive their Salvation, “...for without both it is impossible to be Perfected.” With regard to the Anointing of Holy Chrismation, he observed that “...as the Bread of Eucharist after the Invocation of the Holy Spirit is no longer simply bread but the Body of Christ...” “...likewise the Holy Myrrh is not simply myrrh, neither should anyone consider it as something common with invocation, but a Charisma of Christ...” that through the Presence “...of the Holy Spirit becomes energetic.”<sup>74</sup>

St Serapion speaking of the “...likeness of the Body of the only Begotten...” during the consecration at the time of the invocation, requested “...the bread to become the Body of the Word...” and “...the cup the Blood of the Truth...”, so that “...all those who have communion to receive the medicine of life.”<sup>75</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa concerning the changes that take place in the Holy Mysteries and the rest of the ecclesiastic ceremonies through the Action of the Holy Spirit observed that in Baptism “...the water does not grant the benefit, but the command of God and the invocation of the Spirit.” “For this reason do not disregard the Divine bath, neither consider it as something common because of the use of the water.” Referring to the rest of the Holy Mysteries he stressed that “the Bread” of the Eucharist before it is Sanctified “...is previously common bread, but when he celebrates this Mystery it is said to have become the Body of Christ.” The same refers for the “Mystical Oil” and for “the wine.” “Being small in value before the blessing, after the sanctification by the Spirit each one acts invisibly.” He emphasised the same regarding Ordination. The “...one who was yesterday alone becomes leader of many, president, teacher of piety, celebrant of Mysteries...” “...according to the appearance he exists as he was...” but “...through some kind of invisible power and Grace his soul is transfigured to the better.”<sup>76</sup>

#### 4. The Internal Aspect of the Holy Mysteries.

The Roman Catholics distinguished the external aspect of the Mysteries into two parts, that of “matter” and “form”.<sup>77</sup> These terms were unknown in the ancient and united Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church regards these scholastic terms as unnecessary and prefers to uphold the terms “visible” or “external” or “natural”. The

<sup>74</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, III, § 2; and XXI, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 429 and 1092.

<sup>75</sup> Report of Serapion, in Rauschen, *Fiorilegium*, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *To the day of the Lights*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 581.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Ott, “Précis”, pp. 458-459. Jugie, v. III, pp. 16 and 33.

Mysteries include spiritual acts and conditions, as well as essential words of consecration that instituted the Mysteries<sup>78</sup>.

Concerning the internal and invisible aspect of the Mystery it must be noted, that all the Holy Mysteries offer to those who partake of them the sanctifying Grace of the Holy Spirit, which either regenerates them and strengthens them in the new life in Christ (Baptism, Chrismation), either nourishes and gives life to them through their union with Christ (Divine Eucharist), either offers to them the healing of the wounds of their souls and bodies (Repentance, Unction), either making them capable and strengthening them to serve in the various diakonia of the Church (Priesthood), or exalting and sanctifying their union in life (Marriage).<sup>79</sup>

According to Androutsos, the Mysteries “...are not of the same value, neither of equal necessity.” Thus “...the Eucharist surpasses all the rest and in value and according to its benefits, and together with Baptism is the main of the Mysteries.”<sup>80</sup>

Mogilas spoke of the Eucharist that “...this Mystery surpasses all the others and benefits more than the others to our salvation.”<sup>81</sup>

Kritopoulos characterized the three Mysteries, Baptism, Eucharist and Repentance that they are “...in type of the Holy Trinity.” He distinguished these from the other four which are “...mystical ceremonies, which are called by the Church Mysteries, because they incorporate some kind of mystical and spiritual Grace.”<sup>82</sup>

The Holy Mysteries have their Supernatural Attributes not because of the worthiness of those who officiate them or of those who partake of them. Their holiness and truth derives from Christ Who instituted them.<sup>83</sup> Receiving their Supernatural Attribute from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, they have the Divine Grace that characterises or symbolises each one separately and transmits Divine Grace to those who do not resist or oppose to them.

When we say, that the Holy Mysteries contain Divine Grace, we do not mean that this Divine Grace is contained within them as the water in a container but rather that they are contained within them in power as the result of their cause. Except the Holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, in which the change of the used elements – bread and wine-takes place in reality. The Mysteries are instruments which transmit the Divine Grace of God to those who partake of them, as this is manifested by Holy Scriptures by the use of the terms “of” and “through”. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, taught us saying: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>84</sup> St Paul emphasised “...not by works of

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<sup>78</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 297. Ibid, *Symbolique*, p. 289.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Scheeben, *Les Mystères*, p. 576.

<sup>80</sup> Androutsos, *Symbolique*, p. 298.

<sup>81</sup> Mogilas, A, 106, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 638.

<sup>82</sup> Kritopoulos, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 525.

<sup>83</sup> St Augustine, in migne, *P.L.*, 43, 559.

<sup>84</sup> John 3:5.

righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit...”<sup>85</sup> and he added “...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.”<sup>86</sup> Elsewhere it is assured “...that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given...”<sup>87</sup> to those who were Baptised and transmit “...the gift of God...” – the charisma of the *Diakonia* - to St Timothy “...through the laying on of, the hands...”<sup>88</sup> of St Paul. The Mysteries are the instruments and channels through which the Divine Grace of God is granted and transmitted to the faithful.

St. John Chrysostom concerning Baptism observed that in Baptism “...the water becomes the childbirth to him who is being born. As the womb is to the embryo, likewise the water to the faithful; for in the water he is fashioned and formed.”<sup>89</sup>

St. Cyril of Alexandria spoke of the water in Baptism that “...as the water which is poured into the boiler through the flames of the fire reveals its power, likewise through the energy of the Spirit the perceptible water is changed to some kind of Divine and unspeakable power, and sanctifies those who enter in it.”<sup>90</sup>

St. Cyril of Jerusalem assured that the Myrrh of Holy Chrismation “...as the bread of the Eucharist after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, it is not anymore simply bread, but the body of Christ, likewise and this holy myrrh is not anymore simple, neither should anyone say that it is something common with invocation; but that it is Christ’s gift, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, who becomes active.”<sup>91</sup>

In relation to the way of the dwelling and transmission of the Divine Grace in the Divine Mysteries one must never forget the image, which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ used concerning the action of the Holy Spirit saying: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”<sup>92</sup> In other words “...as the wind cannot be seen, although it gives a sound...” likewise and “...even more the action of the Spirit cannot fall under the laws of nature, nor to the rules of bodily birth, nor to any of such things.”<sup>93</sup>

Consequently, the ways by which the Divine Grace is transmitted within the Divine Mysteries remains inconceivable, unspoken and always a mysterious Mystery to all intellectual.

God Himself Acts in the Holy Mysteries transmitting His Divine Grace bringing an essential change to the receiving soul. The power and result of the Mystery derives not

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<sup>85</sup> Tit. 3:5.

<sup>86</sup> Ephes. 5:26.

<sup>87</sup> Acts 8:18.

<sup>88</sup> 2 Tim. 1:6.

<sup>89</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 26, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 153.

<sup>90</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book II, 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 245.

<sup>91</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, III, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1092.

<sup>92</sup> John 3:8.

<sup>93</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 155.

from any human factor but from its Divine Institution and Power. The Holy Mysteries have their perfection not in their use but even before their use. Neither are they perfected because of the faith of the faithful.<sup>94</sup> To receive the Gifts of the Holy Mysteries it is required to have faith as an indispensable pre-requirement but neither the faith, the good will nor the devotion of the partaker is the cause of the Gift and Grace of God within the Mystery. The Mystery has within it and from it the Supernatural Power and Grace to Act either way for the Salvation of those who with faith and piety receive it or for the condemnation of those who with ungodliness approach it.

This validity and effectiveness of the Holy Mysteries is proclaimed by the Orthodox Church, according to the ancient practice of offering these even to infants who enjoy the same Gifts and Charismata regardless of their understanding and faith as they do not resist or oppose the Grace. So, the Grace of God is offered not because of the work of the Celebrant or of the one who partakes of it (*'ex opera operantis'*), but from its own Energy, from the Power within it (*'ex opera operato'*), through the exact work of the Mystery itself as the instrument of Divine Grace.<sup>95</sup> It is true that these terms used by the Scholastics remained unknown to the Orthodox Theology of the Eastern Orthodox Church to such extent that some Orthodox Theologians rejected this teaching.<sup>96</sup>

## 5. The Indelible Character of Divine Grace

With regard to the effectiveness of the Divine Mysteries and their results upon those who partake of them, the belief of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the indelible character of the three main Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation and Priesthood, is that they cannot be repeated.<sup>97</sup> However, the term "*character indelebilis*" ("*indelible character*") is not found in the writings of the Greek Fathers and is considered to have no foundation in either Holy Scripture or in Holy Tradition and therefore they are considered only as theological terms.<sup>98</sup>

The Greek Fathers do not use the term "*character*" but speak of Baptism as the "*Holy Seal indelible*" and "*Mystical Seal*" through which the one who is Baptised becomes known to the Master and is numbered amongst "...*the holy and logic flock of Christ...*" and "...*is sealed with the Seal made without hands...*" and "...*Seal unbreakable.*"<sup>99</sup>

Clement the Alexandrian used the example of the image and seal on coins, as well as the seal which is branded upon animals displaying "*the owner*" and from this analogy he

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<sup>94</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term XV, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 758.

<sup>95</sup> Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 23.

<sup>96</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 312.

<sup>97</sup> Denzinger 695, in Leeming, *Principles*, pp. 134, 136-139.

<sup>98</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 314. Ibid, *Symbolique*, p. 297. Dyobouniotes, *The Mysteries*, p. 26. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term XVI, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 760.

<sup>99</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Pre-catechesis*, §§ 16 and 17; Ibid, *Catechesis*, I, § 2, in Migne, 33, 360, 365 and 372. St Basil, *To the Holy Baptism*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 433. *Apostolic Orders*, III, § 6, in Migne, 1, 797. Leeming, *Principles*, p. 155.

declared that “... the faithful soul, which has received the Seal, carries the stigmata of Christ.”<sup>100</sup>

The *Shepherd of Hermas* mentions “the Seal”<sup>101</sup> which when one “...receives...” it, “...he lays aside his deadness and receives life.”<sup>102</sup> “It was necessary, he said, for them to come up through water in order to be made alive, for otherwise they could not enter the Kingdom of God, unless they laid aside the deadness of their former life. So even those who had fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God and entered the Kingdom of God. For before a man, he said, bears the Name of the Son of God, he is dead, but when he receives the seal, he lays aside his deadness and receives life. The seal, therefore, is the water; so they go down into the water dead and they come up alive. Thus this seal was proclaimed to them as well, and they made use of it in order that they might enter the Kingdom of God.”<sup>103</sup>

In the Apocrypha “*Acts of Paul and Thecla*,” St Paul speaks to St Thecla about future temptations and she responded by asking to be given “the Seal” so that the tempters would not touch her. St Paul advised her to have patience, assuring her that she would receive “...the water.”<sup>104</sup>

St Basil raised the question of how could an Angel claim us and how could he separate us from the enemies “...if he does not recognize the Seal? How can you say that I am of God without bearing the characteristics?” He responded: “The unsealed treasure is easy for the thieves; the unsealed sheep without danger can be attacked.”<sup>105</sup>

St Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus observed that “...the sealed sheep is not an easy game, the unsealed is susceptible to thieves.”<sup>106</sup>

St John Chrysostom, using the image of the seal of the soldier, observed that “As the soldiers are sealed, likewise the faithful receive the Spirit; even if he is a deserter, he is made known to all.” By means of the last sentence he proclaimed the indelible character of the Seal since even after a Christian’s desertion he is openly known as a Christian. Elsewhere the same Holy Father observed that the Orthodox Christians received the indelible character of the Seal in Baptism “...as sons in the Spirit.”<sup>107</sup>

St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria commented that “...Chrismation is called Seal and is from the Holy Spirit ... The Seal imprints the Son on our souls, as though we have the form of Christ, as the Apostle says; ‘My little children for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you.’”<sup>108,109</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Clement the Alexandrian, *Epistles* 86, in Migne, *P.G.*, 9, 697.

<sup>101</sup> *Shepherd of Hermas*, Parable 9, 16, 4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 276.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, Parable, 9, 16, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 276.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, Parable, 9, 16, 2-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 276.

<sup>104</sup> *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, in Leeming, *Principles*, p. 162.

<sup>105</sup> St Basil the Great, *To the Holy Baptism*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 433.

<sup>106</sup> St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily* 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 377.

<sup>107</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 2 Corinthians*, Homily 3, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 418. *Ibid*, *To Ephesians*, Homily 2, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 11, p. 13. Leeming, *Principles*, p. 169.

<sup>108</sup> Gal. 4:19.

St Paul also proclaimed: “For as many of you as were Baptised into Christ have put on Christ.”<sup>110</sup> “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His Resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”<sup>111</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem, referring to the newly Illuminated said that they were “...Baptised into Christ and having vested Christ they became of the same image of the Son of God ... partaking of Christ we are called Christs.”<sup>112</sup>

The terms “to seal” and “seal” are used. Even in the Service the celebrant invokes the words: “Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” The use of this invocation is believed to be from the “Catecheses” of St Cyril of Jerusalem who taught that after Baptism “...the Seal was given for the communion of the Holy Spirit...” when “...the Holy Myrrh... is anointed upon the forehead and the other parts of the body...” of the newly Illuminated who “...become the anointed ones receiving the antitype of the Holy Spirit, because they are images of Christ.”<sup>113</sup>

Parallel to this, the “Euchologion” of St Serapion refers to the anointing of the newly Illuminated with the Holy Myrrh that is called “Seal” which strengthens them to “...remain solid and unmovable, unharmed and spotless...” having the “...Seal of Christ on the forehead.”<sup>114</sup>

The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church used of the term “Seal” in relation to the Mysteries of Holy Chrismation and Baptism based upon the following New Testament teachings, according to which: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in Whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.”<sup>115</sup> “Now He Who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”<sup>116</sup> St Paul urged the Christians “...not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the Day of Redemption.”<sup>117</sup>

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century written Apocrypha book entitled “Acta Barnaba,” one finds the expression “sealed of the Bishop.”<sup>118</sup> In the Egyptian Order (Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus) the term “sealing” is used on the laying on of hands during the Ordination.<sup>119</sup> The Bishop “...seals the head of the candidate thrice.” During the preparation part of

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<sup>109</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *To Serapion*, Epistle 1, § 23, in Migne, P.G., 26, 584.

<sup>110</sup> Gal. 3:27.

<sup>111</sup> Rom. 6:5-6.

<sup>112</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, III, § 1, in Migne, P.G., 33, 1091.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, *Catechesis*, XVIII and XXI, § 1, in Migne, P.G., 33, 1056, 1088.

<sup>114</sup> *Euchologion*, prayer 16, in Trempelas, *Small Euchologion*, v. I, p. 395. Cf. Didymus The Blind, *About the Holy Trinity*, II, 15, in Migne, P.G., 39, 720.

<sup>115</sup> Ephes. 1:13.

<sup>116</sup> 2 Corinth. 1:21-22.

<sup>117</sup> Ephes. 4:30.

<sup>118</sup> *Acta Barnabae*, ch. 20, in Bonnet, *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, v. III, p. 299.

<sup>119</sup> Publication: Connolly, p. 179.

Ordination of a Bishop the confirmation of the election is called “*small seal*” to differentiate from the “*Great Seal*” which is the Ordination itself.<sup>120</sup> Some Canons of the Ecumenical or Local Councils speak of invalid ordinations,<sup>121</sup> which refer not to the invalidation of the Ordination, but to the invalid installation of the ordained person. The Holy Mystery continues to have its value until the unfrocking of those who performed the illegal ordination. The rights and authorities which derive from Ordination with the jurisdiction and installation to the uncanonical bishopric or parish are the ones which are cancelled and proclaimed invalid.

Generally, it can be said for all the Holy Mysteries that within them the Action of the Divine Grace is purely creative and that the Holy Spirit is He Who acts and recreates through the Holy Mysteries perfecting all those who partake of them without any need of repetition. This refers to all Holy Mysteries in which the Holy Spirit acts with the same Divine Power.

The form of the Seal which is imprinted through the Holy Mysteries, as well as how their prints cannot be removed, especially in the Holy Mystery of Baptism, remain indescribable.<sup>122</sup> Who can possibly understand the Actions of God? Who can understand with his limited mind the movements of the Holy Spirit? Who can comprehend the inexpressible ways of Regeneration and Recreation of the Newness of Life in Christ? Again, one must never forget the Biblical words: “*For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?*”<sup>123</sup>

## 6. The Necessity of the Holy Mysteries

From all the above the necessity of the Holy Mysteries is obvious. They were instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and were assigned as the ways through which the Divine Grace accomplishes the Regeneration and Sanctification of the faithful. It is also evident that the abstention from Holy Communion, Repentance and all Holy Mysteries result in the deprivation of Salvation. The Lord clearly proclaimed that Baptism is the only way for one to become a member of God’s Kingdom. He taught that “*...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God*”<sup>124</sup> and concerning Holy Communion He stated that “*...unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no Life in you.*”<sup>125</sup>

The case of the thief on the cross<sup>126</sup> who entered Paradise without partaking of the Holy Mysteries, the Holy Apostles receiving of the Holy Spirit through the breathing upon them by Christ<sup>127</sup> and the descent of the *Paracletus* (Holy Spirit) upon the Disciples

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<sup>120</sup> Georgios Codinos Pseudonicodinus, *About the Officialians*, ch. 20, in Migne, 157, 117.

<sup>121</sup> Canon XVI of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod; Canons XIII, XXII and XXIII of the Council in Antioch; Canons LXXVI and XV of the Apostles; Canon VI of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod.

<sup>122</sup> Dyobouniotes, *The Mysteries*, p. 26. Androustos, *Dogmatique*, p. 314. Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 29.

<sup>123</sup> Rom. 11:34.

<sup>124</sup> John 3:5.

<sup>125</sup> John 6:53.

<sup>126</sup> Luke 23:43.

<sup>127</sup> John 20:22-23.

on the Day of Pentecost<sup>128</sup> by which they received the Authority of forgiving or not the sins, were exceptional and unique, necessary for their Regeneration and their fulfillment of their mission. These cases are extraordinary events, which were performed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The only thing that is clearly revealed is that God can save man in different ways or to strengthen him for a mission to which He calls him. Under no circumstances is it permissible to predetermine where and when and how God should Act.

The differentiation of the Holy Mysteries as “*compulsory*” or “*at will*” (marriage and priesthood) is inaccurate because all the Holy Mysteries are necessary. It is dependent upon the free will of the faithful to choose between marriage or celibacy. In the case where we choose Marriage, it is necessary to Sanctify our union through the Holy Mystery of Marriage. The same applies if one wishes to enter the Mystery of Priesthood.<sup>129</sup>

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PERFECTION OF THE HOLY MYSTERIES

In order that a Holy Mystery is perfected and bears the saving fruits of its energy the following are prerequisites: The Mystery, besides the extraordinary cases of Baptism, is not permitted to be celebrated by lay faithful but only by a canonical ordained bishop or priest. The validity and authority of the Holy Mystery does not depend on the moral status, way of life, worthiness or unworthiness of the celebrant, because according to the common teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, Christ is the One Who celebrates all the Holy Mysteries through the celebrant who becomes His instrument. It is required for the celebrant to act willingly in order to perfect the Mystery according to the Rites of the Orthodox Church. The bishop or priest must be canonical and not in heresy or in schism. Mysteries performed outside the Orthodox Church, in communities of heretics or schismatics, are invalid. Such events must be performed canonically.

#### **1. Those Who Have the Special Priesthood Are the Necessary Instruments for the Perfection of the Holy Mysteries**

It has been mentioned in previous chapters that all faithful who are canonically baptised are members of the One Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and comprise the Royal Kingdom but not all have the authority to perform the Holy Mysteries. Only those who have the special gift of priesthood with unbroken Apostolic Succession, bishops and priests,<sup>130</sup> are capable of officiating the Holy Mysteries. Just as deacons, although having received the first level of priesthood, cannot celebrate any of the Holy Mysteries, likewise the laity, who, although they comprise the Royal

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<sup>128</sup> Acts 2:2-4.

<sup>129</sup> Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 31.

<sup>130</sup> Jeremias, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, p. 406. Mogilas, (A 109, A 107), in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, pp. 640 and 638.

Kingdom,<sup>131</sup> have neither the authority nor the capability of performing the Holy Mysteries except in extreme necessity. As for example, when death is impending upon an infant they may perform the Holy Mystery of Baptism as long as they are not in heresy or schism. Bishops and priests, when celebrating the Holy Mysteries are not the main celebrants but only instruments of God through whom the invisible great High Priest, Jesus Christ, Who is inseparable from His Mystical Body, His Church, Sanctifies and Perfects the Holy Mysteries.

Christ Himself is He Who offers the Sacrifice without the shedding of blood, and Who is being offered. The bishop or priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to sanctify the offerings on the Altar and change them into Christ's precious Body and Blood. In addition during the Consecration and the Transmission of the Mystery, the celebrant gives his place to Christ Who Sanctifies the Mysteries, making the bread and the cup the Body and Blood of Christ. The celebrant avoids referring to himself by saying "*I baptise*" or "*I anoint*" or "*I ordain*" but rather uses the terms "*...the servant of God...*" is baptised, sealed, crowned, ordained, etc and gives his place to the invisible Lord.

St Cyril of Jerusalem taught that "*...the Grace is not from men, but from God through men.*"<sup>132</sup>

St John Chrysostom, above all the other Fathers of the Orthodox Church, observed that "*...the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit act altogether while the priest lends his own tongue and gives his own hands...*" but "*...Grace works everything.*" The celebrant during the Holy Mysteries "*...opens only his mouth but God works everything. The celebrant is only present as an instrument of God.*" Elsewhere, he spoke of the Divine Eucharist that "*...no man enters into the present things, but everything is the work of God, and He is the One Who leads us to the mystagogy.*" Concerning Baptism, he said that it is great "*...but great is not he who baptises, but He Who is called to the Baptism...*" in other words, the Holy Trinity. Concerning Ordination, he emphasised that "*The hand of man is placed upon the head, in other words that of the bishop's, but everything is worked by God and His Hand touches the head of the one who is being ordained.*" Elsewhere, he invites the faithful to believe that now, when the Divine Liturgy is celebrated "*...it is truly the Supper at which the Lord sat ... For no man works this, but He Himself.*" He also advised those who partake of Holy Communion that when they see "*...the priest giving...*" them the Holy Mystery, they must not think that he is the one who makes this but strongly believe that "*...it is the Hand of Christ which is stretched out. For as when someone is baptized...*" the priest is not the one who baptises him "*...but God is the One Who holds His Hand on the head through His invisible Power, and neither an Angel, nor an Archangel, nor anyone else dares to approach and touch, likewise in the Mystical Supper of the Divine Eucharist.*"<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Rev. 1:6.

<sup>132</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XVII, § 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1009.

<sup>133</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 86, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 472. *Ibid*, *To 2 Timothy*, Homily 2, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 612. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 8, § 1; and Homily 3, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 69 and 25. *Ibid*, *To Acts*, Homily 14, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 116. *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, Homily 50, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 507.

St Augustine considers Christ to be the true Celebrant of the Holy Mysteries. “Christ,” he says, “baptizes in the Holy Spirit. This is unique in Christ, that although there are many celebrants, either just or sinners, they baptise, but the holiness of Baptism is ascribed to the only Holy One, upon Whom the Holy Spirit descended and about Whom it was said that ‘He shall baptise in the Holy Spirit.’ Peter baptized, but Christ was baptising. Paul baptised, but Christ was baptising. And Judas could have baptised, but, even then Christ would have been the One Who was baptising.”<sup>134</sup>

## 2. The Unworthiness of the Officiator does not Affect the Power of the Mystery

The Orthodox Church supports the opinion that neither the private life nor the unworthiness of the clergymen could affect the Holiness and Power of the Holy Mystery in any way.

St Cyril of Jerusalem exhorted every catechumen to approach “...Baptism, not as to the person who appears, but calling to mind the Holy Spirit...” Who sanctifies the water of Baptism and acts through it “...for He is ready to seal the soul...” of the one who is being baptised.<sup>135</sup>

Jeremiah observed that “...although the Mysteries are celebrated by some unworthy (clergymen) who are not themselves benefited, being spiritually damaged, those who receive (the Mysteries) are sanctified and do benefit. For Divine Grace and through unworthy (clergymen) acts and perfects the Mysteries. We must honour those who serve and must not dishonour the good (clergymen) because of the unworthy ones (as in the case of Judas who was among the Apostles).” He continues asking, “Does God not ordain all, even the unworthy?” He answers the question by stating: “...God does not ordain all but He acts through all, even though they are unworthy, in order to save the people.”<sup>136</sup>

St Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus prevented a candidate who was preparing himself for Baptism because he said “Let a Bishop baptise me and he must be a Metropolitan or Jerusalemite...” or “...a presbyter, but from the unmarried who leads an abstemious and angelic life.” St Gregory continued: “Do not judge the judges, he who needs the healing, do not love to judge those who are worthy to be unfrocked.” He then uses the imagery of the ring by saying that although the ring which is used to seal official documents is made out of gold or iron, the image will be stamped one and the same.<sup>137</sup>

St John Chrysostom stressed that, if the divine Grace “...seeks everywhere the worthy ones...”, there will be neither “...Baptism, nor Body of Christ”. But now “...through the unworthy God acts...” and under no circumstances is the Grace of Baptism damaged because of the unworthy life of the priest. “God acts through all, even if they are unworthy...” and this is because He seeks the salvation of the people. For,

<sup>134</sup> St Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium. Tractatus*, in Migne, P.L., 35, 1024. Cf. Leeming, *Principles*, p. 54.

<sup>135</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XVII, § 35, in Migne, P.G., 1009.

<sup>136</sup> Jeremias, Answer A’, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. I, p. 391.

<sup>137</sup> St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 40 to Holy Baptism*, § 26, in Migne, P.G., 36, 396.

when He sent out the disciples to preach, and “...through Judas (although unworthy) *He acted.*” Also, concerning the false prophets who were prophesying in God’s name, “...*He says: ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*’<sup>138</sup>, and others had cast out demons.”<sup>139</sup> If God acted through such unworthy persons in order to benefit His people how “...*much more will He act through the priests?*” He urged strongly “...*that no one should be scandalized by examining the life of the priest...*” and reminds the faithful that the Grace “...*that God grants ... should not be dependent on the virtue of the priest...*” for “...*no man introduces it, but Grace is the work of God and God is He Who leads us to mystagogy*”. He concludes that “...*if we were to examine the life of the rulers, we should then ordain the teachers and the up will be down, and the feet will be up and the head down.*”<sup>140</sup>

St Isidorus of Pelusium states that “...*no one is harmed by receiving...*” the Mysteries through the “*unworthy*” and under no circumstances “...*are the precious Mysteries spoiled...*”, even if the officiator “...*priest is the worst of all sinners.*” He reminds us about the raven by which the Prophet Elijah was fed.<sup>141</sup> As in the case of that great Prophet, God was feeding him through an unclean instrument, likewise within the Church the unclean priests do not prevent, because of their sins, the Grace of God to regenerate us and to lead us to mystagogy.<sup>142</sup>

### **3. What the Church officiates is necessary for the perfection**

If the private life of the priest and his unworthiness under no circumstances prevents the action of the Holy Spirit to perfect the Holy Mysteries, it is necessary and an important term, that the officiator has to have the good will, to perform whatever the Orthodox Church performs in the Holy Mysteries and to invoke and repeat the same words and movements as well as the prayers which the Orthodox Church uses. For the priest sanctifies the Mysteries by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>143</sup> To this aim, right from the beginning, it was the practice that the officiator priest after preparation vested himself with special vestments in order to perform any of the Mysteries and in order that through these he will separate himself from the daily and common life and be prepared for the sacred diakonia. It is also worthy to note, that in all the Holy Mysteries there is a preparatory part, prayers and invocations during the service. In order that the Holy Mystery be considered valuable, it must keep the form and the words of invocation and prayers which the Orthodox Church has established, not because they act as some kind of magic instruments, but because they express the faith and the opinion of the Orthodox Church and describe the full character of that which the Church performs and aims to transmit through the performed Mystery the divine Grace of God.

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<sup>138</sup> Matth. 7:23

<sup>139</sup> Matth. 7:22.

<sup>140</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 8, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 69. Ibid, *To 2 Timothy*, Homily 2, §§ 3 and 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 610 and 612.

<sup>141</sup> 1 Samuel (I Kings) 17:6.

<sup>142</sup> St Isidorus of Pelusium, *Epistles*, book III, epistle 340, in Migne, *P.G.*, 78, 1000.

<sup>143</sup> Mogilas, A’ 100, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 635.

Hence, the validity of the Mystery is not affected if the officiator prays carelessly or indifferently and even celebrates the Holy Mysteries without faith. It is enough that he celebrates the divine Mysteries exactly as the holy Orthodox Church received them from her Founder. For his impiety and indifference, the priest is responsible and accountable before God, Who invisibly performs the Holy Mysteries. The unfaithfulness of the priest cannot eliminate the effectiveness and power of the Holy Mysteries. Since he still remains within the Church and is not separated from her Head by renouncing the Orthodox faith, he can perform the Mysteries, although within his soul he remains alien to the Divine Grace.

The keeping of the order within the Holy Mysteries is necessary and indispensable in expressing the Church's opinion and faith.

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, stated that the “...*first* (in honour presbyter) *during the Eucharist prays according to his power.*”<sup>144</sup> Afterwards, when special liturgical types of celebration were introduced, not all the local churches used the same type. But all the liturgical types were united through the one and same faith, which created a harmonious agreement.

Again, if someone performs exactly the liturgical type of the one holy Orthodox Church, but expresses a different faith, then the Mysteries are invalid, although the external form is correct.

St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria rejects the baptism of the Arians, although they kept the type which was delivered by Christ, the invocation of the Holy Trinity, because “...*although the perfection was given in the name of the Father and of the Son, they (the Arians) do not call upon the Father truthfully, because by renouncing the sameness of the essence they also renounce the true God.*” Because they did not accept the Son being of the same Essence of the Father, they did not perform the baptism “...*in the Father and the Son ...but to the Creator (Father) and the creature (the Son), to the Maker and the thing which was made.*” Elsewhere, he also observes that “...*many other heresies use only the names (of the Holy Trinity), but they do not believe correctly, neither have the healthy faith, thus the water (of baptism) which they offered is useless, for the lack of piety; and consequently he who is sprinkled by them is polluted in irreverence rather than being saved.*”<sup>145</sup>

St Basil the Great considers that some heretics should be baptized, because they were “...*the branches of Marcion and according to their heresies, marriage was impure and they did not partake of wine and that they said that the creation of God was polluted.*” “*For they should not say that they were baptized in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, for they supposed God to be the creator of evil, just as Marcion and the rest of the heresies.*”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 67, 5, **B**, v. 3, p. 198.

<sup>145</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *Against Arians*, II, §§ 42-43, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 236-237.

<sup>146</sup> St Basil the Great, *Epistle* 199, § 47, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 732.

#### 4. The Mysteries of the Heretics.

Now we come to deal with the question: “*What happens with the mysteries of the heretics or schismatics?*” Concerning this major subject we must emphasise that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church deals with this matter on a different basis to that of the Western Roman Catholic Church. Without remaining indifferent towards the canonical performance of the Holy Mysteries, the Orthodox Church takes into consideration the fact that the mysteries of the heretics were performed outside the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are considered invalid. St Cyprian, expressed in his writings that “...*outside the Church there is no salvation.*” This opinion was the general belief and principal of the first Church.

Tertullian considered the baptism of the heretics<sup>147</sup> invalid and his predecessor Agrippinus in the Synod of 198 took similar decisions<sup>148</sup>. Simultaneously this was the opinion of all the Churches of the East. This is manifested in an epistle of Dionysius of Alexandria to Xystus II (257-258), according to which Stephen threatens to cut all communion with the Churches of Cilicia, Cappadocia and Galatia and all the surrounding Churches “...*because they rebaptized the heretics.*” Dionysius speaks about Synods which took place in Phrygia between the years 230-245, which renounced the baptism of the heretics<sup>149</sup>. In an epistle addressed to Phirmilianus, archbishop of Caesarea, we find literal witness of this practice<sup>150</sup>. Thus all the Churches of Pontus and Asia Minor appeared to agree on this matter with the Churches of Africa.

The *Apostolic Orders* proclaim that “...*those who receive anything from heretics receive infection for they became partakers of their erroneous opinion. For they are not priests ... then neither those who were baptized by them are initiated but are infected, and have not received the forgiveness of their sins but a bond of impiety.*”<sup>151</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem assures us that “...*the heretics are rebaptized because they have not received Baptism.*”<sup>152</sup>

Thus the entire ancient Church was against heretical baptism.

On the other hand what was accepted for the validity of the Holy Mystery of Baptism was also accepted for all the Holy Mysteries, and especially for that of Ordination. Thus Innocentius I in his epistle dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 414 concerning the ordinations of the defrocked bishop of Sardica Bonosus literally stated that when he ordained he could not transmit whatever he did not have but what he had, in other words, his condemnation.<sup>153</sup> When he was asked by Alexandros of Antioch (413-420), if it was

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<sup>147</sup> Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, § 15, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 1216.

<sup>148</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 71, § 4, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 424. *Ibid.*, *EpiSt* 73, § 3, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1157.

<sup>149</sup> St Dionysius of Alexandria, in Eusebius, *Church History*, VII, 4 and 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 641 and 644.

<sup>150</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 75, § 7, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1208.

<sup>151</sup> *Apostolic Orders*, VI, 15, in *B*, v. 2, p. 104.

<sup>152</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Pre-catechesis*, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 445.

<sup>153</sup> Innocent, *Epistola* 17, c. 3, in migne, *P.L.*, 20, 530.

possible to recognize the ordinations of the Arians who were returning to the Orthodox Church, he excluded any possibility because, although their baptism was accepted as being performed in the type of the invocation of the Holy Trinity, they do not have the Holy Spirit. By breaking away from the true Faith they alienated themselves from the perfection of the Holy Spirit and consequently could not transmit the fullness of the Holy Spirit.<sup>154</sup>

## 5. The Mysteries of the Schismatics

It was not only the heretics who departed and separated themselves from the original Body of Christ, but also the schismatics. Consequently, it was natural that the mysteries which were officiated by them, although they were performed exactly as in the Orthodox Church, and officiated by bishops or priests who were previously ordained canonically but afterwards had split, these mysteries were considered invalid by the Orthodox Church.

St Cyprian, when asked by the bishop Magnus, proclaimed the invalidity of the mysteries of the heretics and schismatics. He emphasised that since they are out of the Church, they are deprived of the only Source of the divine Grace and are abandoned by the Holy Spirit.<sup>155</sup> This was also the practice of the Churches in Pontus and Asia Minor. All those who separate themselves from the Church do not have the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

In order for a Mystery to be valid, it is not enough that it is officiated canonically according to the Rites of the ancient Church or by a clergyman who was canonically ordained, but it is essential that the clergyman has to be in communion of Faith with the Orthodox Church. A bishop or priest who is separated through heresy or schism from the true Church, breaks the line of Apostolic Succession, falls from the Grace of the Priesthood, alienates himself from the perfection of the Holy Spirit and becomes once again a layman who has no authority to baptize. In other words any mystery which is officiated outside the Orthodox Church can be under no circumstances recognized as valid.

The fact that the canonically ordained bishop or priest remains an instrument of Divine Grace, of which the only source and treasury is the Church. We must never forget that the canonically ordained through Divine Grace which was transmitted to him, makes him for life an instrument for diakonia of the Divine Word and steward of the Divine Mysteries.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, *Epistola* 24, in migne, *P.L.*, 20, 549. Gelasianus, *Sacramentarium*, in migne, *P.L.*, 74, 1145 and 1147. Johannis Papae, *Epistola* 267, in migne, *P.L.*, 136, 887. Paschalis Papae, *Epistola to the archbishop of Magentia*, in migne, *P.L.*, 163, 175.

<sup>155</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 76, §§ 2 and 7-11, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1886 and 1191. Ibid, *Epistola* 69, § 1, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 413. Ibid, *Epistola* 72, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1084.

The mysteries which are officiated by heretics or schismatics or by defrocked Orthodox clergymen are not only illegal, but invalid and powerless and consequently must be repeated canonically.

## 6. The term “*Economia*”

“*Economia*” (dispensation) is the temporary deviation from the accurate practice of the Church in order to achieve a greater benefit<sup>156</sup>. St Cyril of Alexandria uses the example of sailors who, when they are out at sea and face the winter storms, they empty the ship of its cargo, in order to save the whole ship and the crew; likewise the Church, when required, uses “*Economia*”, in order not to suffer damage but to accomplish greater benefit<sup>157</sup>. “*Economia*” is used not to deviate from the essential correctness of the Church, but in order to achieve greater benefits or to avoid greater damage.

If ‘*Economia*’ is used for extraordinary reasons and deviates from the Church’s correctness, it is obvious that this does not create a permanent condition but is an exception to the rule and for a specific case only (“*jus singulare*”). It lasts briefly, in order that those who are outside of the Orthodox Church enter her bosom, as when a door is opened and immediately closed, in order that the Church’s accuracy is not disturbed<sup>158</sup>.

‘*Economia*’ cannot at first and in advance be offered to all the members of the Orthodox Church; neither can it be said that the Orthodox Church is obliged to recognize as valid the mysteries of those outside the Orthodox Body.

Through “*Economia*” the Orthodox Church completes, gives life and grants the Gift and the Charismata of the Holy Spirit to those who were not previously canonically included within the body of the Church because when “...a heretic returns to Orthodoxy he corrects the previous error and heresy is removed; the Baptism by the anointing with holy Myrrh, the ordination by the laying on of the hands.”<sup>159</sup> “*Economia*” can also be exercised even to members of the Church who require special dispensation for some reason or another. In this case the Canons (Laws) of the Church are set aside but only for that moment.

“*Economia*” can only be applied to the Canons of the Orthodox Church which have been established by the Fathers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and can be regarded as flexible. But under no circumstances can “*Economia*” be applied to the Dogma of the Church which is the Revelation of God to His Church.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE NUMBER OF THE HOLY MYSTERIES

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<sup>156</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle 46 to Gennadius*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 77, 319.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, *Epistle 46 to Gennadius*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 77, 320. *Ibid*, *Epistle 87*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 77, 376.

<sup>158</sup> Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 49.

<sup>159</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Answer 14 to the Orthodox*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 6, 1282.

The number of Holy Mysteries were not determined either by the New Testament or by the Holy Fathers and ecclesiastic writers. Indications are found in Holy Scripture that reveals their Divine institution. The Holy Fathers of the ancient Orthodox Church simply named them while from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and onwards others raised their number to seven. In different ages the Fathers included the mysterious ceremonies as God-instituted such as the Funeral Service, the Blessings of Water, etc among the Holy Mysteries and their number was increased. Henceforth, after the 13<sup>th</sup> century the reason for determining the number of Holy Mysteries was raised and all Orthodox Churches, despite their differences, were in agreement on this matter. Many have struggled to find the reason for the Divine Wisdom having had the good will to grant the Holy Mysteries to the Church. The only answer to this question is that God Willed it and had the good pleasure.

### **1. The Number of the Holy Mysteries According to the New Testament and the Holy Fathers**

Each Holy Mystery is witnessed in the New Testament as having its institution either directly from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Founder and Head of His Church, or indirectly through His Holy Apostles and Disciples. Each Holy Mystery is a special way and main pipeline by means of which Divine Grace is transmitted to the faithful within the Church. In the New Testament we do not find any specific number<sup>160</sup> concerning the Holy Mysteries.

This is also noticed among the oldest Holy Fathers and ecclesiastic writers of the Orthodox Church. For practical purposes and not for any dogmatic reasons they (the Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists) mention two main Holy Mysteries, which introduce the faithful to the Church and incorporate him within Christ - those of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist. St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr gave us very important and detailed information in his 1<sup>st</sup> Apology. The Didache, besides other guidelines concerning the way that the Holy Mysteries should be officiated, gives us the ancient types of prayers that were used at the “*tables of love*” (“*agapae*”) and at the Divine Eucharist, which was associated with them. The Apostolic Fathers also mentioned ordinations of bishops and deacons,<sup>161</sup> confession of the sins<sup>162</sup> and the Holy Mystery of Marriage, which was conducted “...with the consent of the bishop...” so “...that the marriage may be in accordance with the Lord and not due to lustful passions.”<sup>163</sup>

For the same practical reasons, in order to initiate the newly illumined and to make them understand their participation in the Divine Mysteries, St Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodorus of Mopsuestias and St Ambrosius and the author of the book “*de*

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<sup>160</sup> See: Meyendorff, *Theology*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>161</sup> *Didache*, 15, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157. St Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 7, 4-8, 1-5; 42, 4-5; 44, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 32-33, 51, 52.

<sup>162</sup> *Didache*, 4, 14 and 14, 1-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 152 and 157. *Barnabas*, 19, 12, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 186. St Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 51, 3 and 52, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 57.

<sup>163</sup> St Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 5, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 117.

*Sacramentis*” referred in their writings (Catecheses) only to Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Eucharist. In the African Church Tertullian does not only mention these three Mysteries but also that of repentance, distinguishing “*the preparation repentance*” for Baptism from that of the exact Baptism. He also refers to Ordination (“*ordinatio*”) as well as Marriage, through which “...*the Church united ... the Divine Eucharist assured and the blessing sealed.*”<sup>164</sup> Likewise, St Cyprian includes Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Eucharist, Repentance and Ordination<sup>165</sup> in the Mysteries. St Augustine, on the other hand, presented in a more advanced manner the teaching concerning the Holy Mysteries. He determined Baptism and Eucharist as Mysteries, characteristically adding “...*and whatever else is constituted in the canonical Scriptures.*”<sup>166</sup> He referred to Marriage and Ordination as Mysteries that he compared to Baptism. Elsewhere, he also called the Symbol (Creed of Faith) and the Lord’s Prayer Mysteries, which, during the preparation for Holy Baptism, children were taught.<sup>167</sup> St Hippolytus’ prayers of Ordination and Blessing of Oil were preserved in the “*Egyptian Order.*” Origen spoke of the confession of sin committed against priests, in order to expose the sin and to request the proper medicine to cure it<sup>168</sup>. He also combined repentance as well as the laying on of hands with the use of oil and prayer, according to the teaching of St James.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore in the “*Euchologion*” (Prayer Book) of St Serapion three prayers for Ordination are found, two prayers “...*concerning the offered oil...*” of which the one concerns “... *the offered oils...*” and the second “... *the oil of the ill.*”<sup>170</sup>

Thus all those Sacred Ceremonies which were used within the entire Orthodox Church were numbered as Holy Mysteries. St Augustine assured that “...*whatever the universal Church upholds were not laid down by Holy Synod, but were always practised and correctly believed as having been passed down by Apostolic authority.*”<sup>171</sup>

## 2. Later Attempts for Systematic Numbering of the Holy Mysteries

In the East some attempts were made to number the Holy Mysteries. At first in the writings that were believed to be by St Dionysius the Aeropagite, the Holy Mysteries of “*Illumination*” or Baptism, “*the Gathering or Communion,*” “*the Rite of Myrrh*” (Chrismation or Confirmation) and “*the Hierarchal Orders*” (Priesthood) are explained. Also amongst the Holy Mysteries the “*Mystery for those who have sacredly fallen asleep*” (Funeral Rite) and the tonsuring of Monks are numbered. In this catalogue according to St Dionysius, of the six Mysteries only four are characterised as “*Hierarchal Mysteries:*” “*Divine and Sacred Symbols,*” “*perceptible images of the Heavenly,*”

<sup>164</sup> Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 41 and *Adversus uxorem*, II, 9, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 68 and 1415.

<sup>165</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola LXX*, 3, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1080. *Ibid*, *Epistola LXXIII*, §§ 20 and 21, in migne, *P.L.*, 3, 1668. *Ibid*, *Epistola LXIII*, § 14, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 396-397. *Ibid*, *De lapsis*, c. XXV, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 499.

<sup>166</sup> St Augustine, *EpiSt LIV*, 1, in migne, *P.L.*, 33, 200.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, *Enarratio in Psalm*, 103(104), § 9, in migne, *P.L.*, 37, 1343. *Ibid*, *De bono conjugal*, § 32, in migne, *P.L.*, 40, 394. *Ibid*, *Contra epistola Parmenia*, II, 28, in migne, *P.L.*, 40, 70. *Ibid*, *Sermo 228*, § 3, in migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1102.

<sup>168</sup> Origen, *In Leviticus*, II, 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 418. Cf. *Ibid*, *To Psalm 37(38)*, homily II, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 1386.

<sup>169</sup> James 5, 14-15.

<sup>170</sup> Serapion, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 60.

<sup>171</sup> St Augustine, *De Baptismo contra Donatus*, IV, 24, § 31, in migne, *P.L.*, 43, 174.

“*Divine and Holy Symbols*,” “*the perceptibly sacred intellectual images*” and especially the Holy Eucharist which is called “*Divine and perfect Mystery*” and “*Ceremony of Ceremonies*.”<sup>172</sup>

St Theodore the Studite numbered the Mysteries up to six although from his biography we learn that at his death he participated in the Mystery of Holy Unction. In another letter he himself bore witness to the custom of the Christians of confessing.<sup>173</sup> Thus during the 9<sup>th</sup> century neither the term “*Mystery*” ceased to be used in its general meaning nor was the final list of Holy Mysteries completed.

Peter Abelardus (+1142) numbers the Mysteries up to six including Marriage. After him, Peter Lombardus (+1160) presented the final list of seven Mysteries in his work “*Sententiae*” and referred to them as the Mysteries of the New Law listing them as follows: Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Repentance, Unction, Ordination and Marriage. Later different Provincial Synods<sup>174</sup> in agreement proclaimed that the number of Holy Mysteries is seven.

Afterwards in the Synod of Lyon in the year 1274, those who participated from the East, the leader of whom was the Orthodox Emperor Michael Palaiologos, accepted the Confession of Faith of Pope Clement IV without any hesitation, in which the Holy Mysteries are seven. Three years later, in April 1277, the Patriarch of Constantinople, John Bekkos, repeated the list of Holy Mysteries in the same order as that of Lyon. In the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a Monk by the name of Job, in his work concerning the Holy Mysteries, added to the list the Tonsuring of Monks and Repentance combined with Holy Unction, although he distinguishes the two Holy Mysteries from one another.<sup>175</sup> In this manner, in his list, the Mysteries remained seven. In the Orthodox Church, in contemporary times, the Theologians express the abovementioned opinion in their writings.<sup>176</sup>

### 3. The Mysterious Ceremonies

The term “*Mystery*” has also a wider meaning and includes some other ceremonies in the Mysteries as well. These ceremonies are similar to the Holy Mysteries and transmit Divine Grace invisibly through words and the use of matter as the Holy Mysteries but have not been Divinely instituted by Christ or by His Apostles. They are not essential for man’s Salvation such as the Holy Mysteries. They were introduced by the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church according to the authority of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who assured and promised that “...*if two of you*

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<sup>172</sup> St Dionysius, *Ecclesiastic hierarchy*, I, §§ 1 and 5; II, §§ 1 and 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 3, 372, 376, 392, 397, 424 and 425.

<sup>173</sup> St Theodore the Studite, *Epistle*, book II, 165, in Migne, *P.G.*, 99, 1524. Ibid, *The life of Theodore of Studites*, II, 67, in Migne, *P.G.*, 99, 325. Ibid, *Epistle*, book II, 162, in Migne, *P.G.*, 99, 1845, 1504-1516.

<sup>174</sup> The Provincial Synods of Durham in 1217, of Oxford in 1222, of Ratisbonne in 1235, of Valentia 1255 and of Cemon in 1247.

<sup>175</sup> Codex 61, Supplem. Graeci Paris, fol. 239, in Trempelas, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 62.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Mogilas (A’ 98); Kritopoulos (ch. 5); Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, (Term 15), in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, pp. 635, 388, 526, 757, 690 and 580.

*agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I Am there in the midst of them.*<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, these Ceremonies are similar to the Holy Mysteries and for this reason they are called Mysterious (“*sacramentaux*,” “*sacramentalis*,” “*sacramentalien*”). They were distinguished into “*consecrations*” and “*benedictions*,” both referring to persons or lifeless things and places.

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<sup>177</sup> Matth. 18:19-20.