



■ On the Occasion of the Beginning of the New Civil Year 2005

## Holy Chrism, the Anointed of the Lord, and a Vigilant Heart

*“Thy Name is myrrh poured forth”*  
(Song of Songs 1:3)

Beloved children in the Lord:

**I** pray from the bottom of my heart that the new period of the Year of Salvation 2005 may be peaceful and fruitful in Christ and that we may, to an ever-increasing degree, realize the gifts of our Holy Baptism, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed *Theotokos* and of all the Saints.

### 1) “Anointed of the Lord”

**O**ne of the sacred Traditions of our Most Holy Orthodox Church is that a candidate for Baptism be anointed by a Priest with Holy Chrism, while the latter simultaneously says: “The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Holy Chrism, our God-bearing Fathers tell us, is the “seal and assurance of the Grace of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

That is to say, by being anointed and sealed with Holy Chrism, we become “partakers of the Divine nature” and “partakers of the Holy Spirit”;<sup>2</sup> the Divine Comforter dwells in our hearts; the “communion of the Holy Spirit”<sup>3</sup> is with us; we mystically receive, in our souls, the Grace and Energy of the Holy Spirit; we are now given the “earnest of the Spirit,”<sup>4</sup> in order that we might enjoy the perfection and fullness thereof in the world to come.

We should not forget that the Chrism of the Holy Spirit “anointed” our Lord and Savior at His Incarnation:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me.”<sup>5</sup>

But neither should we forget that in Divine Baptism

“anointed and sealed as we are by the visitation and energy of the Holy Spirit, in the likeness of and unto participation in the Anointing of Christ, we are vouchsafed to be and to be called Christians.”<sup>6</sup>

It is, therefore, precisely because through “Chrismation” and the “Seal,” namely, through the Holy Spirit,<sup>7</sup> “we are made partakers of Christ,”<sup>8</sup> that is, “we and He become one,”<sup>9</sup> that all of the Faithful are, and are said to be, “anointed of the Lord,”<sup>10</sup> and are called “Christians,” as “having been anointed by the Holy Spirit of Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

## ii) “To Rekindle the Gift”

**O**ur God-bearing Fathers teach, with particular emphasis indeed, that “we have need of nothing but a vigilant heart.”<sup>12</sup>

That is to say, if we are to be truly, in essence and in actuality, Christians, and anointed of the Lord, we need nothing save a heart which is in a state of “vigilance”: unceasing celerity, attention, and prayer.

In order to be saved, we are obligated

“to preserve the indwelling within our souls of the communion of the Holy Spirit and the Seal of the Holy Chrism, which we received when we were Baptized and became anointed of the Lord.”<sup>13</sup>

This means that, in the end, our entire life in Christ involves a continuous effort to rekindle and revitalize the spiritual gifts that we received in Holy Baptism.

The Holy Apostle Paul encourages us in the struggle to “stir up the gift of God.”<sup>14</sup>

Divine Grace must always be alive and flourishing in our hearts and must not be extinguished,

“because, just as fire needs wood in order to burn, so also the Grace of the Holy Spirit needs zeal, attentiveness, and a vigilant heart if it is to be fervent at all times.”<sup>15</sup>

### III) “Fervent in Spirit”

**T**he Holy Elders of the desert were wont to say:  
“Our work is the burning of wood.”<sup>16</sup>

If the Faithful are to preserve the Divine Fire that has been kindled in their hearts through Holy Baptism, they ought unceasingly to stoke it with the wood of virtuous deeds and constantly to unite themselves with the supranatural Fire of the Immaculate Mysteries.

In this way, they will attract the Grace of the Holy Spirit and “aglow with Him they will be ardent and fervent,”<sup>17</sup> putting into practice the Apostolic injunction: “[Be] fervent in spirit.”<sup>18</sup>

The Saints exhort us: “Do not hide or conceal the spark of Divine Grace in the earth and ashes of the passions, or of worldly cares; rather, add kindling and wood to this spark and, fanning it with eagerness and love, ignite from it a large flame.”<sup>19</sup>

However, what contributes most especially to the rekindling and revitalization of the spiritual gifts of Holy Baptism is prayer, and the Jesus Prayer in particular.

“Thy Name is myrrh poured forth,”<sup>20</sup> cries the Bride-Church to Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom, with Divine longing and love.

Thy Name, our Beloved, is fragrant like myrrh that has been poured forth from a vial and gives rise to inexpressible joy and gladness.

Frequent meditation on the Name of Jesus Christ, by means of the holy and noetic Prayer of the heart, is the source of many and various spiritual gifts, and particularly of that supranatural “warmth” which consumes us without harming us, transforming our being.

“Whenever the soul, paying no attention to external things,” says St. Elias the Presbyter, “is concentrated in prayer, then a kind of flame surrounds it, as fire surrounds iron, and makes it wholly incandescent”; “Blessed is he who in this life is granted the experience of this state and who sees his body, which by nature is of clay, become incandescent through grace.”<sup>21</sup>

The hidden life of prayer demands, according to the God-bearing Fathers, “that we not allow our mind to wander amid the vain things of this world, but that we return it within our heart, and there pray in the inner language of our heart and say: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me,’ holding our breath until we have said this brief prayer once, and then taking a breath.”<sup>22</sup>

In this manner, being alert and vigilant, constantly renewing our Baptismal Seal and the “royal anointing of deification,”<sup>23</sup> and perfuming ourselves with the myrrh of His Name, we shall truly be anointed of the Lord and truly be God-loving Christians, temples of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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President of the Holy Synod in Resistance*

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Notes

1. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Ἐορτοδόμιον* (Venice: 1836), p. 177.
2. Cf. II St. Peter 1:4; Hebrews 6:4.
3. II Corinthians 13:13.
4. II Corinthians 1:22.
5. Isaiah 61:1; St. Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27, 10:38; Hebrews 1:9.
6. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “Interpretation of I St. John 2:27.”
7. See St. Athanasios the Great, Epistle I “To Serapion,” §23, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXVI, cols. 584C-585AB: “The Spirit is called Chrism and is the Seal,” “the Spirit is the Chrism and the Seal by which the Word anoints and seals all things.”
8. Hebrews 3:14.
9. St. Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXXV, col. 225C (interpretation of Hebrews 3:14).
10. See note 1.
11. St. Metrophanes of Smyrna, cited by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “Interpretation of I St. John 2:27.”
12. Abba Poimen, §135, in *Τὸ Γεγοντικόν* (Athens: “Aster” Publications, 1961), p. 97a.
13. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Ἐορτοδόμιον*, pp. 177-178.
14. Cf. II St. Timothy 1:6.
15. St. Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXXV, col. 92D (interpretation of II St. Timothy 1:6).
16. *Τὸ Μέγα Γεγοντικόν* (Panorama, Thessaloniki: 1997), Vol. III, p. 178 (Ch. X, “On Discretion,” §203).
17. Cf. St. Theophylact of Bulgaria, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CXXIV, col. 508B (interpretation of Romans 12:11: “For, he who has achieved the aforementioned things attracts the Grace of the Spirit, and ablaze therewith he becomes fervent”).
18. Romans 12:11.
19. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “Interpretation of I Thessalonians 5:19.”
20. Song of Songs 1:3.
21. St. Elias the Presbyter, “Gnomic Anthology,” Part II, §§105, 106, in *The Philokalia*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), Vol. III, p. 46.
22. Cf. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “Interpretation of I St. Peter 5:8: ‘Be sober, be vigilant.’”
23. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, Book II, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CL, col. 521B.