CHAPTER 2

BAPTISM: THE MYSTERY OF REBIRTH THROUGH WATER AND THE SPIRIT

Through the mystery of baptism, instituted by the Savior, the human being who believes in Christ is reborn through water and the Spirit to the true life in Christ and becomes a member of the Church. The sacrament takes place through the threefold immersion of the one being baptized in water and in the name of the Holy Trinity. The celebrant is the priest or bishop, and it is only in the case of an urgent necessity, such as the imminent death of the one to be baptized, that this sacrament can be administered by any member of the Church. All these elements will be clarified in what follows.

A. The Unity between Water and the Holy Spirit as Womb of the New Man

At the beginning of the world, all the definite forms of created existence took their being in the Son from the activity of the Holy Spirit moving over the waters (Gen 1:2; Col 1:16). In a special way the human being was created in the beginning by the will of the Father, according to the image of the Son and in the Son, and through the breath of the Holy Spirit (Gen 1:2; 2:6).

This "original water" of the Bible is not identical with the particular types and instances of water that come after it. Nor is it by any means a material element having its own position over against the creative Spirit and capable of being transformed into anything at all. This

is the "water" that was created by God and that possesses potentially in itself the reasons and potencies of all the defined beings—images of the reasons of the Logos—that will appear through the breathing of the Holy Spirit. Nor was this water by nature wholly passive. It was an undefined energy, illuminated by no determining quality whatsoever but existing within a universal motion, without any kind of concrete or solidified form, possessing in itself, through creation, the reasons of all the forms of existence as these are created and sustained according to the image of the reasons of the creating and sustaining Logos. The Spirit of God, who represents this same fluidity on the spiritual plane, causes this original water to make actually existent the forms imprinted upon it potentially by the creative act of the Logos, in shapes through which the Spirit reveals concretely the images of the reasons of the Logos. Thus the Spirit perfects the creation that was brought into being by the Logos, shining forth from within the Logos, who is on the one hand transcendent, but present within creation on the other. The Holy Spirit, with His own fluidity united to that of the original water of creation, is a force continually giving form to all defined beings of every degree.

In a similar fashion, the Spirit develops further the creation of the human being whose soul has been breathed into his body, he who was molded from clay by the will of the Father and through the activity of the Son and hence created with a special affinity to Him. The form of existence that appeared in the human being was the most exalted of the visible forms of creation, having in itself the image of the Logos as hypostasis, yet holding fast within itself that state of movement through which it was to grow in likeness with the Logos.

Yet even before all this, the universal energy that from the beginning lacked all definition began to take on defined forms, more or less concrete, through the activity of the Spirit. One part of it took the form of water, which, because of its affinity with the original water, represents a mobile reservoir from which all bodies are born, are nourished, and maintain their mobility. Nothing now is born or remains alive, or at least with some kind of mobility, without the presence of the water moved by the Holy Spirit. All organisms that are unable to make use of water become totally rigid and break apart as if they were dead.

After the separation of man from God, the Holy Spirit has not ceased to maintain the human race and to collaborate with human beings in the birth of subsequent generations, for apart from the Spirit nothing can be born. Nevertheless, human beings are now born principally through the flesh and bear the imprint of the flesh on their bodies, that is, the seal of their forebears' existence, an existence that has fallen away from the endless mobility and continuous ascension that marks life in the Spirit.

It is especially true that, without the Holy Spirit, there can be no birth of another human being, that miracle of endless originality. Nature gives birth only to forms that are one-dimensional and monotonous. Never-repeated newness exists only in the spirit. But the human spirit cannot be born without the contribution of the divine Spirit, nor can it remain in a state of continual newness and renewal without the Spirit. "Every human birth is already an absolute novelty: within a fundamentally commonplace layout of matter, there arises a face that is forever unique, like a surfacing of eternity."[1]

But human beings who are born after the advent of original sin, although they are to a certain extent born of the Spirit, are by and large separated from Him. The Spirit indeed assists at their birth and helps to keep them renewed up to a certain point, but this newness has important limits because the Spirit is not found in full communion with them. Hence they easily become more and more hard and opaque and die in both body and spirit. The Spirit is not present intensely within them as the principle of eternal mobility, nor can He keep their spirits participating endlessly in His own mobility or maintain their bodies' capacity to be nourished eternally from the movement of the cosmic water and of the Spirit. The breath of the Spirit no longer blows freely within them, for by the chains of the lower passions they have bound themselves to the repetitive processes of nature and now are only flesh instead of life itself.

Through His Incarnation the Word of God has introduced the Holy Spirit once again, and to the highest degree, into communion with creation. By bringing Himself hypostatically within the framework of creation by taking our flesh upon Himself, or rather, by making Himself the very hypostasis of creation, the Logos brings the Holy Spirit as hypostasis into His humanity and, through it, into creation. From this point onward the human being who opens himself to Christ

through faith can be born again through the all-powerful activity of the Spirit. To this end it was necessary for the Spirit to take part anew and in an incomparable way—as He did not participate even at the creation of Adam—in the birth of the Son of God as man, the birth of the New Man.

In this way nature has been freed from the chains of the rigidity of natural laws and from the inexorability of an eternal death, and also from the power of demonic forces, a power that contributes to this bondage of the freedom of the human spirit and that in the end leads to the death of spirit and body alike. The restoration of the free image of the divine Logos in the human being has been brought about in its fullness by the Logos Himself, who, as hypostasis, takes to Himself—with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit—this image that is His very own. The Spirit extends Himself too, through baptism, into those human beings who believe in Christ, and refashions the image of the Logos within them.

Because human beings were not able to pass over to this new life because their own lives came to an end, they could not return to it except through another birth, one in which the Holy Spirit, the principal factor in this rebirth, would also render intensely spiritual, through baptism, the liquid reservoir of the universe. Although the incarnate Son of God had no need of such rebirth through baptism, for He was born of the Spirit from the beginning, He accepted baptism for our sake so that, in this regard as well, He might be the first human being to be baptized in water and the Spirit. By doing so, in a concrete way He united the Spirit within Him to the water, as womb and sustainer of life, a life now no longer subjected to death because of its complete union with the Spirit. In this way Christ "fulfill[ed] all righteousness" (Matt 3:15), the righteousness with which He was to clothe anew all those who put their faith in Him. He accepted both of these acts in succession because we have to pass through both ourselves. For this reason the Fathers see baptism as based in both the birth and the baptism of the Lord. The baptismal font is for them an image both of the womb of the Mother of the Lord and of the River Jordan.

At Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit unites Himself again, for the sake of Christ, to water and to the whole of creation, which is so intimately connected to Him.[2]

Man is thus reborn as much from Spirit as from cosmic matter, inasmuch as the water represents this matter in a liquid state, as a reservoir and womb for every form of organized existence. Baptism has a cosmic significance. It means that matter itself, brought back to the condition of spiritual mobility, becomes a milieu for the creator Spirit, who is free and ever new in all His acts. The water of baptism is, in a hidden way, the matter of the age to come that will bear within itself the Son as resplendent hypostasis and the Spirit with His life-giving and ever-new energies. But this water has now been made spiritual for the sake of human rebirth and the reestablishment of humanity's relationship with God. The fullness of this spiritualization of water will only be made visible, however, in the age to come, for the purpose of bringing to fulfillment humanity's relationship with God, and this is when that water which was created at the beginning, as a means of developing the relationship between human beings and God, will be shown forth in its final state.

When a man is immersed in this water at baptism, he encounters Christ within it, or he is enhypostatized in Christ; he is fully personalized within the Person of Christ and is filled by the energies of the Holy Spirit that shine forth from Christ. The Son had to be immersed in human nature and, through that nature, in water, so that we, by immersing ourselves in water, can be immersed in His divine life, in His Holy Spirit.[3]

B. The Multiple Efficacy of the Act of Baptism and of the Priest's Declaration

The act of baptism consists in the threefold immersion of the recipient in water, accompanied by the declaration of fact proclaimed by the priest: "The servant of God *N.* is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The nature of the faith-filled declaration and acknowledgement of fact in the words "is baptized" (with its analogous forms in the other sacraments: "is crowned," "is given communion," etc.) shows on one hand that the mystery is celebrated visibly through the act and word of the priest, but invisibly through the activity of Christ. Except in the case of an emergency baptism, the water is consecrated by the Holy Spirit even before the one to be baptized is immersed in it. But the mystery as a

whole, in which the full activity of the Spirit also enters, is celebrated through the threefold immersion of the one to be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. The preliminary prayer for the consecration of the water entreats the Holy Spirit to come down upon it to cleanse it from the activity of demonic powers, so that the water may be prepared for the fullness of the Spirit's descent when the one to be baptized is immersed in it.

Baptism, that is, a person's immersion in water in the name of the Holy Trinity, produces the death of the old man and his rebirth to the true life of Christ. Simultaneously, the person is washed clean of original sin and of all sins committed beforehand, and the image of Christ is imprinted on him. In this way, by uniting himself with Christ, the person is introduced into the Church. All these different effects of the mystery, however, are contained within one another, or are aspects of one and the same comprehensive effect; it is not possible to speak of one of them without also speaking of the rest. It should be mentioned moreover, that they all have a dynamic character.

i. Baptism as the Death of the Old Man and as Rebirth

If we want to speak of these various aspects of baptism in some sort of ordered way, however, we should note that the element that receives most emphasis is almost always rebirth. A person goes forth from baptism as a wholly new existence. He is not renewed in one respect only, but his very existence has become "other." He is like a newborn but on another plane: the plane of a life lived in common with Christ, a life filled with all the potentialities created by the process of spiritualization. His existence now has another foundation and a different movement; in a certain way, it has become enhypostasized in Christ, but it does not lose its freedom to separate itself from Christ. The paradox, however, is that the one baptized remains meanwhile the same subject he was before. Baptism does not produce the birth of a human being who did not previously exist but the rebirth—the being born again—of the same person (Titus 3:5), that is, of someone who also existed beforehand. But in order that the man born for the second time is not to be somehow added to the first one, it is necessary for the former man, the "old man" (Rom 6:6), to die. The birth of the new man follows upon the death of the man born beforehand from the flesh.

Nicholas Cabasilas has remarked that this sequence inverts the order that we see not only in natural man but also in Christ, who first is born and then dies.[4] Christ does not have to die first in baptism, however, in order to be reborn, because even His first birth was without sin and came from the Holy Spirit. He was baptized for our sake, in order that baptism would be based upon the sanctification of the universal waters. He baptizes humanity in Himself, just as He gives birth to it in Himself as the new humanity.[5]

But our baptism is linked both with the death and with the Resurrection of the Lord, which itself is a kind of rebirth for Him, as man, to the life that knows no death. In this way the inverted sequence cited above has its place in some way even in Christ, and hence produces within us too first death and then birth to a new life through our participation in the life and Resurrection of Christ. The Holy Apostle Paul says, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8).

The sequence death-rebirth that occurs in the case of human beings at their baptism is the inverse of the sequence birth-death in the case of Christ only when we understand our death as a death to sin, as the death of the old man. And indeed our death in baptism also has this sense. But our death in baptism has a further meaning: it is *complete surrender of ourselves to God* so that we might live no longer for ourselves but exclusively for God. It is the total renunciation of our own selves, the forgetting of ourselves within a total surrender to God. In this "we have been united together in the likeness of His death" (Rom 6:5). But through this death we are immersed in God, the true life. For in God there is life unending, and by dying to God we enter, in the proper sense of the word, into life. The sequence is now to be seen only in the fact that we intentionally accept death to a life that is not, strictly speaking, life, but rather a life that leads toward death. In the act of making this intention real, however, there appears within us the life of God, authentic life. The death of the old man and the birth of the new man from God are thus virtually simultaneous, and so in baptism there is no real distance separating death from the beginning of the new life. When together with Christ man enters before God as sacrifice, he is made holy, that is, he is filled with the life of God, a theme that St. Cyril of Alexandria develops, following upon the Letter to the Hebrews.

Through this death, we are immersed in a world that transcends any desire on our part to live a life that is gradually drying up. We are immersed beyond the limits of our own creatureliness, which gradually exhausts itself, in the depths of a death that is apophatic, ineffable· or rather, in the depths of a life in God that transcends any defined or limited life, and where we receive the power of the life without death, life in God and for God. In this way what happened in Christ as man happens also in us.

By way of summary, we can say that this inverse sequence occurs in our case for the purpose of distinguishing us from Christ, that is, because of sin; but also for a purpose that is identical with that of Christ's inverse sequence, namely, our immersion as human beings in the unending life of God. This life comes about through our union with Christ as man in His death and in His surrender to God, so as to rise to eternal life in Him. In order for us to be united to Christ in faith, there is added to the death of the old man in us our dying with Christ, understood as a surrender to God and as the reception of eternal life in Him. Thus our death in baptism is not a death identical to that of Christ but only a death "in the likeness of His death," and this is so because we do not die only to be able to surrender ourselves to God but also to be able to die to the old man, the sinner. In this we are not like Christ, the man without sin. Hence our death does not have to mean that we cease continuing to exist, for whereas Christ at His death possessed a life fully perfected in its innocence through His perseverance in blamelessness before His death, we must assimilate ourselves to this life of innocence through the efforts we make after our baptism. Whereas Christ had within Himself this blameless life from birth and continually strengthened it until His death, we receive this life only in baptism, and so we have to work at strengthening it afterward. This is the second reason, closely linked with the first, why our death in baptism is only "in the likeness" of Christ's death.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of an "imitation" of the death and the Resurrection of the Lord in baptism, but he sees the power to effect this imitation as coming from our participation in the condition of the Lord.[6] This imitation is effort, and it can reach as far as an identification with the very actions of the one who first performed them and with the states of being that are produced by these actions. In the act of initial imitation of the dying and rising of Christ, there is concentrated

the whole of the subsequent effort of imitation, and this imitation begins from the moment of baptism. It is meant to continue all one's life, imprinting a pattern of growth in our likeness to Christ that reaches its deepest point in a sacrificial state similar to that which Christ bore on the cross The supreme paradox is that we do not actually suffer what the Lord suffered, but nevertheless we participate in what He suffered and accomplished:

> O strange and inconceivable thing! We did not really die, we were not really buried, we were not really crucified and raised again; but our imitation was in a figure, and our salvation in reality. Christ was actually crucified, and actually buried, and truly rose again; and all these things He has freely bestowed upon us, that we, sharing His sufferings by imitation, might gain salvation in reality. O surpassing loving-kindness! Christ received nails in His undefiled hands and feet, and suffered anguish; while on me *without pain or toil by the fellowship of His suffering* He freely bestows salvation.[7]

If I were to save myself through my own death, Christ would not be my Savior, but I do participate in His suffering. It is prolonged in me in a spiritual manner as I open myself to it through my will.

This also serves to explain the fact that on one hand our baptism is rightly considered to be an image of the birth and baptism of Christ, while on the other hand it is an image of His death and Resurrection.[8] We emerge from the bath of baptism to a life of innocence similar to that of Christ after His birth and baptism, but we come forth to such a life because we have died to sin and have given ourselves over totally to God in the likeness of Christ's death.

The principal effect of baptism is that of being born to a new life on earth. Hence in baptism Christ acts upon us principally as the one who was born and devoted His life totally to God through a death in the sense of self-giving, which would lead Him to another death in the sense of the end of His earthly existence. Christ's birth is united with His death, because in Him—as various older icons of the Nativity of the Lord demonstrate—the reality of sacrifice is present from the time of His birth. Hence in His baptism too Christ experiences with us His birth and Crucifixion as united to one another.

We do not, therefore, die in baptism in the way Christ died at the end of His earthly activity, but we are indeed raised up to a life

of holiness and good works, dedicated to God. For this reason we are also not resurrected in the way that He rose again after His death. The life to which we are raised up from baptism is only a path leading to resurrection. "The birth in Baptism is the beginning of the life to come, and the provision of new members and faculties is the preparation for that manner of life. But it is impossible to be prepared for the future life unless we receive the life of Christ here and now. He became 'the Father of the age to come' (Is. 9:5 LXX)."[9]

Just as we must grow toward resurrection through a life of innocence and through the virtues, so too the condition of death that belongs to the old man and into which we enter through baptism, as well as the new life that we acquire there, has a kind of permanence and growth. To make this growth possible, Christ Himself continues to be with us in His state of sacrifice and resurrection, and He communicates this state of sacrifice and resurrection to us more and more effectively inasmuch as we ourselves grow spiritually. St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "Now the daily bringing of the gifts symbolizes the ceaseless and eternal carrying out of the sacrifice of Christ in every moment and the offering of gifts made by those who are righteous in faith. For there will never lack worshippers, nor will the offering of gifts ever cease, but Christ will offer Himself as one of us and on our behalf, mystically sacrificed in the holy tabernacle. He is our first and all-transcending offering . . . and in the measure that we bear His likeness, we too are consecrated sacrifices, for we are those who have died to sin, insofar as sin has been put to death within us, and we live to God the life of holiness."[10]

After we have accepted death to sin in baptism, together with that death which is the sacrifice of our being offered up to God, we must therefore go on with the process of dying, not the death of the old man, because he has died definitively, but *death as continuous surrender to God together with Christ*. In that case, however, Christ's death is no longer characterized principally as a death for the sake of our sins, the sins of the baptized; He remains in the state of sacrifice, of self-giving to God, so that we too might be with Him in this same sacrificial condition. Within this sacrificial state of His, however, there is most certainly also included the death that He accepted once and for all for the sake of the sins we committed before baptism, as well as for those which we may continue to commit after baptism.

This is the sense in which we must understand what St. Paul says in the Letter to the Romans: "[We know] 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 . . . Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:6, 8–11).

But although it is normal for the one who has died to sin in baptism not to die again, for the old man has died once and for all, nevertheless if he would remain in this definitive state of death in relation to sin, he must continue to bring to God the pure sacrifice that is in Christ, that is, the ceaseless offering of self: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom 12:1). In this same sense, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that we only have entrance to the Father in the state of pure sacrifice, but that we can be in this state only if we are in Christ.[11]

ii. Baptism as the Power of Continuous Spiritual Growth

Here the death we have experienced in baptism shows its power continuously. The prolonging and deepening of the sacrificial state acquired in baptism shows itself in our virtues. Nevertheless, the power for the virtues to be a continuing sacrifice, a ceaseless renunciation of our own selfishness and the living of our lives for the sake of God and our neighbors, comes to us from the power inherent in Christ's sacrificial state. Through the virtues, therefore, we are offering sacrifice continuously to God together with Christ. Again, St. Cyril of Alexandria: "Christ is Himself the holy sacrifice that spreads out a pleasing fragrance through the virtues."[12] The virtues at one and the same time, however, represent the development of the new life in Christ and our own fulfillment according to His likeness.

The death that we experience through the virtues also reveals to us the existence of that death that is bound up with sin, whereas in the case of Christ, the death that He continually shares with us does not represent His resistance in the face of a sin that He might possibly commit but rather a surrendering of Himself to God, made for the sake

of its own inherent value. For we must remember that not even Christ's death on Golgotha was a death to the old man within Him; moreover, we should also not forget that there is no human being who has never sinned again after baptism. Thus, although it might occur in some cases that the death of those who have been baptized is only death as surrender to God and as resistance to sin, these persons' death is also combined with a death to sins they have committed. Indeed, even the death that is shown to be a resistance against sin is also a death to sin, and not merely or purely a self-offering to God.

Clearly, we also receive from Holy Communion the power to live this life of sacrifice that is shown through the virtues, but the virtues grow as a result of baptism too. Through the Holy Eucharist Christ adds to the power that He has given us as a gift in our baptism.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus is another who speaks of the continuance of our sacrifice from the sacrificial power communicated to us in our baptism, and of the identity between this sacrifice and the new life that we lead from the power of Christ. His remarks follow upon the observation that it is necessary for us to activate through all our senses the innocence and the impulse toward good works that were given to us in our baptism: "Let us give to God all our members which are upon the earth; let us consecrate them all . . . Let us bring ourselves entire, let us be reasonable holocausts, perfect sacrifices; and let us not make only the shoulder or the breast a portion of the Priest to take away, for that would be a small thing, but let us give ourselves entire, that we may receive back ourselves entire; for this is to receive entirely, when we give ourselves to God and offer as a sacrifice our own salvation (ἱεροθργῆσαι τὴν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν σωτηρίαν)."[13]

The new life is a gift from above that comes to us through baptism, but it is a gift that must be preserved and developed by our own diligence. "Only be diligent as to your cleansing, 'setting ascension in your heart' [Ps 84:6], and keep with all diligence the remission which you have received as a gift, in order that, while the remission comes from God, the preservation of it may come from yourself also."[14] The gift is also a duty. Anyone who does not keep safe and develop the condition of spiritual cleanness received in baptism makes himself into an abode for even more demons than before the time of his baptism and will be saved only with difficulty (cf. Luke 11:24–26). Whoever has not made use of the powers received at baptism nor of his own powers—some-

thing more easily done due to the reception of these same baptismal powers—demonstrates by a kind of cynicism or bluntness that he is no longer disposed to make any use at all of his powers. And these become totally paralyzed

> You have touched the hem of Christ and your issue has been stayed. Guard, I pray you, the cleansing lest you should again have a hemorrhage, and not be able to lay hold of Christ to steal salvation; for Christ does not like to be stolen from often, though He is very merciful . . . You were raised up from your bed, or rather you took up your bed, and publicly acknowledged the benefit. Do not again be thrown upon your bed by sinning, in the evil rest of a body paralyzed by its pleasures. But as you now are, so walk, mindful of the command, "Behold, you art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to you" if you prove yourself bad after the blessing you have received. You have heard the loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth," as you lay in the tomb; . . . Do not again become dead, nor live with those who dwell in the tombs; nor bind yourself with the bonds of your own sins; for it is uncertain whether you will rise again from the tomb till the last and universal resurrection, which will bring every work into judgment, not to be healed, but to be judged, and to give account of all which for good or evil it has treasured up.[15]

Through these words St. Gregory provides the foundation for the belief that baptism is not to be repeated: this foundation is the obligation to sin no more once we have received the power of avoiding sin. Clearly, there is no affirmation here of the definitive loss of those persons whose later sins do not withdraw them from the body of Christ, that is, the Church, or from relationship with Christ. Those who sin still remain within a certain connection with Christ without needing to be baptized again. The weakness of their connection to Christ is healed through the mystery of penance. However, the sin of deliberately denying Christ and abandoning His mystical body is another thing. Such persons are indeed lost if they do not come back again into the Church, making use of the power they received in baptism. Yet even in this case they are not baptized again, because the grace of baptism is not given a second time. They are not born again twice because even in the physical realm no one is born a second time from the body, nor do persons come into this world a second time bearing original sin.

The virtues are not only a total giving of self to God but also baptized persons' giving of themselves to those who need their help: "If you see someone naked clothe him, in honor of your own garment of incorruption [baptism], which is Christ, . . . If you find a debtor falling at your feet, tear up every document, whether just or unjust. Remember the ten thousand talents which Christ forgave you."[16]

The new life in Christ, received in baptism, is therefore the liberation from the bonds of original sin. Again, this liberation gives to the one baptized the power to sin no more and a readiness to put this power in practice. Yet to put it into practice is a duty of the one who has been baptized. In this sense the baptismal bath has cleansed us from our previous sins but not from those we may commit after baptism, although it has given us the power to cleanse ourselves easily even from these. "Purification must not be played with, but be genuinely impressed upon you; you must be made perfectly bright, and not be merely colored; you must receive the gift, not of a mere covering of your sins, but of a taking them clean away."[17] Unless a human being cooperates on the basis of the power received in the sacraments, these can begin to be considered a kind of magic that provides a person with the right to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, simply because the sacraments have been celebrated over him as if he were a mere object, and with no requirement on his part that he make use of their power through his own effort toward transformation and perfection. They are deemed to be salvific with no requirement that, through the help of the powers of the sacraments, he undergo any real transformation into the image of Christ.

The work of a human being after baptism therefore consists of a kind of assimilation and imprinting of the innocence of Christ upon his own being, in such a way that this innocence can no longer be separated from that being. This explains why there exist different levels at which the divine powers and good deeds of Christ have been appropriated.

iii. Baptism as the Restoration of Christ's Image in Man

The Spirit is united with human beings in the water of baptism not only because *water is the primary foundation of life on the plane of creation* but also because it is the universal means of cleansing, that is, of

bringing to light the authentic image of all concretely existing things, the image from which each takes its own particular beauty.

Sin weakens our reality as persons, especially with regard to what each person possesses distinctively. It pushes us closer to a kind of animal quality that is incapable of expression, something inhuman and impersonal, subject to the automatic movements of repetitive passions. Sin weakens the unity that holds together the constitutive powers of the human being and indeed the very force of his own nature (or being). His nature loses its unity and the power it can lend to his efforts to achieve the good. More and more it is pulled in the direction of what is evil, now by this passion, now by another, drawing the human being closer to nothingness.[18] The body of such a person carries out all its biological functions, but the person himself is virtually absent from his own being, "without recognition and without conscience."[19] The human being descends to the level of a "biological individual."[20] Lacking any ray of light coming from God or going toward God, the human being becomes "darkness," like one "who is nothing."[21] He lives out an existence that is insubstantial, inconsistent, almost like the illusion of existence, a "dead life."[22] Cabasilas speaks of the "deathless dead."[23]

Inasmuch as the weakening of the divine image in the human being, or the weakening of his relation to God, coincides with the weakening of his very nature, there is no difference between the life-giving effect of the water of baptism and its function of cleansing or restoring the image. By the very fact that the image of God is restored in man, the latter recaptures the divine life that knows no death.

Hence the consistency of the human being resides in the image of God that is maintained within him, shining forth from its divine model, and by his own human effort to keep himself in communion with God. If a man loses this divine image or weakens it, he descends into inconsistency, into a state devoid of image. Having become an impersonal chaos without any unity, this man's nature no longer responds in complete earnestness to the call that is addressed to him by name. For him, the name no longer possesses any depth of meaning; it implies no obligation to answer, to make any response before the supreme tribunal of God: he sees only what is on the surface. For him, the name no longer represents a distinct self-consciousness of himself or of a personal responsiveness that rests with him as such. For it is only when a human being hears the voice of God calling him by name that

he truly responds; only then does he take his name seriously. And it is only then that the name becomes for him a distinguishing and formative principle and, most profoundly, a personalizing force.

It is in baptism that the human being enters fully into this relationship with God, a relation of call and response. This is why it is through baptism that he also receives his name, which expresses the relationship with God in which he has been placed and which he must both honor and fulfill. He is baptized by name, not as some generic being: "The servant of God *N.* is baptized." Strictly speaking, because it is Christ who raises man up through baptism to a new life, it is the Lord Himself who brings him into this life, a higher life where man is capable of response; He calls him by name through His power of absolute obligation. He thereby establishes the foundation of a personal relationship with the one baptized, a life of eternal response to His call. The human being is thus pulled out of the indistinct human mass, the general anonymity, to become a person possessed of his own responsibilities, which are founded on the eternal ability to respond that he has before God. He is born into this new life through the will of Christ but also through his own will, through the response he makes to the calling of his name, something that did not occur at the time of his birth in the flesh. It is in baptism that the human being receives his name, and this makes him conscious of his personal responsibility. This name gives him his own deep, personal form, which is the image of Christ in him. The animal is not a person, because it is not the image of God. It is through this quality of being a person or image of God that the human being responds to God, developing and maintaining himself within this responsible relationship with God. Hence this unique personal form of each human being imprints itself more and more upon him, and in it the very form of Christ is also being imprinted. But this occurs through the exercise of a man's responsiveness to the call of Christ as he increasingly gives a positive answer to what Christ is asking of him.

Yet already in baptism the human being has received the form of Christ within his own personal form, because he has entered into relationship with Him. The one baptized will always remember the connection between himself and Christ, the bond linking his own image and that of Christ imprinted upon him. In this sense he has already clothed himself with Christ from the time of his baptism. Christ has

given him His own appearance, and the man must see to it that this aspect of Christ in him is always becoming clearer as he strives to live his life more and more according to the model of Christ.

Nicholas Cabasilas says,

> "New birth" and "new creation" mean nothing else than that those who are born and created have been born previously and have lost their original form, but now returned to it by a second birth. It is as when the material of a statue has lost its shape and a sculptor restores and refashions the image, since it is a form and shape effected in us by Baptism. It engraves an image and imparts a form to our souls by conforming them to the death and resurrection of the Savior . . . For until gold, silver, and bronze are softened and melted by fire, they are mere materials to the onlooker, so that they are called merely by the name of the material, "gold" or "silver" or "bronze." But when each acquires a shape from the blows of the iron tools it is no longer the material only, but the shape that appears to the onlookers, just as clothes become apparent to them before the bodies that they cover. Accordingly each receives a proper appellation, such as "statue," "ring," or something else that no longer indicates the material but the appearance or form only.
>
> Perhaps this is why the saving day of Baptism becomes the name's day for Christians. It is then that we are formed and shaped, and our shapeless and undefined life receives shape and definition. Besides, we become known to Him who knows His own . . . On this day we hear the significant word, our name, as though then we were properly known, for to be known by God is to become truly known.[24]

The image of Christ is a genuine and luminous garment; it is Christ Himself. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). This garment does not remain in contact only with the surface of the skin like ordinary clothes, but it imprints itself on our whole being. It is Christ Himself, but at the same time it is a special relationship with Christ, personal and unique to each human being. The human being therefore receives a name proper to himself and knows that now, when he is called by that name, it is he himself who is being addressed integrally, that he must respond with his whole being. This garment must not be soiled, for that would be to defile the image of Christ and also our own image as person, to tarnish it once again by

that same defilement. The baptismal garment represents Christ, but it also represents us who have been clothed in a personal way with the image of Christ, and this is so because in all the words and acts that show who we are to others, it is not only the Christ who has been imprinted on us that is made visible but also our own image of ourselves, refashioned as persons according to His image.

As mentioned, the image of Christ, and the image we have received from the imprint of Christ's image upon us, increases in its clarity through the response that we make to Christ's call to imitate Him in His deeds. Christ makes this appeal, however, through the preaching of the apostles and the ministers of the Church who portray among us the model of Christ (Gal 3:1). Hence St. Paul declares, "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19). Christ will indeed take shape within the faithful and at the same time give them the personal form that marks them as having lived in a unique responsiveness of their own. Such persons are no longer in bondage to "those [things] which by nature are not gods" in the manner of those who do "not know God," for they "have known God, or rather are known by God" (Gal 4:8–9); that is, He calls them by name, beginning from baptism and continuing through the whole course of their life.

The call that Christ addresses to the Christian beginning at his baptism certainly reaches, through the preaching of the apostles and the ministers of the Church, to his very conscience, and there it urges him to respond to the claims of Christ in every situation. This appeal is also addressed to the Christian through his neighbors, who at any moment may have need of his spiritual and material help. In all the circumstances of life, Christ addresses Himself to us and, through all these calls and positive responses, the image of Christ and our own personal image imprinted with the image of Christ become clearer and clearer.

The image of the human being as person depends on, and is imprinted to such a degree by, the image of Christ, and his response to Christ's call grows to such an extent from the power of Christ's call, that the baptized Christian—if he continues in this state and deepens it—can say with St. Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The human being has henceforth renounced living only for himself, just as Christ renounced living a life that is not dedicated to God and to each one who believes in Him.

St. Paul also speaks of these matters: of the increasingly clear impression of the image of Christ upon the baptized; of this process as bringing to light their genuine and personal faces from out of the obscurity of an undefined and formless generality, or from the disorder of the lower impulses. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). As we mirror more and more the image of Christ and thereby make our own personal image more and more distinct, we become increasingly luminous, for our image as person is the image of freedom, of conscience and responsiveness, and in these things the glory of the image of Christ as Person is reflected. In these same qualities can be seen the strongly accentuated features of an existence lived for the sake of God and for the sake of every good that God has willed that we may perform it for the benefit of others.

Therefore, baptism has come to mean our "renewal," our exodus from a realm of monotonous repetition. But renewal is not a static given. It is a life lived in a continuous newness, in an unending joy that derives from this newness, and in one or another of the forms through which our goodness and love become manifest. For the person is always new through his responsive freedom and his ceaseless love, always inventive in doing something new for God and for the good of his neighbor. In this he differs from the old man, who is locked always within the same fossilized state, enslaved to the monotony of the same old passions and selfishness, with nothing new either to say or show to anyone else. "You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col 3:9–10). The new man progresses toward the fullness of the knowledge of God, of his neighbors, and of himself; through his love for God and his fellow men, he advances toward the fullness in which Christ is to be found.

The Fathers gave baptism the name "illumination." By this name they sought to bestow upon the human face a markedly personal and responsive character and an increasingly profound consciousness of the eternal meaning of personal life and of its continuation, and also a consciousness of the eternal meaning of the whole of reality in God. This is what is lacking to the person who thinks that everything comes to an end in death, that the whole meaning of human life is to

be reduced to the satisfaction of a few bodily needs, always basically the same ones. Through baptism the human being is illuminated; in baptism he is penetrated by the light of the Word of God, who, because He is eternal, has bestowed through the Incarnation the gift of eternity upon the human nature that He assumed and raised up, and upon all those who accept Him in baptism.

Those born in baptism receive the image of Christ and are given the possibility of developing the personal character of their lives through their responsiveness to Christ, and through their contemplation and imitation of Him.

But a human being is not accepted by Christ at baptism within this personal relationship unless he has shown, after a certain amount of preparation, that he himself desires this; unless he takes it upon himself, through a corresponding obligation to respond through the whole of his life to the call of Christ, to use the power that is given him in baptism—namely, union with Christ—so as to live in conformity with the will and the example of the Lord. *Life at this level of personal responsiveness begins from the very moment of baptism.* From the outset God takes man seriously. He wants him to be a responsible person. The human being has to show that he desires a life like this before he receives the power to live it in baptism. Thus, according to St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *a "covenant" is struck between God and man*:

> For, to say it all in one word, the virtue of Baptism is to be understood as a covenant with God for a second life and a purer conversation. And indeed all need to fear this very much, and to watch our own souls, each one of us, with all care, that we do not become liars in respect of this profession. For if God is called upon as a Mediator to ratify human professions, how great is the danger if we be found transgressors of the covenant which we have made with God Himself . . . If after baptism the persecutor and tempter of the light assails you (for he assailed even the Word my God through the veil, the hidden Light through that which was manifested), you have the means to conquer him. Fear not the conflict; defend yourself with the Water; defend yourself with the Spirit, by Which all the fiery darts of the wicked shall be quenched.[25]

This comprehensive obligation assumed by human persons in baptism is given expression through the declaration repudiating Satan and

all his works as well as through the pledge of allegiance made to Christ, and then by the more specific confession of faith in Christ, which takes place in the recitation of the Creed. In this way the one to be baptized assumes the obligation not to serve the purposes of Satan any longer in the world by committing evil acts, but rather pledges himself to defend the faith in Christ and to live in accordance with that faith, following the example of Christ.

The person thus consents to no longer be the slave of Satan or of any of his evil forces but instead the servant of the loving Christ, given over to Him totally. His freedom, therefore, is no longer chained to the passions but is free to seek the authentic growth and continuous newness of the person.[26] Hence in his declaration at the moment of baptism, the priest says, "The servant of God *N.* is baptized . . ." Both this quality of being "servant" of God and the person's name itself are mentioned in all the mysteries.

In the eyes of God, the human being is person and as such is free. God knows him as person, but He knows him as such precisely because he became a partner with God in a loving relationship of steadfast fidelity, and because he committed himself to live a life of loving responsiveness before God. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free" (Gal 5:1), and "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty" (Gal 5:13), or again: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). St. Paul speaks in this way, and yet at the same time always refers to himself as the "slave" or "servant" of Christ and to Christians as "those who are in Christ" (Rom 8:1). Those who are baptized "have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom 6:18), a righteousness that is goodness and love and cannot be exercised without a great effort to free oneself from the passions, which are the real chains binding a man. This slavery is a free slavery, a service offered on the part of an intense desire to remain free and to work according to the law of freedom and of faithful love (cf. Jas 1:25).

iv. Baptism as the Gate of Entrance into the Church

But if human beings are called to a life of personal struggle to defend and grow in their relationship with Christ, and to strengthen themselves as persons freed from the passions that are common to a fallen and hardened nature, that does not mean that they are called to an

individualistic kind of existence, which is itself an enslavement to self-will and pride. It is also a paradox that precisely within the form of existence that is common in the passions of a debased nature, there appear certain divergences that split human nature apart, in fact splitting it into identical fragments devoid of any authentically personal character. By contrast, the true form of personal existence is a form of existence in communion, a communion within which each person grows in the originality of his own self-giving in the measure that he surrenders himself and in accordance with the distinct gift that he has received, and to the degree that he puts himself totally at the service of others.

For, in the one who receives baptism, the raising up of the old man from death to that state of true life that belongs to the new man, which is lived in a personal relationship of responsiveness to Christ, means that he is raised up to a state in which this responsiveness is activated concretely in his relations with the rest of humanity, and in a particular way with the community of those who constitute the Church, the communitarian body of the Lord. To adhere to Christ is to become one of His members in the body of the Church; it is to build oneself as a living stone into the dwelling place of the Lord, resting on the foundation of the apostles, having the same faith, the same way of life, illuminated by the same Christ, so that as a consequence the same image of Christ dwells in and is visible in all, although Christ manifests Himself differently through each person by the way he fulfills the service corresponding to the gift he has received. In one of the baptismal prayers addressed to God, the priest says the following: "Form the image of Your Christ in him (*her*) who is about to be reborn through my unworthiness, and edify him (*her*) on the foundation of Your Apostles and Prophets, never to be torn down. But implant him (*her*) as a sapling of truth in Your Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, never to be uprooted."[27] It is only by abiding in the Church that the newly baptized abides in Christ.

Hence after the baptism, which is celebrated in the narthex of the Church, the newly baptized is led before the holy royal doors, where he communes of the body and blood of the Lord as a sign of full incorporation into the Church, and, if he is male, he is led into the altar,[28] where the priest takes him in a circle around the holy table. This symbolizes his introduction into the highest mysteries

of the knowledge of Christ, so that he too may become a preacher of faith in Christ and the priest of his family, that is, the one who bears primary responsibility for the faith and life in the church that is his household, the first to bring sacrifice and to sacrifice himself on their behalf, just as Christ is this for the sake of the Church in general (Eph 5:25) and the bishops and priests fulfill the same role as the visible instruments of Christ.

The introduction of the recipient of baptism into the Church is signified in a special way by the fact that baptism is celebrated by the priest or bishop. Through his ordination, the celebrant represents not only Christ but also the Church. He never represents Christ in isolation from the Church but a Christ whose activity radiates out from the Church and works within her in order to bring within the Church those being baptized. Hence *the valid celebration of baptism does not depend on the personal worthiness of the priest* so long as the Church upholds him as its minister: for it is in the name of the Church that he celebrates the sacraments.

Obviously, this does not mean that the priest or bishop should be careless in fulfilling his ministry. Such unworthiness will certainly not go unpunished, for God Himself, by speaking within the conscience of the priest or bishop, takes care to keep his unworthiness within certain bounds. In this way God keeps the Church as a whole connected to Himself.

To those who were avoiding baptism at the hands of certain priests because they believed that these men were unworthy, St. Gregory of Nazianzus had this to say:

> Do not ask for credentials of the preacher or the baptizer. For another is his judge, and the examiner of what you cannot see. For man looks upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart. As for yourself, let every one be trustworthy for purification, so he is only one of those who have been approved, not of those who are openly condemned, and not a stranger to the Church. Do not judge your judges, you who need healing; and do not make nice distinctions about the rank of those who will cleanse you, or be critical about your spiritual fathers. One may be higher or lower than another, but all are higher than you . . . The grace of Baptism is the same, and any one may be your consecrator who is formed in the same faith.[29]

The fact that the priest who celebrates baptism does so as an authorized representative of the Church enables the sacrament to be celebrated in the absence of a priest—only in urgent cases and because baptism is an absolute necessity for salvation—by any other layperson who is a member of the Church, as a general representative of the Church and a member of the universal priesthood. For baptism signifies the arms of the Church stretched out to receive those who wish to come into her bosom and escape from the waves of everlasting despair, and these arms can take the concrete form of any member of the Church.

With regard to the recognition of baptism celebrated outside the Church, the freedom with which the Church has acted in accepting a baptism of this kind, performed by way of a threefold immersion or pouring or sprinkling of water in the name of the Holy Trinity, shows that when the Church by economy[30] receives within herself a person who has undergone such a baptism, she is able to accord to it a validity that extends over the outer shell of what was celebrated the grace-filled environment of the Church, which existed in a more or less marked way in the Christian denomination from which the baptized person came. The recognition of such a baptism on the part of the Church represents a kind of delayed completion of the external dimension of the rite through the power of God, which the person baptized outside the Church now receives when he places himself in full agreement with the faith of the Church. Nevertheless, the Church can indeed baptize even those who come to it with an external baptism, and this for two reasons: the first is that the Christian group from which the person has come may lack the fullness of grace and of Christ's saving activity; the second is that it may lack the fullness of faith.

Baptism puts the one who receives it into an intimate relationship not with Christ alone but with the entire Holy Trinity, for Christ is the Son of the Father and makes us, in Him, sons of the Father too, by freeing us from our slavery to the impersonal elemental spirits and passions (Gal 4:3, 9), which are looking to find satisfaction not in the supreme communion of the Trinity but in a blind and individualistic sensuality, stirred up by these elemental spirits and leading us to death. Now it is the Spirit who gives warmth to the love we have for the Father, and it is the Father who strengthens us with His own eternal power and love. The Spirit brings the Father's love for the Son and the

Son's love for the Father into our own hearts, which have been united to the Son, and that is why we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and thereby immersed within the mutual love and common power of the three supreme Persons.

C. The Absolute Necessity of Baptism for Salvation

If it is baptism that, through the union with Christ, does away with the substance of that original sin that separated us from God and was stamped upon our very nature, and if, apart from this union with Christ, there is no entry into the Kingdom of God, then it is clear that baptism is absolutely necessary for our salvation (John 3:3). It is also absolutely necessary for children, for they too, through their birth in the flesh, share in this same state of separation from God, and so they too must pass over from the condition of their bodily birth and their destiny to perdition into the condition of those born of water and the Spirit and, consequently, of the saved (John 3:5–6). Insofar as no one is clean of defilement even if his earthly life lasts only a single day (Job 14:4), children too clearly share in this stain, not through their own personal sin but through their birth. It is only Christ who, as man, differs from us in this respect, for He was made like us in every respect except that of sin (Heb 5:14). St. Paul considers that all men without exception are subject to sin because of Adam, and all must, in baptism, bury the old man of sin in order to be born as new men in Christ. The fact that death has dominion over all is for him a sign that sin and its punishment reign over all, for death is the wages of sin: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12; cf. v. 15). He goes on to say to Christians, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:11). Through baptism the sinful body has been destroyed (cf. Rom 6:6), and now, even if we die physically, we are no longer subject to eternal death: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:8). We will live together with Christ, "for death no longer has dominion over Him" (cf. Rom 6:8, 9).

We cannot receive this new and eternal life with Christ except through baptism "in the likeness of His death." Only "if we have been

united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom 6:5).

Children cannot be deprived of this dying with Christ to the old man within them, nor of the foundation of the eternal life that Christ has placed in every human being.

It is true that children are not able to offer to Christ the confession of their faith as an opening up of their very being to the indwelling of Christ within it, but nevertheless they do belong to a Christian family that is living in the Church, and no barrier of an individualistic consciousness has yet been raised up between the children's spiritual life and that of their family or of the Church herself. This life of the Spirit penetrates more and more into their own being without hindrance. It likewise enters into children belonging to those Protestant denominations that do not practice child baptism, through the concern for Christ that exists within these groups. If the children from these denominations later come to decide to make their own profession of faith, they will do it on the basis of that faith that has penetrated within them beginning from their earliest years.

Baptism is also an act by which the spiritual life of the family penetrates into the children. When the members of a family make a particular confession of faith, it is certain that the children too will do the same. It is a matter of time: what has been planted within them and is found as a potentiality within them will come to manifest itself later and pass into act.

No one knows exactly the point at which a child consciously appropriates to himself the content of his family's spiritual life. The time when he begins to give expression to it can be determined, but before that moment he has already appropriated it in its specific essentials. When a child begins to speak, he articulates what he has appropriated at a much earlier time, gradually, beginning even from his earliest days. The words and phrases that have taken root within him and that he in turn expresses at a particular moment are not neutral or empty of all content; they bear the seal of a content that has a certain specificity. Moreover, this content took root within the child not only through words but also through acts and attitudes. The act of baptism can be considered one of these. In any case, it is a determining factor, through the spiritual life that the family lives, a spiritual life that implants itself within the child.

As the child appropriates the spiritual content of his family, he also appropriates the faith that is stamped upon this content and is determinative for it. The child longs to receive this faith and shows it openly, willingly, and joyfully. He is glad to show that he too is like the older members of the family and can manifest his faith together with them. Thus he can be baptized because of the faith of the family, which, without any doubt, he himself will make his own.

Children open themselves more easily to the faith that is confessed by their family members, more easily than do adults or even adolescents, because individualistic pride has not had time to develop in them, nor do they yet feel the constraint produced by the legalism of nature or by the stumbling blocks of the lower impulses. They believe that everything is possible, and they take joy in all that is beautiful and good. The boundary between the natural and what transcends nature, between the narrowing of human vision and man's power to use his freedom to create and open up new paths and horizons, has not yet been fixed. Indeed, children delight in these new horizons, but on the other hand they do have to be told about them. Taking into account this impulse that children have toward the good, toward the realm of faith, the Savior asked of adults only that they let the children come to Him and not impede them. This implies, however, that adults inform children about Christ. Jesus' words "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them" (Matt 19:14) also mean "Make Me known to the children!"

A child's ability to be in communion with Christ on the basis of the faith of those closest to him also demonstrates the fact that adults can share in the gifts of Christ through the faith of others, as in the raising of Jairus' daughter, the healing of the sick child or servant (παῖς) at Capernaum, and other similar cases. The contribution of those who are near to the salvation of their neighbors is so necessary that, for example, the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda could not take advantage of the water's saving power because he had no one who could be the means of helping him—except Jesus Christ, who healed him in an exceptional way.

It is clear, when the Gospel made its way into the world for the first time, that it was the adults who had to be won over and urged to have themselves baptized. Hence the New Testament speaks directly of the baptism of adults. But when these adults were being baptized, their

children were baptized with them as well. The general phrase used in Acts 16:33 of the jailer at Philippi, "And immediately he and all his [family] were baptized," certainly includes the children too. Similarly, "I [St. Paul] also baptized the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor 1:16). On the basis of the apostolic tradition close to him as the spiritual grandchild of St. John, St. Irenaeus declares that children (*parvulī, infantes*) are also baptized.[31]

To all this we should add that through everything that is communicated to the child, the Christian family also seeks to protect the child from all kinds of dangers and temptations toward evil and to give him the power to fight against them. Baptism is the decisive force that accustoms him to think of himself as a Christian and as duty-bound to act like one, by struggling against temptations before they can enslave him to evil habits. Here is the argument St. Gregory of Nazianzus proposes on behalf of baptizing children:

> Have you an infant child? Do not let sin get any opportunity, but let him be sanctified from his childhood; from his very tenderest age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the Seal on account of the weakness of nature? O what a small-souled mother, and of how little faith! Why, Anna even before Samuel was born [1 Sam 1:11] promised him to God, and after his birth consecrated him at once, and brought him up in the priestly habit, not fearing anything in human nature, but trusting in God.[32]

Circumcision, itself an image or type of baptism, was carried out on the eighth day for all male children in Old Testament times on the basis of the revelation given by the same God who was accomplishing the plan of salvation in stages. The Lord Himself was circumcised on the eighth day and on the fortieth day brought to the temple and "presented to the Lord" (Luke 2:21–22) as a model for all infants. On this occasion, He was blessed by the righteous Symeon, of whom the Scripture says, "And the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25). This benediction is likewise an imparting of the Holy Spirit upon the one who is blessed. Any argument against infant baptism would necessarily include our ceasing to give these blessings to children as well, and that would be absurd.

The Gospel says of John the Baptist, "So the child grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80), and this was clearly because he was raised

in a house belonging to God and characterized by prayer, and because he had been circumcised and dedicated to God. In the same way, the infant Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52); from His human infancy He grew and possessed grace, for it was only as a man that He could have an infancy.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISMATION: "THE SEAL OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

A. The Link between Baptism and Chrismation

This mystery is so closely linked to the mystery of baptism that it would be possible to say that together they form a single whole with two distinct parts. It is a kind of continuation of baptism, and for this reason, unlike the other mysteries, it has no separate introduction[1] of its own within the liturgical rites of the Church. After the baptism and the clothing of the baptized person, the priest goes on to recite a prayer in which he asks God to make a further gift of the seal of the gift of the Holy and All-Powerful Spirit to the one newly illuminated through water and the Spirit. Then he anoints with holy chrism the principal organs of the one baptized and says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."[2]

The close connection between chrismation and the mystery of baptism is also evident in the fact that after the anointing with holy chrism, the priest circles the *analogion* three times with the one newly baptized and chrismated, singing, "As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia" (cf. Gal 3:27). The same connection is illustrated in the very act of anointing the newly baptized with the holy chrism; the priest says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," but he does not make mention of the name of the one anointed, as he does in the case of all the other sacraments. This is considered to have happened already at the moment of his immersion in the water.

A further link between the two mysteries can be found in the prayer said by the priest, who, after asking that the one "newly illuminated through water and the Spirit" be vouchsafed the grace of "being born anew" and receiving as well "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," goes on to ask, "Keep him (*her*) in your sanctification; confirm him (*her*) in the Orthodox faith; deliver him (*her*) from the Evil One and all his devices. And guard his (*her*) soul, through redeeming fear of You, in purity and uprightness, so that pleasing You in every word and deed, he (*she*) may become a child and heir of Your heavenly kingdom."[3] The petition is, therefore, that through the gifts received in baptism, the one born anew may be protected and strengthened in a twofold way: first, in the struggle against the Evil One whose desire it will be to deprive the newly baptized of these gifts; and second, in the keeping of the promise he has made to preserve the faith professed at his baptism and the state of purity and righteousness in which he was established.

The preservation of these gifts, however, demands effort. That is why Nicholas Cabasilas says that through the holy chrism, the powers given to a man through baptism become activated: "It would be fitting, then, that those who are thus spiritually created and begotten should obtain an energy suitable to such a birth, and a corresponding animation. This the sacred rite of the most divine chrism accomplishes for us. It activates the spiritual energies, one in one man, another in another, or even several at the same time, depending on how each man is prepared for this mystery."[4]

The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann sees the connection between chrismation and baptism not so much in the idea that chrismation activates the powers received in baptism as in the relationship between life and birth. He says,

> In the Orthodox Church, what we call today the second sacrament of initiation—that of chrismation (or confirmation)—has always been an integral part of the baptismal Liturgy. For it is not so much another sacrament as the very fulfillment of baptism, its "confirmation" by the Holy Spirit. It can be distinguished from baptism only insofar as life can be distinguished from birth. The Holy Spirit *confirms* the whole life of the Church because He is that life, the manifestation of the Church as the "world to come," as the joy and peace of the Kingdom . . . Confirmation is thus the personal Pentecost of man, his entranc

> into the new life in the Holy Spirit, which is the true life of the Church. It is his ordination as truly and fully man, for to be fully man is precisely to belong to the Kingdom of God.[5]

But this new life reveals itself as the power to preserve and grow in the state of baptismal purity and in the good works that are meant to be developed through the virtues, which find their highest expression in love. It is not merely a feeling of euphoria; it is a steadfastness in thought and good deeds, an authentic living of the universal priesthood by which the baptized offer their lives as a gift to God.

St. Cyril of Alexandria gives expression to this identification of the life given us through chrismation with the universal priesthood—that is, the activity toward the good that we are meant to carry out—when he says,

> By washing Aaron with water, he [Moses] dresses him with the holy cloak of the priestly office [Exod 29:1–9]. Likewise for us, after being washed in baptism and renouncing all uncleanness, we have been enriched with the grace from heaven above and received the cloak of gladness according to the words "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" [Rom 13:14] . . . In the same way priests were consecrated by being washed with water and anointed with oil, then they were dressed with consecrated garments and their hands were sanctified so that they may be worthy to offer sacrifices purely and without blemish. But their heads were anointed beforehand according to the words "You anoint my head with oil" [Ps 23:5]. In the same way our minds were enriched by the granting of the Spirit . . . and we have been sanctified and adorned with the grace from above and have been anointed for the divine perfection so that we may courageously offer to God our spiritual gift with pure and unblemished hands.[6]

Christians, because they have been anointed like Christ, or have participated in His anointing, are priests too. But first of all, the priest is purified in mind and hands, that is, in the source of his thoughts and in the means whereby these thoughts are given their fulfillment, and then he is given the power of the Spirit that enables him to be active, clean in mind and hands, in the work of bringing to God the sacrifices of thoughts and good deeds for the benefit of the Church and of his fellow men.

With regard to the universal priesthood received by the faithful through the mystery of chrismation, St. Macarius of Egypt says, "Men

consecrated through anointing become Christians so that they may become kings, priests, and prophets of the heavenly mysteries."[7]

Through this mystery, the one united through baptism with the Church in Christ moves from a union that to some degree is potential to an actual union. This is a new step forward in strengthening the unity of the Church in Christ.

B. The Special Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Chrismation

Chrismation inaugurates an epiphany or manifestation of Christ in the conduct of the one who has been baptized. This epiphany shows forth the light of the Spirit of Christ shining upon the baptized person's being; it shows him to be the active image and living dwelling place of Christ, for chrismation helps the one baptized to make the image that has been imprinted upon him as a potentiality into something real and active. Accordingly, it can be said that through chrismation it becomes apparent to us that we will actualize the gifts we received in baptism not only through the strength of our own powers but also with the help of the Spirit. This help begins immediately after baptism.

If we did not have the help of the Spirit actively assisting us, we would be able to activate our baptismal gifts only with great difficulty, or indeed not at all. If the Spirit were not in continuous communication with us—a communication that began with the mystery of chrismation—it would hardly be possible for us to develop our life in God. In fact, our dialogue with God implies the activity of both partners and a continuous active communication between both in the Holy Spirit.

In the same way that the death of the old man through the birth of the new in baptism is not just a "given," static in character, but is something filled with endless possibilities, so the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is the beginning of His continuous descent upon and for the sake of each person who enters into the Church and remains within her. This descent represents the setting in motion and, through a reciprocal communion, the maintaining in movement of that death and birth in which we have participated at our baptism.

In affirming the idea that baptism is completed by chrismation, St. Cyril of Jerusalem goes so far as to say that the one baptized is hardly

to be called a "Christian" before he receives chrismation: "Having been counted worthy of this holy chrism, you are called Christians, verifying the name also by your new birth. For before you were deemed worthy of this grace, you had properly no right to this title, but were advancing on your way towards being Christians."[8] What St. Cyril declares here is explained by the fact that at that time baptism was neither envisaged nor celebrated as a sacrament separate from the sacrament of chrismation; it was later in the Christian West that this began to be the case. On the other hand St. Cyril's statement also implies that for him no distinction can be made between the quality of being a member of the Church, in other words, a Christian, and of being a person completely united with Christ, something that occurs through chrismation. Through the holy mystery of chrismation, the believer himself becomes another Christ, becomes the likeness of Christ—which after all means the "Anointed" (*Christos*)—and hence he is also an anointed one, or a Christian (*christianos*).

In the Old Testament, the anointing with oil was considered to be the means of imparting certain divine powers to prophets, priests, and kings for the purpose of maintaining the people within the divine covenant. Christ is the Anointed One *par excellence* because, as man, He receives not just a power from the Spirit but the whole of the Spirit as hypostasis, so that He may be the supreme Prophet, High Priest, and King. He is all this so that He may introduce the people of God within the divine familiarity and maintain them there as a people built up from the sons of God in Christ the Son, and so that He may lead them to the fullness of life in the Spirit of God's love and in God's love, lived for all eternity. St. Cyril of Jerusalem says that after Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, "the Holy Ghost in the fullness of His being lighted on Him, like resting upon like."[9]

Christ was thus anointed with the fullness of the Spirit, but by applying to Himself a passage from Isaiah (61:1–2), He Himself both announces and interprets this anointing as His being sent as man to act in the service of God and for the sake of the salvation of men: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19).

Another witness to Christ's anointing with the Spirit, for the sake of the service and activity that He undertook, is provided by the community in Jerusalem and the Apostle Peter, who says the following, among other things, in the testimony he gave about Jesus to Cornelius: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38).

A consequence of Christ's indwelling at baptism in those who believe is that they too participate in the anointing with His Spirit, an anointing whose purpose is to strengthen them in the new life and to seal them in it. St. Paul gives witness to this understanding of the event from the very beginning of the Church's life: "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" (2 Cor 1:21–22). To Paul's testimony we can add that of St. Peter: "Let every one of you be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38), and a later passage in the Acts of the Apostles that says that Peter and John, sent by all the apostles in Jerusalem, laid their hands on those whom the Deacon Philip had baptized "and they received the Holy Spirit" (see Acts 8:15–17). The example of the Lord and the practice of the apostles can be considered sufficient proof that this mystery was instituted by the Lord Himself.

Following the example of the Lord, we too have Christ within us as we come up out of the water of baptism, although He is not yet visibly resting upon us. Hence the Spirit of Christ immediately descends upon us, or shines forth from Christ within us, in order to show that we too are sons of God, but also in order that we too, with His help, might confirm this sonship of ours through our subsequent actions, just as Christ did after His own baptism. With the help of the Spirit whom we have received, we begin immediately to activate the quality we now possess of being teachers and prophets of God's Kingdom, priests who bring the offering of ourselves and of nature as a sacrifice to God, and kings reigning over our own nature and the nature of the world, so that we may never again be mastered by the world or led to use our natural powers in a way that pursues only our own passions and denies our freedom. If the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ as man occurs at the same moment as the reopening of the heavens before the Second Adam, and they remain open eternally—or are opened in a fuller

way than they were even for Adam before the Fall—then through the anointing with the holy chrism, itself full of the Holy Spirit, the open heavens are revealed to every baptized person, because he is united with Christ. Now there is no longer any boundary separating the life of the creature who is united with Christ from the heavenly order of the Spirit. For just as after the Incarnation the Father acknowledged His Son, even as man, as His own Son in a visible manner—that is by the act of sending down the Holy Spirit upon Him—so He also acknowledges us who have united ourselves with Christ in baptism; He bestows this quality of sonship upon us by anointing us with the Holy Spirit and by giving us the help we need to show that we are in fact His sons. Accordingly, through the descent of the Spirit upon us, we too have the heavens opened for us, that is, the mysteries of the endless life to come that transcend the laws of nature. This occurs within a process of discovery that is actualized for us in stages and in which we will share fully in the life to come, and within this process we can give prophetic testimony to the coming of that life in its fullness, and we all can interpret the experience of its promise, in the same way that the apostles prophesied at Pentecost. We can show, through the new life we lead, that even in our very nature we are prophets of the life to come. With the coming of Christ and the reception of His Spirit, it has been revealed to men that a life limited within the boundaries of nature and the present age—a life that ends in death—is not all there is. The light and the power of the eternal life to come in the Spirit have burst forth from within it, and the revelation of the end of this age has begun. St. Peter spoke of all this on the day when the Holy Spirit descended: "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy'" (Acts 2:16–18).

In general, the Holy Spirit, who is received in the mystery of chrismation, is the point of loving communication between us and the Father, a communication that is eternally new and always growing. This is what is meant by the "heavens opened" and the quality of being "sons" that the Spirit communicates to us. In this way, He bestows upon us a filial sensitivity that becomes more and more delicate within

our relationship to the Father, as well as the sense that we are brothers in God with our fellow men. The Spirit, who bears the paternal love of the Father before the Son and who has become the bearer of that same love between the Father and Christ as man, also makes Himself, for our sake in Christ, the bearer of that same love and sensitivity that are characterized both by ardor and by gentleness. Only thus does He set in motion, in a continually ascending way, the powers that we have received in baptism in order to fulfill the will of the Father; to this end the Spirit makes us come alive by means of our wills and—also through our wills—impresses ever more deeply the image of the Son upon the whole of our being, causing us to love the Father as the Son does and making us, like Him, obedient to the Father. In this sense the Spirit received in this sacrament makes us holy. In this same way, however, the personal image of the human being becomes clearer and clearer, more luminous, and casts off the general haze of nature and mere potentiality. For the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power.

It can be seen in the Acts of the Apostles that the mystery of anointing with holy chrism inaugurates for Christians a continuous and ever-increasing cooperation between themselves and the Holy Spirit. This cooperation has as its purpose the development of the new life received at baptism and therefore means that Christians devoted to Christ are living a perpetual Pentecost, a continuous participation in His Spirit. When the Jerusalem community, after thanking God for having anointed His Son Jesus, asked Him to give them the strength to speak the word "with all boldness," the immediate result of this, even before the prayer was finished, was that "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (see Acts 4:27–31).

The Christian West, under the influence of that same division of a human life into exact and rational stages that has led some Christian denominations to postpone baptism until an age when people may be said to have their own individual consciousness—although "individualistic" might be a better term here—has also postponed "confirmation" (as it is called) to the beginning of the age of adolescence, a time when the human being can in fact begin—or so they say—to enroll as a soldier on behalf of Christ. This overlooks the fact that, even prior to adolescence, a child, from the store of spiritual beauty that he possesses according to the image of Christ within him, can cause Christ

to shine forth all around him. Indeed, who can name the precise moment when there begins within us that cooperation between our own human nature and the activity of God whose purpose is to penetrate the whole course of its development and thus make Christ known in the midst of those with whom we live? Is it not true that this dialogue between the human being and Christ begins already at a stage hidden from the eyes of the mature, because it begins from the earliest phases of childhood, when a child does not possess an advanced language in order to express what he experiences? Does not the child of God pray in a way that is often purer than that of the adult? Is he not set aflame against the force of evil by the impulse of holiness and by a wonderful purity? Is the child's enthusiasm for the good not very much greater than that of many of those who are mature? Does a child not need help from the time that he is small in order to develop good habits? And what would be the result if we avoided providing such promptings, which we feel we have to provide so that a child may acquire good habits? And if we think that urging a child forward in this way is necessary and useful, it means that the child is, in fact, able to put it to use. Roman Catholics now give Holy Communion to children around the age of seven, therefore before confirmation, because it seemed hard to put off the reception of Communion until the child had been confirmed at about the age of fourteen.[10]

C. The Meaning of the Visible Act of Chrismation

To the visible act of this mystery belong *the chrism, the anointing with it,* and the words "*the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" The chrism with which the one baptized is anointed is the kind of fluid that penetrates and lingers much more within the baptized person than water does, and it also imparts a fragrance.

The absorption of the chrism within the body signifies that the condition of the new man's birth is being assimilated. Its lingering is a sign that the Holy Spirit remains in an ongoing communion with the one baptized, while the fragrance it lends to him means that the Spirit becomes so closely connected to the one baptized that the Spirit's activity and quality become an activity and quality proper to the Christian himself. Yet these realities do not come to exist without constant effort on the part of the one baptized, aided as he is by the Spirit whom

he has received. Where this effort is present, the chrism is absorbed within the body, the body grows pliable and loses its rigidity, it allows itself to be penetrated by God, and man and Spirit become a single font of the fragrance of the new life, and hence of that very life itself.

The good odor that disseminates from the one imbued with chrism makes it plain, however, that the Spirit is causing the Christian to fill everything around him with the fragrance of his purified life and nature, filled as it now is with that goodness and kindness that the Spirit, represented symbolically as a dove, has breathed upon him. The fragrance of the believer fills the Church and spreads out into the human community. Through the medium of the Christian's humanity, the Spirit manifests His own power of expansion and the force of a goodness that is gentle, delicate, and innocent, a force to bring all men into unity within the good, a force that the Spirit makes His own and in which Christ, who has perfected human nature in the highest degree, is also found.

For all these reasons, the New Testament portrays chrismation and the fragrance of the Spirit as states of being, states with a certain consistency but also full of a dynamism that, in Christians, has its focus in their efforts toward innocence and generosity. Through these states the very effects of baptism are shown to be persistent and dynamic. With regard to the permanence of the full power shining forth from the Spirit in Christians, St. Paul says, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing" (2 Cor 2:14–15).

According to the vision of St. Cyril of Alexandria, this good odor that Christians, who are found in Christ, spread—or indeed that Christ Himself spreads in them through the Spirit—is connected with the sacrificial state that Christians live out in Christ. The sacrificial state, however, has a double character: it is the state of the death of the old sinful man, but it also represents the state of life with Christ in purity and loving activity. The Spirit activates in the Christian those states that have been established within him by Christ, who, through baptism, has set up His dwelling place within the believer:

> Christ, who according to the Scriptures "committed no sin" [1 Pet 2:22], offers Himself to God the Father on behalf of the

> Church as a sweet fragrance. That is why He said, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself" [John 17:19]. He said "I sanctify Myself" instead of "I offer Myself as an unblemished sacrifice to God and the Father." For it is said that He surrenders Himself to God.[11]
>
> He is Himself the holy sacrifice that imparts the good fragrance through the virtues . . . It is He who sanctifies by anointing with the Holy Spirit those who entered into communion with Him.[12]
>
> According to His likeness, we too are sanctified sacrifices as the ones who have died to sin, because sin has been destroyed in us and we live for God the life of holiness.[13]

To designate this lingering or abiding of the Spirit within us, St. John the Apostle uses the term "anointing," and, among its various effects, places particular emphasis on knowledge. He is clearly thinking here of the knowledge that is based on experience and that simultaneously urges us to act so as to make this same knowledge known to others. If, in baptism, Christ takes up His dwelling within us in a hidden manner, one that eludes our awareness,[14] through chrismation we assume the power that moves us to action, and these acts make us feel the presence of Christ and even reveal Christ Himself, within us. Indeed, these same acts toward which the Spirit impels and assists us imply an awareness of the presence of Christ within us: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One [who is the Spirit], and you know all things" (1 John 2:20); and "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). What St. John says here to the early Christians, that they do not need anyone to teach them, is not intended to be the basis for any kind of individualistic pride; it is meant instead to assure them that in spiritual matters they have no need to be taught by those who stand outside the Spirit of Christ. For inside the Church all share in communicating with one another their experiences of life in the Spirit, and these experiences are verified both in the light of the Church's teaching, which has been preserved in its wholeness from the very beginning, and also in a special way by the preaching and ministry provided by the hierarchy and the liturgical priesthood. Activity carried out on behalf of Christ, an activity empowered in us by

the mystery of chrismation, points to the exercise of a universal priesthood, evident in the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria cited above. Hence the Christian too is anointed, like Christ.

The mystery of chrismation's meaning as the strengthening of the one baptized so that he can develop the new life in cooperation with the Holy Spirit finds its clearest expression in the custom of anointing all the principal members of the newly baptized person's body, especially the sense organs, with the holy chrism. It is through these members and organs that a human being comes into contact with the world and, through the world, with God too. Through them he receives created things, but it is also through them that he sees God in the world, and, based on this vision of God, the believer exercises his own action upon the world in order to bring it more into keeping with God's will. St. Cyril of Jerusalem gives special emphasis to all this when he says, "And you were first anointed on the forehead, that you might be delivered from the shame, which the first man who transgressed bore about with him everywhere; and that *with unveiled face you might reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord*" (2 Cor 3:18).[15] We might say more precisely that through this gesture of anointing, the Spirit is imprinted upon the human being's mind and opens up for him the limitless horizons of light and goodness so that he may know and think only good things, and, by fighting against the evil things that seek to narrow his horizons, so that he may enter with ease into the eternal mysteries of the knowledge and love of God. "Then [you were anointed] on your ears, that you might receive the ears which are quick to hear the Divine Mysteries, of which Isaiah said, *The Lord gave me also an ear to hear* [Isa 50:4]; and the Lord Jesus in the Gospel, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*" [Matt 11:15]."[16] The Spirit is imprinted on the ears to serve as an extraordinary power of hearing or comprehending the deepest spiritual meanings of words. The ears are not to linger among words that are ugly and hateful, among ideas and words lacking in all depth and purity. They are to be open only to words that are clean, and to take hold of only what is deep and pure within these words, so that any impulse toward the good that is found within them can penetrate us through our organs of hearing.

The one who has received baptism is then anointed on the nostrils. Here the intention is that the nostrils are not to be opened to the odors

that might tempt us to evil. After that the chest is anointed "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil . . . having put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph 6:11, 14), that is, the breastplate of the virtues that represent such courageous and brave habits in the pursuit of the good. "For as Christ after His Baptism, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit, went forth and vanquished the adversary, so likewise you, after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Chrism, having put on the whole armor of the Holy Spirit, are to stand against the power of the adversary, and vanquish it, saying, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* [Phil 4:13]."[17] The chest represents power, but it also stands for the heart and its feelings. The seal of the Spirit imprinted here makes these feelings of the heart pure, generous, sympathetic, loving toward God and neighbor, joyful, and far removed from sadness, envy, and enmity.

Afterward, the believer is anointed on the hands and the feet so as to be ready to carry out the good anytime and to hurry to the aid of those who need help, to run to fulfill the appeals that come to him from God, who asks His faithful to do good and to avoid evil.

St. Cyril of Alexandria says in turn, "Christ has implanted in us a sense of hearing full of blessing, [a sense of hearing] that is attentive and easy to direct, as well as able to receive the dogmas regarding God; it is a sense of hearing that does not tolerate whispers and disgusting talk . . . We gain all special gifts in Him and through Him. That is the reason why the hand was also consecrated as a tool for the saving work, and the leg as visible symbol of walking into righteousness. For we are to enrich ourselves with good deeds and to walk on the path leading to all things pleasing to God"[18] (cf. Ps 119:59; Prov 4:26; Heb 12:13).

Through chrismation the Holy Spirit penetrates and imprints Himself upon these physical members and organs, and on the spiritual powers on which they are founded; also, in the same way as the holy chrism, the Spirit abides in them as a pleasing fragrance. He imprints Himself as a seal not only on the outside of these members but also on their interiors, and so provides human beings with a unified spiritual image. The word "seal," therefore, has the twofold meaning of strengthening and of imprinting, and the two meanings are thus connected. The Spirit imparts strength inasmuch as He imprints Himself and accentuates within human beings a characteristic personal image, which is at the same time a spiritual image. The human being grows

stronger through his pneumatization; he becomes a person set firmly in what is good, not easily susceptible to change.

In every spiritual and bodily member of the believer, the Spirit produces an effect, or imprints a power that grows according to the nature of each member. Some persons, however, are more active through the agency of certain members than they are through the others—some through the intelligence, for example, others through feeling, and others through some other type of activity—but the Spirit produces a special gift in each one according to the measure in which one or another of the person's members has received a more powerful strengthening. Consequently, in each member of the Church, the Spirit has brought a special gift into being. But this process also implies that all the members of the entire body receive a strengthening. Hence, at the anointing of each of the members, the same phrase is recited: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." For in all these special gifts, the same Spirit is active, together with the entirety of the believer, although the believer will be more active especially through that one particular member. Thus on one hand the single grace of baptism is put to work in the different gifts of the Spirit, but on the other hand in an individual believer one or even several gifts will develop in a distinctive way, in accordance with his own natural predispositions: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord . . . But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all . . . For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . For in fact the body is not one member but many" (cf. 1 Cor 12:4–7, 13–14; Rom 12:4–6). Thus the distinction of gifts must not serve in a negative way to introduce divisions among the faithful or to inflate the pride of some by comparison to others or by subjugating others to themselves; rather, its purpose is positive: to promote reciprocal complementarity and to strengthen the Church as the unified body of the Lord. To the extent that the others have need of my gift, to the same extent I have need of their gifts. The distinction of gifts must be the foundation, therefore, for a reciprocal love and appreciation among the faithful, for a zeal on the part of each to discover the uniqueness of the others' gifts, and for a responsibility before all the rest.

Through this anointing of the principal members and organs of the senses, we can see the importance that the Church accords—or,

through the Church, that Christ accords—to the human body, an importance that Christ manifested through His Incarnation. It is through the body that a man's life as a whole is enriched and oriented either toward good or toward evil, and it is through the body that the Holy Spirit is communicated to him, for the body is pierced by sensations, and it is through this sensibility that the soul and the mind are able to open themselves up and give themselves to God. Consequently, God Himself works through human sensibility and communicates Himself through it, and without the sanctification of His body there can be no sanctification of the human being. Indeed, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the body of the Lord as well, and from Christ the Spirit shines forth upon our bodies.

In the West it is customary for this sacrament to be celebrated through the laying on of hands by the bishop, after the example of Acts 8:15–17, where the Apostles Peter and John impart the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands upon those whom the Deacon Philip has recently baptized in Samaria. In the East it has been a legacy from apostolic times, on the basis of the various passages cited above, to celebrate this sacrament by the anointing with holy chrism. This practice also has the advantage of making it possible for the priest to celebrate the chrismation immediately after baptism, because today bishops are more remote from the local communities than priests are; moreover, the same passage in Acts shows Peter and John also celebrating the sacrament shortly after baptism. Nevertheless, the Eastern practice also leaves the episcopate a role to play in the celebration of this mystery, for the chrism that the priest uses to anoint the baptized is itself always consecrated by the assembly of bishops of one of the autocephalous Churches. This manifests the unity or sobornicity of the Church in the Spirit of Christ, just as on the day of Pentecost it was upon the entire apostolic body gathered together that the Holy Spirit descended. Moreover, anointing provides a more adequate image for this imprinting of the Holy Spirit separately upon each spiritual and bodily member and organ of the human being, and for the abiding presence of this imprinting.

The role that the Orthodox Church accords in this mystery to the bishops considered as a body can be seen in the fact that the same Holy Spirit who communicates Himself to every believer is always the Church's Spirit whose descent occurs through the invocation that

is made by the episcopate as a whole. Hence the Spirit of the whole Church descends on each of the faithful. It is into the entire Church that each believer is introduced, so that through his own special gift the Church in her totality can be enriched and helped, just as the Church in her totality sustains and promotes this special gift of each of the faithful. Only in the total unity of the Church can each believer be saved and perfected. Only in this total Church can he activate the totality of his own powers, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, even though some of these powers are more pronounced in some believers, and others in other believers. In the celebration of chrismation, the presence of this total Church—together with her contribution to the strengthening of each of her members in the Holy Spirit—thus is more apparent than in baptism. For whoever receives the Holy Spirit through chrismation manifests more effectively his contribution to the life of the whole Church, because the new life he received in baptism is actualized through his good deeds, while at the same time the Church herself is contributing more effectively to the actualization and development, through good deeds, of the new life that belongs to each believer. For human beings cannot work effectively if they lack a milieu in which to work, one that stimulates and helps them to this end, because each one makes use of the work of each of the others. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit who is imparted in this sacrament helps human beings in the development of certain special gifts, He promotes their distinctive personal characters; however, because He is the Spirit of the Church as a whole, a person cannot develop as a person except within the community of the Church, benefitting from her help and working for her sake.

Finally, it should also be noted that this mystery, because of the close relationship it has with that of baptism, is not celebrated a second time.