

*THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT*

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**CHRIST**  
*IN THE*  
***EUCCHARIST***

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# 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 worship<sup>1</sup>.” 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 Eucharist<sup>2</sup>.”

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.*”<sup>4</sup>

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***

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<sup>1</sup> Schaff: *Hist. of the Christian Church, Vol. 2, p. 235.*

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Dix: *The Shape of the Liturgy.*

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 3: 10.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. 20:2.

*burnt-offerings*<sup>1</sup>.”

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 Father<sup>2</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> *Exod. 2: 2.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.”*<sup>1</sup> 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”*<sup>2</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> *John 17:3.*

<sup>2</sup> *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 Jesus<sup>1</sup>.

✠ 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, Jesus<sup>2</sup>.

### **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...<sup>3</sup>

✠ 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 Christ<sup>4</sup>.

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

### **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 Himself<sup>6</sup>, “not for the purification of His own soul or spirit,

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<sup>1</sup> *Didache: The Prayer of the “ Sanctification of the Bread.”*

<sup>2</sup> *Didache: Prayer after the Communion.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Eucharistic Prayer.*

<sup>4</sup> *Prayer of Blessing for the Congregation.*

<sup>5</sup> *Prayer on Breaking the Bread.*

<sup>6</sup> *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 forever<sup>1</sup>.” 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 Omnipotent<sup>2</sup>, “*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 Eucharist<sup>3</sup>.”

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 Spirit<sup>4</sup>.”

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

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

<sup>2</sup> *Mal 1:10.*

<sup>3</sup> *St. Irenaeus: against Heresies 4: 17.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Apostolic Tradition: Anamnesis and Epiclesis Prayers.*

commemorate His holy Passion, His Resurrection...we offer You your offerings from what is Yours<sup>1</sup>.”

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 spirit<sup>2</sup>.”

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.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Before the Epiclesis.*

<sup>2</sup> *Against Heresies 4:18.*

## 2

# THE MYSTERY OF THANKSGIVING “EUCHARIST “

## EUCHARIST AND EUCHARISTIC LIFE<sup>1</sup>

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...<sup>2</sup>*”

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

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

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



known as “Eucharist<sup>1</sup>.”

In the writings of the Early Fathers<sup>2</sup> and in the texts of the ancient liturgies<sup>3</sup>, 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 (Eukharistomen) 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 Paradise<sup>4</sup>.”

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 gifts<sup>5</sup>.

**St. John Chrysostom**

✠ We are not people with ungrateful hearts... The sign of our gratitude towards God is the bread called the “Eucharist<sup>6</sup>.”

**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.

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<sup>1</sup> Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p 11.

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

<sup>3</sup> Cf. book 5: *Liturgical Texts*.

<sup>4</sup> *Sacraments & Orthodoxy*, p 43, 44.

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

<sup>6</sup> *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*"<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

### 3

## THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION

### THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS<sup>1</sup>

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 sins<sup>2</sup>.”*

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 rejoiced<sup>3</sup>. Moses saw it through the Law and God’s actions with His people<sup>4</sup>. 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*

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<sup>1</sup> 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*.

<sup>2</sup> Heb 9:22.

<sup>3</sup> John 8:56.

<sup>4</sup> 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 transgressors<sup>1</sup>.”*

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

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<sup>1</sup> *Is. 53.*

<sup>2</sup> *Heb 9.*

infinite honor, worship and glory, He offered that highest and most precious possession: His own will, which St. Paul called “*Self-emptying*”<sup>1</sup>. But self-emptying cannot be offered by the old victims, for these had no “will” to offer<sup>2</sup>.

**Second:** The High Priest here is not a man suffering from sin<sup>3</sup> 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*”<sup>4</sup>, 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> *Cf. Heb 10:7.*

<sup>3</sup> *Heb 9:7.*

<sup>4</sup> *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 said<sup>1</sup>:

*“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 church<sup>2</sup> 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>1</sup>.

**St. Clement of Rome**<sup>2</sup> 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 words<sup>3</sup>, 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...<sup>4</sup>. 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

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Ignatius: Ep. to Eph. 5:2, Dix p 113.*

<sup>2</sup> *1 Clem 44.*

<sup>3</sup> *Nicolas Lask: His Presence in the World, p 113.*

<sup>4</sup> *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 world<sup>1</sup>.

✠ By It the soul is cleansed, by It it is beautified and inflamed<sup>2</sup>.

**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 Passion<sup>3</sup>.

**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**

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

<sup>2</sup> *Hom. 46 on John 6.*

<sup>3</sup> *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 sense<sup>1</sup>.

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*"<sup>2</sup>.

✠ 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 sacrifice<sup>1</sup>.

**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 It<sup>2</sup>.

**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 up<sup>3</sup>.

**St. Ignatius**

✠ The Food, which has been "*eucharistised*," is the Flesh and Blood of that Jesus who was made flesh<sup>4</sup>.

**St. Justin Martyr**

✠ The mingled cup and the manufactured bread receive the word of God and become the Eucharist or the Body and the Blood<sup>5</sup>.

**St. Irenaeus**

✠ The bread, which He took and gave to His disciples He, made His own very Body by saying, "This is my Body<sup>6</sup>."

**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 Priest<sup>7</sup>!

**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*

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

<sup>2</sup> *Mimre 4 on the Passion*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep. on Sym 6:2*.

<sup>4</sup> *Apology 1: 66*.

<sup>5</sup> *Adv. Haer. 5:2:3*.

<sup>6</sup> *Against Marcion 4: 10*.

<sup>7</sup> *On the Holy Trinity, book 4*.

*that it is still active and continuous*<sup>8</sup>...

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<sup>8</sup> *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 hope<sup>1</sup>.”*

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 sins<sup>2</sup>.”*

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.

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<sup>1</sup> *Zech 9:9-12.*

<sup>2</sup> *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 you<sup>1</sup>.”*

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 TRIBES<sup>2</sup>**

The covenant is a compact between one person and another or between tribes of nations<sup>3</sup> or between individuals<sup>4</sup>, in which every

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<sup>1</sup> *Isa 55: 3 - 5.*

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

<sup>3</sup> *1 Sam. 11:1; Josh. 9: 6, 15.*

<sup>4</sup> *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...*”<sup>1</sup>

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 Abraham<sup>2</sup>. 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 pieces<sup>3</sup>.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gen 31: 44 - 54.

<sup>2</sup> Gen 15.

<sup>3</sup> Jerm 34: 18.

mode of purifying the parties to the covenant<sup>1</sup>. 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*<sup>2</sup>." 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 times<sup>3</sup>.

(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*<sup>4</sup>." They accepted the covenant of obedience and love to God.

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

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

<sup>2</sup> *Gen. 8: 21,9:9.*

<sup>3</sup> *Gen. 17.*

<sup>4</sup> *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 propitiatory<sup>1</sup>, and from the midst of the two Cherubim, which shall be upon the ark of the testimony<sup>2</sup>.*"

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 Holder<sup>3</sup>."

(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 you<sup>4</sup>.*" 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 foretold<sup>5</sup>. 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,

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<sup>1</sup> *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)*

<sup>2</sup> *Ex 25: 21, 22.*

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

<sup>4</sup> *Exod. 24: 7 & 8.*

<sup>5</sup> *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*<sup>1</sup>."

**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 Christ<sup>2</sup>.

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev 1:4,5.

<sup>2</sup> 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 union<sup>1</sup>.” 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?*”<sup>2</sup>”



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<sup>1</sup> PG 81: 128 B.

<sup>2</sup> Heb 10: 29.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE TRUE PASCH

### ANCIENT RITUAL MEALS<sup>1</sup>

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*)<sup>2</sup>: 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*”<sup>3</sup>, 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,

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<sup>1</sup> See: Joachim Jeremias: *The Eucharistic words of Jesus*.

Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p 31.

<sup>2</sup> “*Kiddus*” is a Hebrew word means “*sanctification*.”

<sup>3</sup> 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*”<sup>1</sup>.”

## THE PASCH<sup>2</sup> 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*<sup>3</sup>. We can summarize it in the following points<sup>4</sup>.

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

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<sup>1</sup> *1 Cor 5:7.*

<sup>2</sup> “*Pasch*” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “*Pasch*.”

<sup>3</sup> “*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.

<sup>4</sup> 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 notion<sup>1</sup>. 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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...<sup>1</sup>

#### 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 thanksgiving<sup>2</sup>.

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*

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<sup>1</sup> *Paschal Mystery, p 26 - 39.*

<sup>2</sup> *See p 34.*

*months; it is the first to you among the months of the year*<sup>1</sup>.” 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?”*<sup>2</sup>

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...<sup>3</sup>

**St. Hippolytus of Rome**

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<sup>1</sup> *Exod 12: 2.*

<sup>2</sup> *Rom 6:2.*

<sup>3</sup> *Derivatives from Hipp. The Paschal Mystery p 49 - 77.*

## 6

# THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

## EUCCHARISTIC CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

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"**<sup>2</sup>.

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 life<sup>3</sup>.

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*<sup>4</sup>." 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

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Schmemmann: *Sacraments and Orthodoxy*.

Ware: *Orthodox Church*.

*Concilium*: Vol. 40.

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

<sup>2</sup> *Dogmatic Theology*, Athens 1907, p 262-65.

<sup>3</sup> Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p 246.

<sup>4</sup> 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 Eucharist<sup>1</sup>."

We are represented in the Eucharist, not symbolically but as the members who are related to the head<sup>2</sup>, and the branches to the root.

✠ There you are upon the Table, there you are in the chalice<sup>3</sup>.

**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.

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Alexander Schmemmann: *Sacraments & Orthodoxym* p 41, 42.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor 12: 27.

<sup>3</sup> 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 Body<sup>1</sup>; 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**<sup>2</sup>.

**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*

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<sup>1</sup> *Dix, p 247.*

<sup>2</sup> *City of God 10: 6, 23, Serm 227.*

*one bread*<sup>1</sup>.”

✠ He has instituted on His altar the sacrament of our peace and unity<sup>2</sup>.

**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 boundaries<sup>3</sup>. 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 immortality<sup>4</sup>.

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*<sup>5</sup>.”

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 banquet<sup>6</sup>.

**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**<sup>7</sup>.

✠ 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

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<sup>1</sup> *1 Cor 10: 17.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sermon 272 to the newly - baptized.*

<sup>3</sup> *Concilium, Vol. 40, p. 49.*

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

<sup>5</sup> *John 14: 1 - 3.*

<sup>6</sup> *Myst. 43, Daniélou: The Bible and The Liturgy, p 129.*

<sup>7</sup> *Cath. Hom 15: 20.*

Heaven<sup>1</sup>.

**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”<sup>2</sup>**

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.



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<sup>1</sup> *Cath Hom. 15: 12, 16: 30.*

<sup>2</sup> *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*<sup>1</sup>.” 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*<sup>2</sup>.” 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 Sabbaths<sup>3</sup>. Whoever should despise it, would be guilty of dishonoring God Himself and should be put to death<sup>4</sup>.

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*<sup>5</sup>.”

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

<sup>1</sup> Deut 5:12 - 15, Exod 20:8 - 11.

<sup>2</sup> Exod 31:4.

<sup>3</sup> Exod 20:8 - 12.

<sup>4</sup> Exod 35:3.

<sup>5</sup> 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 gods<sup>1</sup>.

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 day<sup>2</sup>.

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*"<sup>3</sup>.

## AN ETERNAL COMMANDMENT

Our Lord came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it<sup>4</sup>. 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*"<sup>5</sup>. 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 Hebrews<sup>6</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> *New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, article: "Sabbath."*

<sup>2</sup> *Exod 23:36.*

<sup>3</sup> *Lev 25: 1-5.*

<sup>4</sup> *Mt. 5:17.*

<sup>5</sup> *Col 2:16.*

<sup>6</sup> *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 comes<sup>1</sup>.”*

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

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<sup>1</sup> *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 heart<sup>1</sup>.”

### **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 day<sup>2</sup>.”*

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 God<sup>3</sup>.”* 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 sin<sup>4</sup>.

**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*

<sup>1</sup> *Fr. Schmemmann: Great Lent, p 51, 52.*

<sup>2</sup> *Deut 5:15.*

<sup>3</sup> *Heb 4:8, 9.*

<sup>4</sup> *Library of the Frs. of the Church, Vol. 43, Comm. On St. John.*



raised up by Christ and by His death<sup>1</sup>.”

## 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 come<sup>2</sup>.”*

On the Seventh day, the Lord sent upon the earth the flood after speaking to Noah<sup>3</sup>, 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 God<sup>4</sup>.

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,

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<sup>1</sup> *Magnes 5:l.*

<sup>2</sup> *2 Cor. 5:17.*

<sup>3</sup> *Gen 7:4.*

<sup>4</sup> *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 days<sup>1</sup>." 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*<sup>2</sup>." 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 Sabbath<sup>3</sup>.

**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**<sup>4</sup>.

**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**<sup>5</sup>.

**St. Jerome**

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<sup>1</sup> *Meyendorf: The Orthodox Church 69 - 70.*

<sup>2</sup> *Isaiah 1: 13 - 16.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sermon 38. PL. 270, 1242.*

<sup>4</sup> *Against Celsus 8:21.*

<sup>5</sup> *PL. 39: 2058. Hamman: The Mass.*

## 7- SABBATH AND THE DAY OF THE SUN

**St. Justine**<sup>1</sup> 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 appeared<sup>2</sup>.

### 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 itself<sup>3</sup>. 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 bread<sup>4</sup>. On the following Sunday He appeared to His disciples too<sup>5</sup>.

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*”<sup>6</sup>. 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...*”<sup>7</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> *Apology 67:5.*

<sup>2</sup> *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.”*

<sup>3</sup> *Jn 20:19.*

<sup>4</sup> *Luke 24.*

<sup>5</sup> *Jn 20:26.*

<sup>6</sup> *1 Cor 16:2.*

<sup>7</sup> *Acts 20:7.*

first day of the week<sup>1</sup>.”

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 existence<sup>2</sup>.

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 again<sup>3</sup>. **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 Sunday<sup>4</sup>.”

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.



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<sup>1</sup> *Jungmann: The Early Liturgy, p. 19, 20.*

<sup>2</sup> *Daniélou: The Bible and Liturgy.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ep. Barnabas (100-130 A.D).*

<sup>4</sup> *Ep. Magne. 9:l.*

## **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 THEOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

## ***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)

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<sup>1</sup> *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 taxes<sup>1</sup>. But the Church

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<sup>1</sup> 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 virtues<sup>1</sup>.”

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 Church<sup>2</sup>.” 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

<sup>1</sup> *Schaff, Vol 4, p 387.*

<sup>2</sup> *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 occurrences<sup>1</sup>.”

f. Finally in the sixteenth century Luther denounced with

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<sup>1</sup> 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 another<sup>1</sup>.”

### **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

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<sup>1</sup> *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 source<sup>1</sup>. 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 West<sup>2</sup>.”

## **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

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

<sup>2</sup> *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 prepared<sup>1</sup>.”

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

## **LITURGICAL RITE AND SPIRITUALITY<sup>2</sup>**

### **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

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *St. Irenaeus: Adv Hear 4:33:2.*

<sup>2</sup> *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”*<sup>1</sup>.

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 charade<sup>2</sup>.”

## **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

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<sup>1</sup> *Isa 29:13; Mt 15:7-9.*

<sup>2</sup> *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** says<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> *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 formula<sup>1</sup>."

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 development<sup>2</sup>."

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

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Jungmann: *The Early Liturgy*, p. 211, 221.

<sup>2</sup> 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 LITURGIES<sup>1</sup>**

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

1- *The Euchologium<sup>2</sup> 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 Angelicus Kropp in *Oriens Christianus*<sup>3</sup>.

4- *Fragments of other unidentified Anaphora* which have been edited by H. Hyvernat<sup>4</sup>, by G. Sobhy<sup>5</sup> and by E. Lanne<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Khus Burmester: *The Egyptian or Coptic Church, Cairo 1967.*

<sup>2</sup> "Euchologium" means "a book of prayers."

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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*

<sup>6</sup> 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***," 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, Doxologies<sup>2</sup>, Theotokions<sup>3</sup> 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**."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fr. Schmemmann: *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, ch. 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Doxology* is a prayer or hymn concentrates on the glory to God.

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

<sup>4</sup> *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 EUCHARIST<sup>1</sup>**

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 time<sup>1</sup> it is preceded by the *synaxis*, and at another<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 67.

<sup>2</sup> 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?!