

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, January 8, 2017*

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY
BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Greetings my brethren, and welcome on this day when we celebrate the baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a Sacrament universally recognized in Christendom. It is the first ritual step taken by each Christian towards her or his ultimate reconciliation with the Divinity. It is not merely a symbolic affirmation, but a true initiatic rite which places an indelible mark upon the soul of the recipient. It does not guarantee that the recipient will attain to a full spiritual maturity within the space of his or her earthly life, but it does mark that one as an individual set upon the path towards reintegration.

Baptism is an incredibly ancient rite. It is a sacrament which, while promoted by Jesus, was not, strictly speaking, instituted by Jesus. That is, Jesus did not create the Sacrament for us during his earthly life, like the Eucharistic celebration. Rather, he *received* this Sacrament during his life and perpetuated what he had received. Now, our Christian form of the Baptism rite, which is transmitted in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is slightly different from the original forms used by John, but it retains the core elements of John's rite. Likewise, the Gnostic Christian forms of the Baptism rite contain further modifications which aid the recipient in approaching the Holy Gnosis, but without ever altering either the primitive Christian forms and intent, or those of the pre-Christian Johannine rite. And since the Gnostic Baptism, irrespective of its additions and modifications, retains the primitive forms and matter, and furthermore intends to do what the Church, in a broader sense, intends to do, one should never fear any possibility of irregularity, and should always be reassured of its perfect validity - in both a Gnostic sense and in a Christian sense more generally.

The Sacrament of Chrismation, of course, is intimately related to that of Baptism. Chrismation literally means an anointing. For Our Lord Jesus, this anointing by the Holy Spirit occurred at the time of his Baptism. There were, therefore, actually two rites occurring simultaneously. There was the rite of Baptism as practiced by John, and then there was the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit. The rite of Baptism could be administered freely. But the power to invoke the anointing of the Holy Spirit could not be accomplished while Christ was still in the flesh. It was only after Jesus transcended death, becoming pure Spirit himself, that he was able to facilitate the anointing by the Holy Spirit of his disciples. This anointing occurred at Pentecost, and the Sacrament instituted on that day is preserved in the rite of Chrismation.

Within the ACP, as in many Gnostic Churches, these rites of Baptism and Chrismation are united into a single ritual, rather than being spread out, sometimes over years. By uniting these Sacraments we are actually re-uniting them, for recall that Jesus himself was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his own Baptism. It is only natural, therefore, that in our own imitation of Him, that we should apply his teaching and his Sacraments as it seems they are intended. The Mystery of Baptism is one of the greatest of Gnostic Mysteries, spoken of at length in the Gnostic scriptures. They are mysteries well worth contemplating.