

How Baptisms and/or Chrismations May be Done on Great and Holy Saturday

The Exorcisms (Service Book, pp. 146-151) are done in the narthex of the church temple on Great and Holy Friday morning following Royal Hours and Typika.

The Baptismal font is filled and all other arrangements for the Mysteries of Holy Baptism and Chrismation are made just prior to the beginning of the Vespertine Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great on Great and Holy Saturday. The candidates and their sponsors do not enter the nave of the church temple but stand in the narthex.

The Litany of Peace at the beginning of the Vespertine Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great (Service Book, pp. 29-31) are replaced with the petitions of the Litany from the Service of Holy Baptism (Service Book, p. 151-154).

During the chanting of the Doxastikon on “O Lord, I have cried...” the clergy process with the book of holy Gospels to the font in the narthex, where they are awaited by the candidates and their sponsors.

At the conclusion of the Doxastikon, the deacon faces east, lifts the book of the holy Gospels and intones “Wisdom! Stand upright!” Then “O gladsome Light” is chanted.

While the Old Testament lessons are read, the priest quietly says the prayer for the blessing of the waters of Baptism “Great art Thou, O Lord” (Service Book, p. 154-156).

At the conclusion of the Old Testament lessons, the Vespertine Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great is interrupted and the priest says aloud, “Peace be to all” and the prayer for the blessing of the oil of Gladness from the Service of Holy Baptism (Service Book, p. 156).

The candidates for the Mystery of Holy Baptism are then anointed with the oil of Gladness, baptized and clothed (Service Book, pp. 157-158).

All candidates – both those newly-Baptized and those to be received by Chrismation alone – are then Chrismated, washed and tonsured (Service Book, pp. 158-162).

Following the tonsuring, the deacon faces east, lifts his orarion and intones, “Let us pray to the Lord.” After the choir responds “Lord, have mercy.” the priest intones the exclamation “For holy art Thou, O our God” (Service Book, p. 98). Then we chant “As many as have been baptized into Christ” as the clergy lead the newly-illuminated into the church temple.

The clergy return from the narthex directly to their places within the sanctuary and the rest of the Vespertine Divine Liturgy of St Basil the Great is served as usual.

The newly-illuminated Orthodox Christians are the first of the laity to receive the Holy Eucharist, coming forward bearing their lighted Baptismal candles and accompanied by their sponsors.