

2. The Service of Consecration

LESSON PLANS FOR THE CONSECRATION

OBJECTIVE:

To describe and explain the mechanics and meaning of the Service of Consecration, drawing parallels to the service of Baptism & Chrismation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

Print one for each student:

- form to submit names for the scroll
- the 'Readings' handout

We have also provided the text of the Service of the Consecration, for your reference.

NOTES FOR VARYING AGE & GRADE LEVELS:

With younger groups, the emphasis should be on acting out the service, while for older students we should emphasize the meaning and symbolism of the service and its prayers.

If you have the ability to show a video in the classroom (perhaps with a projector, or even just on a laptop screen) there are several videos of Orthodox Consecrations on YouTube. In particular, if you search 'Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Consecration Marietta' you'll find an excellent video from 2013. You could show the video and then discuss that portion of the service, pausing as needed to keep the video's pacing in sync with your class discussion.

THE PLAN

I. OPENING CONVERSATION:

We often say that a Consecration is like the Baptism and Chrismation of a church. What are the major elements of a baptism and Chrismation?

- Holy Water
- Oil
- Prayers
- White Garment
- Walk 3 Times Around the Table
- Carry a lit candle ('newly illumined by the light of Christ')

Just as baptism means that a person is dedicated to God, the church will be dedicated to God at its consecration. Note: dedicated = 'set aside' and technically the meaning of 'holy' can be said to be 'set apart' or 'set aside'.

2. EXAMINING THE SERVICE & ITS MEANING:

As we 'walk' through the service, teachers should pause to ask students why we're doing what we're doing. For instance, if you read together a supplemental reading from the Readings sheet (prayers, gospel readings) consider together why this particular reading would be used at a Consecration. Ask students which phrases leap out at them, or what reactions they have. Unpack the Scripture readings and prayers as time allows.

I. The Night Before: The Vigil before the Consecration

1. First, before the service starts, we must clear everything off the Altar Table. It should be uncovered with nothing on it.

2. The Metropolitan (or Bishop) enters the Church, bringing the relics of three Saints in a little box called a 'reliquary'. (*Remember from last week? Ask who the three Martyrs are and remind everyone of their stories.*)
3. The reliquary is placed on a Paten (which is the plate that holds the bread for Holy Communion), and they will sit on the Altar Table overnight, with a Vigil Light.
4. The people gather for a short Prayer Service honoring the memory of Martyrs. (These Vespers will be on Friday evening, August 5, 2016.)

II. The Big Day: The Service of the Consecration

THE PROCESSION —

1. The next morning, we gather in the Church, and the Metropolitan will come in and go to the altar. He begins the service: "Blessed is our God, always now and forever, and unto the ages of ages."
2. The Metropolitan will say a prayer about the Holy Martyrs (Reading #1) asking them to pray for us and for God to give us grace, so that we might become more like them.
3. The Metropolitan will cense the relics with incense, and then raise them up.
4. Now we head out of the Church: first the acolytes (altar boys), then the Chanters, the Icon of the church, the priests in order of seniority with the most senior carrying the Holy Gospel, the Metropolitan carrying the Holy Relics upon the Paten, and then all of the people follow.
5. Because our church will have a new walkway, we will be able to process with the Metropolitan and the Holy Relics three times around the church. By circling the Church three times, it is like we are drawing a big line around it. We are creating a line around it and declaring that this Church is set apart for God.
 1. We walk around once chanting Reading #2, then the Metropolitan stops at the doors. He places the relics on a table, and we hear an Epistle reading & a gospel reading. (Reading #3, Matthew 16: 13-19) *Why this gospel? This is the foundation of the Church, this authority passes in Apostolic Succession.*
 2. The Metropolitan picks up the relics (the Martyrs walk with us!) and we walk around a second time. Then the Metropolitan stops at the doors. He places the relics on a

table, and we hear an Epistle reading & a gospel reading. (Reading #4, Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28) *Why this gospel? We are called to consecrate part of our lives, to step away from the business of life to sit at the feet of Christ, just as this Church is to be set aside from busy life and become a place for worship.*

3. The Metropolitan picks up the relics (the Martyrs walk with us!) and we walk around a final time. Then the Metropolitan stops at the doors. He places the relics on the table, and prays a special prayer for our Church which asks that angels accompany us as we enter (Reading #5).
6. Now the Metropolitan will pound on the doors of the Church, so “that the King of Glory may enter in.” (Reading #7) This is the dialogue we often do at Great & Holy Pascha, from Psalm 23. (*Note how our Lord does not force Himself in, but asks that we lift up our gates.*)

BACK INSIDE THE CHURCH —

1. Everyone enters the Church, and the Metropolitan takes the Holy Relics to the Altar, where they are placed in a hole in the Holy Altar Table, just as the first Altars in the Early Church were the tombs of the Holy Martyrs. These Saints will be our parish’s personal patrons and protectors, interceding on our behalf before the Lord.
2. Together with the Saints’ Holy Relics, a Scroll listing the names of all those who pledged as Consecration Godparents and their loved ones will be sealed with them, to reside in this Holy Altar forever. These names will include the names of our community’s founding fathers and mothers, and any names offered in memory of loved ones.
3. His Eminence will pour Holy Chrism over the Relics & Scroll to symbolize the union between our Lord and His Martyrs. Over the Holy Relics, he will pour a wax/mastic which contains the sweet-smelling spices used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to anoint the Body of Christ for His burial. He will then apply a marble lid covering, and seal them permanently. The Holy Altar table thus represents the entombed Body of our Lord.

4. In Romans 6:8 we read: “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...” This reading from the epistle to the Romans is read in the Baptism service, because when we are baptized, we die with Christ so that we may rise with Him. The Holy Relics of Martyred Saints remind us of, and connect us to, this great truth, and to Christ Himself. A Consecration is the “Baptism” of a Church, and in it each of us reaffirms our own Baptism, our own dying and living with Christ. Therefore, on the day of Consecration, the Church allows us to be “entombed” with our Lord through the interment of the names of our loved ones, past and present, living (Church Militant) and dead (Church Triumphant).
5. Thus, together with the reliquary containing the Holy Relics of the three martyred saints, His Eminence will place a scroll with the names of our loved ones, both those who are living and those who have fallen asleep. In this way, we and our loved ones are forever connected to the Saints, and to Christ, Who is “wondrous” among His Saints (Small Entrance, Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).
6. The Metropolitan’s robes are now covered with a white sheet, and he prepares to clean the Altar. He is given three bars of soap and a basin of water, which he blesses to make it Holy Water (much like the blessing of waters in Baptism.) As he cleans, he will chant, *“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice.”* three times — we recognize these opening words of Psalm 50, the great Psalm of repentance. (The chanters will finish the Psalm as he continues to work.)
7. After it is clean, he will make the sign of the cross in water over the Altar three times (as when a person is dunked into the water three times in Baptism).
8. He will then make the sign of the cross with oil over the Altar three times, calling out, “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!” each time (as when a person is Chrismated.) We will read from Psalm 132 (Reading #8), which reminds us that when Aaron was chosen by the Lord and anointed, the oil flowed over him and into his beard! Oil was used to heal wounds and to make dry skin supple, to make food delicious and also burned for light — so to have an abundance of oil is to be blessed with many good things, from God’s good pleasure (the reason He’s anointing you in the first place) to health and plenteous food and to the very light of Christ.)

9. A cloth with the icons of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) in each corner is sealed into the Holy Altar with wax. They are in each of the four corners, just as they are in the four corners of our dome, as their Holy Gospels have gone out to all the ends of the universe.
10. The Holy Altar is now covered with a new white cloth — like the new white garment which is worn by the newly illumined (freshly Baptized & Chrismated person), and then with an outer cloth as well. As the Altar is enrobed, we read Psalm 92 (Reading #9).
11. The Metropolitan censes the Holy Altar and the Church.
12. His Eminence the Metropolitan will now chrismate the icons and the building; carrying a reed to the tip of which has been bound a sponge dipped in holy Chrism, he draws the monogram of Christ in the apse of the Sanctuary, on the four columns and on the lintel of the door of the Church on the inside.
13. Finally, at the conclusion of the service, His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah will bring to all the faithful the Vigil Light, an oil lamp or kandyli, from the Holy Altar. This light reminds us of the unfailing light of our Transfigured Christ in His Holy Resurrection (and of the candle that a newly Baptised & Chrismated person carries!)

After we have all offered our oil to the holy vigil lamp, we will begin the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

3. WRAPPING UP

To finish up, you might recap the elements of Baptism & Chrismation that match up to elements of the Consecration:

Circle the table 3 times

Holy Water

Dipped 3 Times

Oil for Chrism

Painting crosses on all parts of body

Priest covered in white sheet

Person wears white garment

Carry the lit candle

Now you are set aside for God

Circle the Church 3 times

Holy Water

Poured 3 Times

Oil for Chrism

Painting crosses on all parts of Church

Metropolitan covered in white sheet

Altar wears white tablecloth

Bring out the lit Vigil Lamp

Now you are set aside for God

Pass out forms to solicit names for the Scroll, and collect them for submission.