



Blessing of Grapes, Apples, and other Fruits on the Solemn Feast of the Transfiguration

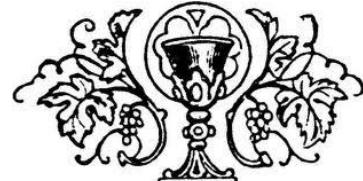


It is the tradition of our Church that on the Feast of the Transfiguration, we bless grapes, apples, and other fruits that the faithful have brought to the Divine Liturgy. This custom of bringing fruit to the Lord's Temple originates in Old Testament times – Gen 4:2-4; Ex 13:12-13; Num 15:19-21; Deut 8:10-14. The Apostles brought this tradition to the Church of the New Testament (1 Cor. 16: 1 – 2). Instruction regarding the bringing of fruit to church is found in the *Third Rule of the Apostolic Canon*, the earliest collection of ecclesiastical laws (canons), known since the second century.

In Greece, August is the month of ripeness of fruit, primarily grapes and grain. Since ancient times, the faithful have been bringing them to the temple for consecration and as a thanksgiving to God. St John Chrysostom writes, «*The farmer receives fruit from the earth not so much because of his labor and diligence, but because of the goodness of God, Who grows this fruit, because neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase* (1 Cor. 3:7).

In the first centuries of Christianity, the faithful brought to the Temple the fruit and crops of the new harvest: bread, wine, oil, incense, wax, honey, *et cetera*. Of all these offerings, only bread, wine, incense, oil, and wax were taken to the altar, while the rest was used for the needs of the clergy and the poor whom the Church was caring for. These offerings were to express gratitude to God for all goods, but at the same time to help the clergy, and people in need.

Grapes are brought to the Temple because they are directly related to the Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist; that is why the prayer for ‘The Consecration of Grapes’ says, «*Bless, O Lord, this new fruit of the vine, which, through the wholesomeness of the air and the drops of rain and temperate weather, You have graciously been pleased to let attain at this time unto maturity. May our partaking of this fruit of the vine make us joyful; and may we offer it to You for the purification of sins, through the sacred and holy Body of your Christ.*»



In lands where, due to climate, vineyards are not normally found, such as **in Russia**, **apples** are brought to Church this day and ‘The Prayer for the Blessing of Fruit’ is said. **In modern times**, when fresh fruits may be obtained at any season, a sampling of fruits should still be brought to Church for a blessing. Likewise, for those who grow their own fruits, some should be brought to the Church for a blessing whenever they are ripe for the harvest.

~ Ambon Prayer for the Transfiguration of Our Lord ~

Master Jesus Christ our God, lead us upon the all-holy mountain of love, just as You led your chief disciples upon a lofty mountain. Open the eyes of our minds to a sight of indescribable beauty, just as You did for your apostles when You surrounded your bodily form with unexpected brightness, for You revealed the radiance of your Godhead through your flesh. Guide us also into higher things by your all-powerful right hand. You changed your visible form beyond our power of understanding; now make our senses aware of the might of your Lordship witnessed by Moses and Elijah. Give us an unfailing memory of the voice of your eternal Father revealing You as His beloved Son. So that, putting your commandments into action, we may shine forth among those worthy of your immortal kingdom, and see in You the eternal Father, with Whom You are blessed, together with your all-holy good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



RESPECT FOR THE DEAD: The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the Holy Spirit. The **interment** of the body is always to be preferred as it most closely imitates the burial of our Lord in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Provided that it does not demonstrate a denial of faith in the resurrection of the body, cremation is tolerated and the following are to be observed.



1. The body is **not** to be cremated until **after** the Parastas Service and the Funeral (Divine) Liturgy.
2. The Parastas, Funeral (Divine) Liturgy, or other services may **not** be celebrated at the place of cremation.
3. In the event that cremains arrive from out-of-state, they are to be present at the Funeral (Divine) Liturgy.
4. Photographs and other mementos may be used at the Parastas Service; a portrait of the deceased is appropriate at the Funeral (Divine) Liturgy when cremains are present.
5. The cremains shall ordinarily be buried in a grave, entombed in a mausoleum or in a columbarium. The practice of scattering cremated remains on the sea, from the air, or on the ground, or keeping cremated remains in one's home or in the home of a relative or friend of the deceased is **NOT** permitted.



IN ORDER TO BE A GOD-PARENT AT HOLY BAPTISM one must be a member of the Catholic Church **in good standing**, i.e., one...

- ...is registered in a parish.
- ...regularly attends Divine Liturgy and holy days; observes the fasts.
- ...is active in the non-liturgical life of the parish.
- ...supports the Church monetarily according to one's means.
- ...has celebrated a **VALID** Catholic marriage.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church «*Baptism is the sacrament of faith.*» As such this should be the prime quality that one seeks in a sponsor. A godparent cannot be lukewarm or indifferent in faith and holiness since it is precisely Christian holiness and faith that the sponsor is being asked to exhibit in his or her life and so be able to transmit that to the child as he or she matures in the Catholic faith. A sponsor is one who promises to join in the struggle with the parents, guided by the Church, to bring the infant carefully and prayerfully along the difficult path to heaven



by focusing at all time on the progress of the child in the knowledge and practice of the catholic orthodox faith. A sponsor who promises to do so and is intentionally remiss in fulfilling said promise will be held accountable before God for the «perjury» committed.

Finally, keep in mind the position that is being imposed on me the priest in the above situation: I am being asked to lie by signing my name to an official, sealed church document, thus compromising the integrity of the sacrament which in conscience I cannot and will not do. As a priest of the Sacred Mysteries of Jesus Christ, I am accountable before Almighty God for protecting and preserving both the letter and the spirit of the Mysteries entrusted to me by the Church.



PLEASE NOTE that having been baptized and chrismated, and having received the Divine Eucharist at a church many years ago does not equate with current active membership. Catholic godparents are asked to provide from their parish priest a **SPONSOR CERTIFICATE**, bearing the church's seal, in order to attest to their suitability to serve as a sponsor. Again, this is done to ensure that the godparent can indeed serve as a role model and mentor for the child in his / her life of faith.

If you do not qualify as a sponsor, instead of getting angry with the priest, the parish staff, the Parish, or the Catholic Church, please redirect your energies in a more positive fashion by seeing this as a wake-up call from the Holy Spirit to reform your life, such that in the future you do qualify to be a laudable godparent.

