

Tridentine Community News

June 22, 2008

The Churching of Women

In keeping with our intent to make available more of the rich liturgical and ceremonial treasures of Holy Mother Church, we are reviving an old Catholic tradition, the ceremony of blessing of a mother shortly after the birth of a child, known as the "Churching of Women." The first such ceremony took place at Assumption-Windsor several weeks ago, while the first at St. Josaphat will be held today after the Tridentine Mass. All mothers of infants who have received the Sacrament of Baptism at our parishes are invited to arrange to receive this blessing within six weeks after the birth of the child.

The concept evolved from the Jewish custom of the Mikvah, the ritual purification of a woman after childbirth. There is no reference to purification in the text; it is a prayer of thanksgiving.

The ceremony is found in the *Rituale Romanum* and is thus an official blessing of the Church. It is conducted in Latin except for optional Exhortations before and after the rite. Below is the English translation:

[At the appointed time, the woman will kneel in the Narthex, holding a lighted candle. The priest, wearing a white stole, will bless her with holy water, and say:]

℣. Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

℟. Who made Heaven and Earth.

ANT. She shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God her Savior: for this is the generation of them that seek the Lord.

Psalm 23

The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and all they that dwell therein.

For He hath founded it upon the seas; and hath prepared it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place?

The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor.

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Savior.

This is the generation of them that seek Him, of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of glory? the Lord Who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of glory shall enter in.

Who is this King of glory? the Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ANT. She shall receive...

[The priest places the end of his stole in the woman's hand and leads her into the church while saying:]

Enter into the temple of God, adore the Son of the blessed Virgin Mary, who gave you fruitfulness of offspring.

[Outside the sanctuary, the mother kneels before the Altar and prays, thanking God for her child.]

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

(The priest recites the Our Father silently.)

℣. And lead us not into temptation.

℟. But deliver us from evil.

℣. Save your handmaid, Lord.

℟. Who hopes in Thee, my God.

℣. Send her help, Lord, from the sanctuary.

℟. And defend her out of Sion.

℣. Let not the enemy prevail against her.

℟. Nor the son of iniquity approach to hurt her.

℣. O Lord, hear my prayer.

℟. And let my cry come to Thee.

℣. The Lord be with you.

℟. And with thy spirit.

℣. Let us pray.

Almighty, everlasting God, through the delivery of the blessed Virgin Mary, Thou hast turned into joy the pains of the faithful in childbirth; look mercifully upon this Thy handmaid, coming in gladness to Thy temple to offer up her thanks: and grant that after this life, by the merits and intercession of the same blessed Mary, she may merit to arrive, together with her offspring, at the joys of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord.

℟. Amen.

[The priest sprinkles the mother with holy water in the shape of a Cross.]

The peace and blessing of God almighty, the Father † and the Son and the Holy Ghost, descend upon you and remain forever.

℟. Amen.