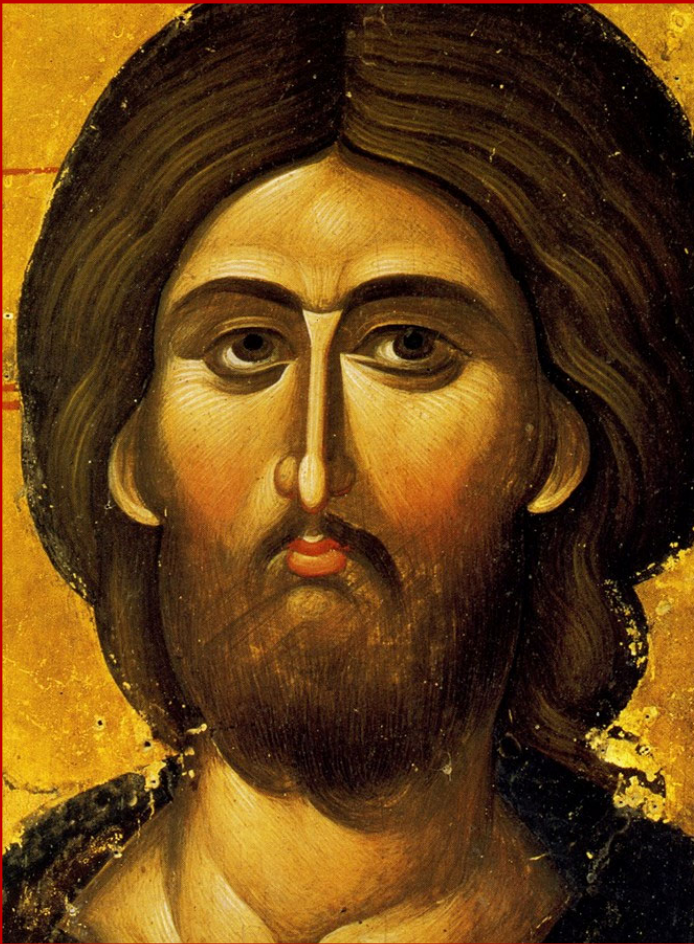


Surrendering ourselves to Christ

The Service for the



Making of Catechumens

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The word “catechumen” is an ancient Greek word used by St. Paul in the New Testament (*Galatians 6:6*) to describe “one who is learning the faith.” At St. Paul’s, formally becoming a catechumen means that one has made the decision to become an Orthodox Christian and enter the life of the Church after a period of inquiry and exploration of what we believe by attending Orthodox Christianity 101 on Wednesday evenings.

The *Service for the Making of Catechumens* begins in the entryway or narthex of the Church and marks the *official entrance*, so to speak, of a believer into the life of the Church, celebrating his/her decision to enter into the sacramental and mystical life of the Body of Christ.

The opening prayers of this service are in fact exorcisms, prayers of confrontation with our only real enemy, the Devil, whom we are called on by the Scriptures to resist (*1 Peter 5:8-9*). The prayers of exorcism proclaim the reality of evil as something dark and irrational within ourselves and in the world around us and the power of Christ crucified and risen from the dead to overcome it—and that to be a member of Christ’s Church is a victory in the war against sin and death.

After these prayers, those desiring to enter the life of the Church are asked a very specific question: “Do you renounce Satan and all of his works?” Their response: “I do renounce him!” The first act of the Christian life is a renunciation, a challenge, and a confrontation with the face of evil. The priest continues, bluntly asking: “Do you unite yourself to Christ?” Their response: “I do unite myself to Christ!” It is this double movement – the renunciation of Satan and the acceptance of Christ – that

forms the nucleus of our faith commitment. It is not enough to turn our backs to evil. We must also *turn to Christ* and orient our entire life towards Him. As a sign of commitment to Christ, the catechumens confess their faith by saying the Creed, a brief summary of Christian belief in the living God articulated by the first two Ecumenical Councils of the Church in the 4th century.

Then the catechumens, led by the clergy, process into the Church and go up to the *solea* while the priest sings a verse from the Scriptures: “Blessed is our God who desires that all people should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth” (*1 Timothy 2:3-4*). There is a brief prayer of dismissal to end the service and then the new catechumens are introduced to the parish gathered for worship that morning.

The catechumenate marks that period of time—in a very public way—during which a person is being trained, instructed and formed in the Orthodox Christian faith. From this Sunday forward, throughout Lent and up until Palm Sunday, those who have been made catechumens at today’s service will be called up to the *solea* after the Gospel reading at every Liturgy to be prayed for by the entire parish.

And although the catechumenate formally ends with a person’s baptism and/or chrismation, it is a simple fact that the process of growth in the spiritual life doesn’t end but is only just beginning. A Christian is someone always learning their faith, always seeking to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ” (*2 Peter 3:18*).

Making of Catechumens

Prayers at the Making of Catechumens

When those who are to be made catechumens have gathered in the Narthex, the Priest begins by saying:

Priest: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

The Priest blesses each catechumen:

Priest: In Your Name, O Lord God of Truth, and in the Name of Your Only-Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ and Your Holy Spirit, I lay my hand upon these, Your servants [*Names*], who have been counted worthy to take refuge in Your Holy Name and to seek shelter beneath the shadow of Your wings. Remove from them that ancient error, and fill them with faith in You, with hope and with love, that they may know that You alone are the True God, and Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Your Holy Spirit. Grant that they may walk in all of Your commandments, and observe everything that is acceptable to You; for if anyone does what is pleasing to You, they shall find life. Write them into Your Book of Life and unite them

to the flock of Your inheritance. Let Your Holy Name and that of Your well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Your life creating Spirit be glorified in them. May You always look upon them in mercy, and be ever attentive to the voice of their prayers. May they always rejoice in the works of their hands, and in all of their generation, that they may confess You, worshipping and glorifying Your great and Most High Name, praising You ceaselessly all the days of their lives.

For all the Powers of Heaven sing Your praises, and Yours is the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The First Exorcism

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: The Lord condemns you, O Devil; the Lord Who came into the world and dwelt among us so that He might cast down your tyranny, and deliver the human race; the Lord Who upon the Tree of the Cross triumphed over the powers of the Enemy, on that day when the sun went dark, and the earth trembled, and the tombs were opened, and the bodies of the saints arose; the Lord Who by His death destroyed death, and conquered him that held the power of death - that is you, O Devil. I command you by the Name of the Living God, Who revealed the Tree of Life, and posted the Cherubim and the flaming sword that turns this way and

that to guard it: be rebuked and depart! I command you, by the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who walked upon the waves of the sea as if they were dry land, Who forbade the storm of the winds, Whose gaze dries up the deep and Whose threats melt mountains; for it is the Lord Jesus Who now forbids you through us. Be afraid and depart, and withdraw from these newly enlisted catechumens, for they are His creation, and do not come back. Do not hide in them, do not confront them, nor seek to influence them, whether at night or during the day, in the morning or at noon; but go back to your own *Tartarus*, until the appointed Day of Judgment. Fear God, Who sits upon the throne of the Cherubim and looks over the abyss, before Whom tremble Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, the many-eyed Cherubim, and the six-winged Seraphim; Whom Heaven and earth fear, the sea and all that lives in it. Fear God Who makes Angels His messengers and His ministers a flame of fire. Come out and depart from these newly enlisted soldiers of Christ our God whom He fashioned; depart from them, together with all your power and might.

For blessed and glorified is the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Second Exorcism

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O God, You are holy, fearful and glorious, and in all Your works and power, You are

incomprehensible and mysterious. You have ordained for the Devil the retribution of eternal torment. Through us, His unworthy servants, He commands you and all of your cooperating powers to depart from those who are newly sealed in the Name of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, every spirit that is evil, unclean, vile, loathsome and alien, I command you by the power of Jesus Christ, Who has all authority in Heaven and on earth, Who said to the deaf and dumb demon, “Come out of the man, and never enter into him again” – depart and acknowledge the futility of your power, which had no authority even over swine! Remember the Lord Who ordered you, in accordance with your own request, to enter into the herd of swine. Fear God, at Whose command the earth was established upon the waters; Who has founded the Heavens, and fixed the mountains with a line, and the valleys with a measure; Who has placed sand for a boundary to the sea and made safe paths through stormy waters; Who touches mountains and they smoke; Who clothes Himself with light as with a garment; Who stretches out the Heavens like a tent; Who covers His upper rooms with waters; Who has established the earth on a firm foundation, so that it shall not be shaken from age to age; Who calls up water out of the seas, and sprinkles it over the face of the earth. Come out! Depart from those who are now being made ready for holy Illumination and entry into Your holy Church. I command you by the saving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, by His Precious Blood and All-Pure Body, and by His dread and fearful Second Coming – for He will come and He will not delay, and on that great day He will judge all the earth, and He will punish you and all of the evil powers that cooperate with you, in the *Gehenna* of

fire, handing you over to the outer darkness where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched.

For all power and glory is Christ our God's, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Third Exorcism

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Lord of *Sabaoth*, the God of Israel, Who heals every sickness and every wound of sin, look upon these Your servants: search out their hearts and examine them, driving away from them every work of the Evil One. Rebuke any unclean spirits and expel them, cleansing the work of Your hands; and using Your mighty power, crush Satan and place him beneath the feet of these newly enlisted catechumens, granting them victory over the Devil and all of his unclean spirits; so that, having obtained mercy from You, they may be deemed worthy to receive Your immortal and heavenly Mysteries and may offer up all glory to You: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Sovereign Master and Lord, the I AM, You made humanity in Your own image and likeness and gave us the power of eternal life; but when the human

race had fallen through sin, You did not abandon us. Through the Incarnation of Your Christ, You planned the salvation of the world. Having redeemed Your servants, whom You created, from the yoke of slavery to the Enemy, receive them into Your heavenly Kingdom. Open the eyes of their understanding that the light of Your Gospel may dawn upon them. Yoke unto their lives a radiant Angel to deliver them from every plot directed against them by Satan, from every encounter with evil, from the noon-day demon, and from evil dreams.

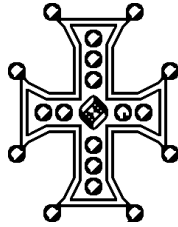
And the Priest breathes on them saying:

Drive out from them every evil and unclean spirit, hiding and lurking in their hearts. *[3 times]*

Drive away from them the spirit of error, the spirit of evil, the spirit of idolatry, and of all greed that works according to the teaching of the Devil. Make them reason-endowed sheep of the holy Flock of Your Christ, honorable members of Your Church, chosen and holy instruments, children of Light, and heirs of Your Kingdom. Having ordered their lives according to Your commandments and having guarded the Seal and kept it unbroken, and having preserved their baptismal garments unstained, may they attain unto the blessedness of the Saints in Your Kingdom.

By the grace, compassion and love for humankind of Your Only-Begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.



Then the Priest turns those who desire to enter the Church towards the West (away from the altar) and asks the following questions three times.

Renouncing Satan and Evil

Priest: Do you renounce Satan, and all of his works and all of his worship and all of his angels and all of his pomp? *[3 times]*

Catechumens: I do renounce him. *[3 times]*

Priest: Have you renounced Satan? *[3 times]*

Catechumens: I have renounced him. *[3 times]*

Priest: Then blow and spit on him.

After this has been done the Priest turns the Catechumens to the East, facing the altar, and repeats the following questions three times.

Joining Christ and His Body, the Church

Priest: Do you join Christ? *[3 times]*

Catechumens: I do join Him. *[3 times]*

Priest: Have you joined Christ? *[3 times]*

Catechumens: I have joined Him. *[3 times]*

Priest: And do you believe in Him?

Catechumens: I believe in Him as my King and my God.



Confessing the Creed

Catechumens: I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages;

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father;

And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the
age to come. Amen.

Then the Priest asks the following questions:

Priest: Have you joined Christ? *[3 times]*

Catechumens: I have joined Him *[3 times]*

Priest: Then bow before Him and worship Him.

*The catechumens then bow
and make the sign of the cross saying:*

Catechumens: I bow down before the Father and the
Son and the Holy Spirit; the Trinity One in Essence and
undivided.

*Taking the catechumens by the hand, the clergy lead
them into the Church singing:*

Priest: Blessed is our God, Who desires that all people
should be saved and come to the knowledge of the
Truth, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: Sovereign Master, Lord our God, call these Your
servants to Your holy Illumination and deem them
worthy of the great grace of entering Your holy Church.
Put off from them all that is old and corrupt, and renew
them unto everlasting life; fill them with the power of

Your Holy Spirit, that they may be united to Your Christ; that they may no longer be children of this fallen world, but children of Your Kingdom;

By the good pleasure and grace of Your Only-Begotten Son, with Whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

People: Amen.

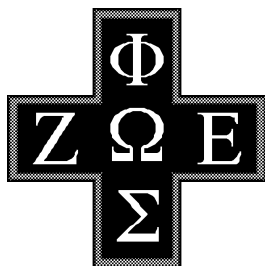
The Dismissal

Priest: Glory to You, O Christ our God and our hope; glory to You.

May Christ our true God, Who desires that all people should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth, have mercy on us and save us – by the intercessions of His most-pure and holy Mother, the *Theotokos* and ever-virgin Mary; by the prayers of the holy and glorious prophet and forerunner John the Baptist; the prayers of the holy, glorious and all-praiseworthy Apostles, especially St. Paul the Apostle, whose name our Church bears; and of all Your saints;

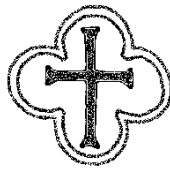
Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

People: Amen.



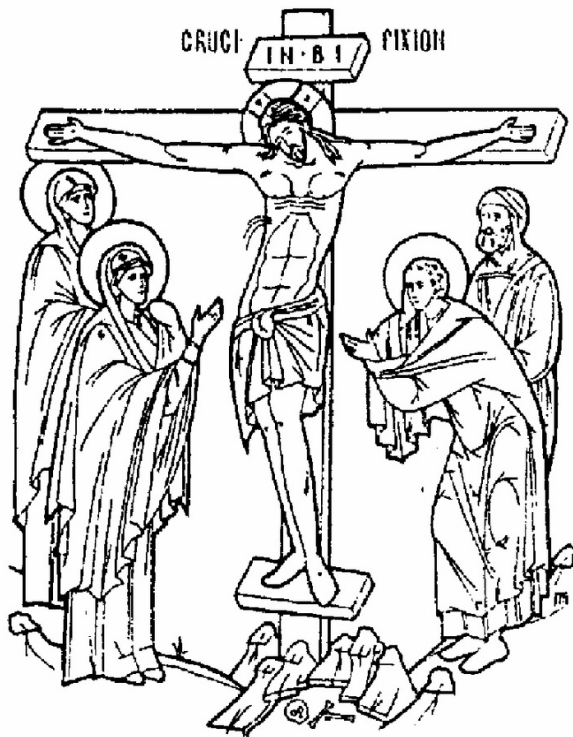
**Lead a life that is worthy of the calling
to which we have been called,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort to maintain
the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

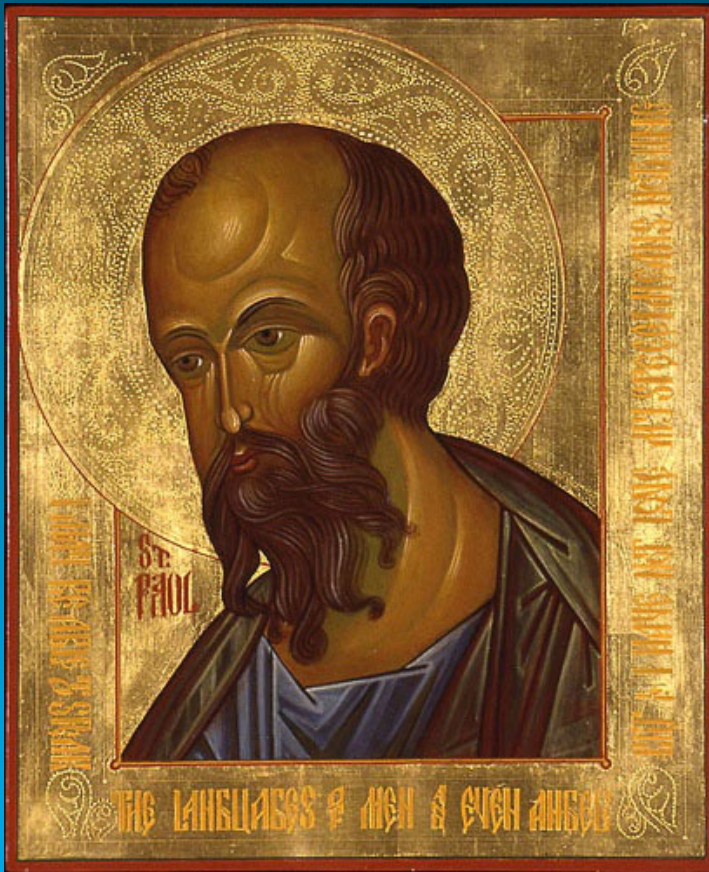
- Ephesians 4:1-3



**Examine yourselves
to see whether you are living in the faith.
Test yourselves.
Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?**

- 2 Corinthians 13:5





Saint Paul's Greek Orthodox Church

4949 Alton Parkway

Irvine, CA 92604

949 733-2366

www.stpaulsirvine.org