

CHURORHNEK

THE CEREMONY OF THE BLESSING OF THE WATER

The blessing of the water, following the Divine Liturgy, is a symbolic commemoration of the Baptism of Christ. The ceremony was originally performed in the Holy Land, at the river Jordon on Theophany, January 6. This ceremony on the one hand pre-figures the necessity for our own baptism, and on the other hand reveals to the world the Divinity of Christ, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Many pilgrims who made pilgrimages to the Holy Land told of the beautiful ceremony they witnessed there. Later churches outside of Jerusalem began to perform this ceremony by the riverside or at the seashore. Because of many difficulties, the Armenian Church began to celebrate this rite in the church and later forbid its performance outside the church. The following is a description of the ceremony, which follows the Christmas or Theophany Badarak on January 6:

A large silver or glass basin containing water is placed on the table in the Sanctuary in front of the Altar. A cross is submerged in the water by the priest, signifying Christ's entry into the river Jordan. A silver dove, containing Holy Oil or *Muron* is brought up in a procession as the choir sings the Hymn *Loos ee Looso*.

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CRE BULLETIN
VOL 9 No 1
January 1979

LIGHT FROM LIGHT

*Light from Light, You were sent from the Father,
and was incarnate from the Holy Virgin
to regenerate corrupted Adam.*

*You, O God, appeared on earth
and walked among us,
and saved the universe from the curse on Adam.*

*The redeemer who has appeared this day
burns up our sins with water,
and quenches the world by the Divine water.*

*Christ is baptized and all creatures are sanctified.
He gives us forgiveness of sins, sanctifying us
by water and Spirit.*

(Canticle of the Eighth day of Nativity, Mode 8)

Next the water is blessed, and as a climax the dove is lifted up by the celebrant who takes it to the basin of water and allows a few drops of *Muron* to drop into the water through the mouth of the dove. We know from biblical accounts that God revealed Himself in the three persons at the time of Jesus' baptism by John. The voice of God the Father was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. This is why *Muron* is kept in a dove-shaped container, since it is through this medium that the graces of the Holy Spirit are given to those who are sealed with it at Chrismation and who receive it through the blessed water at Theophany. Therefore, the ceremony of the blessing of water recaptures fully the event of Jesus' baptism at the Jordan, by revealing to us, the triune presence of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The prayer offered over the water is of great beauty and I would like to quote from it.

Now O Lord, come near to us by your Holy Spirit and bless this water that this may be for the building-up of home, for the healing of the sick, for the salvation of souls and bodies and for goodness in fulfillment of all needs.

Benediction is then given to the congregation and prayers said for the Church and the world for peace and good will.



During the service a prominent member of the community, or a young child whose parents have so desired, stands near the basin clothed as an acolyte to act as the so-called "Godfather". Towards the end of the service, the celebrant takes the submerged Cross out of the water and gives it to the Godfather. The latter then descends from the Sanctuary and stands at the edge of the Chancel facing the congregation near the basin of water. After the service, members of the congregation kiss the Cross held by the Godfather and take a sip of the Holy Water with small cups provided for this purpose. Faithful may take some of this water home to the sick and shut-ins. When we drink of the blessed water, we share in the life-giving act of Christ. Water is essential for our bodily life, and sharing this special water, we are reminded that the participation in the acts of Christ is necessary for our eternal life.

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