



Eastern Catholic Churches

Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church

Ukrainian

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Liturgical Family: *Constantinopl*

1. Cultural Background of Adherents

Country of origin and history of migration to Australia

Ukrainians began emigrating from Germany and Austria from 1948–1951 (many of these were born in Ukraine). A large number of Ukrainians born in Yugoslavia migrated to Italy after World War II and in the early fifties came to Australia. During the 1950s and 1960s, some Ukrainians came from Poland. A new immigration arrived from former Yugoslavia in the 1970s and some have arrived very recently. After the fall of Communism some people have migrated from Ukraine.

In 1949, Fr D. Kachmar and Fr P. Smal, both married clergy, came from Ukraine to provide pastoral and spiritual care for the faithful. The Redemptorist Fathers had a very important role in the spiritual formation of Ukrainian Catholics in Australia. In the 1950s, Fr Mykola Kopyakiwsky CSsR, Fr F. Bosko CSsR and Fr S. Maslo CSsR came from Canada. Latin-Rite Australian Redemptorists, Fr Bowden and Fr E. Morrison, studied the Rite and the Ukrainian language in order to serve the Ukrainian people.

Most of the eparchial clergy came from Rome or other parts of Europe, but their roots were in Ukraine. For example, in 1950, Fr Ivan Prasko came to Australia, and from 1958–1993 served as bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. In the early fifties other clergy arrived. In 1993, Fr Peter Stasiuk CSsR, from Canada, was appointed Bishop of Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania and from July 2021, Bishop Mykola Bychok CSsR became the third Bishop. Today the Eparchy have Priests (Clergy) from Ukraine, Yugoslavia as well as a number of the priests which are Australian born. Presently there are ten parishes and several missions in the eparchy.

Two communities of Sisters serve the people in a variety of apostolic works. The Sisters of the Order of St Basil the Great came to Australia in 1967 from Argentina. In 1994, sisters from the Congregation of the Servants of Mary Immaculate came to Australia from Canada.

The language used in the Liturgy



The official language of the Ukrainian Catholic Church was old Slavonic but after the Second Vatican Council most prayers have been translated into Ukrainian which is used worldwide. In the countries outside of Ukraine, and according to needs, the language of the country is used. In Australia, Ukrainian or English is used in the liturgy.

The Christianisation of the Ukrainian people took place in 988. The faith and the Rite were officially received from Constantinople by Prince Volodymyr of Kyiv. The liturgical language did not remain Greek as did the Latin language in the Western Church. The language that was used in the liturgical worship was the language of the people, Old Slavonic. As the language of the country changed, however, the worship language remained Old Slavonic until Vatican II.

I am a Ukrainian Catholic. I belong to the Church in North Melbourne. My Church is different from other Churches I've been to with my school. We have a lot of special art called icons and our Divine Liturgy (Mass) is sung in our language. (George)

1. Liturgical Seasons

A majority of the faithful of the Ukrainian Catholic Church follow the Julian calendar. The liturgical cycle for the Ukrainian Byzantine Rite begins September 1st which falls on September 14 according to the Gregorian calendar. This liturgical year was adopted by the Council in Nicea of 325 AD. On the first day of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates Jesus' proclamation of the Lord's year of favour (Lk.4:18–19) because the focal point of the year is the divine Saviour and around him are gathered all angels and saints. In the liturgical life of the Church, the Paschal Mystery is the centre of liturgical time. Here the events of salvation are made present and actual. In the Divine Services, the Church makes memorial of the saving mysteries of Jesus Christ. And while the Pascha of Christ persists in transient time, the divine worship of the Church exists in three cycles. These correspond to the three units of time—the daily, the weekly, the yearly.

The first cycle is the Daily Cycle—Horologion (*Chasoslov*)

The Lord God created the world in time, with an alternation of light and darkness—that is, day and night—as well as the seasons of the year: “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years” (Gn. 1:14). The sequence of night and day in the story of creation of the world is a sign of the creative act of God, who brought all from non-existence into existence. This is why, as a memorial of this act, the services of the daily cycle begin in the evening: “And there was evening and there was morning...”

Our Church's daily cycle of prayer is built on the ideal of unceasing prayer, expressed in the biblical number seven. This number is a symbol of fullness and perfection. The Scriptures proclaim: “Seven times a day I praise you, for your righteous ordinances” (Ps.118[119]:164). Saint Basil the Great also exhorts us to such prayer: “Let it also be a rule for us, to praise God seven times a day.” The foundation of this rule of prayer is the Psalms. In Divine Services, these biblical Psalms are interspersed with other prayers: hymns, stichera, troparia, kontakia, prokeimena, litanies, etc. The services of the daily cycle—



namely, Vespers, Compline, the Midnight Office, Matins, and the First, Third, Sixth, and Ninth Hours, as well as the Service of Typica—all of these are found in the liturgical book called the Horologion (*Chasoslov*).

The second cycle is the Weekly Cycle (the *Octoechos*).

According to the Book of Genesis, during six days God did the work of creation, then “blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation” (*Gn.2:3*). Consequently, people also ordered their life according to a similar rhythm of seven days. Six days of the week they work, as God did. And then they set aside their cares to celebrate “the day of the Lord.”

The prayers and hymns of the weekly cycle are incorporated into the Divine Liturgy and the services of the daily cycle. These prayers are chanted according to one of the designated tones (in Greek, *echos*, meaning *sound* or *echo*), which occur in succession. The tradition of church singing according to eight tones flows from the Paschal event—the *Eighth Day*. The full cycle of eight tones lasts eight weeks. Collected together, the prayers of the eight tones comprise the liturgical book called the *Octoechos* (from the Greek meaning *eight tones*).

The third cycle is the Yearly Cycle of Services

The services of the liturgical year, or Church year, are built upon the *immoveable* and *movable* cycles. The former is linked to the fixed dates of the year, and the latter—to the movable date of Pascha. The liturgical year is joined to the astronomical year in such a way that the year is *crowned* with the goodness of God. This is accomplished by commemorating, rendering present, and experiencing all the major events of salvation history in the Divine Services.

The immoveable cycle of the Church Year begins on September 1; according to the Old (Julian) Calendar calculation, this occurs on September 14. The two calculations of the liturgical calendar (new and old) result from the fact that eventually it was noticed that every 128 years the civil calendar (in use since Julius Caesar) differed by one day from the actual astronomical cycles. In 1582, in order to renew the correspondence between the calendar year and the astronomical cycles, Gregory XIII, Pope of Rome, ordered a calendar reform, cancelling ten days from the calendar of the time. The reformed calendar was called the *New or Gregorian calendar*, while the unreformed remained the *Old or Julian calendar*. Since the time of the calendar reform, the difference between the two calendars has grown to thirteen days, and will continue to grow. A result of the different calculations is also the different dates for Pascha (Easter) and, consequently, of the feasts of the moveable cycle. Sometimes the date of Pascha coincides, but sometimes the difference between the Gregorian and Julian Calendar dates can reach five weeks.



The Movable Cycle (Lenten and Floral Triodia)

The centre and pivotal point of the liturgical year's movable cycle of feasts is Pascha. The date of its celebration falls on the first Sunday after the full moon after the vernal equinox. This means that every year the date of Pascha will *move*, falling on different calendar dates. Thus, on the Gregorian calendar it can fall as early as March 22 and as late as April 25; and on the Julian calendar, as early as April 4 and as late as May 10. Accordingly, the dates of the beginning of Great Lent, and of the feasts of the Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem, Ascension, and Pentecost will also move. During this period, the Church accompanies the faithful with the services of the Lenten and Floral Triodia (from the Greek, meaning a *three-canticle hymnic composition*). The Lenten Triodion contains the services for the four Sundays before Great Lent and for Great Lent itself; the Floral Triodion for the period from Lazarus Saturday to the Sunday of All Saints. [The Floral Triodion is also called the Pentecostarion.]

The services of the Triodia guide the Christian liturgically from an awareness of their own sinfulness to a spiritual transfiguration. Great Lent is preceded by four preparatory Sundays: the Sunday of the Publican (Tax Collector) and the Pharisee; the Sunday of the Prodigal Son; Meatfare Sunday; and Cheesefare Sunday. As preparation for Great Lent, on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Church calls us to imitate the humbleness of the Publican and shun the pride of the Pharisee. On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, the Church points to the necessity of repentance as a return from the foreign land of sin to the Father's home. On Meatfare Sunday, when the Gospel about the Divine Judgment is read (see *Mt. 25:31-46*), the Church defines the aim of the coming Lenten fast: to recognize our sins, confess them, and perform works of mercy. On Cheesefare (or Forgiveness) Sunday the Church calls us to take the first step in repentance—mutual forgiveness.

During the Lenten fast, Christians practice restraint in eating, but this is not an aim in itself, only a means to cleanse ourselves of passions: "If you refrain from eating but do not purify yourself of the passions, then your fasting is in vain, for it will not serve for correction. Rather, through insincerity the soul will become similar to the evil demons, who in fact never eat."

The Immovable Cycle of Feasts (the Menaion)

Another series of Church feasts—of the Lord, of the Mother of God, and of the saints—always falls on the same day of the year and they are thus called immovable (fixed) feasts. Chief among the fixed feasts of the Lord are the Birth (Nativity) of Christ (Christmas, December 25/January 7) and Theophany (January 6/19). Their meaning lies in the manifestation of Christ, the Light that overcomes the darkness of sin. On the second day of each of these feasts the Church celebrates the persons principally involved in the salvific events of Christ's Birth and his Baptism in the River Jordan: the Synaxis of the most holy Mother of God and the Synaxis of John the Baptist, respectively (*synaxis* is a Greek word which means 'gathering' and refers to the fact that we gather for a Eucharist to celebrate their memorial). Moreover, linked to the Birth of Christ is the feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God (March 25/April 7), which is nine months before Christmas.

With particular love the Church venerates the most Blessed Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary. She is inseparably tied to the salvific work of her Son. In the course of the yearly cycle, besides the feasts of the Mother of God (the Encounter and the Annunciation), we celebrate her Nativity (September 8/21),



her Entrance into the Temple (November 21/December 4), and her Dormition (August 15/28). The Nativity of the Mother of God is the beginning of our salvation, the Entrance is its proclamation, and her Dormition is a sign of its fulfilment.

Related to the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God is the feast of the Conception of Saint Anna when She Conceived the Most Holy Mother of God. This feast is also called the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God (December 9/22, nine months before her Nativity). Since in her Dormition the Mother of God “did not abandon the world,” her “standing before us in the Church” and her unending intercession for humankind before her Son are expressed in the feast of the Protection of the Mother of God (October 1/14). In the Dormition, the Mother of God was bodily taken up to heaven. However, she left us her precious relics—her robe and her sash—as “a powerful safeguard” for her faithful children. These relics are venerated in the feasts of the Placing of the Precious Robe of Our Most Holy Lady in the Church at Blachernae in Constantinople (July 2/15) and the Placing of the Precious Sash (August 31/September 13).

The Church also professes the Paschal mystery in the feasts of her saints, who suffered with Christ and with him were glorified. The Church offers the example of the lives of the saints to the faithful for imitation, in order to bring all to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The liturgical commemoration of saints is effected in the services and in the veneration of their icons and their relics.

The date of the veneration of saints is usually the day of their death, that is, their *birth to heaven*. It can also be the day of the finding or transferral of their relics. Every day of the Church Year is dedicated to one or more particular saints. The liturgical services (hymnography) for the saints are collected month by month in twelve volumes called the Menaia (from the Greek, meaning *monthly*).

The Season of Christmas

Liturgically the Church re-creates the expectation of the Saviour in the history of salvation by means of the Fast that begins on November 15/28, the day after the feast of the apostle Philip. This Fast lasts until the Nativity of Christ, and is appropriately called the *Nativity Fast*, or popularly, *Saint Philip's Fast* (in Ukrainian, *Pilipivka*). During the course of this Fast, the Church prepares us for the luminous feast of the Nativity of Christ, reminding us of the consequences of Adam's sinful lack of self-control: “Refusing to fast, the first Adam tastes of the death-bearing tree.”

The Nativity of Christ

The Church celebrates the coming of the Son of God into the world with the feast of the Nativity of Christ. The birth of Christ is announced to the shepherds by the angel of the Lord: “To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord” (*Lk.2:11, rsv-ce*). The Fathers of the Church extolled Christmas night as a day of joy and peace: Today the Bountiful One became poor for our sake... Today we receive a gift for which we did not ask... This present day threw open the heavenly door to our prayers... Now the Divine Being took upon himself the seal of humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity.



In our Church's tradition, the Eve of the Nativity feast, also called Holy Eve (in Ukrainian, *Sviat Vechir*), is honoured with particular solemnity. Every home becomes *a Bethlehem of the family*: the table symbolizes the manger; straw is placed under the tablecloth, and upon the tablecloth are placed the prosphora (Communion bread), a symbol of the Child Jesus. A lit candle is placed next to the prosphora to symbolize the star of Bethlehem. With a meatless supper, the family gathers around the table to prayerfully honour the incarnate Son of God. Christmas carols are sung by the faithful. In hospitality, homes open their doors to everyone who celebrates the Nativity of Christ. The high point of the celebration of the Nativity feast is the solemn divine service, for which all parishioners gather. The Eucharistic Supper at the Divine Liturgy crowns the family supper.

The Feast of Theophany (Epiphany)

The Theophany at the Jordan is liturgically connected with the feast of the Nativity. In her celebration of both these events, Church tradition emphasizes that both the Incarnation and the Baptism of the Lord are when God appears (in Greek, *theophania*). In accordance with the text of the Great Blessing of Water at Theophany, "in the preceding feast we have seen you as a babe, and in this present feast as perfect human, appearing as our perfect God." At the Nativity, God the Word "was born," but now he "appears in the flesh to the human race." At the Nativity, the "Sun of Righteousness" rose, and now it "shines forth." In the liturgical tradition of the Church, the feast of Theophany is also called the feast of Illumination. The sticheras of the feast of Theophany elucidate the bond between the feasts of the Nativity and Theophany: What was announced by the angel is now announced to the people by the Baptist; the spilling of infant blood caused Bethlehem to become childless, but through the sanctified waters of baptism, the Jordan now has many children. What was announced by the star to the magi in Bethlehem is now revealed to the world by the Father himself.

In the Ukrainian Christian tradition, the symbolism of Jordan water is closely connected with the memory of the Baptism of Rus-Ukraine by Grand Prince Volodymyr. The river Dnipro, in which the people of Kyiv were baptized, is figuratively called the "Ukrainian Jordan." On the feast of Theophany in Ukraine, an ice cross is erected as a sign and a memorial of baptism; during the Great Blessing of Water, three triple-branched candles are immersed into the waters. Bringing the holy water home, the faithful partake of it at the beginning of the Theophany Eve supper *Shchedryi Vechir* (Ukrainian, meaning *Abundantly Generous Eve*). They bless their homes and farms, and keep the water throughout the year to partake of it, and to bless themselves in times of difficulty and illness.

The Season of Lent and Pascha

In the Ukrainian Byzantine Rite, feast days are filled with symbolic ritual which express profound theology that can stir the depth of the soul. The Paschal season is perhaps most indicative of this reality. The Pasch was celebrated earlier than Christmas and today it is still the longest cycle in the liturgical year. The Pascha cycle begins with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, ten weeks before Pascha, and it is completed eight weeks after Pascha, with the Sunday of All Saints.



The cycle is divided, as follows:

Pre-paschal season

is the four Sundays before the Great Fast (Lent). These Sundays are known as:

- the Publican and the Pharisee,
- the Prodigal Son,
- Meatfare (farewell to meat – when the strict fast was observed, no more meat was eaten after this Sunday)
- Cheesefare (farewell to cheese).

Great Lent lasts from Cheesefare Sunday until Palm Sunday.

From Pascha to Ascension is the post-festal cycle. After the glorious week of the Resurrection, each Sunday celebrates a particular event by which it is named: Sunday of Thomas, of Myrrh-bearing Women, of the Paralytic, of the Samaritan Woman, of the Blind Man, of the Fathers of the Church, of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and of All Saints. Thus the entire Pascha cycle contains thirty-two Sundays.

Ordinary Time

The ordinary time is from the Sunday of all Saints until the Sunday of Zacchaeus.

The Great Fast (Lent)

The four Sundays before Lent begin gradually to lead people into the cycle of the fast. For each Sunday the readings and the prayers prepare the whole person for spiritual and physical transformation during the Great Fast in order that one will be ready to celebrate the great day of the Resurrection. For example, the entire service of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son speaks of the merciful love of God and of the nostalgic longing of a sinful person for God.

At one time the rules of the fast were very strict. During the entire Lent, people abstained from all meat and dairy products. Slowly the rules relaxed, but especially since the Second Vatican Council much has changed. Nevertheless, the forty-day fast is very significant. The faithful are still invited to fast not only physically but also spiritually. The most important aim of Lent is spiritual growth and transformation. In the early Church, Saturdays and Sundays were not fast days but only abstinence days; for example, fish and in some places dairy products were permitted. Today the Ukrainian Catholic Church prescribes that the faithful abstain from meat on all Fridays of the year. In addition, during Lent, there will be no meat



or dairy products on the first day of the Great Fast and on Great (Good) Friday. There is a greater emphasis on spiritual renewal, on receiving Penance and Communion more frequently, and also on service and alms-giving.

In the first century, during the fast, daily divine liturgies were not celebrated. Instead, the liturgy of the Presanctified gifts (vespers with Communion) were celebrated. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated only on Saturday and Sunday and on the feast of Annunciation. The liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesdays and Fridays. On Great Friday there is no Communion service; this is in order to participate more fully in the death of Jesus.

Holy Week

During the first three days of Holy Week, the troparion, "Behold the bridegroom is coming..." is sung during Matins, anticipating the Resurrection. On Holy Thursday, the bishop with clergy celebrate the Divine Liturgy at which he blesses the Chrism (myrrh (oil) prepared with many aromatic spices) which is used for Chrismation. The Passion Matins is celebrated in the evening of Holy Thursday with the reading of the 12 Gospels about Jesus' suffering and death. Before each reading the congregation sings "Glory to your Passion, O Lord", and at the end of the reading "Glory to your suffering, O Lord".

Great Friday is a very solemn day. It is a day of prayer, silence and fast. In every church the people prepare a beautiful garden tomb where the Plaschanytsia (Holy Shroud – an icon of Jesus in the tomb) is placed for the veneration during special vespers. The vespers of Great and Holy Friday solemnly celebrate Jesus' death and burial and culminate in a procession with the Holy Shroud. The Shroud then remains in the garden tomb for all to venerate on Great Friday and Holy Saturday. Great Friday is one of those days when the church is filled with people. In the evening of Great Friday, the melodic Jerusalem Matins (praise and lamentation of Jesus' death) is sung.

Pascha (Passover – Easter)

The services of Pascha truly reflect the splendour of the Resurrection. Many Churches still practise the custom of celebrating the Resurrection Matins at sunrise. The service begins outside the church doors with exuberant, melodic singing "*Christ is Risen from the dead, conquering death by death, and to those in the tombs, he granted life*". The faithful continue singing the Resurrection Matins as they process into the church with banners, bells ringing, all announcing that Christ is risen. The prayers of the Matins exalt the risen Lord in a variety of ways. They express that the power of the Resurrection has destroyed all hatred and all enemies are scattered. There is nothing left but to celebrate with all of creation and to embrace one another with loving forgiveness. The gloriously sung Divine Liturgy follows the Matins, with continuous echoes that Christ is risen from the dead, crushing death by his death.

A very important custom at Pascha is the blessing of beautifully decorated baskets of food, Pascha bread (Paska), Pascha eggs, etc. All foods are symbolic of the new life of the Resurrection. The baskets of food are blessed at the Matins or after the Divine Liturgy. This blessed food is shared by the family at



breakfast.

3. Significant Feast Days and Holy Days of Obligation

Because Jesus is the centre of the liturgical year, the first feasts in early apostolic times were dedicated to his glory. These feasts grew up around Sunday, which is the oldest Christian feast commemorating the Resurrection and the eucharist sacrifice.

The feasts honouring Mary began appearing with the proclamation of the dogma of the Divine Maternity of Mary at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. By 988 (when Prince Volodymyr the Great received the Christian faith from Byzantium), various Church Synods added or deleted feast days.

According to The Particular Law Of The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church,

the following feasts as obligatory:

- All Sundays
- The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos;
- The Universal Exaltation of the Honourable and Life-giving Cross;
- The Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos;
- The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- The Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- The Encounter of Our Lord;
- The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos;
- The Entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem;
- The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- The Descent of the Holy Spirit;
- The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos;

Besides these obligatory feasts, some parishes celebrate their favourite feasts, and there is always a big celebration of the patron saint of a particular Church. At the present time all parishes in Australia celebrate all holy days according to the Julian calendar.

4. Reception of Mysteries (Sacraments)



The Holy Mysteries of Christian Initiation

Participation in the life of the Most Holy Trinity becomes a reality for us through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation, and Eucharist. In other words, we partake of God's life by being united to Christ, receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit, and sharing the Body and Blood of Christ in the community called Church. As a person after birth begins to breathe and then receives nourishment in order to live, so the newly baptized, born to new life in the baptismal font, begins to breathe by the Holy Spirit and receives the nourishment of Holy Communion in order to grow in Christ. Through the prayers and sacred actions of the liturgical rite of each of these Mysteries, the Church leads the faithful (the Greek Fathers speak of *mystagogy—leading into the mystery*) into an understanding of the Mystery and perceiving it as a single, unified action of God's grace. This is why in the tradition of the Eastern Church, these three Holy Mysteries are celebrated together.

Baptism

The antiphon, "All you who have been baptised into Christ, have put on the person of Christ, Alleluia!", epitomises the rites of Baptism and Chrismation. This "putting on of Christ" is ritualised in several ways. The rite begins at the church vestibule with the baptismal party renouncing evil and proclaiming allegiance to Christ, then reciting the Creed as they process into the church. At the tetrapod (small table in front of the altar) there is the anointing of the five senses, heart and shoulders, consecrating the entire person to Christ. Baptism by triple immersion or infusion (water poured on the forehead) is the sign of the Trinity, and of dying and rising with Christ on the third day. (Baptism by triple immersion was practised by the early Church and today this practice is being restored.) Receiving the white garment denotes the putting on of Christ, and the lighted candle, the entry into the light of Christ. Baptism is the beginning of an ongoing process of life in Christ, and all the other mysteries emanate from it.

Chrismation (Confirmation)

Chrismation immediately follows Baptism. It symbolises the entrance into the new life of the Holy Spirit, and thus into the life of the Church. The priest, using Holy Chrism (Myrrh (fragrant oil) consecrated by the bishop each Holy Thursday) anoints the five senses, heart and shoulders, proclaiming "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit". Chrismation activates the baptismal life of Christ and it seals, sanctifies, and dedicates the whole person to this new life, making one available for divine action.

Eucharist

In the Ukrainian Catholic Church, Communion has always been received under two species of leavened bread and wine, and the emphasis is not only on receiving the body and the blood of Jesus but also on the forgiveness of sin.



In the Mystery of Holy Communion, Christ gives us his very self, his Body and Blood, as nourishment for our growth in the new life. At the Mystical Supper (Last Supper) Christ offered himself for us so that we might be able to offer our lives for our neighbour, as he offered his life (see *Jn.13:34*). Receiving Communion in the Lord's Body and Blood, we receive a pledge of life eternal: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day" (*Jn.6:54*). Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we already have eternal life, the fullness of which will be revealed in the glorious second coming of Christ. "For since he bestowed on us his own image and his own spirit and we did not guard them, he took himself a share in our poor and weak nature, in order that he might cleanse us and make us incorruptible, and establish us once more as partakers of his divinity."

Holy Communion is received for the first time at Baptism and regularly from then on. However, in the case of children, they often receive a Solemn Communion after 7 years-of-age. This is a Western innovation that has crept in to some Eastern Churches and justified as a *first conscious reception of Communion*. There are no special clothes, ceremonies or celebrations on such occasions.

The Holy Mysteries of Healing

The Mystery of Repentance (Reconciliation)

Repentance is a lifelong journey which began with Baptism. On the road of life, one experiences sin, moving away from baptismal grace. Therefore, there is a need to keep returning to Christ, to receive the gift of forgiveness granted in Baptism. This is fulfilled by confessing to a priest who is a witness of the sinners' repentance and mediator of God's forgiveness and the restoration of original grace through forgiveness. Frequent confession is a highly recommended practice. It is a general practice to have First Confession and Solemn Holy Communion when children reach the age of reason.

The Holy Mystery of Repentance (or Confession) is a marvellous manifestation of God's love and mercy towards us sinners. This is because the Lord does not reject us and does not turn away from us when we, having been washed of our sins in Baptism and endowed with divine grace, sin again through malice or weakness. Indeed, the Lord awaits our repentance. He forgives us if we repent and confess our sins (see *Lk.15:12-32*).

The spirituality of the Ukrainian Catholic Rite encourages ongoing repentance. For example, a cherished prayer – an act of contrition – is taught to little children and prayed by everyone daily. Traditionally, the Mystery of Repentance was celebrated before an icon, confessing sins to Christ in the presence of a priest. This beautiful practice containing a deep theological meaning has been neglected for a long time. Today this custom is slowly being restored in some places, but generally the Mystery of Repentance is administered in open or closed confessionals.

Anointing of the Sick (Holy Unction)

The Mystery of Holy Anointing, received at the time of suffering and illness, is celebrated in order to



strengthen our faith in Christ's victory over sin and death. In Holy Anointing, God grants the grace to renew a person's inner wholeness—their healing and further spiritual growth. The apostle Paul teaches that "all things work together for good for those who love God" (*Rom.8:28*). Therefore, our suffering and illness can have great spiritual value: "I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (*Col.1:24*). The Mystery of Holy Anointing is performed collegially, by the prayer of the whole Church, for the healing of soul and body. Its purpose is to strengthen trust in God and bestow forgiveness of sins as well as physical recovery. This is why the Mystery is administered to the sick and not only to the dying. By the power of the grace of the Mystery of Holy Anointing, the sick person becomes capable of seeing their illness in the light of Divine Providence and receives the strength to bear their illness and overcome it. By changing his or her attitude toward the illness, the afflicted person joins their own suffering to the salvific sufferings of Christ.

In the Mystery of Holy Anointing, by the prayer of the Church, the sick person receives forgiveness of sins. This Mystery, however, does not replace the Mystery of Confession. Nonetheless, if the one anointed repents but for some reason does not have an opportunity to approach the Mystery of Confession, they receive forgiveness of sins. The Church teaches that the Mystery of Holy Anointing grants spiritual healing, even if physical recovery does not accompany it.

Unfortunately, in mind of faithful, the Mystery of Anointing of sick is mixes up with the Last Rite.

The Holy Mysteries of Service

The Holy Mystery of Marriage

Every mystery, according to the Byzantine tradition, brings out the dignity and divine worth of the human person. The processions and crowning rites in the Mystery of Marriage symbolise this. The rite of the engagement begins in the vestibule of the church, where the priest blesses the rings and puts them on the hands of the bride and the groom. This is the official Church betrothal. The bridal couple solemnly process into the church, actualising their membership as a couple. This also symbolises the procession of the people of God into the Kingdom. At the tetrapod (small altar) the priest blesses and crowns the couple as the head of a new creation. Now this marriage is the beginning of a little kingdom moving toward the ultimate Kingdom of God. The rite ends with the priest leading the couple three times around the tetrapod. This symbolises the eternal journey which has begun at Baptism.

Marriage is based on the fact that the married couple mutually complements one another. The Church gives witness to this in a prayer of the Rite of Crowning: "Holy God, you created man from the dust and from his side fashioned a woman as a suitable helpmate for him, for such was the good pleasure of your majesty that man should not be alone on earth." In their gender differentiation, a man and woman complete one another, creating an indissoluble union of *one body*.



Mystery of Holy Orders

Through Baptism, Jesus draws everyone into the eternal priesthood. He desires to restore and sanctify a human person and all of creation. The essence of the ordained priesthood is the service of love and to help everyone enter the royal priesthood of Jesus. The priesthood reveals the humility of the Church in its complete dependence on Christ's love. The Mystery of Ordination actualises the gift of Christ's love, which can transform the world.

The priesthood of Christ is the actualization in the Church of Christ's mediation and intercession through persons chosen by God. In the Mystery of Holy Orders, the sacred ministers receive the grace of the Holy Spirit to exercise Christ's priesthood in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries and pastoral service. In all of the sacred minister's service "it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock... Teacher of Truth."

But pre-eminently in the Eucharistic offering, the sacred minister acts in the name of Christ, the Supreme and Eternal High Priest. The sacred minister also acts "in the name of the whole Church presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice."

Priestly ministry in the Church has a hierarchical structure, the essence of which is most fully manifested in the celebration of the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic assembly the *bishop*, as successor of the apostles, presides; the *presbyters* concelebrate with the bishop, while the *deacons* assist the bishop and the presbyters. Saint Ignatius of Antioch stresses the importance of the hierarchical ministry in the Church: "I exhort you to study to do all things with a divine harmony, while your bishop presides in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles, along with your deacons, who are most dear to me, and are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ." "Apart from these [i.e., the bishops, presbyters, and deacons] there is no Church."

The ordination of a deacon, presbyter, or bishop takes place during the Divine Liturgy. This is accomplished by the bishop's laying on of hands (in Greek, *cheirotonia*) and the prayer of the Church. Laying his hand on the man being ordained, the bishop invokes upon him the grace of the Holy Spirit. Ordaining a presbyter, the bishop declares: "Divine grace, which always heals the infirm and completes that which is lacking, places the devout deacon in the presbyterate. Let us therefore pray that the grace of the Holy Spirit descend upon him, and let us all say: Lord, have mercy." The prayer of the bishop is joined by the prayer of the Church. By the repeated acclamation *Axios!* (in Greek, meaning *worthy*), the community affirms that through divine grace the one ordained has become worthy of the presbyteral ministry. Just as Baptism and Chrismation, ordination to any hierarchical order confers an indelible seal of grace; therefore, such ordination can be received only once in a lifetime.

The Eastern Church has the tradition of both celibate and married clergy. The candidate for the priesthood has the option to marry prior to Deacon's ordination. In the Ukrainian Catholic Church this custom, ratified by the Union of Brest-Litovsk in 1596, is still practised today.

Schools, parishes or other organisations are free to use this material, but please note its source as *Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)*.

