

Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration¹ of an Icon

After verifying that the icon properly conforms to the Orthodox Tradition, the priest or deacon places it on the east side of the altar before the celebration of a major service (Vespers, Matins, or the Divine Liturgy) so that it can be censed with the altar. After the service, the priest takes the icon out of the sanctuary—in procession if he wants—places it on an anoloy, and says the following prayer:

O Christ our God, we give thanks to you for having permitted, by your holy Incarnation and by the hand of the iconographer, your servant (handmaiden), that your likeness (the likeness of your Saint N.) should be represented on this icon and that your name (the name of your Saint N.) should be written on it. By your Incarnation, you sanctified the matter of your body so that it might carry Divinity itself. Likewise, by accepting that your pure image and your holy name (the image and name of your Saint N.) be represented and written in the matter of this icon, you have made it holy and a carrier of your grace. Therefore, by it, bless us all and through it, shower us with your love. We invoke your loving-kindness on those who ordered it, who painted it and on those who venerate it, for we know that by reproducing your image that carries your holy name and by venerating it, we proclaim the economy of your Incarnation. We honor you (your Saint) in this icon, for the honor given to an image rises to the prototype. Glory to you, O Lord, glory to your condescension, and we give glory to you, O our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir:

Amen.

After this prayer, the priest censes the icon, and the clergy and faithful venerate it after which it is given to the person who presented it.² If, on the other hand, the icon is for the church and is large in size, the service can be done in a solemn manner and in the presence of all. In that case, the icon is placed on a properly covered table (tetrapod or proskynetarion) in front of the holy doors if it is an icon of the Trinity/Hospitality of Abraham, the Baptism (Theophany), the Transfiguration or Pentecost (the Descent of the Holy Spirit). If it is an icon of Christ (or one of his feasts), the Mother of God (or one of her feasts) or a saint, it should be placed in front of the ambon in the middle of the church.³

1 In all the following services, the word *Blessing* has been changed to *Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration*.

2 This text, translated from French, can properly replace the first twelve (12) lines of the *Grand Euchologe Sacerdotal* (translated into French by Fr. Denis Guillaume, Diaconie Apostolique, 1992, p. 345) which begin with "**BÉNÉDICTIONS D'ICÔNES**" and finish with "...et la lui remet." It can also replace the equivalent passage in any English translation of the Euchologion.

3 We have slightly modified the following services so as to make the doctrine of the Church more obvious: icons are holy and sacred because they carry the likeness of Christ or one of his saints as well as his most-holy name or that of one of his saints. An icon is not holy a priest has blessed it or sprinkled it with holy water. Icons are not in the same category as "ordinary" objects such as houses, bee hives, candles, oil, etc. They belong rather in the category of the Cross and the Bible which are holy and sacred because of their form, in the first case, and the Word of God that is written in them, in the other. To have a cross or a Bible blessed by a priest does not make them holy and sacred. They, like icons, are already holy and sacred and do not need a blessing. In fact, such a blessing introduces a foreign nation of sacralization in place of the Church's understanding holiness in another way.

Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration of an Icon of the most-holy Trinity/the Hospitality of Abraham, Christ's Baptism, Pentecost, or the Transfiguration

The priest wearing an epitrahilion censes the new icon which has been placed on a table in front of the ambon. He then says the following prayers:

Blessed in our God, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The reader says the initial prayers.

The priest: ...for unto you...

The reader: Amen. Kyrie eleison (12). Glory to the Father...Now and ever...

The choir:

Come, let us worship and fall down before God our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, our King and our God.

Psalm 66

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us!

That your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you!

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the people with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the people praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.

God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Glory to the Father...Now and ever...

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Glory to you, O God. (3)

The deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

The choir: Kyrie eleison.

The priest:

O Lord our God, you are glorified in the Holy Trinity, whom no mind can grasp, no word can express, and no creature can ever contemplate. Thus we have learned from the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the theologian Apostles to confess you, and thus we believe and confess you to be God the Father without beginning and your consubstantial Son and the Spirit who shares your nature and sits on the heavenly throne with you. For, if the old Law describes you for us, you the Holy Trinity, as the appearance of three Angels to the illustrious patriarch Abraham, the new Law of grace manifests the Father in a voice, the Son in the flesh in the Jordan and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The Son then ascends to heaven in his flesh and sits at the right hand of the Father and sends the Spirit on the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. On Mount Tabor, if the Father is in the voice and the Spirit in the cloud, the Son shows himself to the three disciples in his blinding light. In perpetual memory of these events, we not only confess you whom we glorify with our lips as one God, but we also paint an icon, not to make the image of a god, but to look at it with our fleshly eyes and thus through it to contemplate you, O our God, with our spiritual eyes. And thus venerating it, we

can glorify and magnify you as our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. We remember your innumerable blessings, for the veneration of an image rises to its prototype. Thus by presenting now this icon before your Magnificence, according to the holy precepts that we just mentioned, we pray you and ask you to show us the reality of your mercy. Look down on us with favor, send your heavenly blessing so that those who will venerate this icon with piety and who, standing before it, will humbly worship you and pray to you with faith may receive mercy and find grace. May they be delivered from every evil and affliction, have their sins forgiven and come to your Kingdom of Heaven.

By your grace, mercy and love for us, O God, one and glorified in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom be glory now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

The priest: Peace be with you all.

The choir: And with your spirit.

The deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord.

The choir: To you, O Lord.

The priest:

O Lord, my God, look down from on high, from your heavenly dwelling, from the throne of glory of your royal majesty and by your mercy, send on us your holy blessing. Through this icon, heal us of every evil and every suffering; chase far away from the faithful every diabolical work so that they may approach to worship you in your presence. We pray you and ask you: hear and answer their prayers.

By the grace and mercy of your only-begotten Son with whom you are blessed and with your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

For an icon of the Holy Trinity (Hospitality of Abraham), the following stichirion is to be sung, ton 8:

Come all peoples, worship the only God in three Persons, for the Father begets the Son outside of time, sharing with him the same throne and the same eternity; the Holy Spirit is in the Father, glorified with the Son: one single Power, one single Divinity, one single Being before whom we fall down saying: Holy God who created all through the Son and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. Holy and Mighty God by whom the Father was revealed to us, and by whom the Holy Spirit came into this world. Holy and Immortal God, the Comforter, who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son, Holy Trinity, Glory to you.

If the icon is of the Baptism of Christ (Holy Theophany), the Transfiguration, or Pentecost (the Descent of the Holy Spirit), the troparion and kontakion of the feast is sung.

The dismissal is also that of the feast.

Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration of an icon of Christ or of one of his Feast

The priest wearing an epitrahilion censes the new icon which has been placed on a table in front of the ambon. He then says the following prayer.

Blessed is our God always now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

The reader says the initial prayers.

The priest: ...for unto you...

The reader: Amen. Kyrie eleison (12). Glory to the Father...Now and ever...

The choir:

Come, let us worship and fall down before God our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, our King and our God.

Psalm 88

O Lord, I will sing of your mercies forever;

I will proclaim your truth with my mouth from generation to generation;

For you said, "Mercy shall be built up forever; your truth shall be prepared in the heavens.

I made a covenant with my chosen ones; I swore to David my servant, I shall prepare your seed forever,

And I shall build your throne from generation to generation."

The heavens shall confess your wonders, O Lord, and your truth in the church of the saints.

For who in the clouds shall be compared to the Lord, and who among the sons of God shall be compared to the Lord.

God is glorified in the counsel of the saints; he is great and fearful toward all round about him.

O Lord God of hosts, who is like you? You are powerful, O Lord and your truth is around you.

You are master of the sea's strength, and you calm the surging of its waves.

You humbled the arrogant man as though he were wounded, and with the arm of your power you scattered your enemies.

The heavens belong to you, and the earth is yours; you founded the world and all its fullness.

You created the north wind and the seas; Tabor and Hermon shall greatly rejoice in your name.

Your arm rules with power;

let your hand be strengthened; let your right hand be exalted.

The foundation of your throne is righteousness and judgment; mercy and truth shall go before your face.

Blessed are the people who know glad shouting;

O Lord, they shall walk in the light of your face, and shall greatly rejoice in your name the whole day long;

And they shall be exalted in your righteousness, for you are the boast of their power,

And in your good pleasure our horn shall be exalted.

For our defense is from the Lord and from the Holy One of Israel, our King.

Glory to the Father...Now and always...

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Glory to you, O God. (3)

The deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

The choir: Kyrie eleison.

The priest:

O Almighty Lord, God of our Fathers, who desired that Israel, your chosen people, to be freed from the error of idolatry and to know and serve you for ever, you the only true God. You severely forbade your people to make images and likenesses that falsified your true divinity so that they might serve and worship only you as God. And yet, it was by images and likenesses destined to glorify, not foreign, false gods, but your sublime and all-holy Name, that of the only true God, that in the Law you first ordered Moses to make and place on the ark of the covenant in the sanctuary, two golden cherubim: one at each extremity of the propitiatory. You ordered a multitude of cherubim to be artistically embroidered on the curtains. Then you inspired Solomon to put the two cherubim, made of Cyprus wood and covered with gold, into the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant was to be found along with the tables of the Law, the golden vase and Aaron's rod. These were the objects that accompanied the people in the desert and signified the grandeur of your glory by keeping alive the memory of your great deeds and blessings. And even if these objects were in part the work of human hands, you ordered that they be venerated with fear and trembling, that the people pray before them, falling down in prostrations and censing them as agrees with your Divinity. And in your mercy, you received this veneration as if it were made directly to you. Then, in the fullness of time, you sent your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, born of a woman, the ever-virgin Mary, and your son taking the form of a servant and becoming in everything like men, he represented the features of his all-pure image by pressing his all-holy face against a cloth and sending it to Abgar the king of Edessa for the healing of his sickness and to grant to all the faithful who approached it and venerated it, innumerable healings and so many miraculous benefits. Therefore, O good and all-mighty Master, in memory of the Incarnation of the Savior and for all the illustrious miracles and benefits that he has seen fit to bestow on mankind during his time on the earth in our humanity, we have made this icon of your beloved Son, not as though making an idol, but knowing that the veneration of the image rises to its prototype. We respectfully present it before your Magnificence and falling down we pray you with fervor: look down on us with mercy because we have made this icon in memory of his Incarnation and Manifestation. Through it, send down on us your heavenly blessing and the grace of your all-holy Spirit and bless us. Through it, heal us, keep far from us all diabolic works, fill us with the same force and blessing that you poured on Abgar by the famous image not painted with human hands, which was divinely formed through contact with the holy and all-pure face of your beloved Son. Let the power of your miracles pass through it for the strengthening of the Orthodox faith and the salvation of your faithful people. May all who worship you in front of it, along with your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit, have their prayers answered, may they call on your name with faith and pray to you with fervor. May they merit the mercy of your love towards all people and may they receive your grace.

For you are our sanctification, and we give you glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

The priest: Peace be with you all.

The choir: And with your spirit.

The deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord.

The choir: To you, O Lord.

The priest:

O Lord, our God, look down from on high, from your heavenly dwelling, from the throne of glory of your royal majesty and by your mercy, send on us your holy blessing. Through this icon, heal us of every evil and every suffering; chase far away from the faithful every diabolical work so that they may approach to worship you in your presence. We pray you and ask you: hear and answer their prayers.

By the grace and mercy of your only-begotten Son with whom you are blessed and with your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

The priest then censes the icon, and adding gesture to word, he bows while this troparion, ton 2, is sung:

We venerate your most pure image, O Good One, and we ask forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God, for you accepted to suffer by being put on the cross to save your creature from the servitude to the enemy. Therefore, in thanksgiving, we cry aloud: you have filled the world with joy, O our Savior, having brought salvation to the world.

Then the priest kisses the icon while this troparion, ton 1, is sung:

Glory to the Father...Now and ever...

Having represented on icons your divine traits, O Christ, we openly sing your Nativity, your amazing miracles and your freely-accepted Crucifixion, and the demons are repelled and terrified as the impious people cry.

Dismissal:

May he who before his freely-accepted Passion, in his unspeakable plan for salvation, reproduced the image not-made-with-hands of his most-pure Face, thus associating his divinity with our humanity, Christ our true God, by the intercession of his most-pure Mother and of all the saints, may he have mercy on us and save us, for he is good and loves mankind.

Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration of an Icon of the Mother of God or of One of Her Feasts

The priest wearing an epitrahilion, censes the new icon which has been placed on a table in front of the ambon. He then says the following prayers:

Blessed in our God, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The reader says the initial prayers.

The priest: ...for unto you...

The reader: Amen. Kyrie eleison (12). Glory to the Father...Now and ever...

The choir:

Come, let us worship and fall down before God our Kind.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, our King and our God.

Psalm 44

My heart overflowed with a good word; I tell my works to the King; my tongue is the pen of a swift-writing scribe.

You are more beautiful than the sons of men; grace was poured out on your lips; therefore God blessed you forever.

Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, in your splendor and your beauty.

And stretch your bow, and grant prosperity, and reign because of truth, gentleness and righteousness,

and your right hand shall guide you wondrously.

Your arrows are sharp, O Might One (the Peoples shall fall under you),

in the heart of the King's enemies, your throne, O God is forever and ever;

your royal scepter is a scepter of uprightness.

You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions.

Myrrh and stacte and cassia pour forth from your garments,

from the ivory palaces from which they gladdened you.

There are daughters of kings in your honor; the queen stood at your right hand in apparel interwoven with gold,

and adorned and embroidered with various colors.

Listen, O daughter, behold and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father's house,

for the King desired your beauty, for he is your Lord.

And the daughters of Tyre shall worship him with gifts;

the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.

And her glory as the king's daughter is within, adorned and embroidered with golden tassels.

The virgins behind her shall be brought to the king; her neighbors shall be brought to you;

they shall be brought to you; they shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing;

they shall be led into the temple of the King.

In place of your fathers, sons shall be born to you;

you shall make them rulers over all the earth.

They shall remember your name from generation to generation;
therefore, peoples shall give thanks to you forever and unto ages of ages.

Glory to the Father...Now and ever...
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Glory to you, O God. (3)

The deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

The choir: Kyrie eleison.

The priest:

O Lord our God, you accepted that your Son and Word, coeternal and consubstantial with you, take flesh of the all-pure and ever-virgin Mary and by his all pure birth, thus making her the Mother of God, you gave her to all believers as protectrice, advocate and helper: look down now on us with mercy who humbly pray to you, who call her the Mother of God, and believe her to intercede for us before your throne. By her intercession, hear our prayers and petitions and send the grace of your all-holy Spirit on us, your servants, who have made this icon of her, in her honor and memory. Send miracles through her intercession and through this icon made holy by her image and her name that are inscribed on it. Be a source of healing and health for all sick people who ask for your help through the Mother of God. And all those who venerate in front of this icon the ever-blessed Mother of God, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, all those who ask her intercession as though calling on the heavenly protectrice of Christians before your throne and who greatly desire her help in dangers and unhappiness, let them obtain protection, deliverance and quick help. Grant them, in your mercy, forgiveness of their sins, grant them to receive promptly the grace they ask of you, let them have the mercy of your love for mankind, mercy they have long been waiting for, and grant them entry into your heavenly Kingdom.

By the compassion of your only-begotten Son, born of her according to the flesh, our incarnate God and Savior, Jesus Christ, to whom is given all glory, honor and worship, as well as to your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

The priest: Peace be with you all.

The choir: And with your spirit.

The deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord.

The choir: To you, O Lord.

The priest:

O divine Master, all-mighty Father, who have accepted to choose the only, all-pure dove and all-holy lamb of the human race, the ever-virgin Mary, to be the mother of your only-begotten Son and to sanctify her by the descent of the all-holy Spirit so that she might be his dwelling place. You have made her more venerable than the cherubim and the seraphim, you have made her the highest, the most glorious of all creatures, the intercessor and helper of the human race. By her prayers and intercession, bless us who pray before this image prepared in her honor and memory and for the glory of him whom she brought into the world, your only-begotten Son and consubstantial Word, and this for your own glory, Father without beginning, and for the glory of your life-giving Spirit. Through this icon, be for the believers who will pray in front of it, the remedy for spiritual and bodily sicknesses, the deliverance against all aggression of the enemy, for sure protection and unfailing intercession before your throne.

By the mercy of your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom you are blessed as well as your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen.

Now the following theotokia are to be sung. If the icon represents a feast of the Mother of God, the troparion and kontakion of the feast are sung first.

Under your wings, we find refuge, O Virgin Mother of God. Do not despise the prayers we address to you in the middle of so many sufferings, but deliver us from every danger, only pure Virgin, blessed among all women.

Rejoice, O Virgin Mother of God, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you and you are blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, for you gave birth to the Savior of our souls.

Glory to the Father..., tone 1

From your icon, O sovereign Mother of God, abundantly flow healing and health for the faithful who approach you with love: visit me therefore, me who am infirmed; by your grace, by your goodness, heal my bodily passions and take pity on my soul.

Now and ever...

With love, we venerate your holy icon, O most-pure Virgin and with one voice we proclaim you truly the Mother of God; for us faithful who bow down before you, manifest your powerful protection, keep far from us every evil since you can do great things to save us.

It is truly right to bless you, O Mother of God, ever blessed and most-pure and the Mother of our God. More venerable than the cherubim, and more glorious than the seraphim, O Virgin who gave birth to God the Word, you are truly the Mother of God and we magnify you.

During these hymns, the people venerate the icon. Then the priest makes the dismissal:

The priest:

May Christ our true God, by the intercession of his holy and most-pure Mother have mercy on us and save us for he is good and loves mankind.

Service for the Solemn, Inaugural Veneration of an Icon of a Saint

The priest wearing an epitrahilion, censes the new icon which has been placed on a table in front of the ambon. He then says the following prayers:

Blessed in our God, always, now and even and unto the ages of ages.

The reader says the initial prayers.

The priest: ...for unto you...

The reader: Amen. Kyrie eleison (12). Glory to the Father...now and ever...

The choir:

Come, let us worship and fall down before God our King.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and our God.

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, our King and our God.

Psalm 138

O Lord, you test me and know me; you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you understand my thoughts from afar; you search out my path and my portion,
and you foresee all my ways.

For there is no word on my tongue,
but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether,
the last things and the first things;

you fashioned me and placed your hands on me.

Your knowledge has become too wondrous for me;

it has become too overwhelming; I am unable to grasp it.

Where could I go from your Spirit, or flee from your face?

If I should ascend into heaven, you would be there;

if I should descend into Hades, you would be there;

if I should take up my wings at dawn and pitch camp at the furthest part of the sea,
even there your hand would lead me.

And your right hand would hold me.

And I said, "Perhaps darkness shall cover me." But the night shall be light to my delight;

for darkness shall not be dark because of you, and the night shall be bright as day;

as its darkness, so also shall be its light.

For you possess my heart, O Lord; you took hold of me from my mother's womb.

I will give thanks to you, for I am fearfully and wondrously made; marvelous are your works,
and my soul knows this very well.

My bone you made in secret was not hidden from you, and my substance was in the lowest
parts of the earth;

your eyes saw me when I was unformed, and all men shall be written in your book;
they shall be formed day by day, when as yet there were none among them.

Your friends, O God, became very honorable to me; their principalities became very strong;

I shall count them, and they shall be multiplied more than the sand;

I awakened and I am still with you.

If you should slay sinners, O God, you would turn aside from me, O men of blood.

For you will say regarding their reasoning, "They shall receive your cities in vain."

Have I not hated those who hate your, O Lord?
And was I not wasting away because of your enemies?
I hated them with perfect hatred; they became my enemies.
Test me, O God, and know my heart; examine me and know my paths.
And see if there is a lawless way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Glory to the Father...Now and always...
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Glory to you, oh God. (3)

The deacon:

Let us pray to the Lord.

The priest:

O all-mighty Lord, God of our Fathers, who in the old covenant formerly ordered that wooden, embroidered and golden images of cherubim be made for the tent of meeting, do not reject now this icon in the image of your saint and friend, but accept it so that your faithful servants, seeing in it he/she who was glorified, may honor his/her life and imitate his/her actions, by which he/she was made worthy of your grace and participation in your Kingdom. We pray you, look down on us now who present to you this image made in honor and memory of Saint N, and sanctified by the likeness and the name of your friend. For those who will venerate it and who will worship you and pray to you in front of it and who will invoke Saint N asking his/her intercession before your throne, be a benevolent listener of your friend and show yourself to be a generous benefactor delivering your servants from all danger and affliction, from all spiritual and bodily suffering. Grant them the grace and mercy they desire, through the prayers of Saint N. For you are the source of all sanctification and the giver of every good thing, and we give glory to you as well as to your only-begotten Son and your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen

The priest: Peace be with you all.

The choir: And with your spirit.

The deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord.

The choir: To you, O Lord.

The priest:

O Lord our God, who created man in your image and likeness and who when the first Adam became corrupted by disobedience, renewed this image by restoring it to man through the incarnation of your Christ who assumed the form of a servant. You thus restored man to his original dignity among your saints, and we who piously venerate this image, we honor in them those who are your image and likeness. We honor them, but it is you, their prototype that we venerate and glorify. That is why we pray you to send your grace on us who have prepared this icon for your glory in honor and memory of Saint N. Bless also all those who will venerate this icon and will address their prayers to you in front of it. And in your mercy, let them find grace before your throne.

By the grace, the mercy and the love for mankind of your only-begotten Son with whom you are blessed and your most-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

The choir: Amen

During the veneration of the icon, the troparion and the kontakion of the saint are sung and the priest makes mention of him/her in the dismissal:

The priest:

May Christ our true God, by the intercession of his holy and most-pure Mother and by the prayers of Saint N have mercy on us and save us, for he is good and loves mankind.