

Theology and Life Series

The Divine Liturgy: the Heart of Orthodoxy



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The Significance and Meaning of the Liturgy For Our Daily Lives

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For many Orthodox Christians today, the divine Liturgy is simply another service that they attend in order to fulfil their Christian duty - it is the proper thing to do - without it necessarily having any particular meaning for their everyday life. It is not something that they long to go to because of a real sense of personal joy that it gives to their life empowering them to face the daily challenges that they might encounter. Unfortunately, for many of our faithful - even though they are well-intentioned - in their most honest moments, the Liturgy has become a 'joyless celebration'. It is often said, for example: "I don't get anything out of the Service" and for this reason they feel a sense of frustration. Still others, will argue: "I consider myself a Christian but I don't see why I need to go to Church every Sunday, if at all." In all this, there is a real sense that, over time, our faithful have forgotten not only what the Liturgy is essentially all about, but equally importantly the significance of this celebration for their everyday life. Even the phrase that is often used, "I attend the Liturgy" shows that over time it has become misunderstood. Far from the Liturgy being a theatrical performance between priest and chanters at which the faithful are simply present, from the very beginning, even in its most primitive form as can be witnessed in the New Testament, the Eucharist was something that the faithful actively participated in, and not simply passively attended, an event that was personally enriching and powerfully transformative for their life. We need to rediscover this early vision that the faithful had when they gathered together, as Church, to celebrate the Eucharist. It is this that this paper wishes to explore.

The Divine Liturgy - namely, that service in which the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated - lies at the very heart of the Orthodox Church. And the reason for this, very simply, is that the Church believes that at every celebration of the Eucharist, the faithful are brought into another reality - into the very presence of the risen Christ. If the Church is nothing other than the miraculous presence of Christ here on earth, a graced communion or fellowship between the Uncreated God and the created realm, then it is within the context of the Divine Liturgy that the Church's communion with God is most perfectly expressed. It is for this reason that the Orthodox Church has given to the Eucharist the name 'communion'

because it is in the Eucharist that God communicates with us, making himself present, it is here that we are given the opportunity to enter into communion with him and it is here also that we enter into communion with one another and the entire created realm more broadly. More specifically, it is in the Eucharist that the mystical communion, between Christ and those who partake of the 'body' and 'blood' of Christ, is most tangibly expressed. The Orthodox Church claims that it is when the faithful gather together in one place [ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό] (Acts 2:1) to celebrate the Eucharist that they become the one body of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit - namely one body closely knit together (cf. Eph 4:16) - and consequently given access to God, their heavenly Father. Consequently, the significance of the Liturgy becomes clear: for the faithful it is within the Liturgy that they become something more than what they are as individual members - namely, the one body of Christ, and thus they too together are given the opportunity to experience Christ in the same way that the apostles did some 2000 years ago.

The Eucharist in the New Testament

Contrary to what is often suggested that the Eucharist is a mere human construct with little or no relevance for the life of a Christian - since what is all-important, as is erroneously argued, is the reading of the Scriptures for example - it is critical to bring to the fore, albeit briefly, the New Testament evidence concerning the Eucharist. Already in the book of Acts, where the event of Pentecost is presented - and where we are given an insight into the New Testament Church in its most 'pristine' form - we see the importance that the early Christian community placed on the celebration of the Eucharist. In the second chapter, St Luke writes the following:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers [ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδασκίᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς] (Acts 2:42).

This passage is significant because it shows what the earliest Christian communities did immediately after they had received the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. More specifically, the early Church's response to the outpouring of the Spirit is concretely evidenced in four key actions which included: their daily reflection of the word of God, their apostolic fellowship, their celebration of the Eucharist and their communal prayer life: St Luke's use of the present participial form of the verb 'proskarterein' is significant here in that it emphasised the Church's

ongoing persistence to adhere firmly to, and put into practice, on a daily basis, the apostolic proclamation, the Lord's Supper, corporate prayer and fellowship which would have also included the material collection of gifts and money for distribution to the poor and those in need. From this it becomes clear that St Luke was most concerned to underscore the importance of the Eucharist in the daily life of the first Christians. This passage alone from the book of Acts repudiates the claim that there is no Biblical justification with regards to the celebration of the Eucharist.

A question which justifiably arises is why St Luke placed such importance on the Eucharist. The answer to this question becomes clear when we turn to some other passages from within the New Testament. During his earthly ministry, Christ had told his disciples that, after his death and resurrection, He would return to his heavenly Father, but that He would not leave them orphaned; rather He would remain with them and that He would send the Comforter who would lead them to all truth. With the descent of the Holy Spirit access to the risen Christ was made possible since it was the Holy Spirit who led the faithful to Christ - and continues to do so. In St John's Gospel we read: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth [ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ]" (Jn 16:3). The truth mentioned here is Jesus Christ himself since the Gospels make it clear that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life (cf. Jn 14:6). And so with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the faithful within the Church would continue to be led to Jesus Christ.

Together with the presence of the Holy Spirit leading the faithful to Jesus Christ, and through him to God our heavenly Father, the early Church also believed that when they gathered together to 'break bread' that Jesus Christ would be amongst them since this is what He had promised during his earthly ministry. In the New Testament we read that Jesus Christ himself instituted the Eucharist emphasising that it would be through the celebration of this ritual that He would remain present in the Church. In the Gospel according to St Matthew, for example, Christ said: "Take eat, this is my body" (Mt 26:26). He continued, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:27-28). In the 'breaking of bread' the resurrected Lord would be recognised as present since the 'institution narratives' - as they came to be called - make clear the reality of Christ's body and blood in no way implying that these were meant to be understood as mere symbols of his presence. In this way, the Orthodox Church teaches that in the consecrated gifts of bread and wine are truly Christ's Body and Blood. Elsewhere, in his correspondence to the Church in Corinth, St Paul

also emphasised the importance of repeatedly gathering together in order to give thanks within the context of Eucharist: “Do this... in remembrance of me [namely Jesus Christ] [τοῦτο ποιεῖτε... εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν]. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1Cor 11:25-26). Here again, just like in Acts, the present form of the verb poiein signifies a continuous action. Also scholarship today has shown that St Paul’s letters were specifically addressed to concrete eucharistic gatherings.¹ In the same letter, St Paul again referred to the Eucharist in terms of a real sharing in the body and blood of Christ. He wrote:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1Cor 10:16-17).

Accordingly, it is important to realise that in gathering together to celebrate the Eucharist, Orthodox Christians believe: firstly, that they are doing precisely what Jesus Christ commanded his followers to do; and secondly, that in this gathering, the divine mystery of God’s life continues to be present amongst them in the world in a most intimate way.

Structure of the Divine Liturgy

From the New Testament witness of the Eucharist there developed, in the early Church, a variety of eucharistic formularies. Even the New Testament itself clearly shows a great diversity in the celebration of the Eucharist within the early Church which included a variety of ritual acts within the different local communities.² However, beyond their differences, striking similarities are also noted: for example, all liturgical celebrations of the Eucharist included the breaking of bread followed by a proclamation that it was the body of the risen Lord. Moreover, there was the blessing over the cup which was declared to be the blood of the covenant poured out for all. Becoming fixed over time, these distinctive eucharistic formularies gave rise to different liturgical rites throughout the Christian empire by the

¹ Cf. Eugene La Verdere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 32: “The eucharistic tradition was part of Paul’s gospel to all the churches, and it influenced every one of his letters. Since the letters were to be read in the liturgical assembly, Paul wrote them with that setting in mind. He adapted greetings, blessings, prayers, and hymns from the liturgical assembly and used them in his letters, giving the letters a unique, apostolic and eucharistic form.”

² Cf. for example, 1Cor 11:23-25; Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:19-20 and Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* 66. Bradshaw also draws attention to the multiplicity of rites in the early church. Cf. Paul F. Bradshaw, ‘The Evolution of Early Anaphoras’, in *Essays on Early Eucharistic Prayers*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Pueblo Book, The Liturgical Press, 1997), 2.

fourth century. For the Eastern Churches, it would be the Byzantine rite (Βυζαντινός Λειτουργικός Τύπος) which united all liturgical practices in the Christian East thereby giving rise to a uniformity - more or less - in the way these communities worshipped.³ Today, it is specifically the Liturgy attributed to St John Chrysostom which is the most widely used eucharistic service in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Now, like all classical liturgical rites, the Eucharistic Prayer - or Anaphora - of St John Chrysostom was multi-faceted, made up of many parts organically linked together. Over time, as the prayers within the Divine Liturgy became fixed, it has been possible to identify distinct sections. Today, the following nine parts can typically be discerned: 1. Litany; 2. First Antiphon; 3. Second Antiphon; 4. Third Antiphon, known as the Little Entrance; 5. Scripture Readings; 6. Great Entrance; 7. the Great Eucharistic Prayer, known as the Anaphora; 8. Communion and 9. Dismissal.⁴ Today, the numerous Litanies throughout the Service act as 'pointers' signalling the end and commencement of the different sections.⁵ Furthermore, the Eucharistic prayer, which lies at the heart of the Liturgy, can be further divided in 6 distinct sections:

1. **The Thanksgiving or Sanctus** [Ἄγιος Ἄγιος Ἄγιος Κύριος Σαβαώθ]. This is what we now call the preface which states the particular reasons why we are offering thanks to God - namely for all his saving acts in the world. Part of the prayer reads: "You brought us from non-being into being, and when we fell you raised us up again, and left nothing undone until you brought us up to heaven and bestowed on us your kingdom to come. For all these

³ The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, used in Eastern Orthodox worship, belongs to the family of eastern liturgical rites, which developed in the fourth century – specifically to the Antiochene liturgical tradition of which the Byzantine rite constitutes one group. Other liturgies within the Antiochene tradition include: a) the Western Syrian or Palestinian rite, b) the Eastern Syrian or Chaldean rites from Mesopotamia, c) the Malabar liturgical tradition of India, d) the Maronite liturgical rite and e) the Byzantine rite. Parallel to the Antiochene liturgical tradition, within the Eastern churches there was also the Alexandrian liturgical rites, and in the West there were the Roman, Ambrosian, Gallican, Mozarabic, Celtic and North African eucharistic formularies. Unlike the liturgical forms of the West, the Eastern rites were characterised by their set structural framework which did not change according to the various liturgical feasts of the ecclesiastical year. Now, these different families have been simply listed in order to emphasise the rich liturgical diversity which existed with regard to the celebration of the Eucharist despite the fact that by the end of the fourth century, the Byzantine rite (which included the liturgies of St Basil the Great, St John Chrysostom and the Pre-Sanctified liturgy) came to replace all liturgical rites in the Eastern Orthodox Church due to the political, cultural and religious importance of Constantinople as the imperial capital of the Byzantine Empire. Cf. Ioannis Foundoulis, *Liturgics* [in Greek] (Thessalonika: Aphon Kyriakides Publishing House, 1986), 65-105

⁴ This division can be found in Stanley S. Harakas, *Living the Liturgy* (n.p.; Light and Life Publ. Co., 1974), 44-45.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.42.

things we give thanks to you and your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit and for all the benefits known and unknown.”

2. **The Institution Narrative** is based on the words that Jesus Christ uttered on the night He gave himself up when He said: “Take eat, this is my body...” and “Drink from it all of you, this is my Blood of the new covenant.” These words begin with a reference to the sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ and ends with the command to remember - “remembering then this commandment of the Saviour...”
3. **The Anamnesis.** In the liturgical tradition the act of remembrance is a powerful action which does not simply bring to mind those events mentioned, but makes them really present. The anamnesis in the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom reads as follows: “Remembering then this commandment of the Saviour and all that has been done for us, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascent into heaven, the sitting at the right hand, the second and glorious coming again.” The last phrase shows the extent to which time is transcended where even future events - which have not yet taken place - are made present.
4. **The Epiclesis.** In this prayer, the Father is asked to send down the Spirit upon the faithful and upon the gifts presented that they may be blessed and sanctified. The Liturgy of St John Chrysostom explicitly speaks of the Spirit ‘making’ the bread and wine the body and blood of the Lord. In this way, sharing in the bread and cup, the participants form a communion in the one Spirit.
5. **Intercessions.** The earliest versions of the eucharistic prayers did not always include intercessions. Yet these came to become an integral part of Liturgy as it importantly provided for an occasion for specific people and circumstances to be mentioned. Another reason for the ‘reading of names’ is for the local bishop to be named as an expression of ecclesial communion.
6. **Doxology.** The Eucharistic Prayer ends with the participants together offering glory and praise to God - indeed the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom states that this is to be done “with one mouth and one heart”.

Having mentioned the discrete aspects of the Liturgy, it ought to be remembered that the overall unity of the service must never be overlooked

otherwise it will end up being reduced to concrete theological 'moments' devoid of ecclesial reality. Our attention is now turned towards presenting the theological understanding of the Liturgy.

Theological Reflection

The Orthodox Church teaches that in the consecrated elements of bread and wine, not only is Christ present amongst his people in the world, but that we, too, are taken into Christ's eschatological kingdom. In other words, not only does Christ descend, but we also ascend. Moreover, not only are we taken up to God's heavenly abode and into his very presence, but we become united amongst ourselves as well, becoming, in this way, one body closely knit together. Regarding the unity, which is realised amongst us, this is precisely the reason why the divine Liturgy begins with the petitions for peace, more specifically 'the peace from above'. Unless the faithful are at peace within themselves, one another and with God, they will not be able to become the one harmoniously united body of Christ, which is the Church.

Regarding the presence of Christ amongst his Church within the context of the Eucharist beyond the Pauline references already mentioned in the previous sections, there is also important information found in the Gospel according to St John. Indeed this Gospel sees the Eucharist as the Word's abiding presence within the Church throughout the centuries. The main purpose of the Evangelist throughout the entire gospel was to lead his readers to a deepened faith in, and commitment to, Christ who was no longer physically with them. Yet, even in such an 'absence' the gospel wanted to underline that the 'Word made flesh' was a permanent living reality and would continue to be so for future generations (cf. Jn 6:34-35) unto the end (cf. Jn 13:1). In contrast to the apostles who had the immeasurable privilege of 'seeing' and 'touching' the incarnate Logos in the life of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 1Jn 1:1), the Johannine gospel wanted to impress upon its readers that future generations could 'eat the flesh' and 'drink the blood' of Christ enjoying the same communion as that of the apostles.

One of the most significant passages on the Eucharist can clearly be discerned in the story of the feeding of the five thousand where Jesus is presented as the 'bread of life' (Jn 6:1-71). Set within the context of a dispute that took place with the Jews over the issue of manna, Jesus is presented as the 'bread of life' (Jn 6:1-71), who would thus bestow a radically new mode of life upon the faithful and indeed the entire created order. More particularly, in this discourse, Jesus makes it unmistakably

clear that, just as He was 'the bread of life' (Jn 6:35) who would nourish, in a way which infinitely surpassed their physical hunger, all those who had gathered within the synagogue in Capernaum, so too would He be present in the eucharistic bread bestowing the redemptive gift of koinonia to future communities gathering in his name to celebrate the Eucharist:

those who eat [τρώγων] my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them [ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς] (Jn 6:56).

Certainly, the eucharistic significance of these words is indisputable. From this, we see that the Eucharist was the means by which the faithful within the Church would continue to 'abide' or 'remain' in Christ – that is, they would have everything 'in common' with Christ, and indeed continue to dwell in and with Him forever.

A second important passage illustrating Christ's abiding presence through the Eucharist is that relating to Jesus' washing of his disciples feet during Supper. That the footwashing episode was meant to be understood as a reference to the Eucharist is seen by John's opening phrase, "and during supper" (Jn 13:2), indeed the final supper that Jesus was to have with his disciples before his passion. After vividly detailing the preparation for, and actual episode of, the foot washing, an exchange between Jesus and Peter is recorded which brings out Christ's presence. In response to Peter's emphatic rejection of Jesus washing his feet, the Evangelist offers an astounding revelation of the communal nature of such an action. Jesus is recorded as saying to Peter: "unless I wash you, you have no share with me [ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ] (Jn 13:8)." Regarding the expression, to have a 'share with me', modern Biblical exegetes argue that this describes solidarity and fellowship, in this case Christ's fellowship with his disciples. As the depiction of the footwashing event continues, it becomes clear that the gospel was more concerned to highlight that the sign of Christ's presence within the community after his departure would be seen and expressed in the fraternal love displayed between the members of the ekklesia.

After describing the foot washing of the disciples by Jesus (Jn 13:1-11), the gospel, in Jn 13:12-20, specifically offers an interpretation of its significance in terms of being an 'example' [ὑπόδειγμα] for the Church after Christ's impending passion: "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example [ὑπόδειγμα], that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14-15). Christ remains present in the Eucharist when we strive to live the love with which He loved us to all those around us. From this we see

that there is a necessary human element in the Eucharist – namely, we too as faithful within the Church need to strive to love one another because in this we are assured that Christ is amongst us. It is precisely for this reason that the Evangelist concludes his portrayal of the foot washing with the following: “if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” (Jn 13:17). Therefore, the guiding principle for understanding St John's vision of the Eucharist is remembering that the basis of Christ's presence within the Church is seen when the members strive to love each other with the love that Christ loved us first.

Participation in the Eucharist not only allowed for a real sharing in the life of Christ, but also resulted in a unity amongst the faithful as well. Nourished at the same time by the Spirit-filled body and blood of Christ, the faithful within the Church also became intimately united with one another. That is to say, in partaking of the consecrated elements, the members of the Church also become the one united body of the Lord. Accordingly, in the Church, we are all one body, closely knit together and Christ is our head. Furthermore, a true sign that Christ is in our midst is when we, as an assembly of faithful, strive to live the love with which Christ loved us. In highlighting the double communal aspect of the Eucharist, St John of Damascus (d. 749AD) wrote:

We say koinonia and so it is for through it we have koinonia with Christ and partake of his flesh and deity, but through it we also have koinonia amongst ourselves and we are united with one another. Since we receive of one bread, we all become the one body of Christ.⁶

Consequently, in the Eucharist we live the joy of unity and love and become one with each other.

That the Eucharist was considered to be the bond of human fellowship in the early Church – and indeed continues to be so – is especially seen in the fact that the eastern Orthodox liturgies not only call upon the community to love one another, but also pray for civil authorities, the sick, those travelling and indeed for all people throughout the world. In the Liturgy of St Basil the Great, for example, there is an extensive list of different people who are remembered within the eucharistic synaxis and which wonderfully underscores the unity of the faithful. Part of the prayer is as follows:

Be mindful of all who have fallen asleep... who have offered you these gifts ... who do good works... and are concerned for the poor...

⁶ St John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 13. PG 94, 1153a.

Remember, Lord, those who live in deserts and mountains... those who persevere in virginity... those in authority... speak good to their hearts... Be mindful, o Lord, of the people assembled here, as well as those who are absent for good cause... fill their households with every good thing; sustain their marriages in peace and harmony; nurture their infants; train up the youth; support the elderly; comfort the fainthearted; gather in those who are scattered and lead back those who have strayed, uniting them to your holy, catholic and apostolic church... Sail with those who sail... plead for the widows, shield the orphans... hear the afflicted. O God, look after all those who are on trial... those who love us as well as those who hate us... Be mindful, Lord our God, of all your people and lavish on all your rich mercy, granting to all what leads to salvation. And if we have failed to commemorate anyone, whether out of ignorance or forgetfulness or because of the great number of names, You, o God will remember.'

In Orthodox circles today, the tangible expression of fellowship realised in the Eucharist has given rise to expressions such as 'the Liturgy after the Liturgy' precisely to underline the responsibility of the faithful to continue to live out the fellowship experienced within the eucharistic context. From all the above, it becomes very clear that the fellowship with Christ necessarily implies a unity of Christians with one another. Indeed, this gift of *koinonia*, which we receive at every liturgy, also necessitates our ongoing response to intensify and further this communal reality and to keep on doing this, until the very end of our life here on earth. As such, not only is the Eucharist a gift of God's presence, but equally important, a movement and progression towards heaven as well.

In this way, not only does the Eucharist signify a descending action on the part of God, but also an ascending response of thanksgiving on the part of the faithful back to the Trinitarian God. In every celebration of the Eucharist, we are literally taken up to the gates of heaven, into the very presence of God's kingdom. The beginning of the liturgy, 'Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages' shows precisely the destination of the journey we embark upon at every liturgy, namely the kingdom. Just before the chanting of 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth heaven and earth are full of your glory...' we are told by the priest to lift up our heart to the Lord and we are taken into another reality – to the very heavens where we behold the 'Archangels and myriads of Angels... the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring aloft on their wings.' From this it can be seen that each time we gather to celebrate the Liturgy, we ascend towards the kingdom; we are brought into the presence of the heavenly table of Christ in the kingdom to come.

To this day, the Church's ascent and entrance into the heavenly realm continues to be emphasised, more often than not in nuptial categories, namely, as the entrance of the bride of Christ – that is, the Church – into the nuptial chamber – i.e. the kingdom of the bridegroom, Christ. In a communion prayer recited by the faithful before partaking in Holy Communion, an expression of unworthiness in entering the heavenly bridal chamber is acknowledged by the faithful and therefore God's forgiveness is besought. But the point of significance is the prayer's emphasis that the faithful enter God's heavenly kingdom:

Into the splendour of your saints, how shall I the unworthy one enter?
For if I dare to enter the bridal chamber, my clothing betrays me, for it
is not a wedding garment... cleanse the defilement of my soul, Lord, and
save me in you loving kindness.

From all that has been said thus far, it becomes clear that the Eucharist is salvific. Indeed, in celebrating the Eucharist, we, in the Church, are journeying together towards immortality. In the Church there is no death, but life eternal; life without end. Indeed, our biological death becomes the bridge for our entrance into eternity. St John wrote: 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death' (Jn 8:52). For this reason, one will rarely find abstract speculations on the Eucharist, as for example, how the bread and wine could change into 'body' and 'blood'. Rather, the Eucharist in Orthodox theology has always been seen as God's saving act and continued presence in the Church. And so, it is for this reason that the Eucharist has been attributed with titles such as 'medicine of immortality', 'cup of the synthesis', 'antidote for not dying', 'the sacrament of sacraments', 'the final mystery' and 'the recapitulation of the whole economy of salvation.' St Maximus the Confessor (b. ca 580AD) connected the Eucharist with deification when he described it as:

the sacrament, which transforms ... so that they also can be called gods
by adoption through grace because all of God entirely fills them and
leaves no part of them empty of his presence.”

Consequently, the Eucharist, in Orthodox theology is seen as the pinnacle of all sacraments, specifically in that it manifests the presence of God to believers on earth, but also signifies the presence of the faithful before God in his heavenly kingdom.

Concluding Remarks

Accordingly, from all that has been said, it has become quite clear that each time we enter the Church we encounter God since within the Church God

is active and present amongst His people. In this way, the mystery of communion between God and the entire created realm takes place within his Church. Furthermore, we saw that the Church is not only the very presence of God here on earth, but also a foretaste of His kingdom throughout the ages. It is for this reason, that the Church is able to fill our everyday mundane moments with the very presence of eternity already here on this earth since it is an earthly Paradise. And all this takes place especially within the context of the Liturgy in which the faithful also become organically the one body of Christ united as one. It remains for us to want to become part of this eternal and miraculous vesture of God, which is his Church – the place par excellence of his presence and glory.

The Holy Fathers and the Liturgical Tradition of the Church

Protopresbyter Dr Doru Costache
Senior Lecturer in Patristic Studies

Like any other area pertaining to the Christian faith and experience, both the making of the liturgy and its understanding are organically connected with patristic tradition and so the contributions of the holy fathers and mothers. The word ‘liturgy,’ here, generally designates what is commonly known as the divine liturgy or the eucharistic synaxis, as well as the broader cycle of sacred offices, from the better known evening and morning services to the lenten compline and the various sacraments and blessings of the Church. In what follows, my main contention is that the liturgical tradition of the Church is inseparable from the patristic tradition, and that this connection should be consistently observed in any attempt at making sense of the liturgy. Correlatively, at the end of my talk I shall propose that a student of the holy fathers and mothers is uniquely positioned within the Church, being equipped with the necessary criteria and tools for grasping the spirit of the ecclesial liturgy.

My two convictions draw first of all on the fundamental fact that the liturgical life of the Church is inconceivable without the presiding person, namely the father or bishop, who, for a number of centuries before the recording of the various liturgical pieces and their standardisation, elaborated liberally in terms of ordering the scriptural readings for the assembly and offering prayers, like the eucharistic one, on behalf of the congregation. Later, the fathers together with members of other ecclesial ranks – clergy, monastics and laity of both genders – have undertaken to write down prayers and hymns that have become part and parcel of the liturgical heritage of the Church. Within the Byzantine tradition, this later development continued with the process of liturgical standardisation, which began in the eighth century, in Palestine, with the work of Saint John Damascene (d. ca 754), and resumed in the ninth century through the efforts of Saint Theodore (d. 826) and his Studite monks, in Constantinople, reaching its climax through the fourteenth/fifteenth century contributions of Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki (d. 1429). An unexpected outcome of this process was the objectification of the liturgical texts, which somehow became normative on their own, in separation from both their makers, Church fathers and mothers, and from the worshipping assemblies. From a different yet not an unrelated angle, whilst not entirely

deprived of creativity, in time the process of recording and standardising the liturgical texts amounted to a limitation of the freedom in the Spirit that characterised the early Christian centuries, where the worshipping assemblies together with the makers of the prayers and hymns mattered more than any text that they produced or utilised for liturgical purposes. This meant, of course, a subtle displacement of the prayerful synaxis from its central position in favour of the text and the prescribed ritual; a change which could not have fitted in the apostolic rule that defined Christianity as a witness to the living Word of God incarnate and not as religion of one book or another. The above being said, in an attempt to bring back to the fore the significance of the makers of the prayers and hymns, the first part of my presentation will consider aspects pertaining to the contributions of several holy fathers and mothers to the formation of the Christian liturgy. Needless to say, their creations cannot be properly understood when disconnected from their lives and personalities – the way the Scriptures are dead letter when considered in isolation from Christ, the *skopos* and *telos* of all Scripture.

Second, my two convictions, namely, that there is an unbreakable bond between the liturgical and patristic traditions, and that the students of the holy fathers and mothers are uniquely equipped to address the spirit of the liturgy, surmise from the fact that it is the patristic tradition, again, which provides us with the necessary criteria for the understanding of the liturgy. Indeed, patristic tradition features a series of important interpretations of the various liturgical rites – from the brief, second century descriptions of Saint Martyr Justin the Philosopher (d. 165) to the fourth century sacramental expositions of Saints Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) and Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), and from the sixth century works of the author known as Saint Dionysius the Areopagite to Saint Maximus the Confessor's (d. 662) *Mystagogy* and the later Byzantine liturgical treatises of Saints Germanos of Constantinople (d. ca 740) and Nicholas Cabasilas (d. ca 391). An overview of one of these interpretations, the Maximian *Mystagogy*, will constitute the second part of my talk.

The Patristic Making of the Christian Liturgy

The liturgy of the Church did not emerge out of nothing, before anything else inheriting aspects of the Jewish ritual to which there have been added, in time, elements pertaining to the various cultures of Late Antiquity, all these being reinterpreted in a Christian sense. For instance, in the Acts of the Apostles we see the first disciples of the Lord 'breaking the bread' and intoning psalms in house churches, together with observing the Jewish order of the hours. Furthermore, as they stand from the earliest days of the

Church, the two main parts of the holy synaxis, namely, the liturgy of the catechumens or ‘of the word’ and the eucharistic liturgy of the faithful, reiterate and combine elements of the Jewish Saturday morning synagogal celebration and the Friday night, sabbatical meal, respectively. Later generations have added to this basic structure features borrowed from the then current cultural milieus, such as the choral and antiphonal chant which involved the entire congregation, and elements of ritual choreography like the liturgical processions – both evoking aspects of the classical Greek theatre. Significantly, the early Christians adopted from the Hellenistic milieu the very term *leitourgia* (= public service), ‘liturgy,’ which originally referred to the public affairs of a city, to designate the communal life, the various activities and the ritual celebrations of the Church.

Whilst the above are historical facts of common knowledge, there is an aspect that is usually forgotten, namely, that in drawing on both Jewish traditions and other cultural frameworks of Late Antiquity, the Church displayed an exuberant creativity, which was further evidenced by the impressive liturgical elaborations of the Middle Ages. From among these later elaborations I shall mention only two, more precisely the addition of certain features pertaining to the imperial choreography, such as the episcopal pomp, unknown to earlier generations, and the replacement of the nine scriptural odes by the composition of the *orthros* canons. This creativity causes bewilderment to modern Orthodox Christians, who take the current forms of ritual as eternal and unchangeable, and in whose minds it is all about the blind – and idolatrous, I would say – adherence to the ecclesiastical *typikon*. In relation to the ecclesial creativity of previous ages, now it is the time to point out that those who facilitated this effervescence were precisely the holy fathers, the bishops and shepherds of the early Christian communities. To their mainly anonymous and overall forgotten contributions I must turn.

From the very beginning, the eucharistic assemblies have been presided over by the leaders of the Christian community. Christ himself established this pattern at the mystical supper – the prototype and substance of all Christian liturgies – when he outlined for his disciples the major aspects of the salvific economy, and then blessed, offered and distributed the eucharistic gifts, to end by praying for all believers. The fathers or bishops of the Church handed on this very pattern from generation to generation, together with contributing in their turn, as presiding persons, to the making of the ritual and, specifically, the prayers offered within it. And so, whereas the shape of the liturgy was indeed conditioned by elements of Jewish and Hellenistic inspiration (and other cultures, for the non-Byzantine Christian traditions), its actual content was determined by the

spiritual discernment of the presiding persons, their lifestyle, their personal sensitivity, understanding of the faith and knowledge of the Scriptures, and last but not least by their education. This patristic and personal dimension still remains obvious within the written and standardised liturgical tradition of the Church, where, due to the various contributions of the holy fathers and mothers, we encounter great diversity at any corner. I shall give one example in this relation, which falls within the scope of this seminar on the divine liturgy.

For many centuries, there has been no standard eucharistic prayer or the *anaphora* (Gr. offering), in fact each bishop and presbyter composing it ad hoc, every time the divine liturgy was celebrated. Of course, these spontaneously elaborated prayers followed a certain outline, which, whilst adapted by the apostles to the criteria of the Church, was certainly inherited from the Old Testament and the synagogal tradition. Due to the different inputs of the presiding persons, however, from a morphological viewpoint each eucharistic prayer was largely unlike any other; each one represented another variation on a given theme. The overwhelming majority of these free prayers, needless to say, are lost to us. That being said, we can make sense of how things functioned in the eucharistic practice of the early Church by looking at the various *anaphora* prayers that eventually came to be written down and edited in the Byzantine era, such as those attributed to Saint James of Jerusalem (first century), Saint Basil the Great (d. 379) and Saint John Chrysostom (d. 407). When comparing the prayers of these three liturgical orders, like in the Appendix of my talk, one notices both the common structure that all three observe and a great diversity with reference to their details. Indeed, these three prayers follow what seems to have been a general liturgical layout; God the Father as addressee – the thanksgiving – the memorial of divine economy culminating in the narrative of the mystical supper – the invocation of the Holy Spirit – the commemoration of all saints. Elaborating on this very layout, the early Church fathers have ingeniously improvised, to the extent that not one prayer was entirely like the others – precisely the way none of the three *anaphora* prayers referred to above wholly coincides with the other two.

But let us take a quick look at the variety exemplified by the three written eucharistic prayers. For instance, the liturgy of Saint James ascribes more space to thanksgiving than the other two orders, and so does the liturgy of Saint Basil in relation to the memorial of divine economy. Moreover, all three orders exhibit different ecclesial concerns and sensitivities, with the liturgy of Saint James emphasising the sacred significance of Jerusalem whereas the other two orders illustrate a more ‘catholic’ or encompassing grasp of the Christian *oikoumene*, which does

not require a terrestrial term of reference. Furthermore, although it remains uncertain who were the actual compilers and/or editors of the three liturgical orders discussed here, the large theological discourse represented by the memorial of the Basilian *anaphora* provides sufficient proof as to the original author of this prayer, many lines echoing passages from authentic works by the great Cappadocian father. It results that the true significance of the Basilian anaphora cannot be fully realised outside the wisdom of Saint Basil. To wrap this matter up, it is noteworthy that the three eucharistic prayers mentioned above exhibit different approaches, speaking to us as much about their authors and editors as they proclaim the faith and aspirations of God's people. In so doing, they make obvious the inextricable link between the liturgical tradition and the patristic one. Finally, the differences showed by the three written prayers are an important indication of the amazing creativity that characterised those spontaneously offered by the early Church fathers, before the obsession of uniformity became dominant.

The patristic marks are not visible, however, only in the written versions of the divine liturgy. In fact, it is easier to establish the authorship of many pieces included in other liturgical offices. For instance, there are a number of patristic texts that entered the Byzantine liturgical tradition and are therefore still utilised by the Orthodox Church. Among these texts are noteworthy the Paschal homily of Saint John Chrysostom, read aloud every year within the Resurrection vigil, and the great prayer of Theophany, written by Saint Sophrony of Jerusalem (d. 638). Furthermore, the makers of great many hymns of the evening and morning services are known to us, of which some are celebrated Church fathers like Saint John Damascene and Saint Theodore the Studite. From the plume of the Damascene are likewise preserved famous hymns for the canons of Christmas, Pascha and the Transfiguration, and the funeral service. Among other patristic hymnographers, noteworthy are Saint Ephraim the Syrian (d. ca 373), whose liturgical poems are not included in the Byzantine books yet were foundational for the ancient rite of the Syrian Church; Saint Romanos the Melodist (sixth century), whose famous *kontakia* survive only fragmentarily in our liturgical books; Saint Andrew of Crete (eighth century), an accomplished hymnographer and homilist whose *Great Canon of Repentance* represents a lenten landmark; Saint Cassiane (ninth century), whose hymns are still chanted during the Holy Week of every year, and so on. Interestingly, in the hymns of Saints Romanos and John Damascene feature quite often passages from the fourth century orations of Saint Gregory the Theologian (d. 389) and the mystical writings of Saint Gregory of Nyssa (d. ca 395). All this evidence points to an unquestionable conclusion, namely, that both the divine liturgy and the broader liturgical

tradition of the Church are inextricably linked with the patristic tradition. This evidence precludes any attempt at making sense of the ecclesial liturgy in separation from the wisdom of the holy fathers and mothers that left their indelible marks upon it. On this note, I turn to the patristic interpretation of the divine liturgy.

The Patristic Interpretation of the Christian Liturgy

Together with the many Church fathers and mothers who actively contributed to the shaping of the divine liturgy and other liturgical offices, a number of saintly authors, of which I already mentioned several by name, enriched tradition by offering explanations and interpretations of the holy synaxis. In what follows, I shall exemplify the spirit pertaining to the patristic approaches to the divine liturgy by outlining aspects from Saint Maximus the Confessor's treatise, *The Mystagogy*. My choice is determined by two factors. First, whereas mainly illustrating the views of St Maximus, this work represents a synthesis of previous interpretations, specifically the Areopagetic *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, with which it shares an interest in the participatory and transformative nature of the liturgical symbols. Thus, when reading *The Mystagogy* one is genuinely in touch with the spirit of the earlier views on the liturgy yet as filtered by the sensitivities of our saintly confessor. Second, this Maximian work was largely paraphrased and relied upon in the corresponding treatises of several late Byzantine fathers, such as Saint Germanos' *Ecclesiastical History and Mystical Contemplation*, Saint Symeon the New Theologian's (d. 1022) *Ethical Discourses* and Saint Nicholas Cabasilas' *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*. And so, *The Mystagogy* is instrumental for grasping the presuppositions of later patristic developments in this area.

Turning to *The Mystagogy*, the treatise presents the following structure:

- Prologue. *The Mystagogy* begins by paying tribute to the 'divine Dionysius' and his *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, Saint Maximus warning that in writing it he did not intend to supersede the predecessor's work. Instead, his intention was to highlight aspects, which for one reason or another the Areopagetic tome does not address, and this only upon the request of *The Mystagogy's* addressee and in being guided by an anonymous wise elder.
- Part one (chapters 1-7) undertakes an exploration of the various symbols of the ecclesiastical architecture, in the light of the church's mystical correspondences with God, the cosmos seen and unseen, the human being, the soul and the Scriptures.

- Part two (chapters 8-23) undertakes an interpretation of the most important aspects of the liturgy as experienced by the faithful. The emphasis is on the ecclesial or communal dimension of the liturgical experience, the teaching/learning connection illustrated by the order of the rite, and the latter's spiritual or transformative aspect.
- Conclusion (chapter 24). The work culminates with a synthesis of all the above and a reiteration of some major Maximian themes, such as the need to undertake personal purification in order to develop contemplative senses, the union of the angelic and earthly choirs, and the transfiguring action of the Holy Spirit within the liturgical environment, mediated by the symbols and stages of the rite.

Below I address aspects pertaining to the second part of the book. Turning to the matters of interest,¹ it is worth pointing out that the liturgical outline presented by Saint Maximus depicts a simpler order than the three eucharistic offices attributed to Saints James, Basil and Chrysostom. This simpler form of the divine liturgy is actually quite helpful in terms of easing the grasping of its significance, well, at least as construed by Saint Maximus. A particularity of the Maximian interpretation consists in that for our saintly guide the holy synaxis, together with constituting an event of unification both vertically with God and horizontally within the congregation, is an interactive space dedicated to teaching and learning – an ecclesial school of contemplation whose intents and purposes are hidden beneath the multitude of texts, hymns, gestures and actions. But let us take a closer look at Saint Maximus' approach.

Being a traditional thinker and experienced in the monastic way of life, where the spiritual guidance plays a crucial role, Saint Maximus approached the divine liturgy only guided by God (*Myst.* 22) and a divinely-inspired elder, consistently mentioned throughout the treatise. Thus equipped, he was able to grasp the meaning and finality of the culminating ecclesial experience represented by the holy synaxis, where the richness of the Church's salvific wisdom is disclosed. In his own words, "the divine norms of the holy Church [as delivered through the liturgical symbols] lead the soul, by way of a true and effective knowledge, to its own perfection" (*Myst.* 22). To a discerning person therefore, everything makes sense within the divine liturgy since through all its stages and actions it facilitates the spiritual progress of the participants. Thus, no ecclesial rule, norm or typikonal regulation represents a goal in itself, in fact conveying a superior reason, or *logos*, and purpose, or *telos*, namely,

¹ The following information is borrowed and adapted from my article, 'The Ecclesial Synaxis: Epitome of a Learning Society (Part 2)' *The Greek Australian Vema*, February 2009, 8-9.

the sanctification of the faithful and their union with God (*Myst.* 13), to which the attention of the participants is drawn. Not without reason, after exploring the various ways in which the ecclesial instruction unfolds within the divine liturgy, Saint Maximus utilised the vocabulary of the mystical “remaking, transformation and genuine remoulding” (*Myst.* 24) to designate to goal of the entire movement of the holy synaxis.

This event of transformation was for him, however, communal and not individual. In contrast with the contemporary individualist approach to the divine liturgy, where the believers do not actually gather together in order to congregate or rather to love one another, Saint Maximus emphasised the converging nature of the holy synaxis and the ecclesial dimension of the teaching delivered within it. In his time both aspects were more obvious than today, from the very first liturgical moment of the assembly of God’s people, both clergy and laity, outside the doors of the church and their simultaneous entrance into the nave as one. This first liturgical stage was rich in significance. Whilst primarily reminding of the salvific ministry of Christ (*Myst.* 8), Saint Maximus perceived the movement of entry likewise as a sign of the faithful’s voluntary separation from the ways of the world and all earthly care – “the turning of the unbelievers from faithlessness and error to the knowledge of God, as well as the passage of the believers from evil and ignorance to virtue and knowledge” (*Myst.* 9; see also *Myst.* 24). For him, stepping into the church represented therefore a sign of adherence to Christian wisdom and a first transformative moment within the liturgical order.

The second liturgical moment of relevance to our topic is that of the New Testament readings. The function of the sacred readings is complex, appraising God’s people of “the divine and blessed intentions and wills of God most holy” (*Myst.* 10). In teaching God’s will, the Scriptures reveal the task laying ahead of God’s people for through them “we learn the laws of the divine and blessed contests in which by lawful struggle we will be judged worthy of the victorious crowns of Christ’s kingdom” (*Myst.* 10). Thus, the readings do not just convey information. Through informing, they actually instruct God’s people in the ways of the spiritual life, appraising the faithful of their responsibility for the choices they make and the actions they take.

Closely related to the sacred readings, Saint Maximus mentioned the sermon as “the word of mystical contemplation” (*Myst.* 13). Through the homily, the divine wisdom is made plain and the faithful are exhorted to walk the path of virtue. The kerygma is supposed to sharply cut through the core of confusion in which most people live, pointing out the

incompatibility between the passionate or fleshly mindset, the materialist thinking, on the one hand, and the path that leads to the spiritual perception, on the other hand. Of course, the above should not be taken as entailing hatred toward life and this world. Saint Maximus took the divine liturgy as a school where the believers are called to learn how to live spiritually within the world and not how to abandon the world. In other words, he invited the readers – mostly living incompletely, under the narrow horizon of material life – to contemplate the other side of reality, to recover all their dimensions, visible and invisible, bodily and spiritual, and so reach the fullness of life.

Another liturgical moment of great relevance to our topic is the recital of “the divine symbol of faith” (*Myst.* 13). To St Maximus, the Creed represented both a summary of the entire salvific economy and an expression of our gratitude for God’s mercy – “the grateful acknowledgment” of our salvation (*Myst.* 13). The juxtaposition of these aspects is quite unique. The Creed is more than a recapitulation of the ecclesial faith and more than a memorial of God’s mighty deeds; it is a eucharistic act proper, a humble recognition of how much we depend on God’s mercy; remembering is to acknowledge. These are essential aspects of the ongoing teaching/learning process that unfolds within the divine liturgy, intimating the necessity of a humble approach to faith and knowledge, whose expression is the grateful acknowledgment of God. Upon returning to the assessment of the Creed as “mystical thanksgiving” for “the infinite divine blessings,” Saint Maximus pointed out that it likewise reveals “the paradoxical reasons and ways of the wise providence of God for us” (*Myst.* 18). Here it seems that he emphasised a very practical function of the Creed as a guide for discernment and inspiration of hope. All these show that whereas Saint Maximus contemplated a series of established actions and texts within the liturgy, he took them as means toward an end. This end was the Christian community itself on the way to perfection and union with God. Given this evidence, one realises how even when the process of writing down liturgical pieces began, the fathers were still able to see beyond the texts and the *typikon* – focusing upon the actual meaning, spirit and purpose of the liturgy.

Whilst the above highlights are far from exhausting the treasure represented both by Saint Maximus’ *Mystagogy* and the representatives of tradition previously mentioned, I hope that it has become clear how much one can gain when he or she is led to the understanding of the liturgy by the wisdom of the holy fathers and mothers. I shall end by pointing out the obvious, namely, that for Saint Maximus and the patristic tradition he represents there is no perfect liturgical participation without a proper

comprehension of the ritual – with its texts, gestures and rhythms – and that without a full participation in the liturgy there is no way in which the goals of the Christian life can be attained. This is why it is so important, as highlighted in the introduction of this talk, that we become humble students, genuine disciples of the holy fathers and mothers, from whom we can learn not only about the liturgy but more so the extent to which it discloses the way of life to God’s people.

Further Reading

For more information regarding the liturgical tradition as a framework for the ecclesial process of teaching and learning, see my series of popularisation articles, ‘The Ecclesial Synaxis: Epitome of a Learning Society,’ which can be accessed online at:

<http://www.scribd.com/collections/2331032/The-Greek-Australian-Vema>

Appendix

Excerpts from the three *anaphora* prayers of the Byzantine liturgies

Structure of the eucharistic prayer	Liturgy of St James	Liturgy of St Basil	Liturgy of St John
Initial address	Master and Lord, who visit us in mercy and compassion and have granted us...	Master, Lord, God, worshipful Father almighty...	... You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit...
Thanksgiving	We thank you, Lord our God, that you have given us the freedom of entry into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, inaugurating for us a new and living way through the veil of his flesh. [...] Truly it is right and fitting, proper and necessary, to praise you, to hymn you, to bless you, to worship you, to glorify you, to give thanks to you, Fashioner of every creature, visible and invisible...	...it is truly proper, right, and befitting the majesty of Your holiness to praise You, to hymn You, to bless You, to worship You, to give thanks to You, to glorify You...	It is proper and right to sing to You, bless You, praise You, thank You and worship You in all places of Your dominion...
Memorial	O God, who through your great and ineffable love for humankind sent	...O Master of all, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation both	You brought us into being out of nothing, and when we fell, You

	<p>out your only-begotten Son into the world that he might turn back the sheep that had gone astray... [...] Fashioner of every creature, visible and invisible, the Treasury of the eternal good things, the Source of life and immortality, the God and Master of all [...]. You made humankind from earth, according to your image and likeness, granting it the enjoyment of Paradise. But when it transgressed your commandment and fell away, you do not forsake or abandon it, O Good One, but chastened it as a compassionate Father, called it through the Law, tutored it through the Prophets. Finally you sent your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, forth into the world, to come and renew and raise up your image. He came down from heaven and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and Mary the holy Ever-Virgin and Mother of God, lived among mortals and disposed all things for the salvation of our race. When he, the one without sin, was about to accept for us sinners his voluntary and life-giving death through a cross, on the night he was given up, or rather gave himself up, for the life and salvation of the world, taking bread in his holy, immaculate and unblemished and immortal hands, looking up to heaven and showing it to you, his God and Father, giving thanks, blessing, sanctifying and</p>	<p>visible and invisible, You sit upon the throne of glory and behold the depths. You are without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, indescribable, and immutable. You are the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the great God and Saviour, our hope. He is the image of Your goodness, the seal of Your equal likeness. In Himself He is expressing You, the Father. He is the living Word, the true God, the eternal Wisdom, the Life, the Sanctification, the Power, the true Light. Through Him was revealed the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth; the Gift of sonship; the Pledge of future inheritance; the First Fruits of eternal blessing; the life-creating Power; the Fountain of sanctification. Through Him every creature of reason and understanding is empowered, worshipping You and sending up to You the eternal hymn of glory, for all things are subject to You. [...] When You created man by taking dust from the earth, honouring him with Your own image, O God, You set him in a paradise of delight, promising him eternal life and the enjoyment of eternal blessings in the observance of Your commandments. But when man disobeyed You, the true God Who had created him, and was misled by the deception of the serpent, he became subject to death through his own</p>	<p>raised us up again. You did not cease doing everything until You led us to heaven and granted us Your kingdom to come. For all these things we thank You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit; for all things that we know and do not know, for blessings seen and unseen that have been bestowed upon us. We also thank You for this liturgy which You are pleased to accept from our hands, even though You are surrounded by thousands of Archangels and tens of thousands of Angels, by the Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring with their wings, singing the victory hymn, proclaiming, crying out, and saying [...]. You are holy and most holy, You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. You are holy and most holy, and sublime is Your glory. You so loved Your world that You gave Your only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. He came and fulfilled the divine plan for us. On the night when He was delivered up, or rather when He gave Himself up for the life of the world, He took bread in His holy, pure, and blameless hands, gave thanks, blessed, sanctified, broke and gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you for the</p>
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	<p>breaking it, he shared it among his holy and blessed Disciples and Apostles, saying: Take, eat. This is my body which is broken and distributed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Likewise after supper, taking the cup and mixing wine and water, gazing up to heaven and showing it to you, his God and Father, giving thanks, blessing, sanctifying, filling it with the Holy Spirit, he shared it among his holy and blessed Disciples and Apostles, saying: Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out and distributed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Son of Man, and confess his resurrection, until he comes.</p>	<p>transgressions. In Your righteous judgment, O God, You expelled him from paradise into this world, returning him to the earth from which he was taken, yet providing for him the salvation of regeneration in Your Christ Himself. For You, O good One, did not desert forever Your creature whom You had made. Nor did You forget the work of Your hands, but through the tender compassion of Your mercy, You visited him in various ways: You sent prophets. You performed mighty works by Your saints who in every generation were well-pleasing to You. You spoke to us by the mouth of Your servants, the prophets, who foretold to us the salvation which was to come. You gave us the law as a help. You appointed angels as guardians. And when the fullness of time had come, You spoke to us by Your Son Himself, through Whom You also made the ages. He, being the Radiance of Your glory and the Image of Your person, upholding all things by the word of His power, thought it not robbery to be equal to You, the God and Father. He was God before the ages, yet He appeared on earth and lived among men. Becoming incarnate from a holy virgin, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being conformed to the body of our lowliness, that He might conform us to the image of His glory. For since through</p>	<p>forgiveness of sins. Likewise, after supper, He took the cup, saying: Drink of it all of you; this is my Blood of the new Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Remembering, therefore, this command of the Saviour, and all that came to pass for our sake, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming, we offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts in all and for all.</p>
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		<p>a man sin entered the world, and through sin death, so it pleased Your only-begotten Son Who was in the bosom of You, the God and Father, born of a woman, the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, born under the law, to condemn sin in His own flesh, so that those who were dead in Adam might be made alive in Himself – Your Christ. He lived in this world and gave us commandments of salvation. Releasing us from the delusions of idolatry, He brought us to knowledge of You, the true God and Father. He obtained us for Himself, to be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Having cleansed us in water, and sanctified us with the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself as a ransom to death, in which we were held captive, sold under sin. Descending through the Cross into Hades that He might fill all things with Himself, He destroyed the torments of death. And rising on the third day, He made a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the Author of Life to be overcome by corruption. So He became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the First-born of the dead, that He, Himself, might truly be the first in all things. Ascending into heaven, He sat down at the right hand of Your majesty on high, and He will come to render to each man according to his</p>	
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		<p>works. As memorials of His saving Passion, He has left us these things which we have set forth according to His command. For when He was about to go forth to His voluntary, ever-memorable and life-creating death, on the night in which He gave Himself up for the life of the world, He took bread into His holy and pure hands. And when He had shown it to You, the God and Father, after giving thanks, having blessed it, and sanctified it, and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take! Eat! This is My Body which is broken for you, for the remission of sins. And likewise, when He had taken the cup of the fruit of the vine and had mixed it, and having given thanks, blessed it and sanctified it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Drink of it all of you! This is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me! For as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim My death, you confess My resurrection! [...]</p>	
<p>Invocation</p>	<p>... Have mercy on us, O God, in accordance with your great mercy, and send forth upon these holy gifts, here set forth, your all-holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, enthroned with you, God and Father, and your only-begotten Son, co-reigning,</p>	<p>... Therefore, we also, O Master, remembering His saving Passion and life-giving Cross, His three-day Burial and Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension into heaven and Enthronement at the right hand of You, the God and Father, and His</p>	<p>Once again we offer to You this spiritual worship without the shedding of blood, and we ask, pray, and entreat You: send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here presented. And make this bread the precious Body of Your</p>

	<p>consubstantial and co-eternal, who spoke by the Law and the Prophets and by your New Covenant, who came down in the form of a dove upon our Lord Jesus Christ in the river Jordan, and rested upon him, who came down upon your holy Apostles in the form of fiery tongues in the upper room of holy and glorious Sion on the day of Pentecost. Your same all-holy Spirit, Lord, send down on us and on these gifts here set forth, that having come by his holy, good and glorious presence, he may sanctify this bread and make it the holy body of Christ – Amen – and this Cup the precious blood of Christ – Amen – that they may become for all those who partake of them for forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. For sanctification of souls and bodies. For a fruitful harvest of good works. For the strengthening of your holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which you founded on the rock of the faith, so that the gates of Hell might not prevail against it, delivering it from every heresy and from the scandals caused by those who work iniquity, and from the enemies who arise and attack it, until the consummation of the age.</p>	<p>glorious and awesome Second Coming, Your own, of Your own, we offer to You, on behalf of all and for all. Therefore, most holy Master, we also, Your sinful and unworthy servants, whom You have permitted to serve at Your Holy Altar, not because of our own righteousness (for we have done nothing good upon the earth), but because of Your mercy and compassion (which You have so richly poured out on us), now dare to approach Your Holy Altar, and to offer You these figures of the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ. We implore You and call upon You, O Holy of Holies, that by the favour of Your goodness Your Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon the gifts now offered, to bless, to sanctify, and to show this bread to be the precious Body of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ – Amen – and this cup to be the precious Blood of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ – Amen – shed for the life of the world, making the change by the Holy Spirit. Amen! Amen! Amen!</p>	<p>Christ – Amen - And that which is in this cup the precious Blood of Your Christ – Amen – changing them by Your Holy Spirit. Amen! Amen! Amen!</p>
<p>Commemoration</p>	<p>Remember, Lord, also our holy fathers and bishops in your Church, who throughout the inhabited world rightly proclaim the word of</p>	<p>...And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one bread and cup in the communion of the one Holy Spirit. Grant that</p>	<p>...So that they may be to those who partake of them for vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of Your Holy Spirit,</p>

	<p>truth. Especially our holy father, our most holy Archbishop, all his clergy and priesthood, grant him an honoured old age, preserve him for many years, as he shepherds your people in all true religion and reverence. Remember, Lord, the honourable order of presbyters here and everywhere, the diaconate in Christ, all the rest of the ministers, every order in the Church and our brotherhood in Christ and the whole Christ-loving people. [...] Remember, Lord, the holy city of you our God, the queen of cities, every city, town and village, and those who with Orthodox faith and devotion dwell in them, and their peace and security.</p>	<p>none of us may partake of the holy Body and Blood of Your Christ unto judgment or condemnation. Instead, may we find mercy and grace with all the saints who through the ages have been well-pleasing to You: ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, teachers, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith, especially with our most holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with the holy prophet, forerunner, and baptist John; the holy, glorious, and all-laudable apostles; with Saint N., whom we commemorate today; and with all Your saints; through their prayers, visit us, O God. Remember all those who have fallen asleep before us in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life. [...] Furthermore, we implore You: remember, O Lord, Your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church which is from end to end of the universe. [...] Remember, O Lord, those who offered You these gifts, and those for whom and through whom they offered them, and their intentions. [...]</p>	<p>fulfilment of the kingdom of heaven, confidence before You, and not in judgment or condemnation. Again, we offer this spiritual worship for those who repose in the faith, forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and for every righteous spirit made perfect in faith. Especially for our most holy, pure, blessed, and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever virgin Mary. For Saint John the prophet, forerunner, and baptist; for the holy glorious and most honourable Apostles; for Saint(s) N., whose memory we commemorate today; and for all Your saints, through whose supplications, O God, bless us. Remember also all who have fallen asleep in the hope of resurrection unto eternal life. [...] Again, we ask You, Lord, remember all Orthodox bishops who rightly teach the word of Your truth, all presbyters, all deacons in the service of Christ, and every one in holy orders. We also offer to You this spiritual worship for the whole world, for the holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and for those living in purity and holiness. [...] Above all, remember, Lord, our Archbishop. Grant that he may serve Your holy churches in peace. Keep him safe, honourable, and healthy for many years, rightly teaching the word of Your truth.</p>
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