

Why are we called Christians (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



1. Having been baptized into Christ, and put on Christ, you have been given the same form as the Son of God; for God, having foreordained us to adoption as His children, gave us the same features as the body of Christ's glory. Having therefore become partakers of Christ, you are properly called Christs (anointed ones), and of you God said: "Do not touch my Christs, (or anointed ones)". Now you have been made Christs, by receiving the stamp of the Holy Spirit [Holy Chrism]; and everything's been done to you in imitation, because you're images of Christ. He washed in the River Jordan, and having imparted the fragrance of His Godhead to the waters, He emerged from them; and the Holy Spirit in the fulness of His being lighted on Him, like resting upon like. And, in a similar way, after you emerged from the pool of the sacred streams, you were given the Chrism, a copy of that with which Christ was anointed. This is the Holy Spirit of whom also the blessed Isaiah, in his prophecy about Him, said : "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me: He has sent me to preach glad tidings to the poor".



2. For Christ was not anointed by men with oil or material ointment, but by the Father, Who had previously appointed Him to be the Saviour of the whole world, Who anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, as Peter says: "Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit". David the Prophet also cried, saying, "Your throne, God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of your kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, Your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows". And as Christ was, in actual fact, crucified, buried and raised, you, too, in Baptism are deemed worthy of being crucified, buried, and raised together with Him, in His likeness. So is it with anointing also. As He was anointed with the notional oil of gladness, that is, with the Holy Spirit, Who is called oil of gladness because He is the author of spiritual gladness, so you, too, were anointed with Chrism, having become partakers and fellows of Christ.

3. But beware of supposing this to be plain oil. Just as the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is no longer mere bread but the Body of Christ, so also this holy Chrism is no more simple oil, nor (so to say) common, after the invocation, but it's a gift of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, through the presence of His divinity, and is made active. This Chrism is symbolically applied to your forehead and your other sense organs. And while your body is anointed with the perceptible Chrism, your soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-giving Spirit.

4. You were first anointed on the forehead, so that you might be delivered from the

shame which the first transgressor carried everywhere with him; and so that, with unveiled face, you might reflect, as a mirror, the glory of the Lord. Then on your ears, so that you might receive the ears which are able to hear the Divine Mysteries, of which Isaiah said: "The Lord also gave me an ear to hear". And the Lord Jesus, in the Gospel, says: "He that has ears to hear let him hear". Then, on the nostrils, so that receiving the sacred Chrism you may say, "We are to God a sweet savour of Christ, among the saved". Afterwards, on your breast, so that, having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, you may stand against the wiles of the devil. For as Christ after His Baptism, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit, went out and vanquished the adversary, in the same way you, who after Holy Baptism and the Mystical Anointing, have put on the whole armour of the Holy Spirit, are to stand against the power of the adversary, and vanquish it, saying: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

5. Now that you've been deemed worthy of this Holy Chrism, you are called Christians, confirming the name also by your new birth. Because, before you were found worthy of receiving this grace, you actually had no right to this title, but were advancing on your way towards being Christians.

6. Besides, you should know that the symbol of this Chrism lies in the Old Scripture. For when Moses gave his brother the command of God, he made him High-priest. After he had bathed in water, Moses anointed him; and Aaron was called "Anointed", evidently from the rite of Chrismation. So also the High-priest, in advancing Solomon to the throne, anointed him after he had bathed in Gihon. To them, however, these things happened as a formal procedure, but to you they occurred in truth, because you were truly anointed by the Holy Spirit. Christ is the beginning of your salvation; for He is truly the First-Fruit, and you the leaven; but if the First-Fruit is holy, then clearly His holiness will pass to the leaven also.

7. Keep this unblemished, for it will teach you all things, if it abides in you, as you have just heard declared by the blessed John, talking in depth about this Anointing. For this holy thing is a spiritual safeguard of the body, and salvation of the soul. The blessed Isaiah, prophesying of old, said: "And on this mountain" (he also calls the Church a mountain elsewhere, as when he says, "In the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest") "the Lord will make a feast for all the nations ; they shall drink wine, they shall drink gladness, they shall anoint themselves". And to confirm his words, listen to what he says about this myrrh being mystical: "Impart all these things to the nations, for this counsel is for all nations". Having been anointed, therefore, with this holy Chrism, keep it unspotted and unblemished in you, prospering in good works, and becoming well-pleasing to the Captain of your

salvation, Christ Jesus, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”