

## The Sacraments of Continuation

### Repentance (Confession)

Through this sacrament, sins committed after baptism are forgiven. Repentance is thus often called a "Second Baptism."

In Orthodoxy confessions are heard, not in a confessional booth, but normally before the icon of Christ on the *iconostasis* (the icon screen). This arrangement underscores the Orthodox understanding of confession to Christ himself. The priest may question the penitent concerning his sins and may give him advice. After this, the priest lays his stole on the penitent's head, placing his hand on the stole, and speaks the Prayer of Absolution. The penitent then kisses the priest's stole and departs in peace.

In Orthodoxy there is no strict rule as to how frequently Confession must be made. In some parishes, Confession is required before each reception of the Eucharist. In other parishes, the priest may not require Confession before each Communion.

**1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**John 20:22,23** <sup>21</sup> So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." <sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

### Holy Orders

There are three "Major Orders" in the Orthodox Church: Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. There are also two "Minor orders": Subdeacon and Reader. Only a bishop has the power to ordain. The consecration of a new bishop requires a minimum of two bishops. An ordination also requires the consent of the people; during a part of the service the people acclaim the ordination with the Greek word "axios!" ("He is worthy!").

Orthodox priests are divided into two groups: the "white" (married clergy) or the "black" (monastic). Men seeking ordination must make their minds up to which order they wish to belong. After ordination to a Major order, a monastic cannot marry. If a monastic decides to marry, he must leave the ranks of the clergy. If a priest's wife dies, he must remain unmarried if he wishes to continue serving as a priest. Divorce is not permitted among clergy. Divorced clergy are "laicized."

Only monks may become bishops, if so chosen by the Church. If a priest's wife dies, and he takes monastic vows, he would be eligible to serve as a bishop, if so chosen.

The service of deacons is quite prominent in the Orthodox Church. The diaconate is the lowest order of ordained ministry in the Church. The Orthodox Church does not ordain women.

**Titus 1:5ff** For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—<sup>6</sup> if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. <sup>7</sup> For

a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,<sup>8</sup> but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,<sup>9</sup> holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

**Acts 20:28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church <sup>of</sup> God which He purchased with His own blood.

### Marriage

The Orthodox regard marriage as not only a state of nature but a state of grace. Marriage is a special vocation, requiring a gift of the Holy Spirit. This gift is imparted in Holy Matrimony.

The Marriage Service is divided into two parts: the Office of Betrothal and the Office of Crowning.

The Betrothal involves the blessing and exchange of rings. The second part of the service culminates in the crowning. The crowns, placed on the heads of the couple, are the outward sign of the Sacrament, signifying the grace of the Holy Spirit that they are about to receive. Their crowns are crowns of joy as well as martyrdom, since marriage entails self-sacrifice. At the end of the service, the couple share a cup of wine, recalling the feast of Cana in John 2.

The Orthodox Church permits divorce and remarriage. Since Christ made an exception, so also his Church. The Orthodox regard marriage as life-long and indissoluble. Divorce is regarded as a concession to human sin; it is an act of "economy." The principle of "economy" is employed in the Orthodox Church for the sake of love and compassion.

The Orthodox Canons permit divorce only in the cases of adultery. In practice divorce is granted for other reasons as well. Remarriage in the Church is possible only when Church officials have granted the divorce.

The Orthodox Church strongly discourages the use of birth control devices. While some bishops condemn their use altogether, most leave it to the discretion of the couple, in consultation with their spiritual father.

**Ephesians 5:31,32** "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.

### The Anointing of the Sick

The Sacrament of Anointing, applied to the sick, is based on the words of St. James (5:15-16): "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. . . ." This sacrament has a two-fold purpose: the healing of the body and the forgiveness of sins. The comparable sacrament in the Catholic Church is that of Extreme Unction; however, that sacrament is for the dying only.

The Sacrament of Anointing is not a guarantee of recovery. Sometimes it serves as an instrument of healing. Other times it simply helps the sick person prepare for death.

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**James 5** Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

**Mark 6** So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. <sup>13</sup>And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed *them*.