

Entering the Orthodox Church

The rite of the Sacrament of Baptism

The Baptism of the Catechumens that will take place on Great Saturday will help them appreciate their own resurrection in Christ and their entrance into the resurrected Body of Christ. The paschal season that follows will be their first joyful experience of the new life that they received with Baptism. They will be given the opportunity to take communion every day throughout Bright Week, as they did in ancient times. The Pentecost season will be an effective aid. Besides, the subject matter of most of the Sundays leading up to Pentecost has been chosen to help the Catechumens become consciously aware of what life in Christ is, in practice. We know that most Gospel passages of this season mention water, the font, the advent of the Holy Spirit, who quenches man's thirst, about the healing of the eye, and so on. The Church never does anything aimlessly.

Second. The Baptism of Catechumens should be associated with great feasts. As we mentioned earlier, the most fundamental feast is Easter. Thus, the Baptism will take place on Great Saturday, because the whole service is suited to this aim. According to the readings for Vespers of Great Saturday, the Baptism takes place in an adjoining baptistery or in a chapel. Immediately following this, the newly baptised Catechumens enter the main church and everybody chants in the place of the thrice-holy hymn: "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia." The whole community rejoices over the event. If there is no baptistery or chapel, the Baptism takes place somewhere in the narthex of the church building.

However, Baptism can also be linked with every feast of the Lord. Besides, during all the Feasts of the Lord, Christmas, Theophany, Easter and so on, the thrice-holy hymn, "Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal" is not sung and the hymn "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ..." is sung instead. It is the entire community's joy over the new members joining it.