

THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT

2

CHRIST
IN THE
EUCCHARIST

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Reverend Father Tadros Y. Malaty has kindly permitted that his books be published in the COeRL. He has requested that we convey that any suggestions or amendments regarding their translation are welcome, and should be forwarded to:
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**Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and
Lord of lords**



**THE BEHOLDER OF GOD
MARK THE EVANGELIST
SAINT AND MARTYR**



*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*



**His Grace Bishop Daniel
Bishop of Sydney and Affiliated Regions**

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May our heavenly Father compensate everyone with His heavenly rewards.

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Book 1

THE LITURGY IN THE EARLY CHURCH CONCEPTION

- 1. The Mystery of Worship.**
- 2. The Mystery of Eucharist.**
- 3. The Mystery of Redemption.**
- 4. The Mystery of The New Testament.**
- 5. The Mystery of Pasch.**
- 6. The Mystery of Church.**
- 7. The Mystery of Sabbath.**

Many people wrote about the “Eucharist¹.” Some scholars were concerned in historical points; others dealt with the ritual side, others with theological conception etc. But let us examine this sacrament under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to see our Lord Jesus Christ, feel His love, understand His redeeming work, practice fellowship with Him, enjoy His divine revelations and partake in His eternal glory!

Truly I wonder whether the Church, during the celebration of the Eucharist, is raised to heaven to be with her Divine Bridegroom, or the earth itself is transformed to heaven, as the Heavenly Bridegroom Himself comes with His angels to embrace and to take for Himself His Bride, whom He loved.

It is so difficult for me to speak to you concerning this sacrament!

- ❖ It is the **Mystery of Worship and Sanctification**, through which the soul knows God (the Holy Trinity), loves Him, accepts His work and responds to it.
- ❖ It is the **Mystery of the Eucharist (Thanksgiving)**, which we receive in order to attain His Eucharistic Life, which destroys all ingratitude in us.
- ❖ It is the **Mystery of Redemption**, i.e. the mystery of the living and un-bloody Sacrifice, the power of the Cross, which is always new, working in us continually for our salvation and our spiritual growth.
- ❖ It is the **Mystery of the New Testament**, in which the Incarnate Son offered His Blood as a pledge to His Bride, the Church, as a new and eternal covenant.
- ❖ It is the **Mystery of the New Pasch**, in which the Holy Spirit takes us to the depth of the Holy Scripture, in its Old and New Testaments, so that we can understand Moses and the Prophets and understand God’s ways for redeeming man. Not as historical matters, which are canceled by time, but as a life-giving process, which had worked, and is working and will go on working forever for our sake.
- ❖ It is the **Mystery of the Church**, the Eucharistic one, that destroys the boundaries of time and that knows no other Savior, for the past,

¹ “Eucharist” is a Greek word, which means “Thanksgiving.”

- present or future, but Jesus Christ who carries her into immortality.
- ❖ At last it is the **Mystery of the Sabbath**¹ i.e., the true Rest. Through it we enjoy the rest of the eternal kingdom, that we may know its secrets, not in words, but in its practical presence.

NOTES:

- ❖ The word “**Liturgy**” in classic Greek means “a public service undertaken on behalf of the people.” It comes from:
 1. “*Liow*” meaning “*people*.”
 2. “*Ergia*” meaning “*work*.”
- ❖ In the epistle to Hebrews this word means “the service of the altar,” or “the priestly service (Heb. 8:6; 9:21).”
- ❖ The Church has used this term since the apostolic age, to cover all worship which is officially organized by her, and which is offered by all her members, or their names.
- ❖ In the course of time, this term has come to be particularly applied to the performance of the service of the Eucharist, although there are other Liturgies, as the liturgy of Baptism, liturgy of marriage etc.²



¹ “Sabbath” is Hebrew word that means “Rest.”

² Cf. Fr. Gregory Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

Eisenhofer: *The Liturgy of the Roman Rite*, Herder and Herder, 1961.

1

THE MYSTERY OF WORSHIP

THE LITURGY IS A RECOGNITION OF GOD

Philip Schaff the Protestant historian says, “The celebration of the Eucharist has occupied a foremost, central position in Christian worship¹.” And the Evangelic monk Gregory Dix says...”that rite which was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself to be the peculiar and distinctive worship of those who should be His own... has ever since been the essence and core of Christian worship and Christian living - the Eucharist².”

To understand the reason why the Liturgy of the Eucharist has occupied this place in the Christian worship since the apostolic age, we ought to understand the notion of the word “*worship*.” True “worship” is not just practicing some ceremonies, singing hymns, reciting prayers, fasting, or offering oblations, but above all it is *an acknowledgment of God as the Lover of mankind*.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam’s worshipped God by recognizing Him as his lover. But after his fall, his inner insight was darkened. Hence he escaped from his God, and was unable to hear His voice, as he said, “*I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*” For this reason, God sent Moses’ Law based on the “*recognition of God as the Lover of mankind.*” The Ten Commandments begin with revealing God to man, saying, “*I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*”⁴

In worshipping, God asks us nothing except to know Him, and when we really know Him, we shall love Him. He says, “*I desire steadfast love not sacrifice, the acknowledgment of God rather than*

¹ Schaff: *Hist. of the Christian Church, Vol. 2, p. 235.*

² Gregory Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy.*

³ Gen. 3: 10.

⁴ Exod. 20:2.

*burnt-offerings*¹.”

In the New Testament, the Incarnate Son of God came to us, so as to make us members in His Body, and be acquainted with the reality of the Father and His love through His Son.

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, i.e. the mystery of illumination, we receive the spirit of adoption, for Christ joins us to Himself and allows us to share His relationship with the Father. By that same spirit we can call His Father ours. Thus, our inner man can be elevated to such a supreme level of knowing God that no other creature can reach.

Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, that is to say the Sacrament of the union with God, the Son of God, the High Priest, holds His Church in Himself mystically, offering His real recognition to God His Father. Thus, in Jesus Christ we attain His own recognition of God, fulfilling the true meaning of the word “worship” which all humanity failed to practice before.

The Son of God offered a unique worship to God His Father, fitting with His relationship as the Only-Begotten Son. He, therefore, obeyed Him unto death on the Cross, and accepted the new life of the Father, although He Himself is the Resurrection. This unique worship is related to the Only-Begotten Son alone, for no one knows the Father except Him, and there never was a moment when Jesus did not wish to open Himself utterly to the reality of His Father².

His acceptance of that death is a supreme acknowledgment that God is the true Father; just as His passage into the new life is an acceptance of His Father without reservation as the Giver of this new life.

Thus, in the Eucharist, the new Adam, i.e. the Head of the whole Church, redirected the entire human race back to God through His practical acknowledgment of His Father. The first Adam’s refusal of the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God resulted in the alienation of man from God; the new Adam represented him to the Father.

¹ *Exod. 2: 2.*

² *B. J. Cooke: Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality. p 264.*

Today the Church has nothing to offer to the Father except what His Son can bring through His presence to her, especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the epitome (culmination) of every act of worship the Church endures. It is the act of Christ Himself, offered to the Father in her name, bestowing upon her His own acknowledgment.

For this reason when the Lord entrusted His Church with this sacrament, He went out to Gethsemane saying to His Father, “*This is life eternal that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*”¹ “We have attained eternal life through our illumination of the “**acknowledgment.**”

- ❖ **We know the Father**, “who loved the world, that He gave His Only-Begotten Son...”
- ❖ **And we acknowledge the Son**, Who obeyed His Father and gave Himself up to death. He accepted the new life so that we practice the resurrection in Him and with Him.
- ❖ **We acknowledge the Holy Spirit**, who is sent by the Risen Son, to live with His spirit until we meet Him face to face on the Lord’s Day.

It is true that the Holy Scripture leads us to know our God and His plan for our redemption. But the Eucharist speaks to us practically through our reconciliation with God by His Crucified Son. He paid our debt, opening our inner eyes to see His supreme love.

For this reason when the Savior met two of His disciples at Emmaus after His resurrection, and explained to them the Books, clarifying to them the redeeming plan of God from Moses and the Prophets, their hearts were burning within them. But when He took bread and blessed it, and broke it and gave it to them, “*their eyes were opened and they knew Him*”², as their own personal Savior, doing everything on their behalf.

In brief, through the Sacrament of the Eucharist we attain a new practical acknowledgment, by which we offer Christ’s worship to His Father as if it is our own. This worship is based, not on the spirit of bondage and fear but on the spirit of adoption, which we practice

¹ *John 17:3.*

² *Luke 24:32.*

through our union with the Only-Begotten Son.

The texts of the early liturgies explain the Eucharist as the mystery of the acknowledgment of God through His Son,

Examples:

✠ We give thanks unto You our Father, for the life and the **acknowledgment You had revealed to us** through Jesus¹.

✠ Let us give thanks to You, the Holy Father, for Your Holy Name that lives in our hearts; and for **the knowledge**, the faith and the immortality, You have revealed to us through Your Son, Jesus².

Didache

✠ We praise You, whom the Only-Begotten Son knows, and proclaims to creation... we praise You, whom the Word ...knows You, and **reveals You** to the saints...³

✠ Let their souls be blessed by the understanding, **the acknowledgment and the mysteries so that they participate in them...** Let all of them be blessed through the Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ⁴.

✠ Bestow upon our souls a progress in **understanding purity and upon our souls acknowledgment** through receiving the Body and the Blood...⁵

Euchologium of Serapion

THE LITURGY IS THE MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION

We may wonder how could someone who has refused holiness and indulged in sin, return to the Holy God to be united with Him and worship Him?

On the eve of His betrayal, after establishing the Holy Supper, Jesus prayed “...for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” For our Sanctification, the Holy One sanctified Himself⁶, “not for the purification of His own soul or spirit,

¹ *Didache: The Prayer of the “ Sanctification of the Bread.”*

² *Didache: Prayer after the Communion.*

³ *The Eucharistic Prayer.*

⁴ *Prayer of Blessing for the Congregation.*

⁵ *Prayer on Breaking the Bread.*

⁶ *John 17:9.*

nor for the participation of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is in Him by nature, and He was and is Holy always and will be so forever¹.” But He emptied Himself and took on our humanity and became a representative of man, so that what He did was in our name. Before His incarnation man failed to be sanctified and he could not worship God as God deserved. It is true that man offered burnt offerings, incense, and sacrifices etc., but he failed to offer righteousness, obedience, humility, mercy and love. “*I have no pleasure in you,*” says the Lord Omnipotent², “*and I will not accept sacrifices at your hands.*”

When the Word of God, the Logos, became flesh, He bore us in Himself, so that as the true worship finds its way in Him, it also finds its way in us. He, the Holy One, offered Himself as the only pure acceptable and holy Sacrifice, so that the Father sees us through the Eucharist, i.e. through the body of His Holy Son, sanctified and true worshippers.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons says, “Only the Catholic (universal) Church can offer to God the sacrifice which pleases Him, announced by the prophets, namely the sacrifice of the Eucharist³.”

Through the Cross, the Church can stand in front of the divine throne, to offer Christ’s worship, Christ’s love, holiness, obedience, sacrifice etc. as her own.

We can see this notion in the prayers of the sanctification of the ancient liturgies. For example in the **Apostolic Tradition**, the presbyter recites the *prayers of Anamnesis and Epiclesis*, saying,

“As we commemorate His holy Passion and His Resurrection we offer the bread and the cup to You.

Giving thanks to You, for You make us worthy to stand in front of You and serve You...

Bestow upon Your saints who take communion... to be filled by the Holy Spirit⁴.”

And in the **Liturgy of St. Basil**, the presbyter prays, “As we

¹ Cf. *St. Clement of Alexandria, Library of the Fathers. v. 43. Comm. on Jn.*

² *Mal 1:10.*

³ *St. Irenaeus: against Heresies 4: 17.*

⁴ *The Apostolic Tradition: Anamnesis and Epiclesis Prayers.*

commemorate His holy Passion, His Resurrection...we offer You your offerings from what is Yours¹.”

And the presbyter recites this *Epiclesis Prayer*: “Let Your Holy Spirit be sent upon us and the gifts... revealing them as holy things for the holy ones.”

The Church, as Christ’s Body, fulfills all what He has done once for her, for she is one with Him. **St. Irenaeus** says, “For we offer to Him **His own**, announcing constantly the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit².”

There can be no separation between Christ and His own Church, for they are one, having one mission and one aim. **St. Augustine** says that when Christ was on earth, His Church was hidden in Him, and what He did was in her name, and for her sake. Now He ascended to heaven. He is hidden in His Church, so that what she practices is in His name and for His sake.

Finally, we may say that through the Eucharist, the Church is “**Christ continuing to live and work in His Secret Body**,” she offers nothing but that which belongs to Christ, and in Him she offers herself. **Fr. John of Kronstadt** says, “The Church is one and the same with the Lord. She is His Body, and of His flesh and bones.”

¹ *Before the Epiclesis.*

² *Against Heresies 4:18.*

2

THE MYSTERY OF THANKSGIVING “EUCHARIST “

EUCHARIST AND EUCHARISTIC LIFE¹

When the German materialistic philosopher Feuebrach wanted to deprive man from his humanity and his feelings, he said, “Man is what he eats.” And we say that the Bible itself declares that man is a hungry being. God offers him everything in the world to eat and to give thanks.

Man, as a priest, receives the world as a divine gift, illustrating God’s fatherhood and God’s love for him, and offers his whole life as a Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e. a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. But man loved the world and got attached to it, forgetting his God. He accepted the gift and gave no attention to the Giver. He considered himself as the center of the world and was occupied with his “ego,” seeking the pleasures of the world and losing his relationship with his God and his Eucharistic life. He can’t practice the Eucharistic life although he learns the hymns of the Eucharist and of praise. For this reason, the True Priest, the Son of God, incarnated. As the Creator, the world cannot affect Him nor capture His heart, nor can it separate Him from His Father. He alone can offer the Sacrifice of the Eucharist on our behalf, not only by prayers but also by deed, offering His Holy Body and Blood as a sacrifice of the Eucharist to the Father. That explains why on the night when He was betrayed, “*He took bread and gave thanks... and He took a cup and gave thanks...*”²

By entrusting this sacrament to His Church, which will remain forever grateful, He bestows upon her His life, to live with her. In this way, the hungry man’s wounds of ingratitude are healed, and he returns to the Eucharistic life. For this reason, during the first and the second centuries, the favorite name of the Christian celebration was well

¹ Fr. Schmemmann: *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, chapter: *The Life of the World*.

² *Mat 26: 27, Mark 24: 23, Luke 22: 19, 20, 1 Cor 11: 24, 25.*

known as “Eucharist¹.”

In the writings of the Early Fathers² and in the texts of the ancient liturgies³, we notice that the prayers of the liturgies concentrated on “giving thanks to God the Father, through His Son.”

In all the liturgies, the “Eucharist” governs the whole rite from the beginning to the end. For example, the prayers of the Eucharist often begin by this statement, “**Let us give thanks (Evkharistomen) to the Lord**” and the congregation gives its consent, saying, “It is worthy and right.”

Fr. Schmemmann comments, “when man stands before the throne of God... all joy is restored, then there is nothing else for him to offer but to give thanks. Hence, the Eucharist or “thanksgiving” is the state of the perfect man. The Eucharist is the life of Paradise⁴.”

Through the Eucharist we put on Christ, the Perfect One alone, and return to Paradise with joy, singing - in Him - the hymn of thanksgiving.

From the sayings of the Fathers

✠ When I call it “*thanksgiving*” I unfold the treasures of God’s goodness and call the mind to meditate on those mighty gifts⁵.

St. John Chrysostom

✠ We are not people with ungrateful hearts... The sign of our gratitude towards God is the bread called the “Eucharist⁶.”

Origen

EUCHARIST AND CHABOURA

Fr. Dix says that the Christian Eucharist is carried over from the very roots of the Eucharist of the old *Chaboura* supper, but in a new meaning and shape. God permitted this old tradition “*Chaboura supper*” as a symbol, through which we can understand the Christian Eucharist.

¹ Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p 11.

² Cf. St. Justin Martyr: *Apology 1*: 65, 66; St. Ignatius: *Ep. to Sym 6:2*.

³ Cf. book 5: *Liturgical Texts*.

⁴ *Sacraments & Orthodoxy*, p 43, 44.

⁵ N. & P. N. Frs.: *Series 1, V. 12 Horn 24 on 1 Cor.*

⁶ *Origen: against Celesum 8: 57.*

There is a great difference between the Chaboura supper and the Lord's Supper. In the *Chaboura* a prayer called "*Beraka*"⁷ is offered. It is a prayer of giving thanks and praise to God, for the Jews' redemption from bondage, for the Law which God bestowed upon them, and for the food wherewith He fed them. But our Lord instituted the Eucharist meal, not as something to be said, but as an action and deed, for He offered His life as a sacrifice of Eucharist for us.

And the Church, in the Eucharist, not only offers hymns of Eucharist, but also offers her life to be crucified with her Bridegroom and to be raised again with Him. At the same time she receives from her Father the Holy Body and Blood of her Bridegroom as a divine gift, so that in Him she can live His own life, that is the life of "Thanksgiving."

Thus, the Church feels that this Eucharist itself has increased her debt to God beyond measure. For while she gives thanks to God, through this un-bloody sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son, she accepts Him as her life.

⁷ "*Beraka*" means to bless a thing and to give thanks to God for this thing.

3

THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS¹

God as the real Father embraces man as His lover. But man rejected His love, turning away through his disobedience. Thus, there was the necessity to offer a bloody sacrifice, so as to redeem man, take the consequence of his sin against God (death), and intercede for him.

The entire human race received this rule of the bloody sacrifice through Adam so that most religions knew this sort of sacrifice. But many abused its notion and rites, so that some sacrificed their children to appease the wrath of God. For this reason, the written Law of Moses acknowledged us to offer bloody sacrifices, describing their rites accurately and in detail. For *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins².”*

These sacrifices were symbols of the unique Sacrifice, i.e. that of the Cross, for the “Lamb of God” carries our sins and disobedience, and pays the price. He is the only One who can pay, redeem, intercede and resurrect us.

We can see this sacrifice of Christ hidden in all the history of God’s dealings with man. The Patriarchs saw it through the symbols and rejoiced³. Moses saw it through the Law and God’s actions with His people⁴. The Prophets foresaw it in their prophecies.

The prophet Isaiah saw the Victim bowing His head, to carry our sins, redeeming us by the Cross. He said,

“Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and

¹ See Frank Gavin: *Some aspects of contemporary Greek Orthodox Yought*,

Nicola Lask: *His Presence in the World*, Dayton, 1968, p.113.

Lavosik: *Eucharist in the Catholic Church*, N.Y., 1960.

Charmot: *The Mass, Source of Sanctity*.

B. J. Cooke: *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*.

² Heb 9:22.

³ John 8:56.

⁴ John 5:46.

*acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces.
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely He has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities,
He was stricken for the transgressions of my people...
Although He had done no violence... Yet it was the will of the
Lord to bruise Him... when He makes Himself an offering for sin.
He poured out His soul to death, and was numbered with the
transgressors, and He bore the sin of many and made intercession for
the transgressors¹.”*

The apostle Paul contemplates this sacrifice, comparing it with the old sacrifices. He says,

“But when Christ appeared as a High priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...”

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of time to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself.”

In these magnificent phrases, we catch the depth of the theme of our redemption; Christ’s suffering, the shedding of His blood has a sacrificial quality.

This sacrifice is unique.

First: It is the unique sacrifice in which the “Victim” offers His will as a sacrifice to the Father. He expressed His absolute obedience and inward abandonment to the Father, in addition to His fervent love. He chose death as the ultimate extreme of obedience; giving the Father

¹ *Is. 53.*

² *Heb 9.*

infinite honor, worship and glory, He offered that highest and most precious possession: His own will, which St. Paul called “*Self-emptying*”¹. But self-emptying cannot be offered by the old victims, for these had no “will” to offer².

Second: The High Priest here is not a man suffering from sin³ or offering the blood of animals for the purification of the flesh, but He is the heavenly One, Who offers His own blood as a heavenly and mighty sacrifice, which does not need to be repeated, for it brings us to the heavenly place, i.e. “*the good things that have come.*”

Thus, the sacrifice of the Cross is unique, for it is the sacrifice of “self-emptying” and a heavenly one, not subject to the laws of “time” and “place.” There never was a moment when Christ did not wish to be sacrificed, and now He is still in heaven as the slain “*Lamb*”⁴, making intercession for His Church through His blood.

To understand this notion, we say that the sacrifice of the Cross forms one redeeming action of God, although it was fulfilled in many stages. For our salvation, the Son was incarnated, baptized, tempted, and suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, resurrected and ascended to heaven... These stages are one integral redeeming action, and cannot be isolated one from the other.

Examples: Through His incarnation the Son was united with us, and we abode mystically in Him. But we cannot enjoy this union with Him outside the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the burial with him in the baptistery so that we can rise up with Him in the new life.

And through His baptism, the Church - His body - enters with Him to receive the spirit of adoption from God, but she cannot enjoy this without the cross, which reconciles her with God.

Likewise in the Last Supper, the Lord brought his Church into the mystery of the Cross, bestowing upon her His Sacrificed Life, i.e. His Sacrificed Body and Blood, as a true sacrifice; and the Church still enjoys sacramentally the one sacrifice of the cross through the Eucharist.

¹ *Image book D 38: A Handbook of the Catholic Faith, p 306.*

² *Cf. Heb 10:7.*

³ *Heb 9:7.*

⁴ *Rev 6:5.*

Upon the Cross He fulfills the role of the Victim, which he accepted at the Last Supper.

And His acceptance of the resurrection or the new life from His Father is a fulfillment of His self-oblation in the last Supper, the life-giving sacrifice.

In brief, as the Lord offered sacrifice He took many essential integral stages, especially the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection; it is one sacrificial, supernatural and divine action, presented to the Church to last for eternity.

A REAL SACRIFICE

We said that the Church is “Christ continuing to act or operate in His body,” so He bestows this mystery upon her, so that she can offer His own sacrifice by His Holy Spirit. Thus, what He entrusted to her on the night of His suffering, was a true sacrifice, as we conclude from his words, for He said¹:

“My Body given... broken for you,”

“My Blood shed for many for the remission of Sins,”

“The New Testament in my Blood... shed for you.”

For this reason, the early church used these Greek words, “*thusia* = sacrifice and *prospora* = oblation, for the word “Eucharist.”

St. Paul clearly implies that the Eucharist is a “sacrifice” when he contrasts “*the table of the Lord*” and “*the table of devils*” (1 Cor 10: 20, 21). Also the references in Hebrews chapter ten are to the sacrifices of the Old Testament, to which Calvary and the Eucharist are compared as fulfillment and antitype to prefigured type.

Thus, the Ecumenical Councils and the early Fathers of the church² taught us that the Eucharist is a real un-bloody Sacrifice.

For, **St. Ignatius**, the Eucharistic assembly of the Church is “*thusiasterion*” “the place of the sacrifice and he who is not within it is

¹ Cf. Lk 22: 19,20 Mark 14: 24, Mt 26:28, 1 Cor 11:24,25.

² Cf. St. Ignatius: *Ep. to Phil* 4.

St. Justin: *Ep. to Trypho* 117.

St. Irenaeus: *Against Haer.* 4: 17: 5, 4: 18: 6.

Apostolic Tradition 11: 4, 5.

St. Cyprian: *Ep* 62:2,14.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem: *Myst* 5:8.

St. Augustine: *Ep.* 68:9.

deprived of the bread”¹.

St. Clement of Rome² says that the bishop’s work is to offer “*pro-spheretia*,” the oblation.

EUCHARIST AND CALVARY

On the Cross Christ physically shed His blood. And if this sacrifice had been ended by His death like the old ones, then He wouldn’t have been able to bring us to heaven. But, He rose again proclaiming the Father’s acceptance of this Sacrifice, proving that He is the Living Victim always present in His Church and offering the same sacrifice sacramentally without physical shedding of neither blood nor physical death, because He can die no more.

In other words³, on the Cross, the word of God, the practical, saving and lovely speech, had been spoken through the shedding of His blood. And in the Eucharist the Holy Spirit awakens the hearts of men to hear the same Word of the Cross, by recalling its effect. By the power of the Holy Spirit we enjoy unity with the Crucified Christ as a response to love and to the effective hearing of the word of God. We hear the practical voice of salvation, which is the death of Christ and His resurrection, not simply as a body and blood, but as the sacrificed Body of Christ for our salvation. This means that Christ is not present in the Eucharist “statically” but dynamically.

Thus, we look upon the redemption not as something of the past, or as something that was done, but as something that still goes on. It is operative in human history, liberating men in each succeeding generation from their particular enslavements...⁴. This mystery is the continuous sacrificial action of Christ. For He is present in the sacrificial Eucharist, and He still has his inner approach, that is His obedience to the Father until death, and the acceptance of passage through death into the risen life. It is this manner that achieves reconciliation between man and God. This way of His may flow effectively into our lives through our unity with the Only Begotten Son so that we can meet the Father as ours through His only Son, and the Father once more recognizes us as sons of obedience through His Son

¹ *St. Ignatius: Ep. to Eph. 5:2, Dix p 113.*

² *1 Clem 44.*

³ *Nicolas Lask: His Presence in the World, p 113.*

⁴ *Image Book D 246: Christian Sacraments, p 242.*

also.

Thus, the Eucharist is the continuous redeeming action of the Cross, so that the history of the salvation of men continues to embrace all generations. Men are slowly drawn more closely to Christ, Who is patiently working through His love to shape us to greater maturity.

We mention below some phrases of the early Fathers and some texts of the prayers of the liturgies, which reveal the effect of the Eucharist in our Salvation and spiritual progress.

✠ For this table is the sinews of our soul, the bond of our mind, the foundation of our hope, our salvation, our light and our life,

✠ When you see it set before you, say to yourself:

Because of His body I am no longer earth and ashes, no longer prisoner but I am free.

Because of this I hope for heaven, and to receive the good things therein, immortal life, the portion of angels, converse with Christ.

This Body, nailed and scourged, was more than death could stand against...

This is even that Body, the blood-stained, the pierced, and that out of which gushed the saving fountains: the one of blood, the other of water, for the world¹.

✠ By It the soul is cleansed, by It it is beautified and inflamed².

St. John Chrysostom

✠ The Church grows from day to day in stature and in beauty by the cooperation and communion of the Logos, who condescends to us until now and continues His going out of Himself in the anamnesis of His Passion³.

Fr. Methodius of Olympis

✠ To You we have offered this bread... We have offered also the cup... and make all who partake to receive a Medicine of life, for healing of every sickness and for strengthening of all advancement and virtue, not for condemnation.

Euchalogium of Serapion

¹ *N & P N, Frs. Ser 1, Vol 12; Horn 24 on 1 Cor.*

² *Hom. 46 on John 6.*

³ *Banquet 3:8.*

✠ This oblation of Your servants... that it be to us for the pardon of offenses and the remission of sins and for the great hope of resurrection from the dead and for the new life in the kingdom of heaven.

Liturgy of SS. Addai and Man

A LIVING ANAMNESIS

The sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were symbols of Calvary, and the Eucharist, consisted essentially of the destruction of the victims. The death of victims, and the fire that destroys them are the signs of God's acceptance of the offering. Their work ends at this point, and it becomes necessary to offer another victim for another occasion.

But the sacrifice of Christ is unique, for His resurrection is the sign of the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice, and the sign of the sacrifice's power to be present to the Church, continuing His redeeming and sacrificial act. For this reason the heavenly High Priest bestowed upon us His mystery, i.e. His sacrificial life. He gave us His sacrificial Body and Blood, that is the mystery of His death; His resurrection and His ascension as a living commemoration (*anamnesis*), acting in our lives. Thus, we understand the Lord's commandment, "*Do this in my Anamnesis.*"

For the Greek word "*anamnesis*" does not mean merely a remembrance or a memorial of a thing regarded as being absent, but it means a recalling or representing the thing in an active sense¹.

It does not mean a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ as something purely of the past, something that was done, but as a real and present sacrifice which has its effect on us. It is an "*efficacious commemoration*"².

✠ But do we not daily offer the sacrifice? We offer it, but in making the anamnesis of His death. And this is unique, not multiple.

It was offered once, as He entered into the Holy of Holies.

The anamnesis is the figure of His death. ***It is the same sacrifice that we offer, not one today and another tomorrow.*** Christ is One only, everywhere, entire, one only Body. As

¹ Fr. Dix gives many examples from the O. T. & N. T. (Dix p 161.

² Jean Daniélou: *The Bible and The Liturgy* p 136-37.

everywhere there is one Body, everywhere there is one sacrifice.

This is the sacrifice that we now still offer. This is the meaning of the anamnesis; we carry out the anamnesis of the sacrifice¹.

St. John Chrysostom

✠ (*On the Lord's sayings*)

I have called It and It really is "My Body." The smallest part of this particle can sanctify Thousands of souls and is sufficient to give life to those who receive It².

St. Ephram the Syrian

✠ The Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins, and which God the Father rose up³.

St. Ignatius

✠ The Food, which has been "*eucharistised*," is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus who was made flesh⁴.

St. Justin Martyr

✠ The mingled cup and the manufactured bread receive the word of God and become the Eucharist or the Body and the Blood⁵.

St. Irenaeus

✠ The bread, which He took and gave to His disciples He, made His own very Body by saying, "This is my Body⁶."

Tertullian

✠ What can be sacrificed so full of love, and accepted so gratefully, as the flesh of our sacrifice, which became the body of our Priest⁷!

St. Augustine

Thus, in the Eucharist the Church is presented to the Golgotha, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to enjoy the sacrificial Holy Body and the Precious Blood of her Savior, practicing the saving deeds of her heavenly Father. In other words *the Mystery of the Eucharist is an anamnesis of the redeeming action of Christ in the mysterious sense*

¹ *Ibid* p 137 (See also *Horn. on Heb 17: 3*).

² *Mimre 4 on the Passion*.

³ *Ep. on Sym 6:2*.

⁴ *Apology 1: 66*.

⁵ *Adv. Haer. 5:2:3*.

⁶ *Against Marcion 4: 10*.

⁷ *On the Holy Trinity, book 4*.

*that it is still active and continuous*⁸...

⁸ *Image Book D 246, p 209.*

THE MYSTERY OF THE NEW COVENANT

AN ANCIENT CALL FOR REPENTANCE OF THE NEW COVENANT

By the spirit of prophecy Zechariah foresaw Jesus, the King of Glory, entering Jerusalem to establish a “peace - covenant” with His Church. He bestows upon the Gentiles a new and eternal covenant in which the captives are set free from destruction and the arid pit of sin. He says,

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you;

Triumphant and victorious is He,

Humble and riding an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass...

And He shall command peace to the nations...

And for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you,

I will set your captives free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope¹.”

This wonderful prophecy is addressed to the Church. It is a call to ascend with gladness and rejoicing to the upper room of Zion away from the world, in order that she may enter into the “New Covenant” with her Savior, through His blood, which is sacrificed on her behalf.

This prophecy has been fulfilled literally, when the Lord asked us: *“Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins².”*

This prophecy explained some mysteries of this covenant:

It named the Church “*daughter of Jerusalem,*” i.e. the daughter of heaven. She was called for a heavenly and eternal covenant to possess the characteristics of her heavenly King.

¹ *Zech 9:9-12.*

² *Mt 26: 28, Lk 22: 20, 1 Cor 11: 25.*

And the Founder of the covenant is called “*the Just King*,” who pays our debts by His blood, fulfilling the divine justice, reigning over our hearts. He is “*Victorious*,” for He conquers Satan by the power of His Cross. He is “*humble*,” for He crushes the powers of darkness.

This call is addressed to the Gentiles who had been living for a long time in the darkness of the pit of ignorance and did not know the True God. Now they are called to accept a “*peace - covenant*” with God in order to return confidently to the Savior, their Stronghold.

Isaiah prophesied this call, as he said:

“Incline your ear, and come to Me.

Hear, and your soul shall live;

And I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people

Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you¹.”

It is a joyful call for the nations, which God had not called as sanctified peoples, and they knew Him not as their God. Now the Son of God establishes a covenant with them. He makes and intercedes for them to his Father by the blood of his covenant. Thus, they enjoy the steadfast love of David, i.e. the blessings which David had foreseen, and for which he was waiting.

If we know the notion of the covenants among the ancient tribes, we understand this everlasting covenant, which was foretold by the Prophets in the Old Testament.

Consequently, we get to know the “old covenant” which God established with man as a symbol of the new one, which we now enjoy.

THE COVENANT AMONG THE ANCIENT TRIBES²

The covenant is a compact between one person and another or between tribes of nations³ or between individuals⁴, in which every

¹ *Isa 55: 3 - 5.*

² *Fax: The Church at Eucharist.*
Crichton: The Mass and People of God, p. 24 - 29.
Paul Chapel: A living liturgy.

³ *1 Sam. 11:1; Josh. 9: 6, 15.*

⁴ *Gen. 21: 27.*

party binds himself to fulfill certain conditions.

Among the primary tribes, it was called “peace - covenant,” whose aim was to put an end to fear from any attack by the tribes near by. It created something like a blood tie, which did not naturally exist.

This covenant often had three elements:

1- The terms agreed to by both parties, and oaths sworn. These terms proclaim that the gods were witnesses to the covenant. Sometimes they set up a stone monument or made a heap of stones as a witness. When Laban established a covenant with Jacob, he said, “*This heap is a witness between you and I today... although no man is with us. God is witness between you and I, so Jacob swore...*”¹

2- Shedding of blood of animals: The two parties usually ratified the covenant by cutting the sacrificial victim in two pieces, standing on the pieces or passing between them, and smearing the blood on their persons.

Something like this happened when God proclaimed His covenant with Abraham². He took a heifer three years old, and a female goat of three years old, and a ram three years old; cut them in two, and laid each half of the animal over against the other. And when the sun had set, and it was dark, he beheld a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of the sacrificial victims. This was a premonition of the coming of God to proclaim His covenant with Abraham.

We also know from Jeremiah that it was the custom of the contracting parties to cut a calf in twain and pass between the pieces³.

This custom probably had two meanings, retributive and sacramental:

(A) *Retributive*: The slaughter of the animal symbolized the slaughter of the perjurer.

(B) *Sacramental* or Purificatory: W. Robertson Smith supposes that in the Hebrew rite the parties stood between the pieces, as a symbol that they were taken within the mystical life of the victim, and that the sacrifice was regarded as a ransom for man. This rite was a

¹ Cf. Gen 31: 44 - 54.

² Gen 15.

³ Jerm 34: 18.

mode of purifying the parties to the covenant¹. He supposes also that the persons who stood or passed between the pieces of the victim were thought to be thereby united with each other by the bond of a common blood. It was a blood-covenant, in which the parties artificially created a tie of consanguinity between themselves, which did not naturally exist.

3- Setting up dinner to share a common meal. The parties shared the same food, which is the source of life. This meant that they led one life, acting as if they were one family. It was a meal of reconciliation or alliance.

THE DIVINE COVENANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God established a covenant with man, renewing it from time to time, revealing His divine intention to redeem us.

(A) Removing fear from man's heart. On establishing a covenant with Noah and his descendants, God said, "*I will never again curse the earth for the sake of man... Behold I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you*²." He put an end to human fear, proclaiming His love to man.

(B) Declaring His desire to dwell with man. He explained this aim in renewing His covenant with Abraham many times³.

(C) Revealing Himself as contiguous to man. This aim was stressed in the renewal of His covenant in the days of Moses, i.e. the old covenant. Its pattern and rites stand as our guide leading us to the blood of the new covenant, i.e. the Sacrificial Christ.

It had also **the three elements** like, the covenants of the ancient tribes, but in a new shape and with new meanings:

(A) ***The exchange of rights and duties before the parties***: These are mentioned in the book of the covenant. In it God revealed this choice of mankind and as His own and His consequent sanctification. At the same time on establishing this covenant or renewing it, people said, "*All things that the Lord has spoken we will do, we will be obedient*⁴." They accepted the covenant of obedience and love to God.

Who was the witness between them? The ark of testimony,

¹ Cf. Frazer: *Folklore in the Old Testament*, London 1923, p 161/2.

² *Gen. 8: 21,9:9.*

³ *Gen. 17.*

⁴ *Exod. 24: 7.*

which symbolized God's Presence among His people, was a witness. Thus, after establishing his covenant, God said to Moses: "*In which you shall put the testimony that I will give you. Thence will I give orders, and will speak to you over the propitiatory¹, and from the midst of the two Cherubim, which shall be upon the ark of the testimony².*"

Within it we find the tablets of the covenant, a container of manna and Aaron's stick, which is a witness of God's Providence towards His own people.

In order to let us feel secure God was called the "Covenant Holder³."

(B) ***Shedding sacrificial blood***: This covenant was formalized in His sacrificial act in which the blood of a victim was shared between God and His people. After reading in the book of the covenant Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people. "*This,*" has said, "*is the blood of the covenant that Jehovah has made with you⁴.*" Blood was the sign through which God was binding them to Himself by a blood tie in a clan relationship.

(C) ***The Meal of Reconciliation***, that is, the symbol at the Last Supper.

THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT

The Incarnate Son of God came to fulfill rather than to destroy the old covenant. He established a new spiritual one, which the prophets foretold⁵. It followed the self-same pattern of the old one but the new covenant surpassed the old one as much as the reality surpasses the shadow and the symbol.

The New covenant also has **three elements**:

1- **An exchange of rights and duties**, or the terms agreed to by parties, God and man. The Eucharist, i.e. the Sacrifice of the Cross,

¹ *The covenant of the ark is called a "propitiatory" or "mercy - seat," because the Lord, who was supposed to sit there upon the wings of the Cherubim, with the ark for His footstool, from thence showed mercy. It is called the "oracle" (ver. 18, 20), because from thence God gave His orders and His answers. (The Holy Bible - Douay Version)*

² *Ex 25: 21, 22.*

³ *2 Chr 6: 14, Neh 1: 5, 9: 32, Dan 9: 41.*

⁴ *Exod. 24: 7 & 8.*

⁵ *Example: Jeremiah says, "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand..." 31: 32.*

links the shadows of the old covenant to the glory to come. It brings the shadows into relation with the light and realizes the symbols and achieves them.

The terms, which were written on the tablets of stones, now are fulfilled as the sacrificial Messiah bestows upon us the eternal life.

All the terms of the covenant between God and man have been realized in the Eucharist. In it God reveals His divine love and His redeeming plan towards man. He proclaims the glory, which is prepared for man. In it He tells us practically that He is the Good Shepherd and the Loving Father to His sons.

In the Eucharist we also reveal our obedience. We are hidden in the sacrificial Christ, who offered the sacrifice of obedience to his Father on our behalf.

Who is the witness of the covenant between God and man? In the Eucharist Christ is the practical witness, not by swearing an oath, nor by making an ark of testimony as in the old covenant, but by His real Presence in the midst of His Church. St. John says, "*Grace to you... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness... Who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood*¹."

2- A shedding of Sacrificial Blood: In the days of the Old Testament the sacrifice was central for helping man to approach God, that prepared the way for the sacrifice of Christ².

The riches inherent in the blood of the new covenant to mankind surpass the blood of the old one. For in the old covenant the blood of the animal was sprinkled externally upon the people. But now in a more sublime way our Lord Jesus offers His own mystic blood by giving His disciples the cup to drink from.

By the Messiah's Blood we enter into an eternal family relationship with God, as we became Christ's brothers, Christ's spiritual bride and of His flesh and bones.

By the sacrificial blood, God has opened the door to His unfaithful wife, in spite of her adultery, offering the Eucharist as a new covenant of a spiritual marriage.

¹ Rev 1:4,5.

² B. J. Cooke: *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, p. 182, 190.

Fr. Theodert says: “in eating the elements of the Bridegroom and drinking His blood we accomplish a marital union¹.” In the new covenant also, the Incarnated Son of God Himself abides in us, and the wine of His blood flows into each branch to bear fruit in us. The Father comes and dwells in us.

3- The Meal of Reconciliation: The Eucharist is the Real and New meal of Pasch, which we will discuss in the coming pages.

Finally, we can say that the Eucharist is the mystery of the new covenant. The sacrifice of Christ fulfills the terms of the two parties, God and man. It is the faithful witness. It has also the power to bestow upon us a spiritual and heavenly relationship. It is the heavenly, life-giving banquet.

Christ has established this covenant and we have accepted it, so we must not breach it. The apostle Paul says, “*How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the spirit of grace?*”²”



¹ PG 81: 128 B.

² Heb 10: 29.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRUE PASCH

ANCIENT RITUAL MEALS¹

Before Christianity there were three ritual meals, only one of them was sacrificial and sacramental, and the others were just simple blessings. These meals were:

1- **The Sabbath meal** (or *Kiddus meal*)²: The Last Supper was not a *Kiddus* meal. The *Kiddus* meal was employed only on the evenings before Sundays or before feast days. When the first stars appeared after sunset, the head of the household (on the Sabbath, after lighting the Sabbath candle) recited the blessing at the table over a cup of wine, in the midst of his family and guests. Then he himself drank and after him the other people present. After the end of the meal, the *Kiddus* was employed.

The *Kiddus* is neither a meal, nor a sacrifice, nor does it have sacrificial significance, but it is just a simple blessing.

2- **The Chabourah (Habourah) meals**: These meals were held by groups of friends when they gathered together. These meals were marked by features peculiar to banquets held on specific occasions such as those connected with betrothals, weddings, circumcisions and funerals, in which every guest present would participate in them.

In these ritual meals the father of the family took a piece of bread, uttered over it a short “*prayer of blessing*”³, broke it and distributed it at the table to the guests. After the meal was over, a cup was passed around for all to drink. This meal does not involve any sacrificial or sacred act.

3- **Pasch meals**: It was a symbol of the True Pasch, Jesus Christ,

¹ See: Joachim Jeremias: *The Eucharistic words of Jesus*.
Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p 31.

² “*Kiddus*” is a Hebrew word means “*sanctification*.”

³ He prayed, “*Praised be Jehova, our God, the King of the world who brings the bread forth from the earth.*”

the Lamb of God. St. Paul says, “*For Christ, our Paschal lamb, has been sacrificed*”¹.”

THE PASCH² IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“Pasch” means to “*pass over*,” and it refers to the destructive angel who passed over the houses anointed with the blood of the lamb. It also means “*crossing*,” as their fathers crossed the Red Sea.

According to the Law, every family was to gather each year to eat the Pasch supper in a special rite. The description of the Pasch’s rite is found in the *Mishnah*³. We can summarize it in the following points⁴.

1- The Father of the family slew the lamb he had brought, and the blood was dashed against the altar.

2- The meal was to be eaten after nightfall.

3- A first cup of wine was mixed, and God was blessed for both the feast and the cup.

4- A preliminary dish was served and eaten before the usual table blessing, and subsequent breaking of the bread with which Jewish meals ordinarily began.

5- Then the meal was set out with its unusual Menu of unleavened bread and bitter herbs, as their ancestors had eaten it at that remarkable night of liberation long ago.

6- A second cup of wine was mixed.

7- One of the children asked his father: Why was that night different from all nights?

8- The father related the narrative of Exodus, clarifying three points:

a. The Passover as a ransom.

b. The unleavened bread.

c. The bitter herbs, indicating that God had transported their Fathers from the life of slavery to the joyful life of liberty. For this reason they drank wine which referred to joy and happiness.

9- The narrative concluded with the recitation of the first part of

¹ *1 Cor 5:7.*

² “*Pasch*” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “*Pasch*.”

³ “*Mishnah*” is the early rabbinic legal tradition, a document compiled about A. D. 200, on the basis of authorities of the second and first centuries A. D., and in some cases of even earlier date.

⁴ See *Concilium*, Vol. 40, p 42/4. Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*.

the “*Hallel*,” the psalms of praise which are sung about the Lord’s greatness and His salvation. (Ps 112 - 117).

10- The second cup was drunk.

11- The bread was then broken into pieces and distributed, and the meal was eaten in the usual way.

12- The third cup of wine was mixed, which was called “the cup of blessing,” and was passed around for everybody to drink.

13- Finally, over a fourth cup the remaining psalms of “*Hallel*” were recited.

PASSOVER MEAL AND EUCHARIST

Our Lord instituted the Eucharist in the framework of this “*Liturgy of the Pasch meal*.” After eating the Pasch meal, He offered the real meal of Pasch, raising the same notions, not through shadows, but realistically.

1- **Commemoration:** According to the Pasch’s ceremony everyone considered himself as Abraham’s son. He regarded himself as having personally received God’s redeeming love. The Pasch’s meal was actually a remembrance of past events, enacted in order to practice God’s saving deeds in their life as a present fact and to hope for future salvation and to renew the eternal covenant between God and them, which was foretold by prophets and would be realized by the Messiah.

The rabbinic literature itself witnesses this notion¹. They defined the night of the Pasch as the anniversary of the creation of the world, the circumcision of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the release of Joseph from prison, the future exodus from captivity, the appearance of the Messiah, the coming of Moses and Elijah, the resurrection of the patriarchs, and the end of the world.

The Messiah achieves this feast, which is rich in its memories and promises; He bestows on the Church the true deliverance from the bondage of sin and mortality into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Now Jesus fulfilled the Pasch Meal by offering the Eucharist:

✠ The Paschal mystery has been fulfilled in the body of the Lord...
He was led like a lamb, and slaughtered like a sheep, He ransomed

¹ See *Concilium*, Vol. 40, p 31. R. Le Deaut: *La nuit Pascale (Analecta biblica, 22)*. N. Fuglister: *Die Heilshedeutung des Pascha*.

us from the slavery of the world of Egypt, and freed us from the slavery of the devil as from the hand of Pharaoh, and sealed our souls with His own spirit and our bodily members with His own Blood...

This is the One Who rescued us from slavery to liberty, from darkness to light, from death to life, from tyranny to the kingdom of eternity...

He is the Passover of our salvation...

He is the Lamb without voice... this is He who was taken from the flock and dragged to immolation, and at evening slaughtered, and by night hurried... That is why the Feast of unleavened Bread is bitter, as your Scripture says, “*You shall eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs.*” Bitter were the nails, which you sharpened. Bitter was the tongue by which you blasphemed. Bitter was the false witnesses you presented...¹

Fr. Melito of Sardis

2- **Thanksgiving:** The Pasch meal in its spirit and in its ceremonies was first of all a sacrifice of thanksgiving, by which they thanked God for His miraculous salvation. It retained this notion of the providential presence of God with them. The Eucharist is the true sacrifice of thanksgiving².

3- **The Eschatological Meal:** There was a strong tradition saying that the Messiah would come and the kingdom and its banquet would be established at the Passover. Until now the Jews at the Pasch Feast hope for nothing except the coming of the Messiah, who will reign forever.

Jesus Christ came and gave us His broken Body and His Blood so that we may enjoy **eternal** Life. In Him we pass over the kingdom of sin into His Eternal Kingdom. By the Eucharist we enter His Kingdom, so that we can meet Him face to face forever.

✠ The Jews celebrate an earthly Pasch having denied the heavenly one but we celebrate the heavenly Pasch having “passed over” the earthly one...

He said to Moses “*This month shall be to you the beginning of*

¹ *Paschal Mystery, p 26 - 39.*

² *See p 34.*

*months; it is the first to you among the months of the year*¹.” It means that the sacrifice of the true Pasch is for us too the beginning of **eternal life...**

Knowing this let each one become eager to undertake the beginning of this life and refuse to return to the old Pasch, whose end has been achieved, *“for how shall we who are dead to sin still live in it?”*²

For five days the victim remains with those to be saved, until the fifth day nears its end, then the victim is immolated; death passes over and the one who is saved enjoys perpetual illumination, for the full moon shines during the entire night and is succeeded by the light of day. For this is the fifteenth of the month...³

St. Hippolytus of Rome

¹ *Exod 12: 2.*

² *Rom 6:2.*

³ *Derivatives from Hipp. The Paschal Mystery p 49 - 77.*

6

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

EUCCHARISTIC CHURCH¹

The Greek theologian Christos Androutsos wrote about the Church as the center and organ of Christ's redeeming work;... it is nothing else rather than the continuation, and extension of His prophetic, priestly, and kingly power... The Church and its Founder are inextricably bound together for... **The Church is "Christ with us"**².

We can say that he, who sees the Church as she is, sees Christ Himself. For she is the sacrament of the sacrificial Christ and His Body. We must think of her in sacramental terms, as the Body of Christ; i.e. the Eucharist. But her outward organization, however important, is secondary to her sacramental life³.

We regard the Church since her foundation, as a Eucharistic society, and she will continue to be so through all generations since she is Christ's body, and on the altar she sees His sacrificial Body.

The Eucharist is the center of her life and the cause of her existence. Through it, the Gentiles estrangement was destroyed, as the apostle says, "*Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and members of God's household*".⁴ Thus, the Church enjoys her unity with Christ and her existence as the Living Body of Christ.

ECCLESIASTIC EUCHARIST

Since, the Church has found her existence through the Eucharist, the Eucharist is considered the sacrifice of the Church too, which is offered by Christ, Who is living in the midst of His Church, and who continues His original sacrifice.

The Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ alone. He is the High

¹ Fr. Schmemmann: *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*.

Ware: *Orthodox Church*.

Concilium: Vol. 40.

B. J. Cooke: *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*.

² *Dogmatic Theology*, Athens 1907, p 262-65.

³ Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p 246.

⁴ Eph 2: 14.

Priest and the Victim also, and the Church sharing now in this sacrifice does so by this power and authority, and offers Christ's sacrifice and her life to the Father at the same time.

What does the Church offer in the Eucharist?

In Christ she offers His own sacrifice, and at the same time she offers her life crucified with Him as a sacrifice of love and obedience to Him. She enters the altar at Golgotha, and ascends to heaven to offer nothing but Christ Himself. As she offers herself and all that she received from God in the form of earthly blessings, she discovers in fact that she offers nothing but Christ alone. The crucified life of Christ, and our lives, which are, crucified with Him are one and inseparable.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann says: "We offer the world and ourselves to God. But we do it in Christ and in remembrance of Him, because, as we offer again and again our lives and our world to God, we discover every time that there is nothing else to be offered but Christ Himself, who is the life of the world, and the fullness of all that exists. It is His Eucharist, and He is the Eucharist. It is He who offers and it is He who is offered. The Liturgy has led us into the all-embracing Eucharist of Christ, and has revealed to us that the only Eucharist and the only offering of the world is Christ. We come every time with our lives to offer; we bring and "sacrifice" - i.e. give to God -, what He has given us; because every time we discover that Christ has offered all that exists and, that He and all that exists has been offered of Himself. We are included in the Eucharist of Christ in our Eucharist¹."

We are represented in the Eucharist, not symbolically but as the members who are related to the head², and the branches to the root.

✠ There you are upon the Table, there you are in the chalice³.

St. Augustine

The Eucharist actually consists of offering ourselves through our Head. We as members of His Body are sanctified and become worthy to offer not our gifts only, but also ourselves as a sacred sacrifice.

¹ Fr. Alexander Schmemmann: *Sacraments & Orthodoxym* p 41, 42.

² 1 Cor 12: 27.

³ Sermon 229 to the newly - baptized.

The Father sees us on the altar offered to Him through our Head, His Beloved Son. For what is it that is offered on the altar but the Body of Christ, that is the Church?

On the altar the Church becomes the sacrificed Body of Christ, so that every believer may become “what he has been made by Baptism and Chrism; a living member of Christ’s crucified Body¹; and may receive the sacrificial Body and Blood of Christ so that he can grow day by day and increase in his desire to attain the “**Fullness of Christ**” through bearing the sufferings of the Cross. This is the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and that is its aim.

✠ Every redeemed city, that is to say the congregation of the believers and society of the saints, is the universal sacrifice offered to God by the High Priest Who offered Himself in suffering for us, in order to make of us the body of so great a Head...

This, then, is the sacrifice of Christians that all of them may be a single body in Jesus Christ!

This is the mystery that the Church celebrates through the sacraments of the altar, wherein it is shown to her that in this thing, which she offers **she herself also is offered to God**².

St. Augustine

EUCCHARIST AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

When we look at the altar we see the single Body of Christ, the same that is offered on every altar however numerous. Here we discover the mystery of our unity with one another in Jesus Christ.

The work of the Divine Word of God is to bring all the cosmos into one, through the Eucharist. For the blessed bread is broken that all may share it and “*we being many are made one Body*” for the One Head: we have the One Father and the One Son, to be one divine Family.

Again, our Lord gives us through our one mother, the Church, His Body and Blood, to renew and nourish our vigor in His Body “the Church,” that we should be drawn day by day into an ever more perfect union with the Father, the Son and with each other. St. Paul says, “*We who are many, are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of the*

¹ *Dix, p 247.*

² *City of God 10: 6, 23, Serm 227.*

*one bread*¹.”

✠ He has instituted on His altar the sacrament of our peace and unity².

St. Augustine

THE EUCHARIST AND THE ETERNAL CHURCH

At the Last Supper, the Church received the “*Kirios*” which all the time fulfills and removes temporal boundaries³. She entered into the eschatological world. For she accepted the Body of Christ as the eternal life, that breaks the bonds of time and carries her into heaven, into immortality⁴.

Immediately after this Last Supper, which was an eschatological event, He spoke with His Church openly about preparing a place for her in heaven. He said, “*In my Father’s house there are many rooms*⁵.”

For the same reason, the Church when celebrating the Eucharist, intones the hymn, which the angels eternally sing in heaven. Thus, as we travel as pilgrims through this world, we foretaste and share in that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy City of Heaven, in which the Lamb of God is sitting on the throne, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.

✠ The people who have been purified and enriched with wonderful gifts begin to walk in procession towards the altar saying, “*I will go to the house of God, to God who is the joy of my youth...*” They hasten to go to the heavenly banquet⁶.

St. Ambrose

✠ Then each time when the liturgy of this sacrifice is celebrated, we must consider that we are like one who is in **Heaven**⁷.

✠ By it, we, who are mortals by nature, expect to receive immortality; being corruptible we become incorruptible; instead of the earth and earthly evils we receive the blessings and delights of

¹ *1 Cor 10: 17.*

² *Sermon 272 to the newly - baptized.*

³ *Concilium, Vol. 40, p. 49.*

⁴ *St. Chrysostom says, “This blood has been poured forth and has opened the way to heaven.” Hom. 46 on Jn 6.*

⁵ *John 14: 1 - 3.*

⁶ *Myst. 43, Daniélou: The Bible and The Liturgy, p 129.*

⁷ *Cath. Hom 15: 20.*

Heaven¹.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

✠ In order that we may never become puffed up, as if we had life (eternal) from ourselves, and are exalted against God... let us learn by experience that we possess eternal life from the excelling power of this Being (Eucharist), and not from our nature.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

THE EUCHARIST AND “TIME”²

Two essential themes run through the Eucharist: the sacramental representation of the sacrifice of Christ, and the sacramental participation in the heavenly liturgy. The two themes are in fact one, for the Crucified Christ is the Heavenly Christ. This explains why He Himself called his Cross *“His glory.”*

In the liturgy, man does not submit to any temporal bonds, for he is joined with the whole Church in Jesus Christ, and this passes over into eternity through Calvary.

For this reason, man, through the Church, does not grieve over the **“Past”** as if it is a thing, which has been lost and ended, nor does he fear the **“Future”** as if it is unknown. But the **“Past, Present, Future,”** are one and are exposed to man.

In the past man gained the crucified and risen Lord, and at present he is joined with the same Lord, and in the future he will meet the same One, face to face. The crucified and glorified Lord is our past, present and future.

Finally, we can say that the Church and her liturgy will never age at any century, but it is perpetually new, for she does not submit to temporal laws.



¹ *Cath Hom. 15: 12, 16: 30.*

² *Daniélou: The Bible and The Liturgy.*

THE MYSTERY OF THE “SABBATH”

OBSERVANCE OF THE “SABBATH”

The word “**Sabbath**” is a Hebrew word “*Shabbath*” means “rest.” Moses says, “*Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you*¹.” This divine commandment was of great importance, as God related the “Sabbath day” to Himself, saying, “*You shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations*².” He gave an important commandment that a man, but also his son, daughter, manservant, maidservant, his cattle and the sojourner who is within his gates, ought to observe the Lord’s Sabbaths³. Whoever should despise it, would be guilty of dishonoring God Himself and should be put to death⁴.

And we can sense the importance of this commandment when we note how every time the people of the Old Testament wished to return to God, they first read the Holy Bible and **observed the Sabbath**.

THE SABBATH BEFORE THE LAW

Moses says, “*and on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He Rested on the Seventh day from all His work which He had done. So God blessed the Seventh day and hallowed His work which He had done in creation*⁵.”

We understand that the “Seventh day” was known as the “**Lord’s Day**” even before receiving the written Law. It takes its existence from God Himself Who blessed the seventh day of the creation. Perhaps Adam, who told his sons about it, knew this idea, but as the sons of Adam turned away from God, they used any day of the week as a day of physical **rest** and refreshment. Some nations gave this

¹ Deut 5:12 - 15, Exod 20:8 - 11.

² Exod 31:4.

³ Exod 20:8 - 12.

⁴ Exod 35:3.

⁵ Gen 2:2, 3.

day a religious meaning, as in Babylon, who considered the **Seventh** day a feast of *Mardub* and *Sarpanitu*. On that day they refrained from working, traveling and speaking. At night, the king offered gifts to the gods¹.

Before receiving the written Law, the people of the Old Testament were ordered to observe the Sabbath or the seventh day by not collecting Manna on that day².

But when the Ten Commandments were delivered, the fourth one ordered men to observe the Sabbath as the Lord's Day, asking them to observe it on the seventh day. The Law ordered them also to celebrate a Sabbatical Year every seven years, saying that is a "*Sabbath to the Lord*"³.

AN ETERNAL COMMANDMENT

Our Lord came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it⁴. But we hear one of His disciples say, "*Let no one, then, call you to account for what you eat or drink, or in regard to a festival or a new moon or a **Sabbath**. These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*"⁵. St. Paul never disregarded the eternal command of observing the Sabbath, but orders us to fulfill it, not in the literal meaning of the word but in its deepest sense, through its reality, i.e. "**Christ**" Himself.

In his epistle to the Hebrews⁶, the same apostle connects God's rest on the seventh day "*the Sabbath*," with the seventh day which was mentioned in the Law, and the rest, which was realized by the nation on their entrance to the Promised Land, and the ultimate rest in eternal Life, that is the **Real Sabbath**.

OUR REAL SABBATH

1- THE EUCHARIST IS OUR "TRUE SABBATH"

The observance of the real Sabbath, and not the shadow or the symbol, is what all the Church assembles together around the altar, offering in Jesus Christ the only acceptable Sacrifice to God, and receives His Holy Body and Precious Blood as a Divine Gift from the

¹ *New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, article: "Sabbath."*

² *Exod 23:36.*

³ *Lev 25: 1-5.*

⁴ *Mt. 5:17.*

⁵ *Col 2:16.*

⁶ *Chapter 4.*

Father to the Church.

Thus, we can say that we observe the Sabbath not with idleness as the Pharisees did when they applied the precept to the most trivial acts, and forbade many works of necessity and mercy, but we accept the Lord Jesus as our Sabbath (our Rest). The Pharisees wished that Christ would live with their narrow conception of the Sabbath. But He declared that He was not a slave of the literal Sabbath, but its Lord. Now by the presence of the Lord in His Church every Eucharist, we can say that we celebrate the Sabbath, not as a shadow, but as a pledge of the **eternal Sabbath**, whence we see our Sabbath face to face in His kingdom.

2- SABBATH AS A FEAST OF JOY

The Sabbath has a special prayer mentioned in the Old Testament in the ninety-second Psalm. It is a hymn of joy and thanksgiving to the Creator, Who created everything for the rest of mankind.

Among the feasts, the Sabbath occupied a foremost position. And in our church, the Sabbath, **the Eucharist** which is celebrated on Sunday, precedes all the feasts, not for the historical reason, that it was observed before the other feasts, but because it is a source of joy to the Church.

Every week the Church celebrates a weekly Pasch, bearing a testimony to the resurrection of her Lord, practicing with joy the resurrection in her life on earth, waiting for the resurrection of body too. St. Paul says. *“Every time you eat this bread and drink from this cup you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes¹.”*

In the weekly Eucharist we celebrate the Joyful feast of the Pasch that shines upon us, and delivers us from grief, and we experience the triumph over death in the Risen Jesus Christ.

Fr. Schmemmann says: “In the Orthodox tradition... the Eucharist has always preserved its festal and joyful character. It is first of all the sacrament of Christ’s coming and presence among His disciples and therefore it is the celebration - in a very real sense - of His Resurrection. Indeed it is the coming and presence of Christ at the Eucharist that is a proof for the Church of His Resurrection. It is the

¹ *I Cor 11:26.*

joy and the burning of hearts, experienced by the disciples of Emmaus to whom Christ revealed Himself in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:13-35), and it is the practical knowledge of the Resurrection... The Eucharist is still the same coming and presence of Christ, the same joy and burning of heart¹.”

3- SABBATH AS A SIGN OF REDEMPTION

“You shall remember that you were a servant... and the Lord your God brought you thence with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day².”

Thus, the Sabbath was a remembrance of the rest in the Promised Land. It was also a shadow, as St. Paul says, *“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later of another day. So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God³.”* The other rest is the memorial of the mighty hand of God which delivers us from the slavery of sin and brings us into true liberty, not by remembering the events of the cross and resurrection, but by participating in the crucified and risen Body of Christ.

Hence every Sunday, we celebrate the New Sabbath by practicing our salvation from sin through the Communion, i.e. the Eucharist.

✠ Until our Savior’s coming, we shall observe the Sabbath spiritually, having rested from sin⁴.

St. Clement of Alexandria

4- THE LORD’S DAY

God says, *“My Sabbath,”* and in the New Church the New Sabbath is called the “Lord’s day,” or the day of the *“Kyriake,”* *“Kyriak.”* The word *“Kyriak”* was used for matters concerning emperors. So it means that the day *“which the Lord has made,”* is the day when the heavenly King takes possession of our hearts as a divine Emperor. **St. Ignatius** says, *“Those who once lived according to the ancient order of things have come to the new hope, observing no longer the Sabbath, but the Lord’s day, the day on which our life was*

¹ *Fr. Schmemmann: Great Lent, p 51, 52.*

² *Deut 5:15.*

³ *Heb 4:8, 9.*

⁴ *Library of the Frs. of the Church, Vol. 43, Comm. On St. John.*

raised up by Christ and by His death¹.”

5- THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Sabbath, the seventh day or the last day of the week, has an eschatological meaning as it refers to the end of this world.

In the Old Testament, people were ordered to cease working, and to devote the seventh day to worship. This would enable their hearts to be lifted up to heaven, to ask for true rest, which is eternal life.

Now we have entered the pledge of eternal life, the kingdom of God, the world to come. We no more celebrate the seventh day, but the eighth (i.e. Sunday) and let it be called the first day, that means we leave the seven days of this time on earth so as to enter the new eighth day which is above this time and the first of the coming world.

It is no longer necessary to remember the end of the world on the seventh day, but we need to meditate on the beginning of the new life on the eighth day, the day of Christ’s resurrection! For St. Paul says, *“Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come².”*

On the Seventh day, the Lord sent upon the earth the flood after speaking to Noah³, and **Eight** persons were saved in the ark so that they might enjoy the new creation.

For the same reason on the **Eighth day** after birth, the newborn must be circumcised, so that he would be a member of the people of God.

Number **Eight** has an eschatological meaning, which explains why the eighth beatitude promises the kingdom of God⁴.

For this reason the Church celebrates the Eucharist on the **Eighth day**, Sunday, entering the world to come, opening the gates of heaven, by her communion with her heavenly Bridegroom.

Meyendorff says, “The custom of celebrating the Eucharistic Liturgy on a daily basis is a relatively recent practice, both in the East and the West. However it has never become widespread in the East,

¹ *Magnes 5:l.*

² *2 Cor. 5:17.*

³ *Gen 7:4.*

⁴ *Mat 6.*

hence the Orthodox Church has not issued any obligation for its priests to celebrate the liturgy daily and it is not regarded as their specific task. It is an act involving the whole Church retaining for the liturgy some of its meaning as a 'public function,' a solemnity involving the whole community and normally taking place only on Sundays and Feast days¹." This signifies and foretells the world to come.

Hence, both as a memorial and as an anticipation of the world to come, the Eucharist is the function by which the Church identifies itself with the kingdom of God. This is the essential meaning of the celebration held on the eighth day of the week, i.e. "The Lord's Day."

6- THE SABBATH AND PERFECTION

God says, "*Incense is an abomination to me, New moon and Sabbath... I cannot endure... wash yourselves; make yourselves clean*²." As much as we are clean from iniquity, God rests in us and we rest in Him. That is true of the Sabbath, that we wash ourselves by the cleansing Blood of Jesus Christ.

✠ He who does not sin truly observes the Sabbath³.

St. Augustine

✠ The perfect man is he who is always occupied with the words, the actions and the thoughts of the Word of God, and is always living in His Day, and all his days are the **Lord's Days**⁴.

Origen

✠ They did not undertake servile work on the Sabbath day. As for us we do no servile work on the Lord's Day, that is the day of resurrection.

The Jews did not leave their houses, and as for us let us not leave the house of Christ, let us remain in the Church.

The Jews did not kindle fire on the Sabbath, let us, by contrast, kindle the fire of the Holy Spirit, and let us **burn out every vice and every sin**⁵.

St. Jerome

¹ *Meyendorf: The Orthodox Church 69 - 70.*

² *Isaiah 1: 13 - 16.*

³ *Sermon 38. PL. 270, 1242.*

⁴ *Against Celsus 8:21.*

⁵ *PL. 39: 2058. Hamman: The Mass.*

7- SABBATH AND THE DAY OF THE SUN

St. Justine¹ speaks to the heathens about the first day of the week, which they call “the day of the sun,” saying that that is a proper name, for on this day the True Sun shone by His resurrection. On the first day of creation, the light appeared².

THE NEW SABBATH IN THE NEW CHURCH

St. Basil the Great says that there are many things descending from the tradition of the apostles beside the written teachings. Among these things is the sanctification of the first day of the week.

1- The Lord was accustomed to meet His disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week. He appeared to them on the Sunday of the Easter itself³. On the same day He accompanied His two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus, spoke with them, quoting from Moses and the Prophets, and broke the bread⁴. On the following Sunday He appeared to His disciples too⁵.

After the ascension, they assembled for worshipping on Sunday when the Holy Spirit descended on them.

St. Paul invited the Corinthians to make a collection for the poor brethren of the faith in Jerusalem; this collection should take place “*on the first day of the week*”⁶. The Acts tells us about his departure from Troas. It says, “*And on the First day of the week, when we the disciples were assembled to break Bread...*”⁷

From these indications, we have to conclude that already in the fifties of the first century, at least in the Pauline communities, Sundays were observed, if not as the only day, then at least as the principal day, on which the Breaking of Bread that is the Christian worship took place. This day is then called in the language of the Jewish Miliaw “the

¹ *Apology 67:5.*

² *Gen 1.*

Cf. St. Clement of Alex: Strom 6: 16.

St. Jerome also says: “It is called the day of the Sun by the pagans, we willingly accept this name. For on this day the Light rose again.”

³ *Jn 20:19.*

⁴ *Luke 24.*

⁵ *Jn 20:26.*

⁶ *1 Cor 16:2.*

⁷ *Acts 20:7.*

first day of the week¹.”

Some Christians, who were from Jewish origin, observed the Saturday besides Sunday celebration, but gradually the shadow passed away and reality replaced it. The same thing happened with the Temple, the apostles continued to go there and pray while the new Temple, which is the Christian community, was already in existence².

2- In the second century, the disciples of the apostles, wrote about observing the new Sabbath. **St. Irenaeus** spoke about the Sabbath as a true worship and not limited to the literal meaning, i.e. the seventh day. **Barnabas** declared that God does not accept the Jewish Sabbath, but the one, which God made, that is the eighth day on which the Lord rose again³. **St. Ignatius** says, “Those who live according to the old order of things have come to the new hope and observe no longer the Saturday but the Sunday⁴.”

3- The third and the fourth centuries are the golden age of the writings of the holy Fathers. Many Fathers spoke about the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist on Sundays.

Until 321 A.D. the Christians observed Sunday, but they were obliged to go to work. Then in 321 A.D. Constantine issued an edict declaring Sunday as a public holiday.



¹ *Jungmann: The Early Liturgy, p. 19, 20.*

² *Daniélou: The Bible and Liturgy.*

³ *Ep. Barnabas (100-130 A.D).*

⁴ *Ep. Magne. 9:l.*

Book 2

THE LITURGY AND THE BIBLE

- 1. A practical Gospel.**
- 2. The Liturgy and The Old Testament.**
- 3. The Liturgy and The Old Tradition.**

1

A PRACTICAL GOSPEL

Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven without leaving any written gospel for His Church. All she had at that time was:

1. The “**Holy Spirit**” whom her Lord sent upon His disciples on Pentecost.
- 2- The “**Liturgy**” instituted by our Lord Himself.
- 3- The “**Tradition**” received from the Apostles.
- 4- The “**Old Testament**” which is full of prophecies and symbols concerning the Messiah and His redeeming work.

From the first century, the Church lived in the gospel and by it: for she found it recorded in the liturgy of Eucharist, not by letters and words but in the actual act of bestowing upon us the sacrificial Body and Blood of Christ as a revelation of salvation. Through The Eucharist we receive the remission of sins and enter the eternal kingdom of joy.

The Church lived about twenty years after the ascension of her Lord until the first document of the New Testament was written¹. The Eucharist was the practical and simple way through which the Church learned and practiced the gospel. It still is today.

Therefore we must know the relationship between the Eucharist and the Bible, and the Prophecies mentioned about it in the Old Testament, and how the old tradition bore witness to it.

ONE WORD OF GOD²

If we examine the whole history of our salvation, we shall find that the reading of the Holy Scripture or a part of it was carried along with the offering. They were so closely connected with each other that they formed one single mode of worship. Moses.

- 1- In the Book of Exodus, before the blood-sacrifice was given

¹ Cf. Fr. Dix : *The Shape of the Liturgy*

² Crichton: *the Mass and people of God*, p. 65-81.
Bouyer: *The Liturgy Revived*.

as the seal of the covenant, the word of God was given to In it God reveals Himself, His will, His plans, and intentions towards us.

2- Every time the people returned to their God, they had to begin their repentance with a public reading of the word of God, then they offered sacrifices and celebrated the Paschal Meal¹.

3- On celebrating the annual Pasch, the father of the family related the Exodus story (the word of God) and recited the covenant which God had established with their fathers; all this before eating the lamb, i.e. the Pasch.

4- Our Lord before “Breaking Bread,” interpreted to His disciples the sacred Scriptures, starting from Moses and the Prophets and revealing things concerning Himself².

5- St. Luke described the Church in the apostolic age. He clarified how the people and the apostles “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine... and in the breaking of bread*”³.

In the second century, **St. Justin** described the Sunday Liturgy saying that it consisted of readings from the prophets, the apostles and Christ, a homily followed by the Eucharist⁴.

We conclude that there is no separation between the table of the word of God and that of the Eucharist (the sacrifice). For the Eucharist is the sacramental Body of the Word of God, and the Holy Bible is a call for us to be united with the “Word” and participate with Him in His death, resurrection and glory. For there is only one Word of God, one Messiah, and one single act of salvation...

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE EUCHARIST AND THE BIBLE

First: The Holy Bible is the voice of the Word of God, declaring God's love to man throughout all ages. The Eucharist is the Body of the Word of God, which realizes this divine voice. Hence the Eucharist integrates our entire understanding of the Holy Bible. Although the Holy Bible, i.e. “Old Testament” is divided into the books of Law, the historical books, the books of wisdom, and the

¹ 2 Kings 23: 1-3, 21-23, Neh. 8.

² Luke 24.

³ Acts 2:24.

⁴ PG 6:429.

prophetical books; the mystery of the Eucharist explains the oneness of all these books, declaring that the mystical deed of God for man is a single saving act, continuing throughout all ages. When the revelation of this Sacrament is given to us, we discover that the Scripture or all the sacred history in its entirety is one complete wonderful act.

Through the Eucharist we understand **the books of law**. We look at them not as records of laws and commandments, but as a way of life, a faithful practice in order to be holy according to God.

Through it too, **the historical books** are completed. We look at them not merely as historical events, but also as an act of faith, a single story of our salvation, that God has planned from eternity, so that we enter eternal life, above the history and laws of “time.”

Through it too, **the books of hymns and wisdom** are realized, for by the mystery of the Cross we conquer and triumph over sin, our life becomes joyful, and our darkness and earthly life is transferred to a joyful and heavenly one.

As for **the books of the prophecies**, they have been fulfilled by the act of salvation offered upon the Cross, which we experience in the holy Liturgy.

Thus, the celebration of the Eucharist and communion bring us into the depth of the Holy Bible, so that we enter into the Spirit of inspiration and Truth hidden in the Law, the history, the hymns and the prophecies.

Thus, we understand the Word of God as the actual presence of the Living God in all His power, acting, creating, giving-life, judging, condemning and saving¹...

Through the Eucharist, the believers can understand the Holy Bible and acknowledge the word of God and be acquainted with Him adequately. He knows it as:

(a) **The creative power**, for it is said, “*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth*”².” Through the Eucharist we understand that by the divine word the

¹ Crichton, ch.4.

² Ps 32 (33): 6-9.

heavens were made within us; and we became a temple for the Lord, and we become one with God who dwells in heaven.

(b) **His own salvation** as the psalmist says, “*He delivered them from their distress, he sent forth his word, and healed them*”¹. We know this in the sacrifice of the Cross, which is behind every divine act in the history of our salvation. It is the aim of every rite in our worship.

(c) What psalm 118 (119) mentions concerning the word of God; it declares that the Word of God is life, light, wisdom, food, hope, comfort, security and happiness to those who live by it.

Finally we may say that, through this mystery we come to know the word of God and experience it as the presence of God, acting in our lives, for our salvation and progress. **It is not separate from God Himself.**

Second: The Eucharist leads us to the Holy Bible and aims at our becoming biblical people. In it God continues speaking to His people and Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel:

From the first century many chapters were read, not as a preparation of the liturgy, but as a part of the sacrament, Through the Liturgy, God offers us the Bread of Life, not only that of the table of the Body of the Messiah, but also that of the word of God. “The Fathers spoke freely of the two-fold eating of the word, under the species of the gospel and under the species of the Eucharistic Bread”².

❖ Now we are said to drink the blood of Christ not only during the sacramental rite, but also when we receive His words where life is, as He Himself says, “*The words that I speak are spirit and life.*”

Origen

Third: The Holy Scripture occupies the foremost place in the celebration of the Eucharist. For it is from the scripture that lessons (Pauline epistles, Catholic epistles, Acts and the Gospels) are read, and from which psalms are sung.

All the liturgical prayers and songs are scriptural in their inspiration. So they are implications of the rites and signs of the liturgy drawn from the Bible³.

¹ Ps. 106 (107); 19,20

² Hamman: *The Mass, Ancient Liturgies and Patristic Texts*, p. 24.

³ *The New Commentary On the Holy Bible (Catholic)*.

Fourth: The Bible quotes some sentences from the liturgical prayers. As an example St. Paul wrote, “*But as it is written, what no eye has seen, not the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him*¹.” This sentence is not mentioned in any book of the Bible, but perhaps it is quoted from the liturgy, which was used in those days².

Fifth: The Bible aims at our becoming Eucharistic people, becoming God's own priestly people, to assemble in our heavenly Father's House and eat from the redeeming banquet.

It calls us to receive the mystery of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e. to be united with Christ, our Liturgy. We are in need of whole Scripture in order to discover, under the inner illumination of the Spirit, what the Eucharist means for us and for the entire world.

Sixth: Without the Bible we cannot understand the mystery of the Eucharist, and the sacraments will be as if they were superstitions. The Church guards us against that constantly. She never breaks the bread of the Eucharist with us without first “*breaking the bread of the Word*” in the epistles, gospels and sermon.

In other words, she shares with us the light of understanding which shines out of the Bible, dispelling all darkness due to our inability to understand,

We cannot receive the Messianic Meal unless we have heard what it means, and as we receive the grace of the banquet we also need to hear the word of God.

In the first centuries the catechumens enjoyed the Liturgy of the word as a preparation for accepting the Christian faith and enjoying the sacraments of the Church, after their acceptance of baptism, Chrism and Communion they were still in need to hear the Bible.

¹ 1 Cor 2:9.

² Crichton, p. 69.

2

THE LITURGY AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE EUCHARIST IS THE WORD OF GOD

Man's word, in its wide meaning, is separate from man himself, but it expresses his thoughts and reveals his inner life and has its effect on the listener's life. It is a bearer of the speaker's character.

We mean by the "word of man" the spoken and written words and gestures. The gestures are rich in declaring what language cannot express, like a careless shrug of the shoulders or a smile etc. Symbols are also part of the words of man, like eating a meal with another is a sign of their deep friendship.

Generally the word reveals the depth of man's inner life, and through it man gives himself to others, establishes friendships, and achieves union with them. The word is a means of self-giving. Without it we would remain completely isolated from one another, unable to enter any kind of relationship¹.

This is the effect of the word of man and its influence on the life of other. As for the Word of God, the Creator, it bears the Presence of God Himself and is not a separate entity acted, but still acts and will continue to act in our lives and would be acting on our behalf. The Word of God has created us, redeemed us and bestowed upon us eternal life!

Through the history of our salvation, God spoke to us in many and various ways. At times by creating the world for us, at others by declaring His providence; at times by visions, at others through events, and at others by the prophets. In the fullness of time He spoke to us in His Son², a practical speech, i.e. by giving His Only-Begotten Son for the life of the world.

On the Cross He bestowed upon us His Word, not graven upon

¹ B. J. Cooke: *Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality*, ch 9.

² Heb 1: 1 - 2

stone tablets, but by presenting His Living Eternal Son, i.e. the eternal living Word, as the mighty sacrifice, redeeming us, transforming us by His power into children of God, and bringing us into heaven.

By the Eucharist, i.e. the Mystery of the Cross, God bestows upon us His own Word that is present in His Church, completing the sacred history of our salvation, realizing every prophetic word bringing us to unite with God, His Father.

Thus, we see the eternal Word of God pronounced in its entire reality, effective in the lives of men across the ages. Not only do we hear the Word of God, but also receive Him, and become one in Him.

At the divine altar, we pass over the entire world, ascending with Moses to the mountain of divine love, to receive the Word Himself, enter into heaven with Him, and stand before the heavenly glory of God.

In brief the celebration of the Eucharist is a journey of the Word of God descending to us to raise us up in Him.

THE EUCHARIST AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

God Who spoke to us in ancient times, still continues to speak to us through the Body of His Son, i.e. the Church. He offers the sacrificial body and blood of His own Word, so that we might share the risen life with Christ.

His speech today is a continuation and fulfillment of His speech to mankind since the early ages. As an example, in the prayers of the Liturgy mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitution*¹, the priest gives thanks to God for the creation of the world, for His concern with mankind, for the sacrifice of Abel, the translation of Enoch, the deliverance of Noah, the covenant with Abraham and the sacrifice of Melchizedek etc. He who did these great works gave symbols of His wonderful work, which was fulfilled in the fullness of time, through the Messiah.

The liturgy of the Eucharist is the continuation and the fulfillment of the priestly action of the Old and the New Testaments. It fulfills the past, for it is the only acceptable sacrifice offered to God on behalf of all mankind, from Adam to the end of time. It fulfills the symbols of the ancient sacrifices. It is also the same sacrifice of the

¹ *Apostolic Constitution*, 8:12, 20-27.

New Testament, which was offered once on the Cross, without repetition.

St. Augustine says that Christ came to bestow His own life on the world, announcing to us in the fullness of time what was hidden in the Old Testament¹.

St. Irenaeus of Lyon says that the Patriarchs and the Prophets have planted the word concerning the Messiah, and the Church is reaping it².

THE SYMBOLS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1 - THE PASCH³

The Pasch or Passover in the Old Testament is explained by the fact that God “visited” the land of bondage, on the night when the Paschal Meal was eaten, and “passed over” the houses of the believers. He joined them together with Himself to “pass” to the land of freedom.

On the day of the Paschal celebration, Christ, our “Passover” was immolated⁴, offering to us His sacrificial Body and Blood, as the True Paschal Meal, why?

The True Pasch is the passage of Christ to heaven from this world, through His death. As we receive His sacrificial Body and Blood we also pass in Him and with Him to the new life, accepting His risen life.

In His “visiting” us, He joins us together with Him to pass from the power of darkness to the kingdom of Light, from the death of this world to the resurrection of the world to come. From the flesh, we pass with the Risen Christ to the Spirit. From the law of condemnation, we obtain access to the grace of infinite love⁵.

This is the liturgy of Eucharist. It is a journey of the Church to heaven, our Father's House. It is a joyful journey, in which we participate with Christ in His own passage, preparing day after day to

¹ *Against Pelagians*. 3:7.

² *Against Heresies* 4:25:3.

³ *Schememann: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*.

Gavin: Some aspects of contemporary Greek Orthodox Yought.

Braso: Liturgy and Spirituality.

Hamman: The Paschal Mystery.

Bouyer: The Liturgy Revived.

⁴ *1 Cor* 5:7.

⁵ *Bouyer: The Liturgy Revived*, p. 22-23.

live again the glory of the Risen Christ.

In other words, our paschal mystery depends on Christ's paschal mystery, for we walk with Him and in Him in His own way.

Our final passage will be the completion of the Pasch of the Risen Christ, since we are His heavenly body.

2 - THE MANNA

The Exodus achieved in the Old Testament was simply a model of the new one, for no work is undertaken without a model.

In the New Exodus, we leave the delights of the world looking on the heavenly Jerusalem; guided by Christ Whose staff is His Cross. The cloud overshadows us is the Holy Spirit. As for the miraculous Manna with which God nourishes His sons, it is the Eucharist that we receive after crossing the Red Sea, i.e. the passage through baptismal pool¹.

The Manna as a figure of the Eucharist is not only part of the common tradition of the Church, but is integral in the very teaching of Christ. He said, "*Your fathers ate the Manna in the wilderness and died.*" He showed us that the Manna had no unusual effect, for their fathers ate it and died, but he who receives the True Manna, the Body and the Blood of the Messiah will have eternal life as a reward².

The Manna was taken as an aid against hunger, but it did not accompany them into the Promised Land, It only assisted and provided them in the wilderness, for a period of time. But the new Manna is the heavenly food, which helps us against death and sin, providing us with unity with Christ forever.

St. Ambrose says³, "As the light is greater than the shadow, the truth is greater than the symbol, so the Body of the Creator is greater than the heavenly Manna."

3 - MELCHIZEDEK'S SACRIFICE

This was a single sacrifice and its nature and form were obscure (Gen. 14:18-19).

✠ Melchizedek offered bread and wine, the consecrated food, as a

¹ Cf. Daniélou: *The Bible and The Liturgy*.

² *St. Clement of Alexandria: Comm. On St. John 6.*
St. Chrysostom: Hom. 46 on John.

³ *De Myster. 46.*

symbol of the Eucharist¹.

St. Clement of Alexandria

✠ “*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*”
Who is a priest of God, the Most High, more than our Lord Jesus Christ, He who offered to the Father the same offering as Melchizedek, i.e. the bread and wine, by offering His Body and His Blood²?!

St. Cyprian

4 - THE BREAD OF THE TABLE

✠ On the Sabbath day especially, does God bid the bread to be set out upon the Holy Table, that is He orders it to be put in the Church. It indicates the whole, i.e. the Church, which is represented by a part. For what is holier than the Holy Table of Christ?³

St. Cyril of Alexandria

5 - THE BANQUET OF WISDOM

✠ The Holy Spirit through Solomon, reveals the symbol of the sacrifice of the Lord, making mention of the Immolated Victim of the bread and wine offered on the altar. “*Wisdom*” he says, “*has built a house and supported it with seven columns. She has slain her victims, mixed her wine in a chalice, and has set the table⁴.*” She has sent out her servants calling in a loud voice and inviting the guests to come and drink from her chalice, saying, “*Come and eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mixed for you.*” Solomon thus declares the wine is mixed, that is, he announces prophetically the chalice of the Lord in which water and wine are mingled⁵.

Martyr Cyprian

✠ In this house of the banquet all who come from the East and the West find their places together with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven...⁶

¹ *Stromata* 4:25.

² *Ep. To brother Cecils*, 63:4.

³ *Comm. on St Jn* 6.

Cf. Chrysostom: Hom 46 on Jn.

⁴ *Prov* 9:l.

⁵ *Epist* 635.

⁶ *Comm. On Cant.* 3.

6 - THE MESSIANIC BANQUET

The Prophet Isaiah called us to the Eucharistic Banquet. He said:

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- the sure mercies of David¹.”

✠ By the water he means the Holy Spirit and the spring of the baptistery. The wine and the bread stand for what was offered by the Jews in the past, and now for the immortal communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

St. Didymus the Blind

Isaiah invites all peoples - who are circumcised not in the flesh but by heart - to participate in the Messianic Meal, saying, *“On the mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine... And He will destroy on this mountain and veil that conceals all people.”*

7 - PSALM 22: 23: *The Psalm of the Shepherd, or The Psalm of the Paraclete*

The Early Fathers of the Church were pleased to find the providence of the Good Shepherd towards His sheep in this psalm. They found His sacramental deeds prefigured in it. For this reason, they often used it as a part of the liturgy of Baptism. The newly baptized sang it. On Easter night after receiving Baptism and Chrism, and while they were clothed in white vestments and held candles, they were hastening with joy towards the Lord's altar, participating in the heavenly banquet.

Until today the Coptic Church chants this psalm daily as a part

Cf. St. Gregory of Nyssa: Cain and Abel 1:5.

¹ *Isa 55:1-3*

of the hymn of the Terce (Third Hour). By it they remember the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) Who was sent to the disciples, the same One Who is still working in the Church, especially in the sacraments.

A brief sacramental interpretation¹

“The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.”

As the catechumen accepts the Lord as His Shepherd, becoming one of His sheep, he participates in His Immolated Body and Blood; what would he need more?

This is the feeling of **St. Ambrose²** on seeing the Church on Paschal night as a heaven. The multitude of the newly-baptized receive the spirit of adoption, hasten together with the chorus of the faithful towards their divine altar, singing and glorifying God, receiving what the angels are eager to see.

What does the Shepherd offer to us?

1 - “He settles me in green pastures.”

He leads the catechumens to the pastures where they breed as a preparation to Baptism. As they receive the spirit of adoption, they remain in need to be nourished daily with the permanently fresh and green pastures of the Word of God. This pasturage is the Gospel of our Salvation, which restores us to the paradise of Truth.

✠ The place of pasture is the Paradise from which we fell, and to which Christ leads us and establishes us by the water of rest, that is to say by Baptism.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

2 - “And raise me on refreshing water.”

The holy Baptism, without doubt, is the water of rest, by which the weight of sin is removed.

St. Augustine says, “He raises, rears and feeds me on the water of baptism, which restores health and strength to those who have lost them.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that we find our rest in these waters as we are buried in death with Christ, “It is not death itself, but a shadow and an image of death³.”

¹ *Daniélou: The Bible and The Liturgy.*

² *De Myster.5:3.*

³ *PG. 96 :692 B.*

3 - “For even Yough I go through the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for You are with me.”

We experience death with Christ without fear, as He is with us. And we continue to experience death with Christ, if we practice the sacrament of repentance and confession in its true notion, i.e., by trusting our souls in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who bestows upon us repentance, leading us to righteousness, for His Name's sake. The believer sings: **“He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.”**

4 - “Your rod and Your staff comfort (paraklesis) me.”

St. Ambrose¹ looks at the Good Shepherd guiding us with His rod and strengthening us with His staff, those (rod and staff) are the seal of His Cross, which we receive in the Chrism, bestowing upon us the seal (*sphragis*) of the Paraclete, which frightens demons away.

5 - “You have prepared a table before me in the face of those who trouble me.”

✠ When man says to God, “You have prepared a table, what else does he indicate but that mystical and spiritual Table, which God has prepared for us “over against,” that is, contrary and in opposition to the evil spirit? And very truly; for that evil spirit had communion with devils, but this is spiritual table is communion with God².

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

✠ The sacramental Table is the Flesh of the Lord which fortifies us against our desires and the demons. Indeed Satan fears those who take part in the mysteries with piety.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

6 - “You have anointed my head with oil.”

✠ With oil He anointed your head upon your forehead, for the seal which you have of God, that you may be made, by the engraving of the sign, Holiness unto God.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

7 - “Your chalice which inebriates me, how glorious it is?”

✠ The Lord's chalice, indeed intoxicates us in such a way that it drives away our (earthly) thoughts, it leads our souls to spiritual wisdom... It sets the soul free and banishes all sorrow... It sets the

¹ *De Myst* 5:3.

² *De Myst.* 4:7

soul at ease, by placing the joy of divine goodness in the sad and gloomy hearts, which were weighed down, before, by the load of sin¹.

St. Cyprian

8 - Finally, we receive these divine blessings and holy mysteries in the Lord's house, as the psalmist sings:

“And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord through the length of my days.”

8 - SONG OF SONGS²

The “Song of Songs” is the book of the spiritual marriage union between Christ and His Church, or between Him and the soul. For it is, as a whole, a true prophecy of the sacramental deed of God in His Church. Therefore, according to the old tradition, this book was used to be recited during the celebration of the Pasch.

Our early Fathers found in this book the following sacraments:

1 - **The Sacrament of Baptism**, as the heavenly King Who is the Bridegroom, calls His Bride to His bride-chamber to enjoy eternal union with Him.

2 - **The Sacrament of Chrism**, as the Bridegroom imprints His Bride's heart and hand with His seal. In that way, He prepares her by His Holy Spirit for the day of the eschatological feast.

3 - **The Sacrament of the Eucharist**, as He offers the wedding - feast to His Bride in order that she can be fed and calls others to participate with her in the Heavenly banquet.

✠ For those who know the hidden sense of the Scripture there is no difference between what is said in the Canticle “Eat, O friends, and drink, and inebriate, my dearly beloved” and the sacramental initiation (*mystagogia*) of the Apostles. Indeed, in both places the text says, “*Eat and drink...*” In the gospel text, there is no question of inebriation. But this is because this inebriation is Christ Himself Who raises us up out of inferior realities to those on high.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

✠ The Church, seeing such great grace - the celebration of the wedding banquet of Christ - invites her sons, invites her neighbors to run to Sacraments, “*Eat, O friends, drink and inebriate*”

¹ Ep 113:11.

² *Damiélou: The Bible & the Liturgy.*

yourselves, my dearly beloved.”

St Ambrose

9- ANOTHER TYPES

a- **St Ephram the Syrian** saw in the burning coal which touched Isaiah and sanctified His lips, the Body of Christ which sanctifies the believers¹.

b- In Malachi (1:11) the New Pure Food which would be offered everywhere in the Name of God is the Eucharist.

¹ *Mimre 4 on the Passion.*

3

THE LITURGY AND THE OLD TRADITION

Not only did the Old Testament but also the old tradition itself aimed at announcing the sacrifice of the Eucharist. But unfortunately those whose Holy Scriptures and Traditions are full of shadows and symbols of the Messiah and of His sacrifice refused Him and the Eucharist.

Their tradition reveals that their daily Liturgy was a shadow of the true Liturgy of Christ.

Now we will form an idea about their ancient Liturgy drawn from their own books.

The *Talmud* says that the prayers were instituted to correspond with the sacrifice¹. There was a daily Liturgy celebrated in the temple side by side with the sacrifices as part of the Worship at the altar.

The Jewish encyclopedia says, "In addition to the sacrifice which was the priests, responsibility, and the singing of the psalms, which was performed by the Levites, the temple had its special Liturgy for the third class i.e. the people. The *Talmud* and the *Tosef* mention that all the people were divided into twenty-four sections, so that for every division of priests serving at the altar there corresponded one of the Levites and one of the laity. Each section served for one week in the Temple, and this period was a time of fasting. Every day they read a prescribed portion of the first chapter of Genesis."

1- The Levites recited prayers of thanksgiving and praise during the morning and evening sacrifices².

2- In the morning the priest read the Ten commandments and the

¹ *ber 24 b, passim.*

² *1 Chron 3:30, Neh 11:17.*

“*Shema*¹,” and recited several benedictions².

3- A prayer called “*Tefillah*” or “*Esrah*³,” consisting of eighteen benedictions including sentences of thanksgiving, were recited after meals as a part of the early liturgy. It was regarded as a rabbinical.

4- Often the people who were present, responded with some formulas, consisting of one or two words; Amen, *Hallel* or *Hodu*⁴, *Hossana* (save us), *Baruk* (Bless us), Praise God, etc. These formulas have Eucharistic spirit.

¹ means “hear, Deut 6:4 - 9.

² *Tamid* 5.

³ It means 18 prayers

⁴ Cf. Ps. 15, 111, 118, 135, 136, 146, 150.

Book 3

THE EUCHARISTIC RITES AND CEREMONIES IN THE COPTIC CHURCH

** Introduction: Liturgical Theology and Liturgical Rites.*

1 - The Offertory.

2 - The Liturgy of the catechumens.

3 - The Liturgy of the Faithful.

LITURGICAL THEOLOGY AND LITURGICAL RITES

A couple of years ago I desired to write about “The Eucharist in the Coptic Church.” I visited some bookstores in USA, where I found hundreds of books discussing the mystery of the Eucharist; its history, rites, ceremonies and theology etc. I do not exaggerate to say that many Copts already enjoy the liturgical life, which these books convey through sheer simplicity of faith, in fact they conceive more by the spirit.

The faithful Copts unceasingly live in a state of practical repentance in their Church, and enter the heavenly banquet to receive from the Lord Himself the Food of the soul. They eat and are abundantly satisfied, without engaging their minds in discussing historical or traditional sources. They do not demand a detailed interpretation for every liturgical rite, but they are content with experiencing in it the salvation of Christ, which is achieved by Christ in His Church and which He Himself offers to everyone personally.

This caused me to think twice before writing about the “*Coptic Rite*,” for it is one life which cannot be divided into parts for study, but which the soul can feel, and the inner sight perceives.

But an important thing drew my attention that is the bitter experience the Western Church underwent in her liturgical life for many centuries and which ended with the so-called “Liturgical Movement.” The aim of this movement was to reveal the inner notion of the liturgy in general on apostolic and patristic bases.

I have resolved not to divert from the spiritual line in this book, for I decided that I wish to know nothing other than Jesus Christ who is a living and life-giving sacrifice. So I am satisfied with recording this experience in brief, as a practical and spiritual lesson, for the benefit of everyone - clergyman or layman - in his daily ecclesiastical life.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITURGICAL THEOLOGY¹

1 - THE EARLY CENTURIES

In the early centuries, the liturgies - especially the liturgy of the Eucharist - were the center of the life and worship of the Church. However, these were made for the faithful and not for those who were still outside the Church. Regarding the unbelievers, the Church announced the good tidings of salvation, so that people might know the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Redeemer. Thus, the missionary work of the Church called them to faith and conversion from their ways to repentance.

It is only when they are brought to the threshold of the Church that she opens her liturgies to them so that they might enjoy spiritual rebirth, accept the Holy Spirit, and participate in the divine banquet.

This was the position of the liturgical study to the catechumens. As for believers, they looked at the liturgy of the Eucharist as the basic food of their spiritual life. It is the supernatural life, which flows smoothly through the deepest inner channel of the soul! It is the divine way, which deepens their Christianity.

This spiritual experience of the liturgical life created a true spiritual understanding of the fellowship with God, which had these results:

a. In the early ages, there was no need to study liturgical history, liturgical theology, liturgical rites or ecclesiology, for the living practice sufficed.

b. The Liturgy of the Eucharist was a source of the life of piety to every Christian. Its efficacious work extended to every aspect in his life. It taught him to forget himself in his zeal for the expansion of God's kingdom, and quickened his heart with missionary thoughts. It is the liturgy of the Eucharist that led him to enter his own chamber to pray secretly to his God, as a living member of the catholic (universal)

¹ *Schmemmann: Introduction to Liturgical Theology.*
Louis Bouyer: The Liturgy Revived.
Louis Bouyer: Liturgical Piety.
Braso: Liturgy and Spirituality.

Church.

c. The believer knew only one act of worship, offered by the whole Church through her members, either in the celebration of the liturgy, with his brethren in the public meetings or privately at home. This one act of worship is offered by the One Church in the name of her One Christ, under the guidance of His One Holy Spirit.

In other words, there was a unity between what we now call “public worship” and “personal worship.” The community itself acted for the sake of every Christian, and the Christian also lived with an “ecclesiastical and liturgical spirit.” He knew himself as nothing but a member of Christ's Body, i.e., the Church. Hence, he was a Christian for he believed in the Christ of the Church.

Thus, liturgical life had its effects on the Church, so that every member worshipped and acted in this ecclesiastical spirit.

The Liturgy in the early centuries was a “method of life” the believer practiced it inside the Church, at home, in his work, in his monastery and in the last moments of his martyrdom.

This method did not permit any separation between public and personal worship or between the ecclesiastical rites and its theology, or between the rites and spirituality. But in simplicity of faith, the believer worships in spirit and in truth, understands the mysteries of the liturgy, feels its spirituality through its rites and practices its spirit in his daily acts.

2. THE MIDDLE AGES

In this era, the Western Church interfered in politics, and entered into an exaggerated relationship with the emperors. The clergy were secularized, neglecting their spiritual mission.

We don't deny the duty of the Church to create a patriotic feeling in her children as a natural fruit of faith and love. She offers to society real and good patriots, who fulfill their mission firmly and faithfully. Not with fear or slackness, for the Church teaches her children to be honest in their work, and trains them to suffer for the sake of others, to obey the authorities, pray for the president and all who are in authority and to be loyal in paying taxes¹. But the Church

¹ Fr T. Malaty: *Abbot Abraam, Los Angeles, 1971* p 62, 63.

should not be involved in any matters that are unrelated to her message.

St. Jerome, who witnessed the first effects of this marriage between the Western Church and the Roman empire anticipated the experience of later ages when he said, “The Church by its connection with Christian princes gained in power and riches, but lost in virtues¹.”

Moreover, in this era, the modern languages appeared in Europe, and peoples were now able to express their faith and worship in the vernacular, while the clerics continued to speak, write and pray in ancient Latin, as the sacred language, which people ignored. These two factors; i.e. the interference in politics and the worship in a dead language, in addition to other factors, destroyed the liturgical life, and had their effects on liturgical studies consequently the following ensued:

a. For a long time people regarded the liturgy as something to be “performed” but to understand it, was at best optional, never necessary or highly desirable, and occasionally, considered even objectionable.

b. As early as the sixth and seventh centuries the liturgy lost its spirit, and all that it involved was producing and performing words, rites, ceremonies and feasts. It inclined to superficiality while smothering its spirit.

Unfortunately, believers forgot the liturgy as the reality of the mystery of Christ, and considered the outward form as an aim in itself. Gradually, the theological base was being forgotten.

The Catholic liturgist Bouyer, in His book “*Liturgical Piety*,” says, “Many of them still tell their readers that the liturgy is merely the official outward form of the worship of the Church².” Moreover, it was looked upon as the etiquette or protocol of the Great King.” Thus, a split occurred between liturgical life and spiritual life.

c. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries mark the high point of this outward exuberance while the true sense of worship and piety was being totally lost. The Church involved herself in establishing huge cathedrals that could have been very beautiful if they were at the same

¹ *Schaff, Vol 4, p 387.*

² *Liturgical Piety p 1-4.*

time adorned by the holiness of the worshippers. The Church made an effort to obtain the relics of the saints, and their bodies which was a very vital matter if it had been accompanied with a deep spiritual understanding of the communion of the saints in Jesus Christ. She emphasized the super-human in setting up statues and precious decorations, instead of emphasizing the supernatural state that we attain through our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

d. As the Liturgy, especially the liturgy of the Eucharist, **turned** toward “formalities,” some believers sought piety outside the liturgy. This created a new anti-clerical, anti-hierarchical, **anti-sacramental**, even anti-liturgical tendency. There was a gulf between the people and the clergy, the liturgy and personal spirituality, and between liturgy and theology.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century a community of clerics known as the “*Brothers of common life*” in Holland adopted what is called “*Modern Piety*” based on self-analysis and individual piety. This “modern piety” did not appear overnight but it was a result of many tendencies that evolved secretly or openly throughout many centuries.

e. The sad fact, that the Catholic liturgist Braso mentions in his book “*The Liturgy and Spirituality*” is that in this era not only liturgical worship had been separated from the spiritual life of believers, and liturgical study had lost its theology and dogmatic basic, but also the western missals had opened their doors to the apocryphal stories. He says, “Almost all the missals of the fifteenth century contain a hundred sequences, which, as may be supposed, echo all apocryphal stories and legendary occurrences¹.”

f. Finally in the sixteenth century Luther denounced with

¹ For example, the following fragment, which the missal of lingers, of the year 1491 assigns to the feast of St. John Evangelist, as that disciple does not die. “John enters the tomb alive. And those who seek his body see nothing but manna.”
The following is a fragment of a prose, which the church of Toranto sang during the Mass to the “tear of Jesus Christ,” which they claimed to be perceiving.
“Coming from Christ,
Gathered by an angel,
Given to Magdalene,
Brought to Maximin,
Emperor of the Greeks,
Then preserved to-Godfrey, and transferred to Vendome.”

violence that man can attain salvation through his own faith, denying any relationship between spirituality and liturgical life, This was an echo of the dominant opinion during that period. The Catholic Father Bouyer says, “But we want further evidence, not of unrehearsed reactions, but of the well considered opinion of a theologian, we can look into one of the most famous books about the liturgy written in the seventeenth century: that of the French Oratorian Thomassin ‘*Traite de l’Office Divine et de Sa Liaison Mentale.*’ This work is particularly concerned with clarifying the relationship between the liturgy and personal prayer. It is obvious from the author's whole treatment of the subject that the dominant opinion of the audience for whom he was writing was that there was no connection whatsoever between the liturgy and personal prayer; indeed, the likelihood was rather that they were opposed to one another¹.”

3. THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

As the Western Church was attached to her sacraments, her liturgical study became inclined to a defensive line. It became part of “Comparative Theology.”

This dark side of the struggle that happened in the West had its bright side, i.e. the appearance of a movement studying the liturgical history, examining liturgical texts and translating texts concerning the holy mysteries etc. This scientific movement prepared the way for a return to genuine liturgical theology.

4. WESTERN LITURGICAL REVIVAL

From the beginning of the twentieth century, liturgical researches and studies of its history and its theology created the so-called “*Liturgical Movement.*” This movement has different aspects and history in different European countries. But, we can say in brief that it had two trends:

- a. A renewal of liturgical spirituality on apostolic and patristic bases.
- b. A return to the unity between liturgical life and the spiritual activity of every member of the Church.

Braso says that this movement developed in three phases:

- I. **The historical phase:** Fr. Guéranger was the founder of the

¹ *Liturgical Piety*, p. 2,3.

scientific Oxford movement which may be considered a factor that assisted its creation, for it facilitated this renewal indirectly through researching into the sources of the liturgy.

II. The doctrinal phase. The researchers opened the door to the understanding of liturgical theology and dogma on spiritual and scientific bases.

III. The pastoral phase. The good guidance of the Church raised liturgical life into a practical fact applied by all.

Thus, in the west, they began to return to the patristic thought on a historical, scientific, spiritual and practical base. This was closely bound up with a theological notion and a living missionary spirit.

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH:

First: the great lesson then, that we should learn from this western experience, is that we ought not to celebrate the liturgy in an unknown language, so that it would not turn into an exorcism or outward rite performed without understanding.

Second: It is necessary not to force upon the liturgy foreign tendencies or culture. But rather try to put ourselves in its own genuine spirit. This attitude would guide us in our homes and in every behavior as well as our worship.

Third: Although the Eastern Church - especially the Coptic one - did not have this sad experience, it was slightly affected by it for a period of time. But now we can say that through simplicity of faith, we live in the apostolic and patristic spirit. We must however benefit from the western researches in liturgical history, and ancient liturgical texts, for we are more capable of understanding them spiritually and tasting them practically.

Fr Schmemann says that this movement is in fact an approach of the west to the Orthodox thought. He says, "It should be added here that even though, the liturgical revival as an organized movement arose and developed for the most part among non-Orthodox people in the West, it has nevertheless a deep internal bond with the Church in the East, and is therefore of special interest to Orthodox theologians. From a certain point of view and with a critical appraisal of each of its

achievements, it can be regarded as a kind of ‘Orthodox’ movement in a non-Orthodox context, since this is a restoration in the thought and life of the Church of those points of emphases and categories, which were in some measure lost by the Christian West. The leaders and founders of this movement have repeatedly declared that in their eyes Orthodox worship bears witness to the ‘great liturgical prayer’ of the early Church.

‘The Orthodox Church,’ writes a Catholic historian of the liturgical movement, has preserved the liturgical spirit of the early Church and continues to live by it and to draw life from its source¹. Hence the special interest in the West in the liturgical tradition of Orthodoxy, and the natural sympathy for Orthodoxy. This means that for the Orthodox theologian the material and experience accumulated by the liturgical movement in the West is not something foreign, but, on the contrary, one of the most valuable aids to his

This does not mean however that we must blindly accept all that has been done or is being done in this field in the West².”

THE LITURGICAL RITE AND THEOLOGY

Every worship, especially the liturgy of the Eucharist, without its theology loses its spirit. At the same time, the liturgy of the Eucharist, in its structure, rites, ceremonies, texts and its whole spirit, is in fact a practical life-giving source of “theology” in its wide meaning. It is the source of the acknowledgment of God, of Christology, ecclesiology, bibology, of literary and spiritual theology etc.

In other words, the Eucharist is a supreme revelation (*apocalypses*) of the divine wisdom (*Sophia*), which nourishes us with a genuine view of ourselves, and our real position towards our God, our Christ, our Bible, our Church and our neighbors in this world and in the world to come.

1- It reveals our reality, that as foreigners we should desire what is heavenly.

2- Through the celebration of the Eucharist, we acknowledge our God as our heavenly Father Who offers the Immolated Body and Blood

¹ Dom Olivier Rousseau: *Histoire du Mouvement Liturgique Paris 1945*, p 188.

² *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, p 13.

of His Only-Begotten Son to nourish us spiritually.

3- It expresses in a practical way the Presence of Christ in the midst of His Church, and proclaims His position in our inner life.

4- It also reveals a complete understanding of the ecclesiology, proclaiming the inner nature of the Church, characterizing it as a spiritual and ecclesiastical building. It is built into One Body, through which the believers become true and living members of the single Body of Christ. The Church, which is on the march towards the eschatological city, runs towards eternity.

5- It bestows upon us a true notion of worship, an understanding of the Holy Bible and of the roots of the literary and spiritual theology as a flow of the mystery of salvation itself.

6- It sanctifies our view towards the flesh (body) and the present world for “it is from earthly creatures the heavenly sacrifice is prepared¹.”

7- It opens the door of the world to come so that we participate with the heavenly creatures in their hymns.

LITURGICAL RITE AND SPIRITUALITY²

PUBLIC AND PERSONAL WORSHIP

The Orthodox Church does not know extremes. She does not regard the liturgy as a public worship ignoring the personal relationship of the believer with His God, nor characterizing the personal worship with “individualism” since “God is called “our” Father. Our liturgy in its rite is spiritual. By it we live and worship God publicly and personally.

RITE AND WORD

There are other extremes:

1- Some believers limit their worship into verbal rites, without using sacred words. In their worship, sacred utterings, which make

¹ Cf. *St. Irenaeus: Adv Hear 4:33:2.*

² *Louis Bouyer: Rite and Man.*
Braso: Liturgy and Spatiality.
Braso: Living the Liturgy.

sense and which are spoken in this intent, disappeared, or no longer play an essential role in it. Thus, worship tends to be no more than a purely ritualistic action.

2 - On the other hand, some are satisfied with the spoken word merely devoid of any rites.

In our Church the rites and the spoken word are inseparable. Man expresses and realizes himself in his relationship with both his God and his brethren by the spoken words and through the performance of rites. They are two symbolic methods for orienting us directly toward God, if we use them “in spirit and in truth.” But if we worship God with merely sacred words or through rites without any spiritual understanding, we would hear the divine voice warning, *“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me... But in vain they do worship Me”*¹.

The Catholic liturgist Bouyer, in discussing this subject, says that the Catholic worship was reduced to a purely ritualistic action and the Protestant reaction held the other extreme, reducing worship to the “word” without the rite. He concludes His speech, saying, “At the present stage of human evolution we are suffering from the tyranny of the word, or rather of words that have become devitalized by the very stress that has been placed upon them alone. Hence absorption of the rites may be counteracted. The first thing we need is a phenomenology of a still living rite. This in turn will help us to recover words that will transmit vitality to the ritual, that is, words that have been cured of their tendency to reduce everything to themselves. In the ritual itself actions must be spiritualized by means of words. If the meaning of the ritual is not enlightened by an authentic divine word, it degenerates into a magic and simple superstition. But the action should not on that account be reduced to a mere clothing of abstract ideas. Otherwise, there is no longer any ritual at all but at most a kind of pious charade².”

SOUL AND BODY

The liturgy is, in fact, a “heavenly service.” It is at the same time celebrated by the Church, which is on earth. It lifts man up to

¹ *Isa 29:13; Mt 15:7-9.*

² *A kind of riddle based upon a word the key to which is given by description or action representing each syllable and the whole word.*

participate in singing hymns with the heavenly choirs, but does not ignore the reality of man as he lives on earth.

Christ Himself Who is invisible but works through visible men who have bodies and souls, celebrates the liturgy of the Eucharist. It supposes that the faithful - presbyters and laymen - participate in the liturgy praying in spirit but not away from their bodies, for they have not put them off. We cannot worship if our bodies remain passive!

Nobody ignores the effect of the body on our inner soul. **St. Augustine** says¹ that the interior movement of the soul gains intensity from the exterior movement of the body. Our exterior attitude affects the soul, our inner will, and our deep feelings.

For mankind, rite is an incarnate spirituality. It would be much more fruitful to worship through rite if we enter into its spirit and understand its life, not standing at the external and sensual part of it.

Thus, we understand the holy rites of the liturgy not as a set of religious bodily movements, i.e. bowing, rising, standing, striking one's heart, censuring, lighting candles etc., nor as a religious dialogue between the presbyters, deacons and the congregation, but it is the mystery of Christ in His Church. It is the mystery of our salvation, acting in our whole life.

¹ *PL. XL, 597.*

THE EGYPTIAN LITURGIES

In pre-Nicene times the outline of the rites of all the liturgies in the different Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome etc. had the same structure and pattern, the same spirit and aim, and even common phrases. But there was no such original stability about the content. The liturgical prayer's text was subject to constant development, so that it varied from church to church, and from period to period.

Studying the Egyptian liturgies has its importance, since the East, especially Egypt, kept the apostolic and patristic spirit of the liturgies while the texts themselves remained the same as they were in the fifth century. Fr. Jungmann says in his book, *"The Early Liturgy"*, "in the general structure of the Mass, the oriental rites have kept many primitive characteristics which have disappeared from the Roman rite. Whereas our Mass changes day after day, the Orient constantly repeats the same invariable formula¹."

The Anglican Monk Fr. G. Dix says, "The main lines of all the Eastern traditions had been reached before the end of the fourth century, and after this, the process in all of them is no more than one of adjustment and development of detail. No new principle arose in the fifth century, as it did in the West, to give a new to liturgical development²."

The Egyptian Church now uses only three liturgies of the Eucharist, namely:

1- THE LITURGY OF St. BASIL THE GREAT

It is different from the Byzantine Liturgy though it has the same name. It is the most frequently used in the normal service.

2- THE LITURGY OF St. GREGORY

It is often reserved for festive occasions. Some presbyters use it throughout the year. Its Eucharistic prayers are addressed to the Son. There are other Egyptian prayers, three Ethiopian liturgies, and the Syrian "SS. Addai and Mari's liturgy," and "St. James liturgy," all are

¹ Fr. Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p. 211, 221.

² Fr. Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*, p 546.

addressed to the Son.

3- THE LITURGY OF ST. CYRIL (ST. MARK)

It was recorded and perfected by St. Cyril of Alexandria whose name is associated with it. It is now rarely used.

Now, we shall study the pattern of the Coptic Liturgy of St. Basil is not very different from the Gregorian liturgy. I will try to discuss the St, Cyril /St. Mark Anaphora in another book, as a pure Alexandrian liturgy received from St. Mark.

THE DISUSED LITURGIES¹

There were in early times other Egyptian liturgies, which eventually become disused. We have for example:

1- *The Euchologium² of Bishop Serapion*, whose history and text will be dealt with in the next book.

2- *The Euchologium of Der Baluze*, near Assuit, and its history which will be dealt with in the next book.

3- *The Anaphora of St. Matthew*, the Coptic text and its German translation have been edited by Angelics Kropp in *Oriens Christianus*³.

4- *Fragments of other unidentified Anaphora* which have been edited by H. Hyvernat⁴, by G. Sobhy⁵ and by E. Lanne⁶.

¹ Cf. Khus Burmester: *The Egyptian or Coptic Church, Cairo 1967.*

² "Euchologium" means "a book of prayers."

³ Angelicus M. Kropp, "Die Koptische Anaphora des Heiligen Evangelisten Matthaus," in *Oriens Christianus, Dritte Serie, Bd 7, Leipzig. 1973, p 111 - 125.*

⁴ Hyvernat: *Canon - Fragmente der alkoptesehen liturgie* in *Roemische Quartalschrift fur Christ Alterthum and Kurchengeschichte, 1, 4, Rome, 1888, p 330.*

⁵ G. Sobhy Bey "Two leaves in the Coptic Dialect of Middle Egypt, in *Melanges Maspero II. Orient Grient Grec, et Byzantin (Mem publics par les membres de l'Inst. France d'Arch. Orient. du Caire), tome LXVII, p 245 - 250, Le Caire, 1934 - 1937*

⁶ E. Lanne "Le Grand Euchologedu MonastereBlanc," in *Patrologia Orientalis, t. XXVIII, fasc 2, 1958.*

THE OUTLINE OF THE LITURGY

The basic pattern of the Coptic liturgy consists of:

1- The form of worship, which, in the language of the western liturgies, is called, “*The Divine Office*.” It is also called “*The Liturgy of Time*”,¹ and contains four cycles of time:

A. **The daily cycle** such as the Vesper (the Evening Incense), the Matin (the Morning Incense), the Canonical Hours etc.

B. **The weekly cycle** such as the Psalmody, which contains Psalms, Scriptural, hymns, Doxologies², Theotokions³ etc. and is offered throughout the week, differing from day to day in material and music.

C. **The monthly cycle** such as the service of the monthly feast of the Archangel Michael.

D. **The yearly cycle**, where by we worship God with prayers and hymns fit for the feasts and fastings throughout the year.

2- **The Eucharist**: It may be divided into three services:

A. The Offertory.

B. The Liturgy of the Catechumens.

C. The Liturgy of the Faithful “**Anaphora**”⁴.”

¹ Cf. Fr. Schmemmann: *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, ch. 2, 3.

² *Doxology* is a prayer or hymn concentrates on the glory to God.

³ *Theotokion* is a hymn in honor of the Theotokos (the Mother of God).

⁴ *Anaphora* means “lift up,” for the Church is ascended to heaven through the celebration of the Eucharist.

THE DIVINE OFFICE **“THE LITURGY OF TIME”**

In fact, it consists of the public ecclesiastic prayers, distinct from the Eucharistic and Sacramental prayers, through which the Church practices its liturgical life all the day, praising her Lord, honoring His saints, and interceding for the salvation of the whole world. This service aims at devoting all our time to the Lord, by singing psalms and hymns, enjoying the recitation from the Holy Scriptures, reading the sermons and sayings of the early Fathers, etc.

Through this service the Church asks the whole world, visible and invisible, the rational and irrational creatures, to give hymns to the Creator. Thus, the presbyter, participating with the congregation and the heavenly creatures, begins the service of the sacraments with a concentrated mind and a zealous soul seeking the fellowship with God.

DIVINE OFFICE AND EUCHARIST¹

The spiritual and theological movement of the Liturgy in the West is accompanied by two extreme theological theories concerning the relationship between *the Divine Office* and *the Eucharist*.

1 - The first extreme is the increasing tendency to reduce the whole of the liturgical life of the Church to the Eucharist alone, not to regard it as the summit or center or source of this life, but in fact as its sole content. This attitude separates the divine office from the “Eucharist,” and creates a gulf between the liturgical life and the whole life of the Church.

2 - The second extreme is the liturgical theology which goes under the name of “*mysterienlebre*” and which is connected with the name of Dom Odo Casel and the Benedictine liturgical centre at Maria Laach. Casel seems to merge everything in a general *mysteriological germinology*. He fails **to** draw a clear line between the sacramental and non-sacramental worship. All worship appears as the manifestation of the expression of “mystery.”

Fr. Schmemmann says: “On the one hand, we have the danger of reducing the whole liturgical tradition to a single sacrament with a corresponding neglect of its other elements. On the other hand, we

¹ Fr. Schmemmann: *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, ch 2, 3.
Nevins: *The Mary Knoll Catholic Dictionary*.

have the widening of the concept of Sacrament to include all worship.”

Our Orthodox Church, as usual, does not accept extremes. She holds the Divine Office as a liturgical worship, as a preparatory for celebrating the Sacrament, but it is not sacramental service.

THE HISTORY OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

The history of the Divine Office is co-extensive with that of the Church, since its foundation. It developed, especially when the “Monastic Movement,” appeared in Egypt.

Although some liturgists, such as Fr. Dix see that this office was unknown in the apostolic age, there are other opposing theories that explain how it was an extension of the liturgical life that was practiced by the synagogues in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EUCHARISTIC SERVICE

The Eucharistic service, in fact forms one single act of worship, through which the Church offers the single sacrifice of her Bridegroom to God. At the same time it receives the same sacrifice as a divine Gift. But we can say that this inseparable act of worship was divided into two parts, since the apostolic age.

1 - The Liturgy of the Catechumens

Its main work is missionary and catechismal, but not ignoring its worshipping act. The catechumens listen only to a part of it: the lections, the sermon and some prayers, which the Church offers on their behalf, so that God grants them an understanding, wisdom and faith.

2. The Liturgy of the Faithful, the Eucharist, or the Anaphora

It is an act of worship, without lessening the indirect instructive attitude. Through it, the Church ascends to heaven by the Holy Spirit in the presence of the Father, in Jesus Christ.

THE SYNAXIS AND THE EUCHARIST

Fr. Dix states that the initial core of the liturgy falls into two parts:

1 - The “*Synaxis*,” a Greek word means “a meeting.” We call it “*the liturgy of the catechumens*.” Some historians believe that “*synaxis*” applies to the Eucharistic service as a whole.

2 - The Eucharist, i.e. the Liturgy of the believers.

These two parts, in Dix's opinion, were separate things, and each could be and frequently was held without the other. He proved this by saying that **St. Justin's** apology describes the Eucharist twice. At one time¹ it is preceded by the *synaxis*, and at another² only the conferring of baptism precedes it.

The next witness, **St. Hippolytus**, in His "*Apostolic Tradition*" also describes the Eucharist twice, at one time preceded by the consecration of a bishop and at another preceded by baptism and Chrism, but in neither case is it accompanied by the *synaxis*. But, not mentioning it, it does not mean that it was not performed. Perhaps the *synaxis* was held before performing them, i.e., after the dismissal of the catechumens, as they were not admitted during the performance of the Sacraments. And the two Fathers described the service after this dismissal of the catechumens.

This is not abnormal, for the Coptic Church - up to this day - holds the consecration of a bishop or presbyter after reading the lections and before the beginning of the celebration of the Anaphora. And the presbyter can baptize at this stage so that the newly baptized person can receive communion on the same day.

However, Fr. Gregory Dix himself says that despite their separate origins and different purposes, the *Synaxis* normally preceded the Eucharist in the regular Sunday worship of all Churches in the second century. From the fourth century onwards the two were gradually fused until they were everywhere considered inseparable parts of a single rite.

THE OFFERTORY

The rite of the offertory was a part of the rite of the "*Liturgy of the Faithful*," but before the fifth century this rite was performed at the beginning of the whole liturgy, so that the people, on hearing the word of God and receiving the Communion would be prepared to renew their covenant with God.

For this reason I've preferred to discuss this rite as a third part of the liturgy, before discussing the other two parts.

¹ Chapter 67.

² Chapter 65.

THE DIVINE LITURGY IN BRIEF

The Divine Liturgy is a journey towards heaven. We enjoy it through our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ, as we are united with Him.

1- The Psalmody and the Divine Liturgy are preparations for this journey. They are addressed to the whole world, visible and invisible, rational and irrational, to give hymns to God, the Creator.

The “Cross,” or the “Sacrifice of the Messiah,” is the center and subject of the hymns of the heavenly and earthly creatures. Thus, before starting the liturgical prayers, the presbyter and the congregation participate with all the creation in giving hymns to the Savior.

2- The Offertory is the starting point of the journey. It guides the Church to know the real expenses of the journey, for she must offer her whole life as a sacrifice to and through the Lord, Who is sacrificed for her sake. This is the least that the Lord accepts. He asks for her whole life without which she can't start the journey.

3- The Lections are the guide and the map of the journey, by which we know our position towards God, and His position towards us, without it we deviate from our aim.

By the lections the Church witnesses God Who is the aim of this journey. She witnesses Him before her children and the catechumens so that they hear His divine voice through:

- A. His apostles: “The Pauline and Catholic epistles.”
- B. The apostolic acts: “The Acts.”
- C. The acts of the Church: “*Sinaxarium*.”
- D. His Son: “*The Gospel*.”
- E. And through the ministers of the Church: “The Sermon.”

These lessons are accompanied with open and secret prayers, which the Church offers, so that God may work in their hearts with His word to complete their way in hope.

4- The Intercessions: Through the journey, the Church lifts up her heart to the Divine Throne asking God to bestow peace upon the Church “Intercession of the Peace” - to strengthen her ministers “Intercession of the Fathers,” and bless her meeting “Intercession of

the meetings.” Thus, she can fulfill her message without any deviation.

5- Pre-Anaphora: Now the whole Church is prepared to ascend to heaven and stand by the Lord Jesus, she proclaims the reconciliation between God and man in Jesus Christ (The prayer of reconciliation). The Faithful in response declare their reconciliation in a practical way by the (*Spasmos*) i.e. the apostolic kiss.

6- The Anaphora: It is an entry to heaven, the *Epeclisis* of the Holy Spirit, the unity with the Lord Jesus, and the spiritual nourishment through the Communion of His holy Body and Blood.

What else do we need?!

I

THE OFFERTORY

** The offertory of the early Church.*

1 - The Preparation.

2 - Choosing the Lamb.

3 - Prayer of Thanksgiving.

4 - Offertory Prayer.

THE “OFFERTORY” IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Some people regard “*offering the bread and wine*” in the Eucharistic rite as a physical necessity. In fact, it is an integral and original part of the Eucharistic act and not introductory to it.

In other words the “*Offertory,*” the “*Eucharistic prayers,*” and the “*Communion,*” are three parts of the Eucharistic service that stand as closely connected moments in a single continuous action, but each gains its proper meaning only as a part of the whole.

Fr. G. Dix says, “From before the end of the first century the offertory was understood to have a meaning of its own, without which the initial significance of the whole Eucharist would not be complete but actually destroyed.”

We can give a picture of the characteristics of the “offertory” in the Early Church in the following points.

1- At the beginning of the third century **St. Hippolytus** spoke of bringing up the oblation (*prosphora*) of bread and wine, and the imposing hands over them by the bishop with his colleagues of presbyters while reciting the “Eucharistic prayers.” Other gifts such as oil, cheese and olives were brought after the Eucharistic service.

2- Bringing the *prosphora* was obligatory not only for laymen but also for the clergymen and poor men whom the Church sustained.

As an example, **St. Cyprian** wrote to a rich woman rebuking her for coming to the Lord with our bringing the *prosphora* and taking part of the *prosphora*, which poor men had offered. In the ***Apostolic Tradition*** those who were to be baptized and confirmed by Chrism were told to bring their *prosphora* with them to offer for themselves at the midnight liturgy of the Easter, which followed.

However we know that in all the Churches the layman brought his *prosphora* of bread and wine with him to the ecclesia that was a chief part of his liturgy. We know too that the deacons presented these offerings upon the altar that was a chief part of their liturgy. For this reason, the deacon commanded thrice the people to bring up their *prosphora*.

This ancient rite still takes place in our Coptic Church, where the deacon says: “*Offer, offer, offer (the oblation) in this order...*”

Finally we ask: What is the notion of the offering?

THE NOTION OF “OFFERTORY”

The sacrifice of the Eucharist is essentially an act of love, in which Christ gives Himself totally to God, His Father, on our behalf. We also, in His Name, offer ourselves totally, through our unity with Him, as His own Body.

In other words, by the “*offertory*” the Church declares the practical acceptance of her Bridegroom's Cross, i.e. the ladder to heaven. For we offer not only bread and wine or money but also our deeds, our joys, our sorrows, our hopes, our ambitions, and our hardships etc. We must bring them all to the altar - the Cross of Christ - at the offertory and lay our hearts upon the paten and our life into the chalice so that we may participate in His suffering and His sacrifice.

This is our notion of the offertory that we in the Victim, Jesus Christ, offer ourselves as a self - offering to God, not with bloodshed, but in those things that make up our daily lives ⁶.

The offertory is an entrance of the Church with Christ unto His sufferings... the practical and loving sufferings!

St. Paul the apostle says, “*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God!*.”

The fraction of Easter (Christian Pasch) states: “He lifted up His saints on high with Him; and offered them as an oblation to His Father.” He bore us as an oblation to His Father. This is the feeling of every person who has cleaved unto the altar of God and knows his unity with the Immolated Christ, that he himself is offered as a “*prospora*” to God in Jesus Christ.

St. Ignatius wrote to the Romans when he was sent there for martyrdom,

“I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good will

¹ *Phil 4:17-18.*

towards me.

Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God.

I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts...

Entreat Christ for me, so that I may be found a sacrifice to God by these instruments.”

Our sacrifice, in fact, is not our money or possessions but offering our lives and ourselves to the Father in Jesus Christ. For this reason the Church orders the bishop to avoid the oblations of the unjust, the adulterers, the avaricious and the unbelievers, if they are still not repenting.

1

THE PREPARATION

A DIVINE CALL

The celebration of the Eucharist is a unique journey; the believer starts it at the moment he leaves his home going to the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit holds him, supports, embraces, and lifts him up step by step on the ladder of heaven, i.e., through the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, he brings him to the depth of God to meet the Holy Trinity Who makes his soul glad. He desires not to depart from God, saying with St. Peter the Apostle, "*Lord, it is good for us to be here!*"

Truly, my dear, the celebration of the Eucharist is a departure of the heart, not from home or from the world but from its own cares, from the earthly care, flying quickly towards its true Treasure, Jesus Christ, in whom it rests.

This service is a divine call addressed to the Church to enter into her Master's Joy. At the same time it is the Church's response concerning this call, for she follows her Bridegroom in His ascension to His Father and looks at this ascension as her eternity.

I say, How awesome are these moments, for the Church is moving towards heaven to stand before God, in the company of the Cherubim, Seraphim and all the choirs of heavenly creatures, offering to the Father the "desire of His own Heart," the Sacrifice of His beloved Son, as the Ransom for the whole world!

For this reason I find no words to write emphasizing the necessity of our preparation - clergymen and laymen - to be in the presence of this Sacrifice at the moments of the celebration. It is enough for us to know that we are in the presence of the Body of the Lord whose divinity never departed from His humanity, neither for an instant nor a twinkling of the eye.

I find myself, however, obliged to say a few words concerning the spiritual and bodily preparation:

¹ *Mat 17: 4, Mk 9: 5, Luke 9: 23.*

1 - We must leave our homes with our Father Abraham to the land that God will show us, i.e. unto His holy Altar. Here we neither receive a symbol i.e. covenant, nor inherit the land which our feet have trodden, but we receive the Blood of the Son of God as the New Covenant and inherit the eternal kingdom, and enjoy what the angels desire to see.

Thus, we must leave behind “our country, our kindred, and our Father's house,” throwing off every earthly care from our hearts and memories, so that our inner powers may accept every spiritual thought and see the heavenly visions, and the hearts may be widened to love all the world in Jesus Christ.

How beautiful it is to pray before leaving our homes and on our way to Church, asking God to cast away every wandering thought, so that our whole spiritual being is entirely consecrated to God.

2- This true meeting round the Lord's Altar needs, not only special preparations to be practiced before leaving home, but we must offer our whole life during the week as a step forward towards the holy Mount of Calvary where we eat our true Pasch, sacrificed for us.

In the anniversary of the Old Pasch, people celebrated it for a week, eating unleavened bread, and not bringing leaven to their homes. Now as we celebrate our Pasch, Jesus Christ, in the beginning of every week we must remain all the time “consecrated to God,” and not permit the leaven of evil to approach our inner life, but we should nourish on “*unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*” The apostle Paul says, “*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, neither with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*¹.”

This is what every believer ought to do, how much more should the presbyter do? We must hasten to go to the Lord as Abraham did when he got up early to offer his beloved son Isaac as a burning sacrifice to the Lord. We must also hasten to go to the House of God without any slothfulness, for He is always waiting for us. Truly He is long-suffering, waiting for us even if we go late.

4 - As we enter the House of God we ascend with the prophet

¹ 1 Cor. 5:7-8.

Moses, not to the Mountain to receive the Law graven on stone tablets, but we enter His own House to receive the Life-giving Body and Blood of the Lord, and we remain there for such a time, until He orders us to dismissal (the Prayer of blessing and dismissal), as otherwise we will seem to despise Him.

St. John Chrysostom says, “You have entered the Church. O Man; you have been held worthy of the company of Christ... Go not out from it, unless you are sent. For if you go out from it without being sent you will be asked the reason; as if you were a runaway¹.”

✠ Nobody should go out of the Church without necessity after the Holy Gospel is read and until the oblation has been elevated and the presbyter granting the benediction and dismissal².

St. Basil the Great

5 - The decrees of the Church order that:

(a) We must pray in fear and tremble and not with pride³.

(b) We stand in Church quietly and in earnest and chastity to hear the word of God⁴.

(c) We do not speak with anyone in the Church⁵.

THE RITE OF THE PREPARATION

To receive the Law; Moses was ordered that all the people should be sanctified for three days during which no one should approach his wife. The Church too, commanded the presbyter and the people to be prepared in the eve and the day of their receiving the Communion that they do not approach their wives, not that this approach is unclean but because, in the opinion of the Church, it is considered a fast-breaking.

At the eve of receiving Communion, the believer must involved only with repentance and contrition of heart, and on the day he receives It, he must be glad that he received this heavenly gift.

The Church ordains certain rites performed during the Liturgy, to prepare the presbyter and congregation for this meeting with God, which we summarize in these points.

¹ *PG. 63: 623-632.*

² *Basil, 97.*

³ *Basil, 67.*

⁴ *Didache, 10.*

⁵ *Basil, 17*

- 1 - Putting on Sacred Vestments.
- 2 - Prayers of Preparation
- 3 - The Canonical Hours.
- 4 – Hand-washing.

1 - PUTTING ON THE SACRED VESTMENTS

As God desired to prepare His priest Joshua for a great task He revealed this vision to Zechariah. *“Now Joshua was clothed with filYour garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spoke unto those that stood before him: Take away the filYour garments from him. And unto him he said, “Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment. And I said, “Let them set a fair mitre (crown) upon his head¹.”* Also when we start to serve this sacrament, we must put off our clothes, which we use in our ordinary life and put on the sacred vestments that had been sanctified by the bishop's prayer and Chrism, and became as if they were God's own.

In other words, every time we serve the Lord, we must take away our daily infirmities in order to put on God's bright vestment, and to be crowned with chastity and righteousness, i.e. to be hidden in Him.

THE RITE OF PUTTING ON THE SACRED VESTMENTS

The presbyter shakes hands with his brethren the presbyters and asks them to support him with their prayers. He ascends to the Sanctuary, makes the sign of the cross on his vestments and the deacon's with the cross, in the name of the Holy Trinity.

He puts on his sacred vestments, which can't be used but for the worship of God. He sings psalms 29 (30) and 92 (93), saying:

1 - *“I will extol You on high, O Lord, For You have lifted me up, and have not let my enemies rejoice over me.”*

The enemies attack me all the week, and think that they conquer me, but as I put on the vestment of the Spirit, Your name will be extolled and You raise me up so that the enemies can't approach unto me. I put on “You” and become hidden in “You,” for You are my victory.

¹ Zechariah 3:3-5.

“O Lord, my God, I cried unto You, and You healed me.

O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Hades.

You have delivered me from among them that go down to the pit...

You have turned my mourning into joy.

You have ripped off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; that my glory may sing praise to You and that I may not be pierced with sorrow¹.”

Thus, the presbyter's heart is lifted up with joy and gladness, as he puts on the sacred garment, remembering the wedding garment, with which we enter into the eternal kingdom of joy, as if he says, *“My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments (crown), and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels².”*

2- *“The Lord reigns, He has clothed himself with honor; the Lord girded Himself with strength: for He has established the world, which shall not be moved...”*

As the presbyter puts on the sacred vestment, he looks at the Lord as He reigns in His Church, and His glory has been declared. His strength has been proclaimed to His people.

Thus, we enter the sanctuary with the white linen vestments, in order to be distinguished not only from others but also even from ourselves, from our “ego.” That is we may be hidden completely in Jesus Christ. We put Him on as a tall and bright vestment covering us totally, for *“Without Him we can do nothing.”*

Our congregation looks upon us not as individuals but as God's instruments, through whom the Holy Spirit works, however unworthy of our vocation.

From the apostolic ages the sacred vestments were used. Nikolai Gogol says, “From apostolic times special vestments were in use, although the persecuted Church was not in position to give it the beauty we are accustomed to. But from the very beginning there were strict rules that the priest might not serve in his ordinary clothing and that none of the clergy could go in the street in the vestments worn

¹ *Psalm 30 (29) LXX.*

² *Isa 61:10.*

during Church services¹.”

In the fourth century Constantine presented to his new cathedral at Jerusalem a sacred vestment of gold tissue to be worn by the bishop when serving in the solemn baptisms of the Paschal vigil².

Finally, we can say that not only the presbyters but also the whole Church, as a priestly nation ought to put aside the soiled garments, the filthiness of the flesh, the faults of character, and the defilements of lust. They have to put on clean garments, vestments kept apart from the common clothing of the rest of mankind. They must have the divine fire, God's own fire that He gives to men, of which the Son of God says, “*I have come to send fire on earth*”³.”

2- THE PRAYER OF PREPARATION

The presbyter goes up to the altar and takes off the big veil (*prospharien*) from the sacred vessels. He sets them before him, and looses them from their wrappings after crossing them thrice in the name of the Holy trinity.

At this instant the congregation sings the “*hymn of Blessing*.” If the Pope or the bishop is present they sing the “*hymn of Peace*.”

The presbyter begins inaudibly the “*Prayers of Preparation*,” namely:

“Lord, Who knows everyone's heart, The Holy One, Who abides in His saints.

Who alone is without sin, and Who is able to forgive sins.

You, O Lord, know I am unworthy and unprepared and unfit for this Your holy service;

And I have no face to draw near, and open my mouth before Your holy glory.

But according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, forgive me, a sinner, and grant unto me that I find grace and mercy at this hour; and send me strength from on high.

That I may begin, and prepare and complete,

As is pleasing unto You, Your holy service,

To the delight of Your will,

¹ Gogol: *Meditation on the Divine Liturgy*,

² Theodoret: *Eccl. Hist.* 2:27.

³ Luke 12: 49. Cf. Origen: *Hom. on Leviticum* 9:1.

*A sweet savoring incense.
Yea, O Lord, be You with us,
Share working with us, bless us.
For You are the Remission of our sins, the Light of our souls,
our Life, our Strength and our Favor...”*

Before he touches the sacred vessels, he confesses his faults and unworthiness for this holy service, and in the meantime he believes that God is the Forgiver of sins Who begins, prepares and completes this divine service. He Himself works in us and with us.

As the presbyter wipes the altar, thus he prepares the upper-room of Zion in which the Lord assembles with His people to offer the same sacrifice He offered at the Last Supper.

As the heart has been wiped and prepared so that the Lord may enter, the presbyter recites inaudibly the “*Prayer after Preparation,*” in which:

1- He gives thanks to God who bestows upon him this grace and honor to serve His Holy Altar.

2- He confesses that he is in need of this sacrifice more than others. He says that It is presented for his sins and for the ignorances of God's own people. **He** attributes the “sins” to himself and the ignorance to the congregation.

3- PRAYING THE CANONICAL HOURS

The presbyters, deacons and the congregation participate in reciting the psalms and the hymns of the Canonical Hours. They pray the Terce and the Sext. On fast days - except Sundays and Saturdays - they also recite the Nones¹.

These hymns direct our thoughts towards the Holy Trinity's saving act for us.

At the Terce, according to the *Apostolic Tradition*, we give praise to Christ's being nailed on the Cross and beginning His life-giving suffering. At the Terce we remember also the Holy Spirit descending on the Church after the ascension of the Savior, asking Him to work in us. For He is the Spirit of Adoption and Chastity, the Spirit of Holiness, justice and power, Who acts for our Salvation.

¹ *On the great Lent they also pray the Vespar and Compline.*

By reciting the hymn of the Sext, our hearts are lifted up to Christ Who was hung upon the wood of the Cross. The *Apostolic Tradition* states that by this prayer we look like Christ Who cried while He was hung upon the Cross.

Praying the Nones, according to *the Apostolic Tradition*, we look like the souls of the righteous whom the Lord remembered - for after He was pierced in His side blood and water, were shed forth, He descended to them in the Hades and gave them rest¹.

Thus, the hymns of the Canonical Hours prepare us for the celebration of the Eucharist, the mystery of salvation, but these hymns represent an inseparable part of the Liturgy itself.

4- THE HAND-WASHING

The presbyter washes his hands thrice while praying:

** You shall sprinkle me with hyssop. And I shall be cleansed.*

You shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

** You shall make me hear joy and gladness. The bones that have been humbled will rejoice.*

** I will wash mine hands among the innocent, And will encircle Your Altar, O Lord:*

That I may hear the voice of praise, And tell of all Your wonders.

By putting on the sacred vestments the presbyter declares his desire to deny his “ego” putting on the “*Vestment of Righteousness*,” i.e. Christ Himself, and by reciting the prayers of the preparation he confesses his infirmities asking the Divine grace to act in him, and by washing his hands he asks for internal purification.

St. Clement of Alexandria states that it is natural to see in the physical cleaning element of water a symbol of internal purification.

✠ This is not given because of physical stains, but this washing of hands is a symbol that they should be cleansed of all sin and all unworthiness. As the hands are the symbol of action, so in washing them we signify the purity and innocence of our works.

¹ Dix: *The treatise on the Apostolic Tradition*, London 1937.

THE BREAD AND THE WINE

1- The bread is a small flat round cake. It is in the shape of a circle, which has no beginning or end. It is a symbol of the eternity of our Immolated Lord. In Him, we pass over the boundaries of this temporary life, and enter eternity.

2- The bread is baked from pure wheat, for our Lord is the blameless Lamb, through Him, we also become righteous and without blame, hearing His divine voice, saying, “*You are all fair, my love: there is no spot in You*¹.”

3- The bread is stamped with a cross in the middle, surrounded with twelve smaller crosses. This means that the Crucified Jesus Christ is surrounded by His Church (12 disciples) who carries with Him His Cross. In other words, the Church, Christ’s Body, is always suffering in the world with her Head.

Number 12 is a symbol of the Church, i.e. the Kingdom of God in this world, for the Holy Trinity (3) reigns over the four sides of the world ($3 \times 4 = 12$).

For this reason, according to **St. Augustine**², the number of the tribes in the old Church was 12, also the number of the disciples of Christ and the number of the gates of heavenly Jerusalem are twelve.

“Number 12” means that God reigns in the life of men, and this is the notion of the “Church” herself.

4- Round the crosses, is stamped the Trisagion i.e. “The Holy God,” for God is the mystery of the Church’s holiness. He surrounds her, and He is in her midst. She does not fear, for her Lord is in her midst and no evil can touch her for God is a fence of fire around her. God as a fence separates the spirit of the Church from the spirit of the evil world so that nobody can enter her except through Him, and who goes away from her perishes.

5- The holy bread is leavened but not salted; for the yeast refers to our wickedness, which Jesus carried on in His Holy Body and entered into the fire of the Cross It is not salted, for our Lord does not

¹ *Song of Songs 4:7.*

² *Cf. Comm. on John, tractate 27:11.*

need any salt as He Himself is the Salt of the world.

6- In the Greek Church the bread is pierced during the celebration, but in the Coptic Church the bread is pierced five times round the central cross while baking it so that we may understand that this true sacrifice is a spiritual one and that Christ bore His passions from the time of His Incarnation.

7- The bread is prepared with great solemnity, in a special building attached to the Church, called "Bethlehem." Bethlehem is the place where the Lord was born. It is interpreted "House of Bread," because the Son of God Who was born here is the Bread of Life, as He Himself said in His Gospel, "*I am the Living Bread that came down.*"

8- It is prepared by deacons or devout men, accompanied by the recitation of the psalms.

9- It is baked on the same day of celebration.

10- The wine must be of grape only, pure and red in color.

11- The presbyter chooses a blameless bread and unspoiled wine.

12- As our Lord used a "mixed chalice," the Church follows His example. The presbyter mixes wine with about one third of water, and without measuring it. The mixing of water is a symbol of the water that poured out of Christ's side when He was pierced by the spear. It represents the unity of nations and peoples in Christ, as the book of Revelation mentions¹, or **as St. Irenaeus** says that it represents the unity of the Church with her Christ in one chalice.

St Cyprian wrote a long letter against celebrating the Eucharist by water or wine alone.

St. Clement of Alexandria says, "As wine is blended with water, so is the Spirit with man²."

We should notice that with the exception of the Armenian Church all the Eastern Churches mix the wine with water. The Church of Constantinople mixes the wine with hot water, for Christ's Blood, which poured from His side and was mixed with water, was hot as a

¹ *Rev. 17:15.*

² *The Instructor 2:2.*

symbol of Life.

ONE LAMB AND THE ONE CHALICE

St. Ignatius says: “Take great care to keep one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup to unite us by His Blood, on sanctuary, as there is one bishop, together with the presbyter and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus, all your acts may be done according to God's will¹.”

In the Coptic Church we should not celebrate more than one Eucharistic service on the same altar the same day, also the presbyter cannot celebrate but one Eucharist service a day. He can use only one bread and one chalice, proclaiming the oneness of Christ's Sacrifice once and forever.

The Lord chose the bread and wine as materials of the mystery and transformation for these reasons:

1- To fulfill the fore-mentioned prophesies.

2- The bread and wine naturally transform into flesh and blood in our bodies. In the same way the Holy Spirit transforms them through the Eucharistic celebration into the Lord's Body and Blood.

3- The “Didache” states that as bread is made up from many grains and wine from many grapes so Christ, Who is the Head of “His Body” i.e. the Church unites us in Him².

This is also mentioned in the Egyptian Anaphora of “Der-Balizeh.”

St Cyprian says, “When the Lord calls bread, which is combined by the union of many grains His Body, He indicates that our people whom He bore are as being united into one. And when He calls the wine, which is pressed from many grapes and clusters and collected together His Blood, He also signifies that His flock is linked together by the mingling of a multitude into one³.”

4- The bread and wine resemble us in that we are an ablation to God. As the bread cannot be offered before going through many phases, so likewise we must pass with our Lord through the fire of His

¹ *Ep. to Phil, 4.*

² *Didache 9:2-4.*

³ *Ep 75 (Exford) 69).*

suffering. Also as the wine is not offered before it is pressed, we must be pressed with Him through the winepress of His Cross, so that we may be offered to Him.

5- When our Lord spoke of His death He likened His Body to the grain of wheat, saying, *“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone¹.”*

6- Our Lord also likened His Kingdom to a grain of wheat.

7- As bread is the main support of our earthly life, so the Eucharist is the main support of our spiritual Life.

¹ *Jn 12:24.*

2

THE RITE OF CHOOSING THE LAMB

In the Coptic Church the rite of choosing the Lamb contains many theological meanings, spiritual experiences and heavenly notions, matters that language can't express. This rite speaks of the events of salvation together as if they were one event, subjected to "time" but beyond the boundaries of Time.

Through this rite, the soul enters Christ's manger, contemplating His incarnation and meditating upon His message. It bears Him with Simeon the elder into the Temple to see in Him the prophecies fulfilled. The soul follows Him to Jordan to see His baptism remembering His sacrificial act for its sake. Then it goes to Golgotha to enjoy the Cross and enters His tomb to practice His Resurrection.

CHRIST, THE LAMB OF GOD

The deacon brings the offering, i.e. bread and wine. Then the presbyter extends his hands over it to choose the "Lamb," that is the bread that will be transmuted into the Body of Christ. The Holy Scripture calls Him the "Lamb" of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

"With the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

"Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain..."¹

The presbyter chooses one "Lamb" out of 3, 5, 7, or 9 loaves, as it is said in the Book of Song of Songs "He is chosen from among ten thousands," and He is the First-fruit of the entire human race. Who is chosen as a sacrifice for all His brethren.

a- The "**Lamb**" is chosen out of three as a symbol of the Son, One of the Holy Trinity, Who was incarnated, fulfilling the redeeming plan.

¹ John 1:29; 1 Pet 1,19; Rev 5:12.

b- Number “5” refers to the five types of sacrifices in the Old Testament which were symbols of Christ's one and single Sacrifice¹.

c- Number “7” refers to the above-mentioned five sacrifices plus the two birds offered for the leper on his healing. It also refers to the seven sacraments of the Church². It reminds us of the seven words, Christ uttered while **He** was upon the Cross.

We return to the rite of choosing the Lamb. **The presbyter lays his hand on the oblations and crosses them in the shape of the cross; this action reminds us of the priest in the Old Testament, who laid his hands upon both the sacrifice and the sinner announcing that the sin had been transferred from the sinner to the sacrifice.**

Our Lord bowed His head to the Cross for us to lay our hands upon Him so that He may bear our sins in His body.

At this instant, the people ask for nothing but God's mercy, singing the word “*Kyrie Elieson*,” i.e. “Lord have mercy” forty one times.

As the Church sees her Bridegroom giving Himself up a sin-offering on her behalf, she asks Him to declare His mercy in the lives of all her members.

The presbyter crosses the bread and wine with the cross three times in the name of the Holy Trinity, before carrying them to the altar, in the same way as Jesus Christ accepted the Cross willingly before the action of the crucifixion. He bore the Cross within Himself before His going to the Golgotha, “the Altar.”

After choosing the “Lamb,” the presbyter crosses It with the wine by his finger, for the wine will be transformed into the Blood of Christ's Body. The other breads are also crossed with wine as a symbol of the Church, His brethren, who are sanctified and purified by His Blood.

¹ *The five kinds of the old Sacrifices are: a burnt-sacrifice, a meat-offering, a sacrifice of peace offering, an offering for a sin and a trespass offering. See Lev 1:7.*

² *The Seven Sacraments are: Baptism, Chrism, Communion, Penance, Ordination (Priesthood), Matrimony and Unction.*

BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY

The rite of choosing the lamb contains a symbol of the Lord's baptism, for the presbyter puts the Lamb on the psalm of his hand, anointing it with water, praying, "*O Lord, let It be accepted for my sins and the ignorances of Your own people.*"

Before performing the symbols of Christmas the presbyter begins with those of Epiphany. The presbyter lifts up his heart towards Jordan to see the Messiah bearing His Church with Him secretly, in order that God adopts her in Him.

The presbyter prays inaudibly on behalf of all Christians in general, his family, his spiritual brethren and sons and for himself in order that God may preserve our baptismal garment spotless.

It is wonderful that in the rite of the Church, the presbyter practices the spirit of humbleness so that his heart may be full of love towards the Church, praying for them all and at the end he prays himself saying. "*Remember, O Lord, my weakness - poor that I am - and forgive me my manifold sins.*"

The presbyter wraps the lamb in a white linen veil, praying inaudibly the litanies of Peace, Fathers and Meetings of the Church. This white linen veil reminds us of the swaddling clothes the Lord when He was lying in the manger and also of the burial clothes in which His Body was wrapped.

What does the presbyter ask for while he is in the Lord's manger or in His Holy Tomb, except that God may grant peace to the Church, Her Fathers and Meetings, for she is the "Lord's Holy Body..."

The use of the white linen is a symbol of sanctity and purity. The vestments of the priests and prophets of the Old Testament¹ were from linen. Daniel ²saw the Lord, in his vision, clothed with a vestment of linen; and Jesus Christ when He was buried³ was wrapped in linen vestment.

WITH SIMEON THE ELDER

The presbyter lifts the lamb covered with the linen veil and the

¹ *Jer 13:1.*

² *Dan 10:7.*

³ *Mat. 27: 59.*

cross in front of his forehead, and turns round the altar once as the child Jesus Christ was borne by Simeon the Elder¹, not on his arms but in his inner heart and mind, putting Him in front of his eyes, for He is his crown!

The deacon walks behind the presbyter carrying the cup of wine and a candle, for through the Blood of Christ the whole world has been illuminated, and is assured of its salvation, and attains the worthiness to enter into God's holiness.

After the circuit round the altar, the presbyter stands at the royal door, lifting the lamb and the Cross over his head facing the people who bow down their heads. He declares mystically that the mind of the Church is occupied with the Divine Incarnation and Crucifixion, giving glory to the Holy Trinity, saying:

*“Glory and honor, honor and glory, unto the Holy Trinity;
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Peace and edification unto the Church of God,
The One, Only, Catholic, and Apostolic Holy Church, Amen.
Remember, O Lord those who offered unto You these oblations,
Those for whom they were offered,
And those by whom they were offered.
Give them all the heavenly recompense.”*

In this pleasant view, Incarnation and Crucifixion are mixed together as a single redeeming act. For this reason the people sing to God, saying;

*“Alleluia. This is the day, which the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
O Lord, save us,
Prosper us, O Lord.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, Alleluia².”*

Christmas and Good Friday are joyful days, in which the Lord reveals His redeeming love towards man, making the way of salvation - which man thought impossible - very easy, opening to us the way to eternity!

“Blessed is He who came to us as the Way, by which we attain

¹ Luke 2:22.

² Ps 118 (117):24-26.

to his Glory!” This is what the people sing during the ordinary Liturgy, except on fast days when they sing¹:

*“Alleluia, for the thought of man will confess to You;
And the remains of his thought will keep festival to You. Accept
the oblations, Alleluia.”*

In the first hymn we remember the day of His Incarnation as that of His Crucifixion, but in the other one, man praises God for His good deeds and love, asking Him to receive the Holy Sacrifice - oblation of the holy fast - from His people.

In the great Lent and the fast of Nineveh, they sing²:
*“Alleluia. I will go to the altar of God,
To God, the Joy of my youth.
I will praise and thank You.
On the harp, O God, my God. Alleluia,
O Lord, remember David and all his meekness Alleluia.”*

In these holy days, as the liturgy is celebrated, the believers declare their joy in the Lord in spite of their fast and meekness, for He brings them to His altar. They see His face, the joy of their youth. His grace works in them, i.e. in His Church.

CROSSING THE OBLATION

The presbyter bows to his brethren saying, “*Bless,*” and they do the same, saying, “*You bless.*”

He crosses the lamb, wine and water using the cross three times in the name of the Holy Trinity.

** In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, The One God... Blessed be God the Father the Pantocrator, Amen.*

** Blessed be His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.*

** Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Amen.*

Now the sacred vestments, the sacred vessels and the oblations have been signed in the name of the Holy Trinity.

The presbyter places the lamb on the paten beneath which lies a linen cover, saying inaudibly: “*Glory and honor, honor and glory,*

¹ Ps 76 (75): 10.

² Ps. 42:4 ; 131:1.

unto the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

After this he pours the wine into the chalice, then he adds about its third of water. The deacon answers “Amen” three times, then he sings.

*“One is the Holy Father,
One is the Holy Son.
One is the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Blessed be the Lord God unto all ages. Amen.
All you nations bless the Lord!
Let all peoples bless Him!
For His mercy is established upon us;
And the truth of the Lord endures Forever, Amen. Alleluia.”*

The people also sing the “**doxology**” namely: “*Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Now, and ever and unto everlasting eternity. Amen. Alleluia.*”

Now the presbyter, deacons and people give glory to the Holy Trinity, for through this Holy Sacrifice we understand the Holy Trinity, their mercy and their divine plan for us.

3

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

OPENING GREETING

The presbyter begins the *Prayer of Thanksgiving* by singing, “*Pray,*” and the deacon then urges the congregation, “**Stand up for prayer.**”

This call to “Stand up for prayer” warns us to be reverent when we enter into dialogue with God and assist at the holy mysteries. There must be no distraction, we must act with fervor and all reverence; and in this manner look, listen, and pray throughout the service.

The first sign of this fervor and devotion is the uprightness of our bodies; we do these things standing on our feet. This is the attitude of servants whose eyes are intent on the will of their master, waiting to present instant service and ready to perform at once any order that may be given. And are we not God’s suppliant in everything of importance, and his servants for every kind of duty?

Thus, the body stands up for praying and the soul stands up in vivacity to enter the Lord’s holies, worshipping Him without slothfulness.

The presbyter turns towards the other presbyter and says; “*Bless.*” The other replies, “*You bless.*” This illustrates that neither is putting himself ahead of the other.

The presbyter blesses his children with the sign of the Cross as a source of inner peace, saying: “*Peace be with all,*” and they reply: “*And with your spirit also.*”

This is the ordinary oriental greeting “*Salaam*” (Shalom). But it had a special and beautiful significance in Christian worship as the first greeting of the Risen Lord to His own¹.

The presbyter following his Lord asks peace for his children, and they in the spirit of his children ask him for the peace of God which passes all understanding.

¹ *Dix: The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 38, 103.*

This is the opening prayer in the Liturgy of Eucharist containing the blessing we obtain in celebrating this mystery and partaking of the Communion. Through it God comes to us, and we return to Him. He rests in us and we find our rest in Him. Thus, our lost peace returns to us, i.e. our inner and hidden peace, and our peace with God.

THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

St. John Chrysostom has a comment on the position of the *Thanksgiving Prayer* in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He says, “Jesus, gives thanks, to teach us how to celebrate this sacrament, and to show that He comes to the Passion without reluctance, and to teach us to bear whatever we may suffer thankfully, thence also suggesting good hope.”

Fr. Jungmann, in his book, “*The Early Liturgy*,” says: “Our Christian sacrifice is enclosed in a prayer of thanksgiving, in a prayer whose main subject is the salvation we have received through Christ. That prayer is but a thankful remembrance that recalls with gratitude how the Father sent His Son into the world, into a virgin’s womb, to accomplish our redemption, and how the Son, by the struggle of his passion and the triumph of his resurrection, made that redemption effective for us. Through considerations such as these, the first and second centuries were led to shape the Mass liturgy into a Eucharistia¹.”

Thanksgiving is not merely a certain prayer to be recited during the celebration, but it is an acceptance of Christ’s sufferings in our life with thanksgiving. It is an acceptance of the salvation in a practical way. Thanksgiving is a spirit that governs the whole rite. Thanksgiving is a method by which we live in the Immortalized Jesus Christ.

Finally, I shall provide you with the English translation of this prayer, so that you may contemplate its phrases. The Prayer of Thanksgiving is used by the church as the start of all prayers; whether they are sacramental or not, public or personal, on sad or joyful occasions. The prayer gives thanks to God the Beneficent, Merciful and Lover of Mankind.

¹ Fr. Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p. 48-49.

The English Text

P. (Presbyter) *Let us give thanks unto the Beneficent and Merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ for He has sheltered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us into Him, had compassion on us, sustained us and brought us unto this hour. Let us then ask Him, the Almighty Lord our God, to keep us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.*

D. (Deacon) *Pray.*

C. (Congregation) *Lord have mercy (Kyrie Elieson).*

P. *Master, Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord, our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You upon every condition, for any condition and whatever condition. For You had sheltered us, supported us, preserved us, accepted us unto You, and had compassion on us, sustained us and brought us unto this hour.*

D. *Pray that God have mercy upon us, have compassion on us, that He may hear us, that He may help us, that He may accept the prayers and supplications of His saints on our behalf for our good at all times, and forgive us our sins.*

C. *Lord have mercy.*

P. *Wherefore we pray and entreat Your goodness, Lover of mankind, grant that we may complete this holy day and all the days of our life in all peace with Your fear.*

All envy, all temptation, all workings of Satan, the counsel of evil men and the rising up of enemies hidden and manifest, do You cast away from us, and from all Your people¹

And from this table²

And from this holy place of Your;

But those things, which are good and useful, grant them to us. For it is You who has given us authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the enemy. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

By the grace and the compassions and the love of mankind of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

¹ *If the Patriarch or a bishop is present, he should say this prayer.*

² *At the Vespar or Matin, it is said: "and from this church,"
at the absolution of women: "and from this woman,"
at the Baptism liturgy: "and from this font,"
at the marriage liturgy: "and from this bridal couple,"
at the Unction of the sick: "and from this sick person,"
at the service of the Burial of the dead: "and from this soul."*

through whom the glory and the honor and the dominion and the adoration is due unto You with Him and the Holy Spirit, the Life-giving and consubstantial with You, now and at all times and unto the age of all ages Amen.

4

OFFERTORY PRAYER

After reciting the prayer of thanksgiving, the presbyter prays inaudibly the “*Prayer of the Offertory,*” which is addressed to the Son:

“Master, Lord Jesus Christ, the Co-eternal Word of the undefiled Father, Consubstantial with Him and the Holy Spirit.

For You are the Living Bread which came down from heaven, You have foreordained to make Yourself the Lamb without blemish, for the life of the world.

We pray and beseech Your goodness, O Lover of mankind.

(Pointing to the Bread)

Cause Your face to shine upon this bread;

(Pointing to the Chalice)

And upon this cup, which we have set upon

(Pointing to the altar)

This Your priestly Table,

(Here he signs the cross over the bread, chalice and altar, saying):

Bless them,

Sanctify them,

Purify and transform them,

(Pointing to the bread) *that this bread may become indeed Your holy Body.*

(Pointing to the chalice) *and the mixture in this chalice become Your precious Blood.*

And that they may become to us all for participation and healing and salvation for our souls, bodies and our spirits.

For You are our God and unto You is due all glory, with Your good Father and the Holy Spirit.”

Notes¹

(1) Its language suggests a date towards the end of the fourth

¹ See Dix 120.
Brightman. L. E. W, p 148.

century.

(2) This prayer is in fact a complete anticipation of the whole Eucharistic action, recited at the offertory. The Eucharistic action contains offertory, consecration and communion, these three parts are so intricately connected as parts of a single action that it is exceedingly difficult to express their meaning separately.

(3) This prayer reveals the aim of the Eucharistic action that is the communion for participation, healing and salvation for our spirits, souls and bodies, i. e. working in our whole life.

(4) It is called the “*Prayer of Covering*” for the presbyter, after praying it, covers the paten and the chalice with two linen veils, and then he covers both with the big veil called “*Prospharine*”¹. Then he places a small folded veil above the *prospharine*. Then the presbyter and the deacons leave the Sanctuary and kneel before the altar after kissing it and going round it.

It is a wonderful symbol of burying the Life-giving Body of the Lord, as It is buried in linen and placed in the Holy Tomb, “the Altar” which is closed with a big stone “*Prospharine*,” and sealed, then all leave him and return back!

The Holy Body was hidden in the Tomb from the eyes, He Whose divinity never departed from His humanity, and Whose spirit preached unto the spirits in prison, to those who had slept and reposed in hope, to bear them to Paradise.

In the Holy Tomb we do not smell the stink of destructive death, but the savor of the mystery of life-giving death! By His Life-giving death, He raised the dead and still raises us with Him, not only to enter Paradise after our death, but also to enjoy the “**Paradise of Delight**” from now.

Thus, the offertory is concluded and the church is contemplating the Lord’s burial, so that in the Eucharistic prayer we enter with Him into the glory of His Resurrection receiving His Risen Body as the eternal life, given to all partakers.

Some perceive in this rite not only Christ’s burial, but also His flight to Egypt and His dwelling in Nazareth, until He started His

¹ The Greek word “*prosharine*” means to offer the oblation.

ministry and was crucified.

However, the disappearance of the *prosphora* is a declaration of the hiding of the reality of the Messiah, and the mystery of His redeeming action, till the time of His resurrection, as He opened the inner sight of the two disciples of Emmaus to understand the scriptures and breathed in His disciples' faces for the same aim.

On the altar, the *prosphora* is covered so that the Lord may be hidden in our hearts and we are hidden in Him.

ABSOLUTION OF MINISTERS

The presbyter and deacons leave the altar, their faces being to the East, they always leave by stepping out with their left foot and enter by stepping in with their right foot first. Then they kneel before the sanctuary, and one of the present presbyters recite the prayer of Absolution of the Ministers. If the Patriarch or a bishop is present he should recite this prayer:

“Your servants, the ministers of this day, the proto-priests, the priests, the deacons, the clergy, all the people and my weakness,

May they be absolved by the mouth of the Holy Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And by the mouth of the One, Only, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, and by the mouths of the twelve apostles, and by the mouth of the ecstatic evangelist Mark, the pure apostle and martyr,

And the Patriarch St. Severus.

Our Master Dioscorus,

St. Athanasius the Apostolic,

St. Peter the martyr and archpriest,

St. John Chrysostom,

St. Cyril,

St. Basil, and St. Gregory.

And by the mouths of the 318 gathered together at Nicea, the 150 at Constantinople and the 200 at Ephesus. And by the mouth of our father, the archbishop Pope anba... and by the mouth of my abjection,

For blessed and full of glory is Your holy Name, O Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now....”

In ancient times. God ordered Moses to anoint Aaron and his sons and pray for them before starting the service. Aaron himself

before beginning the service prayed for those who served with him, for nobody can enter into the holies of the Lord unless he is purified himself his infirmities.

Thus, nobody, whatever his personality or his priestly rank is, can participate in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy unless he is absolved first from his sins.

It is wonderful, that through the list of ministers, the presbyter not only mentions his brethren, the presbyters and deacons, and himself; but also the people, for they can't approach this service without purification. Thus, in the Eucharistic service of the Coptic Church the people have an active part in the service and they are not mere hearers.

The mystery of the Eucharist being the mystery of the True Body of Christ, it is also the mystery of the whole Church that is assembled together in her Head, Jesus Christ.

II THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

** The Outline of the Liturgy of the Catechumens.*

1- Lections.

2- Intercessions.

3- Aspasmus (Pre-Anaphora).

THE OUTLINE OF THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

We can summarize what we have been saying concerning this service in the following points:

1- It is called the *Liturgy of the Catechumens*, not because it is celebrated only for the catechumens, but because they can enjoy it together with the believers. Its main work is missionary and catechismal, but we cannot ignore it as an act of worship.

2- It is also called the *Liturgy of the Word*, for its main work is the proclamation of the Word of God. In this service God speaks to us through His Holy Scripture, the Church's acts and the bishop's sermon.

This Word works in the catechumens preparing them to receive the spirit of adoption taken in baptism, and works in believers to prepare them to receive the Word's Body and Blood in the Communion. **Origen** says that in the liturgy of the Catechumens the soul is engaged to the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the liturgy of the faithful it is married to Him.

3- Fr. Gregory Dix has his own opinion concerning this service. He says that the Liturgy is divided into two parts (*Synaxis* and Eucharist). Up to the fourth century, the outline of the *Synaxis* consisted only of the proclamation of the revelation through the readings of the Scriptures, and the living witness of the church to their truth in the bishop's liturgical sermon followed by the intercessions of believers¹

At the pre-Nicene *Synaxis* the passive part was the only possible thing for the congregation. They were only listeners.

The *Synaxis* became an effective corporate act after the exit of the catechumens when the intercessions of believers began. In other words, Dix sees that the prayers might not be offered in the presence of the catechumens.

We cannot accept this opinion as it is, for the church never separated readings of the Scriptures or preaching by sermons from the prayers. She loves all mankind, revealing the "Truth" through the spoken and written Gospel but not without prayers. She preaches and

¹ *Dix, p. 318.*

prays that the hearing of the word by mankind might be fruitful. In the *Euchologium of Serapion*, the liturgy of the Catechumens begins with a prayer headed: “First prayer of the Lord’s day” and it ends with another prayer after the sermon. The prayer after the sermon is referred to several times by **Origen**¹ in his homilies in Alexandria², and once by **St. Athanasius the Apostolic**³.

Fr. Dix says that the primitive structure of the two rites was:

(1) SYNAXIS	(2) EUCHARIST
1- Greeting & Response.	1- Greeting & Response
2- Lections interspersed with.	2- The Kiss of peace.
3- Psalmody.	3- Offertory.
4- The Bishop’s Sermon.	4- Eucharistic Prayer.
5- Dismissal of the Catechumens.	5- Fraction.
6- Intercessory of the Faithful.	6- Communion.
7- Dismissal of the Faithful (If it was held separately from the Eucharist).	7- Dismissal.

COPTIC LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

1- Lections: God speaks through

- a. Apostolic writings:** Pauline and Catholic Epistles
- b. Apostolic acts:** Acts.
- c. Church’s acts:** Sinaxarium.
- d. Christ:** Gospel.
- e. Church’s teaching:** Sermon.

2 - INTERCESSIONS AND CREED.

3 – SPASMOS:

- a. Reconciliation with God.
- b. Reconciliation with brethren.

¹ *Dix 442*

² *Origen in Gen 2: 6, in Num 16: 9,20: 5.*

³ *Athanasius: Horn. de Semente 17.*

1

LECTIONS

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LECTIONARY¹

1- We see that prayers are connected with the lections, for the Church asks unceasingly her Bridegroom for the fruitful hearing of the apostolic proclamation of redemption by the lessons and the sermon. She asks Christ to be hidden in her so that He Himself proclaims His Gospel to the catechumens and to believers.

2- Fr. Dix says, "In large gatherings at least, if not always, the lessons were chanted with a simple inflection rather than read. This was partly in order to secure that they should be heard... and partly to give solemnity as the Word of God is being read to the church, and through the church to the world²." This custom is carried on in our church today, especially when the reading is in the Coptic language.

3- The order in which the lections from the various parts of the holy Scriptures are read was already fixed in pre-Nicene times³. Every Sunday and Holy Day, even every day throughout the year has its own specific text in the lessons of the Bible which explain an aspect of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Actually all the lections reveal the personality of our Savior, His redeeming work, or His position in our life. But the Church, as a wise mother, offers to us the proper lessons that fit into the calendar. Sometimes she speaks of His Incarnation, while at others of His Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, or Advent etc. At times she leads us to be humble in Him, at others to be crucified with Him, at others to be joyful in Him etc.

This does not mean that she separated our life in Christ into parts, or divides Christ's life into separate periods. She is a witness to one Christ, one Life, and one single redeeming act, but from time to time, or from one day to another she proclaims one aspect or more of

¹ Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

² Dix, p 39

³ Dix 360

these matters without destroying its unity.

Such a system of “propers” was found in the synagogue liturgy at our Lord’s time, the lessons for the Sabbaths being arranged on a three years cycle though certain greater festivals stood out from the system and had the same lesson every year.

In the second century the two great Christian feasts of the Pasch (Easter) and Pentecost had their own “proper” lections and chants.

Dix says, “The rise in the importance of martyrs’ feasts during the fourth century, further increased the fixed contents of the lectionaries¹.”

1- THE PAULINE EPISTLE

After praying the absolution, all rises, the presbyter ascends to the Sanctuary, kisses the Altar, and puts five spoonfuls of incense in the censer.

He offers, inaudibly, the *Prayer of the Pauline Incense* to the Father, asking Him to be with us, stand in our midst, purify our hearts, sanctify our souls, and grant us to offer sacrifices.

He then prays inaudibly the *Litany of Peace, Fathers and Meetings of the Church* while he goes round the altar, and the deacon goes round on the opposite side of the altar, with a cross raised in his hand.

During that time the deacons and the congregation sing a *hymn blessing the Holy Virgin Mary*. This hymn describes her as the pure golden censer holding sweet aroma, in the hands of Aaron the priest, offering up incense upon the altar. The censer of gold in the Virgin; her sweet aroma is our Savior, whom she has borne.

While the presbyter offers incense in the sanctuary round the altar, praying for peace, for the clergymen and for the meetings of the church, the congregation’s thoughts are raised up to heaven to see Jesus Christ our Savior as the True Incense, who was born from our mother, the Virgin Mary. He is the Mediator Who forgives our sins, grants us peace, and who works in the clergymen and in the whole Church.

¹ *Dix, p 361*

- ❖ The presbyter descends and offers incense to the Gospel, which is the representative of Christ Himself, then to the clergymen, then before the icons of the saints and to the entire congregation starting from the left side of the church. It is as though He collects the prayers of his brethren, the clergymen with those of the angels, the saints and of the congregation to offer them altogether through the altar of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ In the nave of the church he begins from left to right, for through the Messianic sacrifice we are transferred to the right hand of our Lord.
- ❖ **He** lays his hand on everyone saying “*the blessing of our teacher the Apostle Paul be with you,*” and the person answers inaudibly “*O Lord forgive my sins which I committed willingly and unwillingly.*”
- ❖ He returns to the sanctuary where he offers incense “on behalf of the people,” saying inaudibly “*the Mystery of Return*¹,” asking God to accept the confessions of all His people and forgive them their sins. The presbyter cannot do anything by himself, but through the sacrifice of Christ he asks the forgiveness of the sins of the entire congregation.
- ❖ A lesson from St. Paul is read while the presbyter in the sanctuary prays inaudibly the *Mystery of the Pauline Epistle*², asking the God of knowledge and the Giver of wisdom who made of Paul, the persecutor, a chosen vessel, to grant us a free mind and a pure understanding in order that we learn and understand the benefit of His sacred teachings which we are hearing right now. He also asks God to make us like St. Paul in deed and doctrine so that we may glorify His Holy Name.

2- THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

The Catholic Epistles are:

- 1- The epistle of St. James.
- 2- The epistles of St. Peter.
- 3- The epistles of St. John.
- 4- The epistle of St. Jude.

While the deacon reads a lesson from the Catholic Epistles, the

¹ See Appendix 1.

² See Appendix 2.

presbyter prays inaudible the *Mystery of the Catholic Epistles*¹. He asks God to grant unto us at all times to follow the apostles footsteps, and to imitate their struggle, and participate with them in the toiling which they have accepted for God's sake.

He puts one spoonful of incense into the censer and prays the *Litany of the Oblation* inaudibly. Then he prays the *Mystery of the Acts*², asking God, Who accepted the old sacrifices and prepared our salvation through the new sacrifice of the Lamb of God, to accept from us this sacrifice of incense, asking Him His mercy.

❖ Then he goes round the altar seven times praying the Litanies of Peace, Fathers and Meetings of the Church, while the deacon goes to the opposite side of the altar lifting the Cross. This rite reminds us of the priests and people who went round Jericho seven times to enter it. Thus, we ask God to enter His sacred heavens.

The presbyter does not leave the altar during the reading of the Catholic Epistle to offer incense among the people, as the disciples did not leave Jerusalem and waited for God's Promise³.

The deacon at the Catholic Epistle's conclusion says, "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world; the world passes away and the lust thereof; he that does the will of God abides for ever Amen."

When the Catholic Epistle is finished, the people sing: "*God takes away the sins of the people, through the burnt-offering and the sweet savor of incense. Even He who offered an acceptable sacrifice upon the cross for the salvation of our race...*"

3- THE LESSON OF "ACTS"

The presbyter descends and offers incense to the Gospel, clergymen, the icons of the saints and only to the first choir (division) in the nave of the Church. He does not offer incense to all the church because, when the Apostles began preaching, they preached only in Jerusalem and Judea.

A deacon recites the proper lesson from the "Acts of the Apostles." The deacon begins by saying "*Acts of our holy Fathers the*

¹ *Appendix No 3*

² *Appendix No 4.*

³ *Act 1: 4.*

apostles, their holy blessings be with us.” When it is finished he says, “The word of the Lord shall grow, and shall be multiplied, shall wax mighty and shall be confirmed in the holy Church of God. Amen.”

By the lesson of the “Acts,” God speaks to us not only through their epistles but also through their lives.

Now the presbyter returns to the Sanctuary, where he offers incense on behalf of the people, saying inaudibly the “*Prayer of Return.*” During censuring, the people sing: “*Blessed in truth are You, with Your Good Father, And the Holy Spirit; for You have come, and saved us...*”

4- THE SINAXARIUM

The presbyter reads from the *Sinaxarium*, the book of the chronicles of the Saints. Now we hear the Word of God through the life of the members of the church of the New and Old Testaments. Mr Leeder, the English writer who visited Egypt, said: “Another deeply impressive feature of the Coptic services is the reading of the lives of the Saints in Arabic, according to a very ancient custom sanctioned in the fourth Century¹.”

5- THE TRISAGION

The presbyter, while holding the censer and standing before the Sanctuary door, sings with the deacons and the congregation the Trisagion:

*“Holy (Agio) God, Holy Almighty, Holy Immortal;
Who was born of the Virgin, have mercy upon us...
Who was crucified for us...
Who rose from the dead and ascended unto heaven...
Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Now and forever and ever. Amen.”*

This hymn in the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom comes after the reading of the Gospel, and not before as in the Liturgy of St. Basil.

The *Trisagion* is a hymn of, the Seraphim who eternally surround the Holy Trinity². During the liturgy we are no longer on earth but somehow we are transferred to heaven³. The Eucharist is a

¹ Leeder: *The Sons of Pharaohs*, p. 191.

² *Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8.*

³ Daniélou: *The Bible and The Liturgy*, 135-6.

participation in the heavenly liturgy.

✠ Man is as though transferred to heaven itself, he stands near the throne of Glory. He flies with the Seraphim, and he sings the holiest hymn.

St. John Chrysostom

✠ We speak of the Seraphim that Isaiah saw in the Holy Spirit, surrounding the throne of God and saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, God of hosts.” This is why we recite this theological hymn that is transmitted to us by the Seraphim, so that we may take part in the hymn of praise with the hosts above the cosmos.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

This hymn: “*Holy God, Holy Almighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us,*” which is repeated thrice, is said to have been divinely revealed at Constantinople in the time of the Patriarch Proclus (434-446) as the authentic text of the hymn sung by the angels in heaven. The Eastern Churches believe that its origin goes back to the burial of Christ, when Nicodemus and Joseph buried Him, they were astonished how He who gave life others had died, and they consequently sung this hymn.

6- THE GOSPEL

THE LITANY OF THE GOSPEL

After singing the angelic hymn “*the Trisagion,*” the presbyter prays the litany of the Gospel, saying:^{1 2 3}

“O Master, the Lord Jesus Christ our God, who has spoken unto His saintly disciples and honored Apostles, saying: Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which you see and have not seen them, and to hear the things which you hear, and have not heard them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears for they hear. May we be made worthy to hear and act according to Your holy gospel through the prayers of Your saints.”

The deacon who is standing behind the presbyter holding the gospel and the cross, urges the congregation saying, “*Pray concerning the holy Gospel.*” So they ask God “*Kerie eleison,*” i.e. “*Lord have*

¹ Luke 10:6

² A living Liturgy 56.

³ St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer. 1:10:2.

mercy.”

Then the presbyter completes the litany asking the Lord to remember all those who asked us to remember them in our prayers and supplications, especially for those who died and for the sick, Because He is our life, our hope, our salvation, our healing, and our resurrection.

The presbyter offers incense to the Gospel. Then ascends the sanctuary and puts one spoonful of incense into the censer. The deacon holds the Gospel and the Cross, facing the presbyter who goes round the Altar praying secretly the Song of Simeon: *“Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for mine eyes have seen Your salvation.”*

He declares his desire to see Paradise, as Simeon did. For he sees salvation through the Gospel, and his heart is lifted up to heaven.

As for the rotation round the altar censing the Gospel and the Cross, it refers to the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world by the power of the Cross which is the center of the Gospel.

At the sanctuary door the deacon declares *“Stand you in the fear of God. Let us hear the holy gospel.”* And the presbyter by the Sanctuary door lifts the Bible over his head and shows it to the people saying: *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

He holds the book of the Gospels, and the presbyters according to their rank draw near to kiss it, He says to each *“Kiss the Gospel...”* then he kisses it himself saying likewise.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

One of the presbyters censes the Gospel praying inaudibly the *“Mystery of the Gospel,”* asking God to accept our prayers, penitence and confessions, to make us worthy of hearing His holy gospels. He also mentions the sick, travelers, the winds, the waters, the plants, the president of the country, the captured, the offerers, the afflicted and the catechumens.

The officiating priest stands before the sanctuary door looking towards the east and praying inaudibly the *“Prayer of the Iconostasis,”* asking the Father that this sacrament, which He has ordained unto us for our salvation, would not become a condemnation to us or to any of

His own people. The entire congregation stands up with reverence to hear the Gospel.

STANDING ON READING THE GOSPEL¹

1- It is a universal custom to rise and keep standing in the presence of authorities, therefore standing to hear God's word is the least we can do as a sign of respect to our Lord.

2- The standing position reminds us of the resurrection of our Lord which means our salvation.

3- The standing position is also the posture of the active man, who is ready to work, exercising the practical salvation in his life and preaching the good news to the world².

THE PSALM

Before reading the Gospel, a psalm is sung. This rite came down from the first century. Fr. Dix³ says that it came down from the synagogues of our Lord's time.

The psalm-chant with "Alleluias" expresses the joy of the Church of Christ, for her salvation, which is revealed in the Gospel.

Chanting the psalm before reading the Gospel represents the prophets who preceded Christ.

7- THE SERMON

Every bishop, at his consecration, receives a special gift of grace, in order to teach his people, proclaiming the unchanging saving truth of the Gospel, and not any personal opinion of his own.

Sometimes the early bishops used to invite the presbyter and deacons to teach. But the liturgical sermon was regarded as one of the Bishops integral tasks⁴. In every church there is a special seat for the bishop⁵. It is not the seat of government by a teacher's chair, for he is not a ruler but a "watchman" of his church⁶.

¹ *Concerning censoring before the Gospel and increasing lights during its reading, see our book: Church, House of God, p. 98-99.*

² *Cf. Fax: The Church at Eucharist.*

³ *Dix: The Shape of the Liturgy, p. 471.*

⁴ *See Dix, p.40 - 41, Irenaeus: Adv. Haer 1:10:2.*

⁵ *Fr. Malaty: Church, House of God 40-41.*

⁶ *See Hip: Philosphumen 1:1. Irenaeus: Demost of the Apostolic Preaching 2.*

Our Lord said to those who preach God's word, "*Who hears you, hears Me.*" In order to listen to a sermon fruitfully, one must see the Lord standing behind the preacher, pointing at him and saying, "*Whoever listens to him, listens to Me.*"

There is a passage of **St. Irenaeus**, which gives so much light on the conception of the liturgical sermon in the second century.

✠ Although the Church has spread all over the world, it diligently observes work as though dwelling in a single household: and she unanimously believes all matters of the faith, as though having one soul and one heart; and she accordingly proclaims and teaches and bands down these things, as though having but one mouth...

As the sun, God's creation, is one and the same for the entire world, so does the proclamation of Truth everywhere shine and enlighten all men who are willing to come to the knowledge of the Truth. It is fit for those who preside over the churches, as those who are very skilled in teaching, to say nothing else than this; for no man is above his own teacher. Also he, who is but a poor teacher, should not omit the contents of the tradition. For since their faith is one and the same, neither can he, who can say a great deal about it, actually add to it; nor can he, who can say but little, subtract anything in dealing with these matters¹.

St. Irenaeus

✠ ✠ ✠

¹ *Irenaeus: Adv. Haer 1:10:2.*

Appendix No 1

THE MYSTERY OF THE PAULINE EPISTLE

O God of knowledge and Giver of wisdom, Who clears out the depth from darkness, and gives the word unto the preachers of the gospel with great power, Who of Your goodness did call Paul, who was one time a persecutor, to be a chosen vessel, and was pleased in him, that he should become a chosen apostle and a preacher of the gospel of Your kingdom, O Christ our God.

You also do we now entreat, O good Lover of mankind. Graciously grant unto us and all Your people a concentrated mind and a pure understanding, how profitable are Your holy teachings, which have been read to us from him. Even as he became like unto You, O Chief of Life, so make us to be like unto him in deed and doctrine, that we may glorify Your holy Name and ever glory in Your cross. And You are He unto Whom we lift up glory and reverence and worship, with Your good Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

Appendix No 2

THE MYSTERY OF THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

O Lord God, who has revealed unto us through Your holy apostles the mystery of the gospel - of the glory of Your Christ, and hast given unto them, according to the power of the unlimited gift of Your grace, that they should preach among all nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of Your mercy. We pray to You, O our Lord, make us worthy of their share and heritage. Graciously grant us unto their wrestling, and have communion with them in the sweat, which they accepted for the sake of godliness. Keep Your holy church, which You founded through them, and bless the lambs of Your flocks, and make to increase Your vine, which Your right hand has planted, through Christ Jesus our Lord. This is He through whom are due unto You glory and honor and power and worship, with Him; and the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver who is of one substance with You, now and

forever and unto the age all ages, Amen.

Appendix No 3

THE MYSTERY OF THE ACTS

O God Who accepted the sacrifice of Abraham, and in lieu of Isaac prepared a lamb to replace him, even so, O our Lord, accept from us this sacrifice of incense, and send down upon us in return Your abundant mercy, and make us pure from all pollution of sin, and worthy to minister in holiness and righteousness before Your goodness, all the days of our life.

Remember, O Lord the peace of Your One, Only, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Appendix No 4

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

O You Who are long-suffering, abundant in mercy and ever-true, accept from us our prayers and supplications, receive our entreatings and repentance and confession upon Your holy undefiled heavenly stainless altar: may we be made worthy to hear Your holy gospels, and may we keep Your precepts and commandments, and bring forth fruits therein, a hundred-fold and sixty-fold and thirty-fold in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Remember, O Lord, the sick of the people; attend them with Your tender mercy and loving-kindness, heal them.

Remember, O Lord, our fathers and brethren who are traveling, bring them back to their homes in peace and safety.

(At the time of sowing) Remember, O Lord, the sowings, the herbs and the plants of the fields, may they grow and multiply.

(At the time of harvest) remember, O Lord, the atmospheric changes of the air and the fruits of the earth, bless them

(At the time of the rising of the Nile) Remember, O Lord, the waters of the river, bless them, and bring them up to their right measure.

Remember, O Lord, the safety of man and beast; do You save them all.

Remember, O Lord, the safety of this time holy place, and all

the places and all the monasteries of our Orthodox fathers; do You save them from all evil.

Remember, O Lord, the Christ-loving (N) servant, the (president) of our land; keep him in peace, justice and power.

Remember, O Lord, those who are in bondage; save them all.

Remember, O Lord, those who suffer under afflictions and adversity, save them from all their tribulations.

Remember, O Lord, our fathers and brethren who have slept and reposed in the Orthodox faith, give rest to all their souls.

Remember, O Lord, them who have offered these oblations to You, them for whom they have been offered, and them by whom they are offered, give them all the heavenly recompense.

Remember, O Lord, the catechumens of Your people; have mercy upon them; confirm them in faith in You, uproot from their hearts all trace of idolatry; strengthen in their hearts Your law, Your fear, Your precepts, Your truths, Your holy commandments, grant them a firm knowledge of the words preached to them. And at the appointed time may they be worthy of the washing of the new birth for the remission of their sins. Prepare them to be a temple for Your Holy Spirit.

Appendix No 5

THE MYSTERY OF THE ICONOSTASIS

O God, who in Your unspeakable love towards mankind sent Your Only-begotten Son into the world, to redeem the lost sheep back unto You. We pray You, O King, do not repel us as we lay our hands on this awful un-bloody sacrifice. For we rely not on our own righteousness, but on Your mercy, whereby You have given life unto our race. We pray and entreat Your goodness, O You Lover of mankind that this sacrament which You have ordained for us unto salvation may not be condemnation unto us or unto any of Your people, but unto the obliteration of our sins and the forgiveness of our shortcomings and for the glory and honor of Your Holy Name, O Father, Son, Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever, Amen.

2

INTERCESSIONS

THE THREE GREAT INTERCESSIONS (*LITANIES*)

God speaks to us through His Church (Lections), now His Church prays to Him on our behalf.

1- She asks for God's peace to be poured in our hearts. She also asks for the peace of the president (king), the armies, magistrates, councilors, our neighbors etc. Lastly she asks Him for the forgiveness of our sins so that we may not fall under the dominion of death and lose our peace.

2- She prays for the clergymen, especially the Pope, for they need special power to take care of God's people. We pray for them and they for us. We pray to Him to accept their prayers, which they make on our behalf and ours as well on their behalf.

3- She also prays for the holy assembly (ecclesia). We desire to see all mankind become children of God and members in Christ's Body, enjoying their free salvation.

Until now, in the Coptic Church, these intercessions still preserve their liturgical type. They are offered as a corporate act involving the whole church, in which each order - laity, deacon and presbyter - must actively discharge his own separate and distinctive function within the fulfillment of the "priestly" activity of the whole Body of Christ.

It is with just sorrow that in many churches the deacon's part has completely disappeared and the congregation's prayer has been reduced to a single word "Amen."

In the fourth century in Jerusalem, these intercessory prayers were shifted to be said after the consecration, as a part of the celebrant's Eucharistic prayer, instead of at the end of the liturgy of the catechumens¹.

¹ *Dix, p 509.*

THE CREED

It is a natural response to the divine voice of the Lections and the ecclesiastic prayers in the intercessions. By it the believers declare their faith, carrying the word of God to the end of the earth.

We sing it, for it is a beautiful, simple and complete hymn. It describes the divine plan for our salvation in our lives, the Passion, Death, Resurrection and the Ascension of the Son of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It also describes the “*Mystery of the Church*” which waits for her entire triumph with her Bridegroom in the Kingdom of Heaven.

TEXT OF THE THREE GREAT PRAYERS

Presbyter: *Again let us pray to God Almighty, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray and beseech Your goodness, O You, Lover of mankind, remember O Lord the peace of Your One, Only, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church of God.*

Deacon: *Pray for the peace of the One, Only, Catholic, Apostolic Church of God.*

Congregation: *Kyrie Elieson (Lord have mercy).*

P: *Which is from one end of the world to the uttermost ends thereof, all nations and all flocks do You bless them. Grant that Your heavenly peace be poured into all our hearts, also grant unto us the peace of this life.*

The king (president), the soldiers the rulers, the counselors, the people, our neighbors, our coming in and going out. Adorn them with all peace, O King of peace, grant us Your peace. For You have given us everything. Possess us unto You, O God our Savior, for we know none but You. We call upon You Your holy Name. May our souls live by Your Holy Spirit, and let not the death of sin have power over us, we Your servants, nor over any of Your people.

C: *Lord have mercy.*

P: *Again let us pray to God the Almighty, the Father of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. We pray and beseech Your goodness O You Lover of mankind. Lord, remember our Patriarch the honored father and Pope “Shenouda III” and his brothers in the apostolic service the Patriarch of Antioch “Ignatius Awas, and the Patriarch of Eritrea “Abouna Philopos”*

D: *Pray for our father “Shenouda III” Pope and Patriarch, and*

Archbishop of the great city Alexandria.....

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: *Protect and keep him for us for many years and peaceful times, fulfilling his Patriarchate (which You entrusted him with) in peace and according to Your holy and blessed Will. Preaching the Word of truth in an orthodox manner, and shepherding your people in purity and justice.*

We also ask You to preserve for us with our Orthodox bishops and the proto-priests, the priests and deacons and all the fullness of Your one Catholic and Apostolic Church. Accept their prayers on our behalf and for Your people, as well as our prayers for them. Receive and accept these prayers, as a sweet aroma, on Your holy, eloquent and heavenly altar.

Subdue without fail all their enemies under their feet. As for the clergymen, keep them in peace and righteousness in Your holy Church.

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: *We also ask God the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We entreat Your goodness, O' Lover-of-Mankind, remember O' Lord, our gatherings. Bless them.*

D: *Pray for this holy church, and for our gatherings.*

C: *Lord, have mercy.*

P: *Allow us to have them without prevention or hindrance, that we may hold them according to Your Holy and Blessed Will*

Grant us O' Lord houses of prayer, houses of purity (he stretches his hands westwards), and houses of blessing (he stretches his hands northwards). Grant them unto us, O Lord, and unto Your servants coming after us forever (he stretches his hands southward, making the sign of the cross).

Eliminate all idol worship from the world. Trample and humiliate Satan and his evil powers under our feet. Abolish all intrigues and their instigators. Eliminate all dissension of the corrupt heresies. Humiliate the enemies of Your holy Church, O' Lord, as You have always done. Remove their vanity; show them their weaknesses. Shatter their envy, their intrigues, their madness, their wickedness and their slander, which they commit against us.

Lord, bring them all to no avail; disperse their counsel, O' God, as you have dispersed the counsel of Ahithophel.

C: *Amen, Lord, have mercy.*

P: (The celebrant, turning to the East, censes the presbyters, as he says):

Arise O Lord God, let all Your enemies be scattered. Let all that hate Your holy Name flee from before Your face.

(Then turning to the west, he censes the people):

But let Your people be blessed a thousand - thousand fold, and ten-thousands ten-thousand fold.

May they fulfill Your will, through the grace and mercies and loving (philanthropy) of mankind that belong to Your Only - begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, (he offers incense thrice towards the altar). It is due unto You, with Himself and the Holy Spirit, the life-giving and con-substantial with You, all glory, honor, dominion and worship, now and all times and unto the ages of all ages Amen.

3

ASPASMOS (*PRE - ANAPHORA*)

The church asks for us (*the litanies*), the deacon urges us to listen to God with wisdom, and we recite the apostolic creed. Now at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, the presbyter reveals our reconciliation with God through His Son. This is the last thing the catechumens hear before their going out¹, and it is the foundation on which the Liturgy of the Faithful is built.

THE ASPASMO'S PRAYER (*Prayer of Reconciliation*)

The presbyter washes his hand three times², turns westward, and wrings his hands before the congregation saying that he has sinned and asking them to forgive him. They answer that they have sinned and need forgiveness. Then he prays the *Aspasmos' Prayer*.

Some presbyters use the *Aspasmos' Prayer* of the Liturgy of St. Gregory or that of St. Cyril (St. Mark). These prayers have the same meaning. The person confesses that he had sinned and that God sent His prophets for him, and lastly He sent His Beloved Only-Begotten Son, Who grants us reconciliation with God.

The presbyter says:

✠ O God, Great and Eternal, Who made man in incorruption;
*And death, which entered into the world by the envy of Satan,
You have destroyed by the life-giving manifestation of Your
Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, our God and our Savior, Jesus
Christ...*
*And has filled the earth with heavenly peace, for which hosts of
angels glorify You, saying:*
*Glory be to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward
men.*

The Liturgy of St. Basil

✠ ...Adam was deceived by the enemy (Satan) disobeying Your holy

¹ Perhaps the catechumens were dismissed before this prayer.

² See: "The Rite of the Preparation, The Hand-washing"

commandment. When You wanted to put him back to his previous rank, You did not trust an angel, an archangel, a patriarch or a prophet for his salvation, but You incarnated without changing Your divine nature, and was likened unto us in everything except sin. You became a Mediator between us and the Father and removed the barrier and demolished the previous enmity.

You reconciled the earthly creatures with the heavenly hosts and united both in one...

The Liturgy of St. Gregory

THE APOSTOLIC KISS

Through the *Prayer of Reconciliation* the deacon urges us to kiss one another, saying: “*Pray for perfect peace, for love and for the holy Apostolic kiss.*” We cannot enjoy reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ and the peace with the Holy Trinity unless we have peace with one another.

This “*Kiss of Peace*” which is still exchanged in our Coptic Church, was used from the apostolic age, but it disappeared from other churches.

St. Justin¹ in the second century mentioned the liturgical kiss as an immediate preparation for the Eucharist, as a conclusion of the prayers before the Eucharistic celebration. By means of this spiritual kiss, they affirmed that they really wanted to be one family. It also means that if one wished to bring a gift to the altar, he ought first to reconcile with his brother.

The Syrian Didascalia² of the Apostles says that the deacon cried aloud, while the kiss was actually being exchanged, “*Is there any man who keeps aught against his fellow?*” as a final precaution so that even at the last moment the bishop may make peace between them.

Fr. Dix says that the apostolic kiss of peace “now stands in its primitive position only among Copts and Abyssinians³.”

Nikolai Gogol⁴ describes this liturgical kiss saying that a long time ago all those who were present in church kissed one another, men

¹ *Apology 1: 67. Cf. Apostolic Tradition 4: 1.*

² *Dix 109, 106, Syrian Didascalia 2: 45*

³ *Dix 110.*

⁴ *Nikolai Oogal: Meditation on the Divine Liturgy, p 36.*

kissed men, women kissed women, saying “Christ is between us,” and others replying, “He is and will be.”

✠ Do not think that this kiss is like that which friends are accustomed to give one another when they meet in the *agora*. This is not such a kiss. This kiss unites the souls together and destroys all resentment. This kiss is a sign of the union of souls.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

✠ It is the sign of peace. The outwardly shape of the lips expresses what is in our hearts¹.

St. Augustine

✠ By this kiss people make a kind of profession of the unity and charity which they have among themselves. It is not fitting for those who form one body in the church that any one of them should hate any of his brothers who share in the faith².

Fr Theodore of Mopsuestia

OTHER KINDS OF KISSES IN THE CHURCH

1- In the Coptic Church, the people kiss the hand of the bishop and the presbyter; and the clergymen exchange the kiss of peace. A kiss of this sort is a sign of veneration, not to the presbyter himself, but indirectly to our Lord Christ.

2- It was the custom that the neophyte kisses the hand of the bishop immediately after Confirmation, and the bishop himself would kiss him³, as a symbol of that “fellowship of the Holy Spirit,” of which the communion of the Church is the only consequence and the outward sign. Then the neophyte passes by the faithful in the church, who greet him with a kiss as a sign of “brotherhood” in Jesus Christ. Now being a member of the Body of Christ he can receive and give the spiritual kiss, i.e. the peace of Christ⁴.

3- Kissing the altar, Gospel, and icons, is simply a sign of veneration to the holy objects, related to the Lord.

THE HOLY FEAR

At the end of the *Prayer of Reconciliation* the deacon urges us

¹ *PL 38: 1101 A.*

² *Catch. Hom. 15: 40.*

³ *Dix 107, Hippolytus: Apostolic Tradition 22: 3.*

⁴ *Jungmann: The Early Liturgy, p. 128.*

to bring our offerings and to stand up with fear; he says: “*Offer, offer, offer (the oblation) in order, Stand in awe, and look towards the East. Let us attend.*”

*Or “Let us stand up,
Stand in decency,
In fellowship,
In peace,
In God’s fear,
In trembling and reverence.
Lift up your eyes youe clergymen and you congregation,
In a prayer of thanks,
Quietly and peacefully,
Towards the East,
To see the Body and Blood of Immanuel our God placed on the altar,
Angels and Archangels are watching,
The Seraphim with six wings, and Seraphim, who are full of eyes, all of them are covering their faces in reverence,
For the wonder of His unseen and inaudible glory....”*

KINDS OF FEAR

The holy Fathers distinguished three kinds of fear:

- 1- The fear of the servants who work so that they may not be punished.
- 2- The fear of the hired people who work in order that they may receive a salary.
- 3- The fear of the sons who work because they love and respect their beloved fathers.

In the liturgy we fear God as His children. We believe that through the power of the blood of our Lord we will not be punished, and we do not expect earthly rewards. We are but sons, waiting to be received in the divine bosom of God.

We also know very well that the altar, especially at the moment of consecration is tremendously fearful.

✠ Man should stand in the presence of God with fear and trembling.

✠ (It is) with veneration that we must approach these most fearful

realities¹.

St. John Chrysostom

THE DISMISSAL OF THE CATECHUMENS

In the pre-Nicene church, the deacons proclaimed the dismissal of the catechumens before the intercessory prayers². They were, however, dismissed before or after the intercessions. They had the right to hear the Gospel, but as they had not yet received the Spirit of adoption, therefore they could not join in offering the Eucharistic prayer.

In Egypt - according to the *Euchologium of Serapion* - in the fourth century or even perhaps before this date, the catechumens who had received the faith but were not yet baptized, received blessing from the bishop before their dismissal.

¹ Danielou: *The Bible and Liturgy*, p 134.

² Dix, p. 437.

III

**THE LITURGY
OF
THE FAITHFUL**

- 1- Eucharistic Prayers.**
- 2- The Fraction.**
- 3- The Communion.**

1

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYERS

A - Heavenly hymn.

B - Consecration.

C - Church in Jesus Christ.

(A)

HEAVENLY HYMN *LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS!*

HEAVENLY PRESENCE!

The service of the liturgy of the faithful starts with the congregation's hymn: "*The Mercy of Peace, the Sacrifice of Praise.*" This hymn is a response to the deacon's command that we stand in awe, offering "*the continual sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name.*"

This is the *Sacrifice of Peace*, for - through the Cross - we have peace with God, the internal peace, by which our hearts become full of true joy and our spiritual tongues learn how to fly to heaven and participate in the angelic hymns.

Now the doors are closed, and the faithful are present and they all ascend to heaven, and enjoy the heavenly liturgy. **But by what merit the Church ascends to heaven and enjoys this great mystery?**

The rite relates to us the mystery of our entering into heaven, for the presbyter and the deacon lift up the "*prospharine*," slowly wave it above their heads. While removing it, the voice of its rattles is heard in the church, as if the heavenly liturgy starts with the resurrection of our Lord, which is the mystery of our entering into heaven; and the stone, i.e. the *prospharine*, has been moved, and the earthquake, i.e. the rattles are heard, and the reconciliation has been completed, and we find a place among the heavenly creatures to participate with them in their hymns and praise to God in His Presence. It is a fearful instant, in which we serve God in awe and piety.

✠ Yes, truly at this moment, filled with holy fear, we must hold our hearts raised on high to God and turned no longer toward the earth or earthly things. The priest invites us all implicitly to leave at this moment all the cares of life and our domestic preoccupations and to have our hearts turned to heaven to God, the Friend of man.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

The presbyter transfers the veil, which he has in his left hand to his right, for we are now transferred to the right side of our Lord. He holds the veil, which was over the “Lamb” and crosses the congregation, the deacons and himself, three times, declaring that the “Lamb of God” may bless all the church, laymen and clergymen.

He blesses the congregation saying, “*The Lord be with you all,*” or as in the Gregorian Liturgy he says: “*The love of God, the Father, and the grace of the Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, our God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and the communion gift and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with you all.*”

The church is in heaven, in the Presence of the Lord, meditating upon the love of the Father Who sent His Only-begotten Son for our salvation; and the free grace of the Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for by Him we are born children of God, united with our Lord and with each other in Jesus Christ. We all share the same Spirit He bestows upon us as different gifts.

This apostolic blessing was used since the first century.

The **Talmud**¹ says that this greeting “*The Lord be with you*” was used in old times when a man would recall his companies to the remembrance of Law.

As the presbyter declares that the congregation stand in the Presence of God, they also answer, “*And with Your spirit,*” for he is in need to feel the Presence of God.

Then he cries, “*Lift up your hearts,*” i.e. let us be heavenly-minded, not earthly-minded.

The people give their consent and say that their hearts are lifted up to heaven, where their treasure is², that is, Jesus Christ. We have followed Him in His ascension, because He has accepted us at His Table in His Kingdom. We have entered the *Eschaton* (world to come) and are now standing beyond time and space. It is because all this has

¹ Tractate “Barakoath.” Tos 7: 23; See Dix p. 38.

² Mat. 6:21.

happened to us that something will happen to the Bread and Wine.

Now that our hearts are in heaven in Christ, nothing remains but to give thanks to God. The celebrant says, “*Let us give thanks (eucharistomen) unto the Lord,*” and the faithful give their consent, saying, “*It is worthy and right.*”

✠ You now have the sacraments in their order. At first, after the prayer, you are asked to “*Lift up your hearts.*” This befits the members of Christ. For if you have become members of Christ, where is your Head?... Our Head is in heaven. Hence when “*Lift up your hearts*” is said, you answer, “*We have (them lifted up) to the Lord.*”

Then, because this lifting up of your hearts to God is a gift of God and lest you should attribute it to your own strength, your merits, and your labors the fact that you have your hearts lifted up to the Lord, after the answer “*We have our hearts lifted up to the Lord,*” the bishop or priest who is officiating also says, “*Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God,*” because we have our hearts raised up to Him.

Let us give thanks to Him, because if He did not give (the grace) we would have our hearts fixed on earth.

And you bear witness to this, saying, “*It is worthy and right,*” for us to give thanks to Him Who caused us to raise our hearts up to our Head¹.

St. Augustine

The Eucharist is an “Anaphora” i.e. the lifting up of our offering, our hearts and ourselves; through our Head, Jesus Christ, for without Him we would have laid prostrate on the ground.

A HEAVENLY CHOIR

Now we are together with the heavenly choirs. We praise our Lord together with the seven choirs of angels and with the two choirs of Cherubim and Seraphim. We become the tenth choir of the heavenly creatures, taking the place of Satan before the fall. Meditate upon that which the presbyter prays:

✠ *Worthy and right, worthy and right. For verily it is worthy and right. O Master, Lord, God of Truth, Existent before the ages and*

¹ *Sermon 227 (Frs. of the Church 38: 195.*

reigning unto eternity, Who is in the highest, and looking unto the lowly, Who created the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything therein, Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This by whom You have created all things, seen and unseen, Who sits upon the throne of His glory, Whom all the holy powers do worship.

Liturgy of St. Basil

✠ *It is meet and right. It is meet and right. It is indeed meet and right that we should praise You, bless You, serve You, worship You, and glorify You, the only true God...*

Liturgy of St. Gregory

✠ *It is meet and right. It is meet and right, for You truly are worthy, just and holy, becoming and necessary for our souls, our bodies and our spirits, O eternal, Master, Lord, God, Father Almighty, at all times and in all places of Your dominion that we should praise You, sing to You, bless You, serve You, worship You, give thanks to You, glorify You and confess to You, day and night, with unceasing lips, un-silenced hearts and uninterrupted praise. For You is He who created the heavens and all things therein, the earth and all that is therein, the seas, rivers, fountains, lakes and whatsoever is within them.*

You created man in Your image and likeness and You created all things in Your wisdom, in Your true light, Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, our God our Savior and our King, Jesus Christ; wherefore we give thanks to You and also to Your Son and the Holy Spirit, the holy consubstantial and inseparable Holy Trinity, this reasonable sacrifice and this un-bloody service, which all nations offer to You from the rising of the sun even to its going down, from the north to the south, for Your Name, O Lord, is great among the nations, and in every place they offer incense to Your Holy Name and a pure sacrifice, together with this sacrifice and this oblation.

Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark)

The deacon then gives the admonishing, “*You who are sitting, arise.*” Then after another prayer the deacon says, “*And look eastward.*” As we become heavenly beings, we ought to “stand” like the angels, looking to the East that is to the Throne of the Sun of Righteousness.

The presbyter prays:

✠ *Before whom stand the Angels, the Archangels, the thrones, Lordships, the Principalities, the Virtues and the Powers.*

You are He, round whom stand the Cherubim full of eyes and the six-winged Seraphim, praising continuously, with unceasing voices, saying:

Liturgy of St. Basil

✠ *You are He whom the angels praise, and the archangels worship!*

You are He whom Principalities bless, and Dominions hail!

You are He whom Powers glorify, and the Thrones raise acclamation to.

Around You stand thousands of thousand, and ten-thousand of ten-thousand offer You service.

You are He whom the invisible Powers bless; the visible worship You, all doing Your will, O Master.

O Lord, who is existent, true God of true God, who has revealed to us the light of the Father, who has vouchsafed to us true knowledge of the Holy Spirit: Who has displayed to us this great mystery of life, who has instituted for men the choirs of incorporeal beings and has committed to us who are on earth the Seraphic hymn: receive us together with those of the invisible choirs, even our voice, unite us with the heavenly hosts:

May we also speak with them, having eliminated all sinful thoughts, and may we cry aloud those things, which they proclaim, with unfailing voices and unceasing lips, glorifying Your greatness.

You are He whom the six-winged Cherubim and Seraphim encircle, with twain they cover their faces, and with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they do fly¹.

They cry one in front of the other, with the triumphal hymn of our salvation.

With joyous voice, celebrating, singing, shouting, glorifying, crying aloud and saying²:

Liturgy of St. Gregory

✠ *You are God, high above all Principalities and Powers, Dignities and Authorities, and above every name that can be named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come.*

¹ See the Euchologium of Bishop Serapion.

² See the liturgy of St. James.

You are He in whose presence stand thousand thousands and ten-thousand-times ten thousands holy Angels and Archangels serving You.

Before You stand Your two most glorious Living Creatures, six-winged and many-eyed, the Seraphim and Cherubim; and with twain of their wings they cover their faces because of Your invisible and incomprehensible divinity, and with twain they cover their feet, and with twain they do fly.

One and all they ever hallow You, but with all who hallow You, receive also from us our hallowing that with them we may praise You saying:

Liturgy of St. Mark (St. Cyril)

**THE HYMN
OF OUR SALVATION
“THE SANCTUS”**

Now, the hearts are lifted up to heaven, and the believers find a room among the heavenly creatures. They have the right to sing the *Seraphim’s hymn*, saying.

*“The Cherubim worship You,
And the Seraphim praise You,
They cry, saying,
Holy,
Holy,
Holy is the Lord of Sabaoth (the hosts).
Heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory.”*

✠ It is not much of praise, when we call Him “*Holy*.” For the Holy Scripture tells us that the angels worship Him by a hymn, and praise Him by singing it.

And as our hearts are taken up to heaven, we sing with the angels this hymn and share with them one bread, so that all of us would be one body and one holy building of God.

St. Ambrose

✠ Man is as if taken into heaven itself, he stands near the Throne of Glory. He flies with the Seraphim. He sings the most holy hymn.

St. John Chrysostom

✠ We sing this hymn as a sign of reconciliation and unity between angels and men. Their unity in singing hymns proves that in Jesus Christ they - angels and men - became one church.

St. Gregory

Fr. Dix says¹ that we have seen that the Sanctus, preceded by an account of the angels’ worship, is to be traced to Alexandria in the work of Origen c. A.D. 230 and probably goes back in the Alexandrian use to a period well before that date. The description of the heavenly worship and the Sanctus made its appearance for the first time in Syria during the time of Cyril of Jerusalem in A.D. 347, it was clearly borrowed from Egypt.

¹ *Fr. Dix, p. 537.*

This Hymn can be traced in the *Der Belizeh Anaphora*, in the Serapion's Liturgy and in St James' liturgy.

According to the liturgy of St Gregory, the hymn of the Hebrew children is added "*Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.*" This is the hymn of salvation and triumph, which they sang when our Lord entered Jerusalem to be crucified for the entire world.

We sing this angelic hymn before the "*angelic worship*" and the *sanctification*, as a symbol of the appearance of the angel who preached the human race before the incarnation of the Savior.

USING THE FANS

At this moment the two deacons who are serving with the presbyter would move their feather fans, as a sign that the angels are present around the altar. St. Chrysostom says that the deacons themselves represent the angels.

✠ We must think therefore that the deacons who (at the offertory) carry the eucharistic bread and bring it out for the sacrifice represent the invisible ministry (i.e. angels).

Fr. Theodore of Mopsuestia

THE PRESBYTER PRAYS THE SANCTUS (*The angelic worship*)

The presbyter with the congregation and deacons participate with the Seraphim in singing: "*Holy, Holy, Holy.*"

Before the presbyter prays this prayer he changes the veils, putting in his left hand the veil which was in his right hand (*previously it was on the bread*), and takes the one which is on the chalice by his right hand to use it in crossing himself, the servants of God and the congregation, saying in each time "*Agios*" i.e. "*Holy.*"

During the previous prayer, the plate was uncovered but the chalice remained covered, because when the reconciliation was realized and the Lord rose again and appeared to the Church (Mary the Magdalene) she did not know Him at first. Now the chalice and the bread are uncovered, for He declares Himself to His beloved Church.

The presbyter begins by taking the hand-cross and the chalice veil, crossing himself, the ministers and the congregation three times

saying, “*Holy*” meaning that the Holy Trinity is glorified through the holiness of the whole Church. He is Holy and is able to make His beloved bride holy.

Then he proclaims the history of our salvation, i.e. the divine saving plan for us, declaring the incarnation of the Son of God and His works for us, His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and His last (second) advent.

This is our eternal hymn, by which we give praise to the Holy Trinity, and in whom we find a fountain of love, peace, joy, righteousness and divine life. In the liturgy of St. Basil, the presbyter prays:

a- MEMORIAL OF OUR FALL

✠ *Holy, holy, holy, verily You are, O Lord, our God. Who formed us and created us and placed us in the Paradise of delight. And when we disobeyed Your commandment through the seduction of the serpent, we fell from eternal life and were exiled from the Paradise of delight.*

b- MEMORIAL OF SENDING PROPHETS

✠ *You did not leave us forever, but visited us always by the holy prophets.*

c- MEMORIAL OF INCARNATION

✠ *And at the end of days, You appeared unto us, we who are sitting in the darkness and shadow of death, through Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary. Took flesh and became man, and brought us the way of Salvation. He gave unto us the grace of rebirth from on high, of water and Spirit. And made us His own united people, He sanctified us by Your Holy Spirit.*

d- MEMORIAL OF PASSION

✠ *It is He, who loved His own who are in the world, and gave Himself up for our redemption unto the death which reigned over us whereby we were bound and sold because of our sins. He descended into Hades through the cross.*

e- MEMORIAL OF RESURRECTION

✠ *He rose from the dead on the third day.*

f - MEMORIAL OF ASCENSION

✠ *He ascended up into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand, O Father.*

He appointed a day for retribution, this on which He will appear to judge the entire world in equity, and to give unto everyone according to his deeds.

In the Gregorian liturgy, the presbyter prays in the singular form, on behalf of every member of the church, for what the Lord did; He did it for everyone personally.

It mentions many details, addressed to the Savoir, Jesus Christ, but it does not differ so much from the Basil's shape.

g - MEMORIAL OF OUR FALL

✠ *Agios (Holy), Agios,*

Agios are You, O Lord, and all-holy.

Surpassing is the light of Your essence, indescribable is the power of Your wisdom, words may not measure the depth of Your love for mankind.

You created me a man, as Lover of mankind, and You were not in need of my worship but rather that I had need of Your sovereignty.

Because of the abundant kindness, You have formed me out of nothing.

You set the sky to be a roof for me, and established the earth for me to tread.

For my sake, You have restrained the sea.

For my sake, You have showed the nature of animals;

You put all things under my dominion,

You did not let me want anything of Your goodness. You have formed me and lay Your hand upon me, and have inscribed in me the image of Your power, and have endowed me with the gift of reason. You have opened the Paradise for my delight.

You have bestowed upon me Your knowledge;

You have shown to me the tree of life, You made me know the sting of death. You forbade me to eat from one tree, from which alone You commanded that I should not eat:

I ate by my own will and set at naught Your Law, neglecting Your commandments by my own self-will. And I snatched for myself

the judgment of death.

h- MEMORIAL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

✠ *You, my Master, have changed my punishment unto salvation.*

As the Good Shepherd; You have gone after the wanderer.

*As the true Father You have sympathized with me when I fell,
And girded me with all remedies leading to life.*

You sent the prophets for me, who am sick.

*You have revealed to me the approach of Your advent, in which
You shall come again to judge the living and the dead, and to
render everyone according to his deeds.*

Liturgy of St. Gregory

In the Liturgy of St. Mark (St. Cyril) there isn't a similar prayer, but the presbyter says:

✠ *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Saboath (hosts),*

*Heaven and the earth are full of Your holy glory, O Lord, our
God.*

*Truly the heavens and the earth are full of Your holy glory,
through Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord, our God, our Savior
and King of us all, Jesus Christ.*

*Fill this Your sacrifice, O Lord, with Your blessing which is
from You, by the descent upon it of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Liturgy of St. Mark

(B)

CONSECRATION

As the Church stands before the heavenly altar, at the most significant moments of the Eucharistic act, in which the revelation of the divine love comes to its fullest utterance, it utters the words of Christ Himself, i.e. the instituting narrative, or the crossing, as an *anamnesis* of the Messiah, asking the Father to send His Holy Spirit upon the oblations to be transformed into the Immolated Body and Blood of Christ in order that their effect may be accomplished in us.

The whole liturgy is a preparation and fulfillment of the consecration of these oblations.

We can divide these prayers of consecration permissibly into three divisions:

The Institution Narrative,

The Anamnesis, and

The Epiclesis or the Invocation of the Holy Spirit.

These divisions, which we find in the early liturgies as in the Coptic Liturgies, aroused many questions in the minds of some liturgists, such as:

1- Is the consecration effected by the *Institution Narrative*, i.e. by Christ's words of transformation, or by the *Invocation of the Spirit*, or by both of them?

2- Does the Son of God play an active part in the Eucharist, or is He satisfied with the passive part, while the Holy oblations are transformed by the Holy Spirit?

3- Is the Invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the oblations or is it upon men also so that they may enjoy the worthiness of receiving the Eucharist, or is it on both of them?

Now I will try to answer these questions and others by studying the notion of the "consecration" and its prayers.

1 - THE INSTITUTION NARRATIVE (CROSSING THE GIFTS)

Consecration is transforming the bread and wine into the Immolated Body and Blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit Who is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, and Who is given to the ecclesia, as her Spirit. In other words, consecration is the *Mystery of the return of the church to the divine Bosom of the heavenly Father, through and with the Only-begotten Son, by the power of the Spirit.* Thus, the Holy Trinity plays an active part in the mystery.

The Father is the One Who accepts the Sacrifice of His Beloved Son on behalf of the Church. He accepts this eternal sacrifice through the ecclesia, i.e. the Body of the Son of God. He recognized the ecclesia as His Son's Body and her members as His own children in His Only-Begotten Son. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the fellowship who transforms the gifts and unites us with the Holy Trinity. The Son is the High-Priest of the Father, who unites His ecclesia to His priestly function, He serves the divine liturgy, consecrates the gifts and unites His Bride to Himself.

✠ It is Christ Himself Who declares (through the presbyter) "This is my Body¹."

St. Ambrose

✠ Whenever the great prayers and the holy supplicants are sent up, the Word comes on the bread and cup, and they become His Body².

St. Athanasius

THE RITE OF THE "INSTITUTION OF NARRATIVE"

The presbyter censes his hands thrice before praying the "Institution of Narrative" or "Crossing the gifts." This refers to the sanctification of the Church by the Holy Trinity in order that she can handle the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord.

Incense is a symbol of prayers, by which the presbyter may be sanctified so that he can carry the "Lamb" on his hand, and enter into

¹ *Ambrose: De Myster 9.*

² *Fragm 7. PG 26:1325.*

heaven, reciting Christ's words of consecration. He says: "*And He has instituted for us this great mystery unto godliness. For when He was determined to give Himself up unto death for the life of the world....*"

The congregation answers: "*We believe and trust.*"

The presbyter takes the Bread in his hands, lifts up the veil, which was under it, and puts it on the altar saying: "*He took bread on His hands which are holy, spotless, pure, blessed and life-giving.*"

Again the congregation expresses their faith in the real presence, saying: "*We believe that is true indeed. Amen.*"

The presbyter puts his right hand over the Bread, which is still on his left hand, and lifts his eyes upwards, saying: "*He looked up towards heaven, to You, O God, His Father and Lord of all.*" He signs the cross thrice over the bread, saying: "*He gave thanks.*"

Congregation: "*Amen.*"

Presbyter: "*He blessed It.*"

Congregation: "*Amen.*"

Presbyter: "*He Sanctified It.*"

Congregation: "*Amen.*" "*We believe, we confess, we glorify.*"

Signing the Bread (and the chalice afterwards) with the Cross thrice is sealing them with the seal of the King. For the Cross is the sign of the Son of Man, as He reconciled us by the Blood of His Cross.

He crosses them thrice proclaiming the active part, which the Holy Trinity plays for our salvation through the crucifixion of the Son of God. It also means that the sacrifice on the Cross or crucifixion was and still is the power and the glory of the Holy Trinity. For this reason the congregation sings this hymn: "*We believe, we confess, and we glorify.*" What the world considers weakness, we realize, through the Holy Spirit, to be God's power.

The presbyter slightly breaks the Bread into one and two thirds, using his thumb without touching the "*Spadikon*"¹, letting this one third on his right hand, and saying: "*He divided It and gave It to His saintly disciples and holy apostles, saying: Take, eat you all of It, For this is My Body.*" Here he slightly breaks the top part of the Bread with the tip of his fingers and places It on the paten. He cleans his fingers on

¹ *i.e. the central part.*

the paten from any particles sticking to them, saying: “*Which is to be broken for you and for many, to be given for the remission of sins. Do this in anamnesis of Me.*”

He places the host on the paten and genuflects, but without any elevation.

The congregation reply: “*This is so, indeed, Amen,*” i.e. we believe in His words asking the remission of our sins.

The ecclesia utters Christ’s words of consecration. She is one with her Head; she recites His own words of transformation by continuing the action of giving Himself to His ecclesia, as a source of her salvation and divine life. Christ Himself continues to utter through His ecclesia, His effective words of consecration, which He spoke on instituting His Sacrament.

St. Ambrose says, “*How does the consecration take place? It takes place by means of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

The presbyter not only utters Christ’s words of consecration, but also breaks the Bread while he is reciting them. The Lord did this by His own hand declaring that He willingly accepts the passions he would suffer.

In the *Apostolic Tradition* of **St. Hippolytus**, the presbyter prays:

“When He delivered himself up to His death freely, so that He may bring death to nothingness and break the bonds of the devil and tread hell under his feet and give light to the righteous and set up a covenant and manifest His resurrection. He took bread and while giving thanks He said, “*Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you.*”

St. Jacob El-Serougi says that the apostles could not break the Bread if it were not that Jesus Himself broke it in front of them. The ecclesia received this rite from the Lord, i.e. breaking the Bread.

The presbyter breaks it in the shape of a Cross, without separating the parts from each other. For Jesus suffered the passions while He is Himself the Life-giving Lord, whom death cannot conquer and one of His bones shall not be broken.

CONCERNING THE CHALICE

We do not need to repeat the rites of the institution narrative concerning the chalice, for it has the same notions and meanings but we shall summarize its rite.

The presbyter uncovers the chalice and puts his hands on top of it, saying:

“Likewise, after supper. He also mixed the chalice of wine and water” (crossing it thrice saying): *“He gave thanks.”*

Congregation: *“Amen.”*

Presbyter: *“He blessed It.”*

Congregation: *“Amen.”*

Presbyter: *“He Sanctified It.”*

Congregation: *“Amen.” “Again we believe, we confess, we glorify.”*

The presbyter gently holding the chalice says: *“He tasted, and gave it to His saintly disciples and holy apostles,”* (Slightly inclining the chalice crosswise the presbyter says): *“Take, drink of it you all”* (pointing with his hands to it), *“For this is my Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for you and for many to be given for the remission of sins. Do this in my Anamnesis.”*

The congregation affirms their belief, saying, *“This, also is true indeed. Amen.”*

2 - THE ANAMNESIS

We already spoke about the Eucharist as an *anamnesis* of the Redeemer. The presbyter proclaims through the prayers of the *Institution Narrative* that the Eucharist is done in *anamnesis* of Christ, acting in our life. He also prays, pointing with his hands to the Body: “*For as often you eat of this Bread, and drink of this Chalice, You do preach My death, do confess My resurrection, you do remember me (make anamnesis) until I come.*”

The congregation responds singing this hymn: “*Your death, O Lord, do we preach, Your holy resurrection and ascension we confess. We praise You. We bless You. We thank You, O Lord. And we entreat You, O our God.*”

The presbyter in the meanwhile continues the anamnesis, saying: “*As we commemorate His Holy Passion, His Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension to Heaven, His sitting at Your right hand, O Father, and His second coming, which shall be from heaven, awesome and full of glory. We offer unto You Your oblations from what is Yours, upon every condition, for any condition and in whatever condition.*”

The oblations, which we offer, are the living and life-giving sacrifice of Christ, creative in the life of the Church. Through this sacrifice the Church offers herself, as the Body of the Messiah, practicing His passion. His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension, as if these things are her own.

3 - THE EPICLESIS

THE INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fr. John Damascus in the eighth century said that the consecration is not affected by the words of the “*Institution Narrative*” (the Lord’s own words), but only by the Invocation of the Holy Spirit¹. Some theologians accepted this idea, but others refused it, saying that we cannot say that the consecration is affected solely by the *Epiclesis*. The celebration of the Liturgy, especially the consecration prayers cannot be divided into separate parts. We cannot separate the positive action of Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist from the action of the Holy Spirit, and so we cannot separate the Institution Narrative from the *Epiclesis*.

The Mystery of the Eucharist is the action of the Redeemer Himself, by the power of His own Spirit, i.e. by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the saving deeds of Christ, the Holy Spirit would not descend on the gifts i.e. the oblations to transform them into the Crucified and Risen Body of Christ.

For example the *Serapion’s Petition of Consecration* mentions the advent of the Word, instead of the advent or the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The same idea also found in other fourth century writings such as those in Egypt, Syria and Cappadocia, and in some later dated Galician prayers².

Some see that the Eucharistic celebration looks like the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin. St. Mary for the Incarnation of the Word. The Holy Spirit, however, had realized the Incarnation. While the Son played an active part by His incarnation, similarly, in the Eucharist, He is the active agent who offers the Church, which is found in Him, to His Father³.

As an example, **St. Chrysostom** sometimes attributes the sanctification to the Holy Spirit and at other times to the Word.

✠ When the presbyter stands before the table, lifting up his hands to

¹ *De Fide Orthodox* 13.

² *Dix* 275/6.

³ *St. Athanasius says that the Logos « formed for Himself the Body from the Virgin » De Incar.* 18.

heaven, and calling on the Holy Spirit, to come and touch the gifts, great silence and solemnity prevail all over the place¹.

✠ It is not man who transforms the gifts which are set forth into the Body and Blood of Christ, but it is Christ Himself Who was crucified for us².

St. John Chrysostom

At the **Liturgy of St. Gregory**, the presbyter asks the Son to send the Holy Spirit, upon us and upon the gifts. At the same time he proclaims the active part, which the Son plays in this transformation. He says:

✠ You, O Master, only by Your own voice transform these gifts which are presented.

You, Who are present with us, prepare this service, which is full of mystery for us.

Plant into us the memory of the holy service.

Send the grace of the Holy Spirit upon us to sanctify and transform these oblations, which are presented into the Body and Blood of our salvation.

Liturgy of St. Gregory

Fr. Dix sees that there is a confusion in the Eastern Churches, for while they say that the consecration is effected by the *Epiclesis* they also say that the Eucharist is the act of Christ Himself, the High-priest of the heavenly altar, Who Himself offers, Himself prays, Himself consecrates in the offering of the sacrifice. He also says, "We westerns have enough confusions and losses of our own which deplore in the field of Eucharistic teaching and devotions, without seeking to follow theirs³." He attributes confusion to the Eastern Church for these reasons:

1- Fr. Dix makes a complete separation between the works of the Holy Trinity, so that when he attributes a task to one of the Trinity he sees the other two Persons play a passive part. But **St. Augustine** in his sermons on the Gospel of St. Matthew explained the opposite of this.

¹ *Hom. In. Coent App 3.*

² *De Prod. Judoe 1: 6.*

³ *Dix, p. 292.*

Example: The Incarnation was realized by the act of the Holy Spirit, but the other two Persons played an active part. The Holy Scriptures say concerning the Father that He “sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved,” and concerning the Son it is said, “But He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant.”

2- The second reason is Dix’s analysis of the liturgy is in an earthly way. The liturgy is a divine and heavenly service, which surpasses space and time. We must not separate its prayers one from the other. It is one act for our salvation, in which the ecclesia is present in the Golgotha, and at the same time in heaven.

Finally, we mention what Fr. Daniélou says¹, “The consecration is, on the one hand, an act shared by the Holy Trinity i.e. Three persons and (aspect of the same) is appropriated to the Spirit, by whom God carried out His great works in history; on the other hand, it is enacted by the creative Word, which is also a powerful instrument of God.”

THE RITE OF THE “EPICLESIS”

As the deacon says audibly: “*Worship God in fear and trembling,*” the congregation - bowing - answer: “*We praise You; We bless You. We serve You, We worship You.*”

Lifting up his hands and leaning over the altar, the presbyter inaudibly begins the epiclesis:

“*And we beseech You, O Christ our God, we, Your sinful and unworthy servants. And worship You, by the pleasure of Your goodness, that Your Holy Spirit may descend upon us and upon these offerings here present, to purify them unto us, and transform them, and manifest them holy unto Your saints.*”

The deacon gives the admonition: “*Let us attend. Amen.*” Then the presbyter thrice crosses over the paten, saying, “*And this Bread, He makes into His Holy Body*”

Congregation: “*We believe.*”

Priest: (inaudibly) “*Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. It is given for the remission of sins and eternal life for whoever partakes thereof.*”

¹ Daniélou: *The Bible and the Liturgy.*

The presbyter also crosses the chalice thrice as he says: “*And this Chalice the glorious blood of the New Testament..*” repeating the same rite of the paten.

(C)

THE CHURCH IN JESUS CHRIST

Now the holy gifts are transformed into the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, and the Church is not only around the altar, where the Sacrifice is present, but she is also His Body.

Nobody sees himself alone, but regards himself as a member of the one Body in Christ.

The Eucharist is the Mystery of Christ, i.e. the mystery of the unity with everybody in Christ. It is the Mystery of Love, which does not know any barriers or walls of separation.

The Church is united together in Christ. For this reason the present members pray for each other, for the absent as well as for the departed members, and at the same time they ask for the prayers of those who are rested in the Lord.

The Church prays:

- 1- **The Small Intercessions:** Prayers for all men.
- 2- **The Commemoration of Saints:** Asking prayers from the departed ones.
- 3- **The *Dipytuchs* of Dead:** Prayers for the departed ones.

1- THE SMALL INTERCESSIONS

The Church lifts up her heart to her Bridegroom, who is the Lover of mankind, asking Him for the whole world, praying for:

- A. *The Peace of the Church.***
- B. *The Fathers of the Church.***
- C. *The Presbyter of the Church.***
- D. *The Place where we live.***

✠ The reason why I say that the presbyter prays for a city, village, or for the whole world is that he must ask the Lord to forgive all those who pray¹.

St. Chrysostom

It is wonderful that God asks us to pray not only for our country, to which we are indebted by love, but also for every place where we live. He says to the prophet Jeremiah, who was in exile, “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare².”

- E. *The waters, the plants or the weather.***
- F. *The Oblations.***

According to the **Liturgy of St. Gregory**, the presbyter also prays other litanies for:

- 1- *The Emperor (President).***
- 2- *The Ministers.***
- 3- *The Captives.***

He also prays for *the Shepherds and the Congregation*; for *the Presbyters, the Monks, the Nuns, the Virgins and the Married persons*; for *the Rich and the Poor*; for *the Elders and the Young*; for *the Believers and the Heretics...*

According to the **Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark)**, these litanies are said before the prayers of the sanctification and the invocation. There are other litanies prayed also like those for the *sick, the Travelers, the Departed, the Meetings* etc.

In the Coptic rite the presbyter prays for the people in general

¹ *Priesthood 6.*

² *Jerm 29: 7 See Ps 122: 7 - 9.*

and does not mention names except the Emperor (the President), the Pope of Alexandria and the local bishop; and in the diptychs he mentions the names of the dead¹.

The deacon admonishes the people to participate with the presbyter in praying these litanies. They ask for the individuals whom they know secretly in front of God.

¹ See *Dix*, p. 510.

2- THE COMMEMORATION OF THE SAINTS

The Eucharist is the mystery of the whole ecclesia. It is the coming of the whole redeemed Catholic ecclesia to the Father in Jesus Christ, as His Holy Body, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a divine action done on behalf of the whole ecclesia, not only on behalf of those present at the moment of the celebration, but of all the members. It is a divine mystery of the one ecclesia, i.e. of the triumphant and militant members. For the triumphant ones, who departed from earth, did not leave the Church. Their love to their brethren, who are militant, did not cease by their departure and dwelling in Paradise. The death of bodies never separates the faithful from the Church, nor does it sever the bond of mutual love¹.

“The community, which as Christians, we belong to, is not limited only to the world we see around us. It extends across time as well as space, embracing the departed ones along with the living. In God and in His Church there can be no division between the living and the dead, for both are one in the love of the Father. Christians, whether they are alive or not, as members of God's Church still belong to one and the same family; they are still members belonging to each other and are called to bear each other's burdens.

The Church, a reality, both visible and invisible, encompasses within herself earth and heaven, the living, the departed and saints, men and angels, joining them all in one body².”

Origen held a strong doctrine of the Communion of saints³ He says:

✠ Now according to the divine word one of the chiefest virtues is to love one's neighbor⁴. And we must hold that the saints who have fallen asleep before us exercise, toward those who still struggle in this life, much more than do they who are compassed about with human weakness and are struggling in company with feebler folk.

✠ Regarding to the power of the Lord being present with the Church, Paul says, “When you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the

¹ See Fr Tadrous Malaty: *Church, House of God*, p 42 - 45 (1970).

² See Philippou: *The Orthodox Ethos*, vol 1, p 141.

³ Origen: *De Principiis* 3, 2, 4, *Corn. on Mat 27: 30. Exh. to Martyr. 30: 38. On prayer 6: 2 - 4, 31: 5. Horn on Num 26: 6.*

⁴ *Mat 5: 43, Luke 6: 35.*

power of the Lord Jesus¹,” being associated not only with the Ephesians but also with the Corinthians. And if Paul, while still clothed in the body considered himself to be united in his spirit at Corinth, we must not give up hope that the blessed also who have departed are present in spirit at the gatherings of the Church, and perhaps more than those present in the body. Therefore we must not despise their prayers, for they bestow a singular grace on anyone who in sincerity comes to the assembly².

Origen

THE RITE OF THE COMMEMORATION

We ask for nothing on behalf of the saints, instead we ask that their prayers may assist us. According to the **Liturgy of St. Cyril (St. Mark)** the presbyter concludes the commemoration with this prayer: *“O Lord, we are not worthy to intercede for their blessedness, but that they, standing before the judgment seat of Your Only-Begotten Son, may in their turn intercede for our weakness and our wretchedness. Forgive our sins for the sake of their holy petitions, and for the sake of Your blessed Name.”*

✠ *Not that we are worthy to mention their blessedness, but that they who are standing before Your fearful and dreadful judgment seat may in their turn mention our wretchedness, and we may find grace and mercy before You, O Lord for succor in our time of need³.*

Liturgy of St. James

¹ 1 Cor 5: 3, 4.

² See Alexandria Christianity, 259 - 260 Origen, *On Prayer* (S.P.C K London 1954).

³ For the Greek Orthodox Church.

3- THE DIPYTUCH (Diptichon, Touptikon)

Abbot Macarius the Great says, “There is no other way to be saved except through our neighbor.” We can’t practice our salvation outside the other members of the church. We cannot cease from praying for others, for we love them, and are one with them.

“We pray for others while they are alive, why should we not continue to pray for them after their death? Is it because that they cease to exist, that we should cease to pray for them?!”

Perhaps we do not know precisely how much these prayers are useful for the dead, but we still go praying for the loving mercy of God¹” to be upon them.

✠ When you pray for the repose of the soul of the departed, force yourself to pray with your whole heart remembering that to do so is your essential duty, and not only that of a priest or ecclesiastic person... Our prayer of faith and love for the departed means much in the Lord’s sight.

✠ Pray to the Lord for the repose of the souls of your departed forefathers, fathers and brothers, daily in the morning and in the evening, in order that the remembrance of death may live in you, and the hope in the future life, after death, may not be extinguished in you, and that your spirit may by daily humbled by the thought of the transience of your life².

Fr. John of Kronstadt

¹ *The orthodox Ethos, Vol, p 142.*

² *Blessed Fr. John of Kronstadt, On prayer, p 44.*

2

THE FRACTION

- 1- Prayer Before the Fraction.**
- 2- The Fraction.**
- 3- The Lord's Prayer.**
- 4- The Secret Prayers.**
- 5- The Holy Unto the Holy.**
- 6- The Confession.**

1- PRAYER BEFORE THE FRACTION

As the church has been assembled around her Savior, and in Him, she offers the following prayers as a preparatory for the Fraction:

A - A prayer to keep her in faith.

B- A prayer to bring her unto His Kingdom.

C - A thanksgiving-prayer for His saving deeds.

A- A PRAYER TO KEEP HER IN FAITH:

✠ *And we, who are strangers in this place, keep us in Your faith, And grant us Your peace till the end.*

The Liturgy of St. Basil

The Congregation offers a hymn, singing: “*As it was, and it is, and so shall it be from generation to generation, and unto the age of all ages. Amen.*” They participate with the twenty four heavenly presbyters in their hymn, saying “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who are, and was, and are to come; because You have taken to You Your great power, and have reigned.” And participate with the four Living Creatures in their hymn, namely, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.”

Now, the congregation being united together in Jesus Christ, conceiving their salvation, says: “You were acting on our behalf, and is still acting in us, and we are waiting for your continuous acts from generation to generation until we meet You face to face in eternity.”

B - A PRAYER TO BRING HER UNTO HIS KINGDOM:

✠ *Guide us unto Your Kingdom,*

That in this, as in all things, may be glorified, blessed and exalted Your great and holy Name,

Which in all things is glorious and blessed, together with Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgy of St. Basil

The presbyter concludes this prayer with the apostolic greeting, saying: “*Peace be with all,*” without crossing the congregation; for after sanctification and invocation the Lord Himself is present on the altar, and crosses and blesses them Himself.

C- A THANKSGIVING PRAYER FOR HIS SAVING DEEDS

✠ *Let us give thanks unto God, Almighty, The Father of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. For He has made us worthy, even now, to stand in this holy place, And lift our hands upwards and minister unto his Holy Name. Let us also pray unto Him, to make us worthy of the communion and raising up of His divine and undying Sacraments.*

Liturgy of St. Basil

From these three prayers, especially the last one, we can understand the preparations for receiving the Communion as:

- 1 - Trusting in the grace of God, which acted and is still acting and will act in all the generations on behalf of mankind.
- 2 - Lifting the heart up to the kingdom of God, and being occupied by eternity.
- 3 - Continuously giving thanks for His plans and deeds on our behalf.

2- THE FRACTION

Before the presbyter prays the “Fraction” he takes the Body, puts It on his left palm and points to it praying: “*The Holy Body.*”

Congregation: *We worship Your Holy Body.*

He dips his finger into the Blood and signs the Cross once, saying “*And the honored Blood.*”

C: *And we worship Your honored Blood.*

P: *Which belong to His Christ, the Almighty Lord, our God.*

D: *Amen, Amen, Pray you.*

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: *Peace be with all.*

C: *And with Your spirit.*

We see the church worshipping the Body and the Blood of Christ, “For who does not worship the Body of Christ,” says **St. Augustine**, “does not receive It.”

St. Chrysostom says that the Wisemen who were pagans and barbarians left their countries and homes and came to Jesus who was in the manger and worshipped Him in great fear. We, who are the sons of heaven, must at least imitate them. For they who saw Him in a manger inside a hut came in trembling and did not see anything of what you see now; you, who see Him not in a manger but upon the altar.

Crossing the Body with the Blood is a symbol of the Passions of the Lord, for it resembles the Blood, which was bleeding from His side when He was on the Cross¹.

It reminds us of the prophecy of Isaiah who said, “Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like those of him that treads in the winepress? I have trodden the wine press alone².”

Now all the minds are thinking of Golgotha with gladness to enjoy fellowship with the Crucified Lord.

The presbyter breaks the Body into twelve parts around the center, which is called the “*Spadikon.*” **Fr. Theodore of Mopsuestia** says, “Now that the liturgy is accomplished, the Presbyter breaks the

¹ *Jn 19: 34.*

² *Is 63: 2, 3.*

bread as our Lord first shared Himself in His manifestations...¹”

St. Hippolytus² mentioned the “Breaking of Bread” by the Bishop. **Bishop Serapion** mentioned in his *Euchologium* a prayer of the fraction.

In the “*Chabourah Meal*,” the father of the family broke the bread simply to distribute it. But at the Last Supper, Jesus consecrated It and transformed It into His Body, then He broke It and distributed It to His disciples, saying: “This is my Body which is broken (*klomenon*) for you³.” We know that one of His bones had not been broken, but He broke His Sacramental Body declaring that He offers His Body to suffer and be slain willingly.

We must understand that the living Body after the resurrection does not die again. It is a spiritual and glorified Body and what we receive is the true Body of Christ and not a part of It. “For the Body Itself” says **St. Jerome**, “is inseparable.”

¹ *Cat. Horn 16: 18.*

² *Ap. Trad 23: 5*

³ *1 Cor 11: 24.*

3- THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the end of the prayer of the Fraction, the presbyter asks God to purify our spirits, our bodies, our souls, our hearts, our eyes, our understanding, our thoughts and our intentions, that in faith without hypocrisy, with perfect love and steadfast hope we dare with intimacy and without fear to pray unto the Father the Lord's prayer.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose¹, St. Augustine², and others mentioned the importance of the Lord's Prayer at the end of the Eucharistic celebration. But it seems that it was not accepted in Rome until the time of Fr. Gregory I³.

Why does the church pray it in a loud voice with everybody saying it?

1- This is because Christ cried to His Father while He was at Golgotha upon the Cross. Thus, the Church imitates her Bridegroom and cries to her Father while she is around the altar asking Him what her Lord taught her.

Outside this heavenly sacrifice nobody can call God His "Father." But through this service the Church, in one voice, calls Him her Father, reciting her common prayer as a preparation for Communion, i.e., receiving the Body and the Blood of the Son of God.

St. Augustine says, "Because that sacrifice is a sign of the state we are in i.e. God's children, behold when the sacrifice is finished we say the Lord's Prayer which we have received and learned from him⁴."

2- This prayer is most suited for starting the Communion service. For it contains in brief all the prayers and concerns of a Christian soul⁵.

St. Augustine says⁶, "If we pray rightly and fittingly, we can

¹ *Ambrose: The Sacraments 6: 24.*

² *In Jerusalem it comes after the Eucharistic prayer immediately before the fraction, and at Milan it appears to have been placed within the Eucharistic prayer itself recited by the celebrant only (Dix 131). In our church it comes as a conclusion of the fraction recited by the deacons and the entire congregation, in a loud voice.*

³ *Dix: The shape of the Liturgy, p 131, 108.*

⁴ *Sermon 227.*

⁵ *See Frenany: The Spirituality of the Mass, p 220.*

⁶ *ad Probam ep 130, 12.*

say nothing else but that which is contained in the Lord's Prayer.” **Tertullian**¹ says that this prayer “contains almost the whole sum of Christ's doctrine and law.

3- **St. Augustine** in his sermons to the newly baptized said: “It is recited before receiving Christ's Body and Blood because of human frailty due to a bad thought, perhaps a slip of tongue, a sinful glance, or listening to an off color story. If through worldly temptation and human weakness you have succumbed to such a sin, it is remitted by the Lord's Prayer at the words: Forgive us our trespasses. We can then approach the altar in the safe knowledge that we are not by eating and drinking It, bringing judgment upon ourselves².”

¹ *De Oration 1.*

² *Denys 6.*

4- THE SECRET PRAYERS

Before receiving the Communion, the deacon admonishes the congregation, “*Bow down your heads before the Lord...*” The presbyter prays inaudibly asking God to purify us and prepare us for receiving the Communion.

He prays also the “*Prayer of Submission,*” giving thanks to God who prepared for us those things that the angels desire to behold.

The deacon gives another admonition, “*Attend on God with fear,*” and the presbyter gives the Peace of Christ to the congregation, then he prays inaudibly the *Prayer of Absolution*, asking God to absolve His servants, the clergymen and laymen and the celebrant himself from their sins by the Holy Spirit, and to write our names among the ranks of His saints in the kingdom of heaven.

The three Coptic liturgies contain many secret prayers, that are very wonderful, by which the heart of the presbyter is raised up in humility to God, in order that he and all the people may be prepared for this great Glory.

The presbyter concludes this prayer by reciting inaudibly the litanies of the Peace and the Fathers of the Church, Finally he prays: “*Remember O Lord, our meetings, bless them.*”

5- THE HOLY UNTO THE HOLY

THE HOLY THINGS FOR THE HOLY ONES

Having broken the bread, the celebrant picks up the “*Ispadikon*” and lifts it up, his head bowed down, and invites the church to enjoy communion crying¹: “*The holy things for the holy ones,*” as if to say: “Let those who are worthy come to receive the Communion, For holy things are for the holy ones only.”

The Greek word “*Agios*” cannot be translated into “good.” It means more than “good,” it means those “who belong to God, the holy ones²”. St. Paul calls the Corinthians, the chosen *Agios* (saints,) i.e., the chosen people of God.

Here the Presbyter’s invitation can be translated to “The things of God are for the people of God.” This invitation for receiving the Communion is addressed not only to those who are perfect but also to those who are striving to become perfect in Jesus Christ, not by their own power, but by the Holy Spirit's. The people of God are called “holy” because of their unity with the Son of God. We are members of His Body, “of His flesh and of His bones.” As long as we remain united with Him, and preserve our connection with Him, we live in holiness, drawing to ourselves, through the holy mysteries, the sanctity that comes from the Head.

✠ “Be holy, because I am Holy.” If you say you are not holy, you would be ungrateful... If they say that they are not holy they are insulting their very Head.”

St. Augustine

✠ “He that eats of the Bread and drinks of the Cup unworthily, eats and drinks doom unto himself³,” and I, having examined myself, see that I am unworthy. When then will you be worthy? When will you present yourself to Christ?...

Decide then to lead a holier life, in harmony with the Law, and so receive the blessing, believing that you receive power to expel,

¹ *He holds the Ispadikon with the tips of his thumb and forefinger, makes with it the sign of the Cross over the Chalice, touches the blood with it, lifts it up and crosses the Body with It.*

² *Dix p. 134*

³ *1 Cor 11: 29.*

not death only, but all the diseases or weakness in us...¹

St. Cyril of Alexandria

THE REPLY OF THE CONGREGATION

As the celebrant calls the holy ones only to receive the holy things, the entire congregation trembles. They respond: “*One is the Holy Father. One is the Holy Son. One is the Holy Spirit. Amen.*”

As if they are saying: “There is One Sun that shine on all of us, and pours Its own rays of holiness upon us.”

THE FERMENTUM

Fr. Dix² says, that this custom of the “*Fermentum*,” which goes back to the early years of the second century, died out comparatively early in the east, probably in the fourth century, though it lasted in Rome till the eighth or ninth century. But in fact this custom still continues in the Coptic Orthodox Church. Until to day this custom is used as the presbyter puts the “*Ispadikon*” in the Chalice.

Fr. Theodore of Mopseuestia says that this custom shows that the Body and the Blood are inseparable: They are one in power, and vouchsafe the same grace to those who receive them³.

THE SANCTUM

This custom started in the sixth century, when a fragment reserved from the Eucharist consecrated at the previous Liturgy, was brought to the offertory⁴ of the following Liturgy. This custom has no existence in the Coptic Church.

¹ *Corn. on St. John 6: 56.*

² *Dix, p. 134.*

³ *Cat. Horn 6.*

⁴ *Dix 134.*

6- THE CONFESSION

The Presbyter lifts up the paten in both hands and says the **Confession**. He proclaims that this is the Life-giving Body, which the Only-Begotten Son took from our Lady and Queen, the *Theotokos*, the Pure Saint Mary. He made It one with His Divinity without mingling, without confusion, and without alteration.

✠ Here we ought to admire the holy Evangelist openly crying, “And the Word was made Flesh” For He was not ashamed to say that He was made Flesh that He might show the Union... And we do not say either that God, the Word of the Father, was transformed into the nature of the flesh or that the flesh passed into the Word; but in an unspeakable manner, a manner surpassing human understanding, the Word was united to His Flesh and having as it were, transformed it all into himself, drove forth of our nature corruption, and dislodged death which of old prevailed by means of sin.

He, therefore, that eats the holy Body of Christ has eternal life, for the Body has in itself the Word that is Life by nature.

It is as though one took a spark and buried it in the midst of stubble in order that the seed of fire preserved might inflame the while. So in us too, our Lord Jesus Christ hides life through His own Flesh and inserts it as a seed of immortality abolishing all corruption that is in us¹.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

¹ *Corn. on St. John 6: 24.*

3

THE COMMUNION

THE RITE OF COMMUNION

When the presbyter receives communion, he turns towards the congregation and exhibiting the holy mysteries, calls again to those who wish to receive communion saying: "*The holy things for the holy.*" They show their desire to accept the holy mysteries, borrowing the words of the Psalmist saying: "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

On communing the Body, the Presbyter says: "*Verily this is the Body of Emmanuel, our God. Amen.*" The same thing happens at communing the Blood of Christ. In our Church, the laity as well as the clergy always receives Communion of the Body followed by the Blood - each separately.

In other Orthodox churches the laity receive the two elements put together.

Fr. Nikolai Gogol says: "In the early days of the Church the people partook of the separate elements just as the clergy do now and everyone received in his hands the most pure Body of our Lord and then drank from the chalice the most pure Blood. But when newly-converted Christians - Christians only in name - began to carry away the Holy Gifts to their homes to use them for superstitious or magical purposes or behaved in an uncommonly manner in church, pushing one another and making noise and confusion, then **St. John Chrysostom** ordered the people not to receive any longer Holy Communion separately but in the mixed form and that It should not be given to the people in their hands but in a holy spoon which serves as a symbol of the tongs with which the fiery Seraph touched the lips of the Prophet Isaiah, in order to remind everyone of the purity of that which is touching their lips.

After first giving Communion to himself and then to the deacon, the servant of Christ becomes a new man, cleansed by Holy Communion from all his sins, truly holy at this moment and worthy to give communion to others.

In the first centuries, the elements were placed in the hand (not in the mouth) of each communicant by the clergy who were present, or according to **Justin**, by the deacons alone, amid the singing of psalms

by the congregation¹.”

STANDING UP DURING THE COMMUNION

During the communion, the congregation is overwhelmed with feelings of sacred love, holy fear, internal joy and celestial happiness. They stand up eager to eat from this heavenly table.

They are the Bride who stands up to put her hands into those of her Bridegroom, hearing this blessedness, “Blessed are they who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb².”

We do not kneel during the Communion, for this custom is strange to our rites, as well as to the early Church. Fr. Dix says that the practice of kneeling by anybody for communion is confined to the Latin West and began to come in only in the early middle ages³.

Now we enter the heavenly kingdom with joy, singing the Psalm 150, giving glory to God who gave us this unspeakable Gift. He offers us the food of immortality, feeding us with the food of angels, the heavenly bread, which is prepared without human labor, having in it all that which is delicious and the sweetness of every taste⁴.

We praise Him, for we are the poor who eat and are filled⁵. We offer hymns to the Lord for His un-bloody Sacrifice by which we share in the sufferings and the divinity of Christ⁶.

Finally the celebrant washes the vessels and his hands, giving thanks to God, asking Him to be with His ministers and His people. He takes some water in his palms and says: “*O angel of this oblation, who flies up to the heights with this our praise. Remember us before the Lord that He may forgive us our sins.*”

He sprinkles the water upwards over the altar, passes his wet hands over his own cheeks as well as the cheeks of his fellow - presbyter and lays his hand over the people’s heads. Then he says the ***Benediction*** asking the Peace of God and distributes the “***Eulogion***”

¹ Nikolai Gogol: *Med. on the Divine Liturgy*, p 51.

² Rev. 19: 9.

³ Schaff: vol 2, p 239

Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

⁴ Wis. 16: 20.

⁵ Ps. 21: 27.

⁶ Greg. Naz: P G 35: 576.

(the morsel of blessing).

He kisses the altar, turns round it once saying Psalm 46 “*O, clap your hands all you nations.*”

Book 4

LITURGICAL TEXTS

*** Liturgy And History.**

1- First century.

2- Second century.

3- Third century.

4- Fourth century.

LITURGY AND HISTORY

Before the sixteenth century there was no need to go back to the liturgical history, or any sacramental history, for the living practice sufficed. But when the sacraments of the Western Church were attacked, it was necessary to go back to the liturgical history and its source for the aim of defending the Church.

This present historical research does not have the same aim, for we want to know the solid rock of the historical facts of the Liturgy on which all the worship of the Early Church is based, so that through this living knowledge we come to understand the liturgy and practice it accordingly while worshipping. This study tells us the manner which those early generations worshipped and reveals to us Christian life and its concepts.

LITURGICAL SOURCES

The liturgists give importance to the early Egyptian liturgies. As an example Fr. Jungmann, in his book *“The Early Liturgy”* says: “Dust-covered volumes in the libraries of oriental monasteries were made accessible. From the sands of the Egyptian desert, papyrus rolls and papyrus fragments were brought to light. All these investigations and discoveries enriched our knowledge of the liturgical life of those early days, while an ever-increasing number of scholars labored to exploit these results and to make them bear fruit.”

The most important early sources of the liturgy at our disposal at the present time are the following:

1- THE FIRST CENTURY

The Holy Bible: Three evangelists are telling the *“Narrative of Institution”* of the Last Supper. It is the center and the source of all celebrations of the Eucharist.

The “Acts” and the Epistles of St. Paul describe the early church steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles and in the Communion of Breaking the Bread and in prayers¹.

Fr. Dix² says that of the liturgical tradition must have originated independently of the literary tradition in all its forms, Pauline of

¹ *Acts 2: 42.*

² *Dix, p. 49.*

Synopic, and must have been very solidly established everywhere as the invariable practice before the first three gospels and the first epistle to the Corinthians began to circulate with authority.

2- THE SECOND CENTURY

A. **St. Justin**: This martyr wrote his first apology about 150 A.D. It contains a complete description of the celebration of the Eucharist. He describes its rites twice: First, concerning the newly baptized, and secondly, concerning the Lord's Day.

B. *The Didache*: The teaching of the twelve Apostles around the end of the first or the beginning of the second century.

3- THE THIRD CENTURY

A. The *Apostolic Tradition* (or the Church Order) of **St. Hippolytus of Rome**, the most important source of information we possess on the liturgy of the pre-Nicene Church¹. Some liturgists attribute it to the Egyptian Church, as it was called "*The Egyptian Church Order*" and others say that it is a genuine work of St. Hippolytus of Rome. It was written about 215 A.D., and contains the Anaphora prayers.

B. The *Anaphora of SS. Addai and Mari*, for the Syrian Church. It started from the third century according to Botte or from the fifth century according to Raes.

4- THE FOURTH CENTURY

A. The *Euchologuin of Serapion*: The Egyptian Bishop Serapion was a friend of St. Athanasius. It was put together around the year 350 A.D.

B. The **Strasburg papyrus**, which represents *the liturgy of St. Mark*.

C. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, commonly called the "*Clementine Liturgy*."

D. Writings based on liturgical texts and rites:

I. The *Mystagogical Catecheses* delivered by **St. Cyril of Jerusalem** in 347 A. D.

II. The *Baptismal Catecheses of St. John Chrysostom*,

¹ *Dix, p. 157-197*

delivered between the years 386 and 398 A. D.

III. The *Mysteries of St. Ambrose of Milan*.

5- THE FIFTH CENTURY

A. The **voyage of Etheria**: This is a description of a pilgrimage made by a nun called Etheria (native of Gaul) in the year 400 to the Holy places. It was discovered in 1887 by an Italian scholar, Camurrini. It contains a long description of the church services in Jerusalem in those days.

I. The daily service.

II. The Canonical Hours.

III. The Sunday service.

IV. Services of the Holy Week in detail.

B. The catechesis of **Fr. Theodore, Bishop Mopusustia** at Cilicia, in Iraq. He died in 428. This work was discovered and published in 1932 by Mingana in Syriac and English. These are catechetical instructions of the newly baptized, and contain a detailed explanation of Baptism and the Eucharist.

6- OTHER SOURCES

Fr. Jungmann says, "We can add to these sources also various papyri rescued from the desert sands of Egypt which contain valuable liturgical texts from Christian Antiquity. Of these the *papyrus of Der Balyzed* is especially famous, it also contains a section from the prayers of the Eucharist.

Despite this fact, it was put together at a later date (fifth/sixth century) but it seems that the prayers which it contains can lay claim to a much greater antiquity."

First Century

THE HOLY BIBLE

St. Luke described the last *Passover Meal* of our Lord with His disciples¹. It was a preface of the *Eucharist Meal*, which the Lord has bequeathed to His Church as a new covenant and a sign that His community is a Eucharistic One. The three evangelists, SS. Matthew, Mark and Luke and the apostle Paul mention the “*Institution of the Last Supper*”². This text was used by the Early Church in her celebrations and is taken up in all the early liturgies³.

When St. Luke, in the book of the Acts, draws a picture of the characteristics of the Early Church in Jerusalem he says⁴ that they were “steadfast in the apostles teachings and in the Communion of Breaking of Bread and in prayers⁵.”

The Christians were practicing Breaking of Bread as their special worship, in spite of the persecution⁶. Under torture the reader Emeritus says to Felix, “Do you know Satan, that the Christians make the Mass and that the Mass makes the Christians and that one cannot exist without the other?”⁷ The martyrs of Abitina said during the Diocletian persecution, “We cannot survive without the Eucharist.”

As we cannot deny our Lord's Passion, or His Cross, so we can't deny what He bestowed on us on the night He was betrayed⁸.

BREAKING OF BREAD AND ORDINARY MEALS

The evangelists Matthew and Mark says, “As they were eating Jesus took bread...» Here the eating is very necessary, for it was the Passover Meal, which was the symbol of the New Heavenly Meal.

In the first century an ordinary meal was combined with the Breaking of Bread. This meal was called “Agape” i.e. Love Feast.

¹ Luke 22: 15 - 18.

² Mat 26: 26 - 28, Mark 14: 22 - 24, Luke 22: 19 - 20. 1 Cor 11: 23 - 25.

³ Lucein Deiss: *Early Sources of the Liturgy*.

⁴ Acts 2: 4, 41 - 47, 4: 32 - 37.

⁵ Acts 2: 42.

⁶ Dix, p. 141 - 155.

⁷ Hamman: *The Mass*, p. 16.

⁸ 1 Cor 11: 23.

Schaff says, “It was a family feast, where rich and poor, master and slave met on the same footing, partaking of a simple meal, hearing reports from distant congregations, contributing to the necessities of suffering brethren, and encouraging each other in their daily duties and trials. **Augustine** describes his mother Monica as going to these feasts with a basket full of provisions and distributing them¹.”

The prayers of the *Didache* give evidence of this agape meal connected with the celebration of the Eucharist. We find the same thing in the writings of St. Paul².

But this resemblance between the Eucharist and the Agape did not go on for a long time. For as early as the beginning of the second century these two exercises were separated. This separation is mentioned found in the well-known letter of Pliny to Trajan, also in **St. Ignatius of Antioch's** letters³ and clearly in **St. Justin's** writings⁴.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYERS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Fr. Dix⁵ says that in the first century, the normal celebrant was, of course, the bishop, who certainly always had freedom to phrase the prayer as he wished within the traditional outline. But there is evidence indicating that when a presbyter deputized for the bishop he was not more restricted.

In the Sahidic version of the Egyptian Order we read, “It is not altogether necessary for him to recite the same words which we said before, as if learning to say them by heart in his thanksgiving to God; but according to ability does each one pray... only let him pray in sound orthodoxy.”

¹ *Schaff, vol 2.*

² *1 Cor 11: 17 - 26,*

³ *Ad Smy. 8.*

⁴ *Apoogy 1: 65 - 67.*

⁵ *See Dix, p. 156 n.*

Second century

1

St. JUSTIN

HIS LIFE¹

Justin, the Martyr, is the most important of the apologists of the second century and one of the noblest personalities of early Christian literature. He did not lead his reader merely to the door of the church, as most of the apologists did, but opened it and told a good deal about what went on inside. He was the son of Priscus and grandson of Bacchius, born in Flavia Neapolis (ancient Shechem and modern Nablus) in Palestine (c. A.D. 100). His family were pagans, and seem to have been of Greek origin.

He learned philosophy in many schools. At first, he tried the school of a Stoic, then that of a peripatetic, and finally that of a Pythagorean. None of these philosophers convinced or satisfied him. Platonism deeply attracted him for a while, as it seemed to show the way to the true knowledge of man and to a vision of God. But he tells us that as he walked along the seashore an old man convinced him that Platonism could not satisfy the heart of man and directed his attention to the deeper wisdom of the prophets who alone announced the truth. "When he had spoken," related St. Justin, "these and many other things, for which there is no time to mention at present, he went away, bidding me attend to them, and I have not seen him since. But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul and a love of the prophets, and those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me; and whilst turning his words in my mind I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable²."

His honest quest for truth and humble prayers led him to the true faith. He said, "I confess that I both prayed and strove with all my strength to become a Christian³." He also tells us about the effect of Christians, who suffered passions fearlessly, on his conversion. "For I myself, too, when I was content with the doctrines of Plato, and heard

¹ See *Oxford University: The Dictionary of Saints; Dialogue 92.*

² *Dial 8.*

³ *Apol 2: 13.*

the Christians slandered, and saw them fearlessly meet death, and all that is considered terrible, I perceived that it is impossible that they could be living in wickedness and worldly pleasures¹.”

After his conversion, which occurred most likely in Ephesus, he devoted his entire life to the defense of the Christian faith. He remained a layman but, “it is our duty,” he said; “to make our teaching known,” and he traveled from place to place proclaiming the Gospel. He visited Rome twice where he founded a school. One of his disciples was Tatian, destined later to become an apologist. In his second visit to Rome he was beheaded, together with five men and a woman, probably in 165 A.D.

HIS WRITINGS

St. Justin was a prolific writer. Only three works, which were known to Eusebius², have come down to us. These are contained in single manuscript of poor quality copied in 1364 (Paris No 450). They are his two apologies against the pagans, setting forth the moral values of Christianity, and the Dialogue demonstrating Christianity's truth to the Jewish Trypho.

He is considered to be the first ecclesiastical writer who attempted to build a bridge between Christianity and pagan philosophy. He believed “that everyone who can speak the truth and does not shall be condemned by God³.”

NOTES

He is the first to furnish us with a complete description of the celebration of the Eucharist. In his first apology he pictures the Eucharistic service in regard to the newly baptized (ch. 65) and in regard to the regular Sunday Service (ch. 67).

In his Dialogue with Trypho (ch. 41) he clearly identifies the Eucharist with the sacrifice, which was prophesied by the Prophet Malachi. In many places he says that there is no longer any need for bloody sacrifice. The Eucharist being the long desired spiritual sacrifice, because the Logos Himself, Jesus Christ, is here the Victim⁴.

¹ *Apol 2: 12.*

² *Ecc. His 4: 18.*

³ *Dial 82.*

⁴ *Quasten : Patrology, vol 1, 218.*

In his writings concerning the Eucharistic celebration we notice the following:

1- He calls the Liturgy "*Eucharist*" which means "*Thanksgiving*." Starting from the beginning of the second century we find this name generally used by the Eastern Fathers¹. They concentrated on the prayers of thanksgiving.

2- He was a churchman and he used the church's technical terminology. For example he said:

a- "Those whom we call deacons."

b- "The Food we call Eucharist."

c- "The president of the brethren."

d- "Rebirth," repeating the term twice in one sentence to explain that baptism is the Sacrament of regeneration.

3- In his description of the celebration of the Eucharist we notice the following:

a- The kiss of peace as a preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist.

b- The service begins with readings from the Old Testament and New Testament, followed by a homily then the Eucharistic prayers. This means that the Liturgy of the Word precedes the Liturgy of the Faithful.

c - Nobody can participate in the eucharistic prayers except those who believe that the things we teach are true, and have received the washing for forgiveness and for rebirth, and who live according to the teachings of Christ. He gives three conditions for enjoying the celebration of the Eucharist.

I. To be faithful.

II. To be baptized.

III. To live according to the commands of Christ.

d- He relates the "Institution" from the Gospels, and mentions the customary collections for the poor.

A LITURGICAL CHURCH

As we are speaking about the second century we cannot ignore the letters of **St. Ignatius of Antioch**, which were written at the beginning of this century (107 A.D.). He looks to the church as a Eucharistic Society. He speaks of this sacrament, only by way of

¹ *St. Ignatius used this name.*

allusion, but in very strong, mystical terms, calling it the Flesh of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, and the consecrated Bread, a Medicine of immortality and an antidote of spiritual death.

The Eucharist, according to St. Ignatius, cannot be celebrated without the bishop or the presbyter to whom the bishop has committed it.

THE DIDACHE¹

The oldest Eucharistic prayers have recently come to light in the *Didache*². The complete title of this work is “The Lord’s instruction to the Gentiles as reported by the twelve Apostles.” It was discovered by the Greek Metropolitan of Nicomedia, Philotheos Bryennios in a MS in Constantinople in 1875, and published by him in 1883.

It was produced during the years 100 and 150 A.D.; certain passages could even go back as far as the years 50-70 A.D. Quasten says, “We possess here a summary of directions which offer us an excellent picture of Christian life in the second century. In fact we have here the oldest Church-Order and the venerable prototype of all the later collections of Constitutions or Apostolic Canons with which ecclesiastical law in the East and the West began³.”

The *Didache* is divided into sixteen chapters in which two main divisions are clearly discernable. The first part (1-10) represents liturgical instructions; the second part (11-15) comprises disciplinary regulations. The chapter on the “Parousia” coming of the Lord and the Christian duties arising there from constitutes the conclusion⁴.

These chapters include:

- a- Five chapters of moral teaching arranged in the form of two ways or tracks, that of life and that of death.
- b- A transitional chapter dealing with the eating of meats offered to idols, and with remarks on the “yoke of the Lord.”
- c- Chapter 7 deals with baptism.
- d- Chapter 8 deals with fasting and prayer.
- e- Chapters 9 and 10 deal with Eucharist.
- f- Chapter 11 deals with Apostles and Prophets.
- g- Chapter 12 deals with traveler Christians.
- h- Chapter 13 deals with teachers and disposal of the first fruits.
- i- Chapter 14 deals with Lord’s Day.

¹ For more details see our book: “The Apostolic Fathers.”

² Schaff: vol 2, p 235.

³ Quasten: *Patrology* vol 1, p 30.

⁴ *Ibid* 30.

- j- Chapter 15 deals with bishops and deacons and settling of disputes in the Church, ending with a general summary that each Sunday should be enacted according to the Gospel.
- k- Chapter 16: It concludes with a warning on the approaching end of the world¹.

CHAPTERS 9, 10 AND 14

Perhaps the writer pictures the Eucharistic liturgy of the newly baptized on Easter Eve in chapters 9 and 10. The ordinary Eucharistic service held on Sundays is described in chapter 14².

Some do not consider chapters 9 and 10 as a Eucharistic prayer totally but merely a prayer concerning an agape meal. They give these reasons:

- a- The chalice prayer is put first, which matter we find nowhere in all the Anaphoras.
- b- Chapter 10 begins with this phrase, “after having had enough” which is an expression possible for a usual meal only.

Vokes says³ “The following solutions are possible:

- 1- That the Didache describes in chapters 9,10 and 14 the Eucharist.
- 2- In 9 and 10 the agape and Eucharist and in 14 the Eucharist.
- 3- In 9 and 10 private house-Eucharists are described and 14 the public Sunday Eucharist.
- 4- In 9, 10 and 14 the Christian ceremonial meals are stated, when agape and Eucharist are still one undivided liturgy.

Lietzmann, Harnack, Duchesne, Spitta and Botiffol are supporters of the first of these points of view. Zahn, Weizacker and others of the second, Ladeuze and Sabatier of the third, Baumstark and Von der Goltz of the fourth.

NOTES

1- These prayers (ch. 9 and 10) are a eucharistic celebration. They contain three thanksgivings for the chalice, the Broken Bread and “After Communion.” His saying “After having had enough” perhaps means after “Communion,” for the Didache calls the Eucharist “a spiritual food and drink.” Communion shall fill the soul.

¹ See Yokes: *The Riddle of the Didaehe S.P.C.K 1938; Richardson: Early Christian Frs.*

² *Quasten: Patrology vol 1, p 33.*

³ p 183.

2- These prayers are eucharistic celebrations for the author adds, "If anyone is holy, let him advance, if anyone is not let him be converted" (10:6).

3- In chapter 14 the Didache mentions some rules and directions concerning the Eucharist, as:

- a- Nobody can attend the Eucharist unless he is reconciled with his brethren.
- b- Every Lord's day, as the brethren meet or gather together to "*eucharistesate*" (giving thanks), they ought first to confess their sins that their sacrifice may be pure.

4 - He described our Lord Jesus as the «*Pais*» of God. The word "*Pais*," its translation oscillates between the two meanings "child," and "servant." Someone prefers the second meaning "servant," meditating the poems of Isaiah on the " Servant or Slave of God¹."

¹ *Isa* 52: 13-53, 42: 1-9, 49: 1-6, 50: 3-35.

Third Century

1

THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION OF ST. HIPPOLYTUS¹

Andre Hamman says, “The most ancient formula of consecration of the eucharistic offerings is provided for us by Hippolytus, probably of Egyptian origin, and adopted by the Roman clergy...”

For a long time it was known as the “*Egyptian Church Orders*,” and we find under the name of “the anaphora of the Apostles” for the Ethiopian Church (following the Egyptian Church), a combination of the liturgy of Hippolytus with framework and complementary elements taken from the Egyptian St. Mark (St. Cyril liturgy)².

But Dom Connolly in his book “The so-called Egyptian Order,” says that it is of St. Hippolytus of Rome and was accepted in Egypt, then in Syria through Egyptian documents³.

¹ *Hamman: The Mass.*

Jungman: The Early Liturgy, ch 6.

Jungman: The Place of Christ in Liturgical prayers.

Don ConnoUy: The So-called Egyptian Order, in Texts and Studies, Cambridge 1916.

Lucien Deiss: Early Sources of the Liturgy.

Don Bernard Botte: La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte, essai de reconstitution in liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen, vol 39.

Gregory Dix: The Shape of the Liturgy.

Gregory Dix: The treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of Saint Hip.

Hanssens: Institutions Liturgicae, t. III.

Louis Bouyer: Eucharist.

² *Bouyer, p. 341, Hanssens, p. 638.*

³ *Connolly says that there are a number of oriental documents, known under the generic title of " Church Orders " and bear a striking resemblance to one another.*

a. The Egyptian Order: It was known to the Western World in four versions, Coptic-Sahidic and Beheric, Arabic and Ethiopian. He says that the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus was accepted in Egyptian collections of cannon law. It was translated into the various vernaculars. Latter it was rewritten and adopted to new circumstances, but retained its author's name, i.e., " the Canons of Hippolytus."

b. The Canons of Hippolytus, which exist in Arabic and Ethiopic versions.

c. The Apostolic Constitutions, collection of 8 books, probably drawn by a Syrian writer in the 4th century. The 8th book contains what is called the "Clementine Liturgy." It is based on the "Egyptian Order," as it was accepted in Syria in the 4th century.

Jungmann says,⁴ “However, if anyone is still skeptical about accepting this treatise as the work of Hippolytus of Rome, we may add that in any case it is a work of the third century, and reflects, if not the liturgical life of Rome, then that of Egypt and Alexandria. We must bear in mind that one of the results of the comparative study of liturgy has been to prove that throughout the era covered by our present investigation - the first five or six centuries - Rome and Alexandria shared many things in common.”

ITS CONTENTS

It is a collection in which we can classify into 3 parts:

I - Concerning the clergy:

- a. Rules, prescription and prayers for the consecration of a bishop.
- b. A complete formula on the celebration of “Anaphora” of the newly consecrated bishop with the whole college of presbyters.
- c. Some formulas of blessings for the offerings of the oil, cheese, olives and others.
- d. Communion prayers, which are found only in the Ethiopian texts of the “Egyptian Church Order” Yough there are parallels to them in the Apostolic Constitution.

There are many questions concerning the author of these prayers.

- e. Rules and prayers for the ordination of presbyter and deacons.
- f. Suggestions concerning confessors, widows, virgins, sub deacons etc...

2. The Admission of Catechumens, their baptism, and receiving the Communion.

3. Various prescriptions and prayers concerning the Christian life:
The Agape meal; the “Vespars” office that was joined with the agape meal; blessing the fruits and flowers; the duty of deacons and sub-deacons towards the sick; Communion in homes; the burial of the Dead; Canonical hours; and the sign of the Cross.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

1- St. Hippolytus did not intend to improve the liturgical text,

d. The Eptime, or the Constitutions of the Apostles. It is a Syrian document based on the former one (book 8).

e. The Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. A Syrian apocryphal work, which was discovered by the Syrian Patriarch Rahmani in 1899. This also, in his opinion, is based on the Egyptian Order.

⁴ *Early Liturgy, p. 57.*

but he proposed it as a sample or model to guide the celebrants.

In the second century **St. Justin** said that “the president should pray and give thanks as well as he can¹.”

St. Hippolytus also says, “Let the bishop give thanks in the manner described above. It is not, however, necessary for him to use the form of words set out there, as though he had to make the effort to say them by heart in his thanksgiving to God².”

When the tradition became in danger of being transformed because of the heresies, the church put the formulas of the liturgies in detail.

2 - Perhaps the prayers of this Anaphora are by **Hippolytus**, but it is clear that the structure of the prayer as a whole and some sentences were really traditional.

Fr. Dix made a comparison between this prayer and **Justin's** writings concerning the Eucharist³. He attained this result: “We can thus, at least say that there is nothing whatever in the specifically eucharistic teaching of St. Hippolytus Prayer which would have been repudiated by Justin sixty years earlier.”

4 - The Eucharistic prayer is concentrated on the redeeming work of the Savior Jesus Christ. It is addressed to the Father in relation to the Eternal Word. And thanksgiving is offered for:

- a- The creation through the Word,
- b- The Incarnation of the Word,
- c- And the Redemption through the Passion of the Word.

5- We can summarize what has been mentioned in this Apostolic Tradition in the following points:

- a- The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God through His Word.
- b- The Eucharist is a thing “done.” It is our Lord's command and a priestly act of the Church.
- c- It is an anamnesis of the Crucified and Risen Lord.

6- The “Sanctus is absent in this anaphora.”

¹ *Apol. 1: 67.*

² *Ap. Tr. 10.*

³ *Apol 1 : 65-67 (See Dix 160).*

ANAPHORA OF ADDAI AND MARI¹

It is a document of Syrian origin, it has no certain Greek prototype. It represents the ancient rite of the Church of Edessa, in Syria-Edessa was a semi-independent state on the Eastern Roman frontier, a strong center of a Semitic culture and tradition, though theologically it also acted as a channel for the diffusion of Greek ideas to the purely un-hellenic regions around the east itself².

Deiss says that it is a Chaldean liturgy of the holy apostles Addai and Mari, the Liturgy of the Uniate Chaldeans and of the Christians of Malabar in India.

Some liturgists see that this formula belongs to a time in which Edessa was separated from the rest of Christendom because of the Nestorian heresy. The Nestorians still use it.

NOTES

1 -At the preface, the words “of the glorious Trinity...” are a later insertion into the primitive form of this Anaphora.

The body of this prayer is addressed to the Son. For example: “You have clothed Yourself in our humanity.” “You saved mankind by Your compassion.” But it is clear that this prayer is rewritten, for suddenly we find a change in the address, from the Son to the Father.

2 - The liturgists see that the words of the “Institution” are absent in the primitive text, added in the 16th century by the Catholic Chaldeans, but Botte doubts that the absence of the Institution is original.

¹ *Ermant: Dict. d'Archéologique Chrétienne et de Liturgie, vol I.*
Botte: L'Anaphore Chaldéenne des apôtres, in " Orientalia Christiana."
Renaudot: Liturgiorum Orientalium Collectis, t. 2.
Deiss: Early Sources of the Liturgy; Jungmann: The Early Liturgy p 59.

² *Dix: The Shape of the Liturgy.*

Fourth Century

I

EUCHOLOGUIM OF SERABION¹

Serapion was a bishop of Thumis, in the Delta of Egypt, near Lake Manzaleh, in the fourth century. He died before 359². He was a contemporary to St. Athanasius and a friend of the hermit St. Anthony³. His *Euchologium*, *Euchologion*, or his collection of prayers was discovered as late as 1894⁴.

Its chief value for us is that in it we have what is probably the oldest example of a Eucharistic Liturgy, since the Hippolytus Liturgy. It represents the official liturgy in Egypt, in the fourth century, and perhaps the period before this epoch.

ITS CONTENTS

It contains 30 liturgical prayers. Bishop Wordsworth divided them into 6 sections:

I 1-6 Eucharistic Anaphora; including the blessing of oil and water.

II 7-11 Baptismal prayers.

III 12-14 Ordinal prayers.

IV 15-17 Blessing of oil, including oil used at baptism, Chrism and Unction of the sick.

VI 19-30 Intervening prayers.

Eighteen of these prayers (19-30, 1-6) are connected with the Eucharistic service. But there is no certain rule to determine their exact order.

¹ John Wordsworth: *Bishop's Prayer-book, 1944* (First published on 1899).

Lucein Deiss: *Early Sources of the Liturgy*.

Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

Frère: *The Anaphora (The Egypt. Evidence)*.

² In this year the Council of Seleucia was attended by Bishop Ptolemaeus who is described as "Bishop of Thmuis."

³ St. Anthony on his death (356 A.D.) said to his disciples: "Divide my garments: Give one sheepskin cloak to Athanasius, the Bishop, and the pallium on which I lay, which he gave me new, and which has grown old with my use; and the other sheepskin cloak to Serapion the Bishop; and you can keep my shirt of goats' hair." (*The life of Anthony* 91.)

⁴ The single manuscript was discovered by the Russian scholar A. Dimitrievsky at Kiev in 1894, in an 11th century manuscript belonging to the monastery of Laura. (Ms no. 149).

NOTES

1 - Many liturgists see that this anaphora reflects the third century “Logical-theology” of the Alexandrian School, but with a fourth century explicitly anti-Arian turn. It represents an old formula of the Egyptian liturgy, re-worded in the fourth century, repudiating the teaching of Arius concerning the Logos.

2 - Many prayers in this Anaphora are the same as in the Anaphora of St. Mark, in the Anaphora of the Ethiopian Church Ordinance, and in the Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitutions.

3 - All the prayers are addressed to the Father of the Only-Begotten Son, for His loving-kindness, revealed through the saving deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 - The liturgical prayers may be divided into 4 subsections:

I. Anaphora (1-6).

II. Prayers of the Catechumens (19-21).

III. Prayers of the Faithful (22-27).

IV. Benedictions (28-30).

THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS
Commonly Called
THE CLEMENTINE LITURGY

The Western World did not know this text until 1546 when Capellus published a Latin version of a text found in Crete.

This work is basically fictitious. The author has made use of documents that were already in existence, and ascribed his work to St. Clement of Rome in order to give it great authority¹.

In the sixteenth century scholars still believed that they really possessed a work of St. Clement, and even F. Probst, writing in about 1870 concerning the liturgy of the third century, places it in the second century. In Migne's *Patrologia* also, the Apostolic Constitutions are found in the first volume.

But it has been common knowledge for quite sometime that this is a work of the late fourth century² between 370 and 380. It was probably written in Syria and in or near Antioch³.

ITS CONTENTS

The Apostolic Constitutions are a collection, forming a sort of manual of ecclesiastical law, and of Christian morality, doctrine and ceremonial.

I - Books 1-6: They are an exact resumption of the text of the *Didachia of the Apostles*. The *Didachia* or "*The Teaching of the 12 Apostles and Holy Disciples of our Savior*" is an ecclesiastical Constitution, which dates from the first half of the third century. Its author was a bishop in northern Syria.

II - Book 7: It is divided into 2 parts:

A. An expansion of the *Didache*.

B. A euchology grouping together some ancient prayers.

III- Book 8 (5-15): It is the most valuable, because it provides

¹ *Deiss: The Early Sources of the Liturgy.*

² *Jungmann: The Early Liturgy, p. 5.*

³ *Cresswell: The Liturgy of the Apostolic Constitution.*

us with a complete liturgy formulary, which is often called the “*Clementine Liturgy*,” an oriental form of the Liturgy of the fourth century.

Some liturgists say that it is derived from the *Apostolic Tradition*. Others look upon it as the most ancient and pure form of the Eucharist, and that the *Apostolic Tradition* had originated from it¹.

Creswell sees that this liturgy indisputably resembles the Antiochene Liturgy, the parent rite of the liturgies of St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom.

The Apostolic Constitutions, however, present the order and prayers of the Liturgy in the fourth century.



3

THE STRASBURG PAPYRUS ANAPHORA OF ST. MARK²

¹ *Drews: Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Kanons (Tubingen 1902).*

² *In the year 1928 a fragment on papyrus was found dating back to the 4th century, at the Library of Strasburg (No Gr 254).*

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