

## CONSECRATION OUTLINE

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The consecration service is the act by which we formally dedicate and set aside a sacred space for worship.
  - 1.1.1. We are setting aside this area as separate and sacred from all other areas; we are noting that it is a special place.
  - 1.1.2. We are dedicating it to a particular use: for the salvation of each of us and of our community.
  - 1.1.3. The service changes an ordinary building into the House of God.
- 1.2. The consecration service focuses on the Holy Altar Table.
  - 1.2.1. Salvation is union with Christ; it is our life in Christ.
  - 1.2.2. The center of this “Life in Christ” is the Holy Altar and the divine services that are related to it – i.e., the sacramental life of the Church.
  - 1.2.3. Because the Holy Altar is so important to the regular life of an Orthodox Christian, the service of consecration of a Church centers on the Holy Altar, just as our lives should be centered around the Holy Altar.
- 1.3. Reduced to its essence, the consecration service is the baptism and chrismation of our Church. Just as a Christian is given new life in the mysteries of baptism and chrismation, our building is given a new life in the consecration service.

### **2. Structure of the Service**

- 2.1. Invocation of the Martyrs and All Saints
- 2.2. Sealing of the Relics
- 2.3. Washing of the Holy Table
- 2.4. Anointing of the Holy Table
- 2.5. Vesting of the Holy Table
- 2.6. Procession and Anointing of the Nave

### **3. Invocation of the Martyrs and All Saints**

- 3.1. The service begins with the altar table completely bare.
  - 3.1.1. When an infant is baptized is also completely unclothed.
  - 3.1.2. In antiquity, adult catechumens were also unclothed for baptism.

- 3.2. The bishop invokes the intercessions of the Holy Martyrs.
  - 3.2.1. The Orthodox Church is built upon the witness of the Holy Martyrs; She is adorned with the blood of the Holy Martyrs “as with fine porphyry and royal purple”.
  - 3.2.2. Our bishop will pray that the Lord will be entreated by the intercessions of the Holy Martyrs to grant unto this community to share in their inheritance, that becoming imitators of them we may also be found worthy of the reward that awaits them.
- 3.3. The bishop then invokes the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and all of the saints.
  - 3.3.1. The Virgin Mary is the first among the saints, our prime example of obedience to the will of God.
  - 3.3.2. Our bishop prays that, through the intercessions of our Lady and all the saints, our service (both this consecration service and all the services that will follow in the newly consecrated Church) will prove to be pleasing to God.
- 3.4. The bishop will also call for the eternal memory of all of the founders of our parish who have fallen asleep in the Lord prior to the date of the consecration. We honor those who have gone before us, whose efforts have paved the way for us.

#### **4. Sealing of the Relics**

- 4.1. The top of our holy table will be prepared with a hole carved into the middle of it.
- 4.2. In this hole, the bishop will place a box containing relics of St. Raphael of Brooklyn.
  - 4.2.1. These relics bear witness to the special presence of God in this place.
  - 4.2.2. God inhabits his saints; His presence in them is what makes them saints.
  - 4.2.3. The presence of the holy relics reminds us that when we are in this building we are in a place sprinkled with the blood of the saints.
  - 4.2.4. They remind us of the intercessions that are constantly offered on our behalf by the saints.
- 4.3. In this cavity will also be placed a written copy of all the names of the faithful of this parish.

- 4.3.1. For as long as this altar stands in this Church, the names of the faithful of this time will be encased within it.
- 4.3.2. Every service served on this altar will be served not only on the relics of St. Raphael, but also on “relics” of each of us.
- 4.3.3. This altar will belong to each of us and we should, therefore, become attached to this altar, dedicated to living our lives centered on it and the divine services that will be served here.
- 4.4. The cap is placed on the cavity and is sealed with wax mastic while Psalm 22(23) is recited “The LORD is my shepherd ...”

## **5. Washing of the Holy Table**

- 5.1. Just as we are washed in the waters of baptism, our altar table will be washed by our bishop.
- 5.2. The bishop dons the sasanon, a special white garment that is worn over his episcopal vestments.
- 5.3. We all kneel as the bishop prays for the presence of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and fill this Temple and the Holy Table. He prays that God will:
  - 5.3.1. “Fill it with light everlasting ...”
  - 5.3.2. “Make it the abode of Thy glory ...”
  - 5.3.3. “Let Thine eyes be open upon it day and night ...”
  - 5.3.4. “Preserve it indestructible ...”
  - 5.3.5. “Show it forth to be Thine altar ...”
  - 5.3.6. “Glorify it above the Mercy Seat according to the Law ...”
    - 5.3.6.1. The “Mercy Seat” was the spot in the Old Testament Tabernacle where the presence of God hovered
    - 5.3.6.2. It was the space above the Ark of the Covenant.
- 5.4. The bishop takes pieces of soap and makes the sign of the cross with them on the surface of the holy table.
- 5.5. A vessel of warm water is brought and the bishop blesses it, asking that God send down upon it the blessing of Jordan. The prayer echoes the blessing of water at the baptismal service.
- 5.6. The bishop pours water onto the table, scrubs the entire surface with the soap, rinses it and wipes it dry with a clean towel.

## **6. Anointing of the Holy Table**

- 6.1. Just as we are chrismated after baptism, our altar table will be anointed with Holy Chrism.
- 6.2. The bishop places the antimensia he wishes to consecrate on the holy table and sprinkles them with rose water.
  - 6.2.1. The antimensia is the cloth that sits on the altar.
  - 6.2.2. It bears the image of the body of Christ in the tomb and is the authorization of the bishop for the priest to celebrate the divine services.
  - 6.2.3. It represents the body of Christ and the altar represents the tomb of Christ.
  - 6.2.4. The rose water represents the fragrant spices with which Christ's body was anointed for burial by the Holy Myrrhbearers, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus.
- 6.3. The bishop then anoints the table with Holy Chrism at the center and the four corners.
- 6.4. He also anoints the antimensia and four small icons of the Evangelists.
- 6.5. The icons of the four evangelists are affixed to the four corners of the altar table by wax mastic. The holy table will be prepared with recesses in the corners to hold these icons.

## **7. Vesting of the Holy Table**

- 7.1. In connection with holy baptism, the newly illumined Christian is vested in a "garment of light". So also is the newly washed and anointed altar vested.
- 7.2. The table is vested twice – with an inner covering and an outer covering
  - 7.2.1. This reminds us that the altar has a double significance: it is both the tomb of Christ and the throne of God.
  - 7.2.2. The inner covering is a plain white cloth. It reminds us of the white baptismal garment, but also of the winding sheet in which Christ was buried.
  - 7.2.3. The outer covering is made of rich and brilliant cloth; it reminds us of the glory of God's throne.
- 7.3. Each of the altar vestments is blessed with Holy Water before being placed on the table.

- 7.4. Psalm 131(132) is read while the vesting takes place “Lord, remember David in all his meekness, how he swore to the Lord ... I shall not ... sleep ... until I find a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob ...”
- 7.5. The bishop places the Antimins, Tabernacle, Gospel Book, Candlesticks, Lampada, and Holy Cross – all of the holy hardware – on the altar and blesses them with Holy Water.
- 7.6. The savanon is removed and will be cut into small pieces to be given to the faithful.
- 7.7. Psalm 92(93) is read “The Lord is king; He is robed in majesty ... Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, forevermore.”

## **8. Procession and Anointing of the Nave**

- 8.1. The baptismal service concludes with a procession around the baptismal font. Echoing this, the consecration service concludes with a procession around the nave by the clergy and acolytes.
- 8.2. The bishop processes around the Nave, preceded by acolytes and the other clergy while the faithful sing “O Lord, save Thy people ...”
- 8.3. One of the concelebrants sprinkles the whole Nave with Holy Water.
- 8.4. The bishop anoints the walls of the nave with Holy Chrism, using a sponge affixed to a long pole, making this symbol



- the Greek letters “Chi” and “Rho”, the initials of the name of Christ.
- 8.5. This circuit around the Church indicates:
  - 8.5.1. that this Church is consecrated forever to God (the circle is the symbol of eternity).
  - 8.5.2. the perimeter of this sacred space; it defines a boundary.
- 8.6. Following the procession the bishop returns to the altar and lights the Eternal Flame before the Tabernacle, from which all the candles and lamps on the Holy Table and throughout the Church are now lit.
- 8.7. The clergy process to the thronos and begin the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy.