

Did you know...

Consecration Questions and Answers for Orthodox Christians

What is the Consecration of a Church?

The Consecration of a church is the dedication service of a building for use as a church. This special service is complex and filled with religious symbolism and many biblical elements and references. The service "changes" an ordinary building into the House of God.

What happens at a Consecration?

Like the Baptism of a child or the ordination of a priest, this change takes place through the Grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. An ordinary building is changed into the House of God through the Grace of God and the Holy Spirit.

Many symbolic actions take place during the Consecration Service, such as:

1. The Three Processions around the Church Building.
2. The Placing of, and Sealing of, the Holy Relics in the Altar Table.
3. The Washing and Anointing of the Altar Table.
4. The Placing of the new Altar Coverings and other Holy Articles on the Holy Table.
5. The Lighting of the Vigil Light.
6. The first Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated Church.

At the end of the Consecration Service the church has now been Baptized, Chrismated, Sanctified, Consecrated, and dedicated to God for eternal use as an Orthodox Christian House of Worship. The first Divine Liturgy is then celebrated in the newly consecrated "House of the Lord."

What is salvation for an Orthodox Christian?

For an Orthodox Christian, salvation is union with Christ. This union with Christ is called the "Life in Christ". The center of this "Life in Christ" is the Holy Altar, as well as the services which are related to it, i.e. the Seven Sacraments. Because the Holy Altar is so important in the life of an Orthodox Christian, the service of Consecration centers around the Holy Altar Table. In simple terms, the Consecration Service is the Baptism and Chrismation of the Church.

Next time you enter a Consecrated Orthodox Church, remember that it is a Holy Place, a Holy Space, a Place of Prayer and Worship. Make sure that you show the proper reverence, respect, and piety. The Orthodox Christian attends for the purpose of worshipping our Ever-Loving God and of receiving the Divine Eucharist through which we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Did you know...

What is the sequence of events for the Consecration of the Church?

Introductory Services and Vespers begins on the Eve of the celebration with a short Prayer Service honoring the memory of Martyrs.

On Sunday Morning the order of services is Matins (Morning Prayer), the Consecration Service and the first Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated Church.

Orthros is a morning service held prior to the Divine Liturgy. During Orthros, resurrection and consecration hymns are sung. The Priest will also celebrate part of the Proskomidi Service (preparing the Gifts which will be used during the Divine Liturgy). At the appointed time the Bishop will enter the Church and will put on his vestments (Ceremonial Robes).

The Consecration Service centers around the Holy Altar Table (for it represents the center of all Mysteries (Sacraments) and services of the Church), the Bishop asks God's help to accomplish the service.

The First Divine Liturgy is then celebrated in the newly consecrated "House of the Lord".

Who should attend?

Everyone who is physically able should attend the Consecration Service. It begins at 8:00 am with the procession of the Holy Relics. The entire Church complex will be circled three times. The Metropolitan will stop in front of the connecting link entrance and recite specific prayers and psalms. The third time, the Metropolitan will continue to the door of the chapel. He will pound on the door with his staff reciting from Psalm 24 the following dialogue:

The Bishop: Open, Open the gates and let them remain open forever and let the King of glory enter.

The Priest, who is the only one inside the Church and represents an Angel, is surprised to hear this command, and asks:

Priest: Who is this King of Glory?

The Bishop: The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

This dialogue is repeated 3 times.

Having said this, the Bishop raises the Paten and makes the sign of the Cross before the Church doors. The doors are then unlocked by the Godparent, and the Bishop enters the Church carrying the Holy Relics followed by all the clergy.