

## THE MYSTERY OF HOLY EUCHARIST

### I. DEFINITION, IMPORTANCE, PREFIGURES AND DIVINE ESTABLISHMENT

The Holy Eucharist is the Mystery of the Orthodox Church in which the presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is real and essential. The bread and wine are offered as a Sacrifice without the shedding of blood and in remembrance of that unique Sacrifice that was offered on the Cross once and for all. The Holy Eucharist is offered as the Life-giving food and communion to all the faithful. Thus, the Holy Eucharist has two aspects, according to which it is a Mystery as well as a Sacrifice. These two aspects are manifested through the many and various names ascribed to Eucharist by Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Through these names the Mystery is exalted. It nourishes the souls of the faithful and unites them through the one Bread and the one Body to Christ and to one another. As a Sacrifice it is a re-enactment, without the shedding of blood, mysteriously and realistically of that Blood offered on the Cross by the High Priest. Since in this Holy Mystery the exact Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is offered for eating and drinking, its supreme and special importance is obvious. It becomes the centre of all other Holy Mysteries and Christian Life. Therefore, as the greatest of all New Testament Holy Mysteries, it is prefigured in the Old Testament and undoubtedly was directly instituted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Supernatural Nourishment and Sacrifice

If through the Holy Mystery of Holy Baptism we enter into the Kingdom of Grace, Justified and Regenerated in Christ, through the Holy Mystery of Chrismation the Gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon us. This is essential in order to strengthen us in the Newness of Life. The third Holy Mystery of Holy Eucharist nourishes us by eating and drinking the actual Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Partaking in this Holy Mystery, although our senses inform us that we eat and drink the offered bread and wine, we are assured by the undoubtable Faith that we have communion with the actual Body and Blood of the Lord, which was shed on the Cross for the Life and Salvation of the entire world. *“We do not judge the thing from its taste, but from faith we are informed without hesitation that the Bread which is seen is not bread, although its taste is perceptible, but it is the Body of Christ; and the wine which is seen is not wine, but it is the Blood of Christ.”*<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 183-186. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 199-201. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 17, part 4, pp. 51-58. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 315-320. Labadarios, *Sermons*, pp. 17-18, 69-81. Sophrony, *His Life*, pp. 87-90. Meyendorff, *Theology*, pp. 201-210. Georgopoulos, *Anthology*, pp. 20-42. Schmemmann, *Eucharist*, translated by Joseph Roelides, Athens, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXII, *Mystagogia* I, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1104.

We are guaranteed by the word of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who said: *“This is My Body’ and we are convinced and believe and see this with the conceivable eyes.”*<sup>3</sup>

Through the invocation of the Holy Spirit a Supernatural, unspeakable and an above all human understanding change takes place in these elements, which are presented, offered and officiated by the officiators who presents them to the Lord Who initially had been offered. He commanded us to do this in remembrance of Him, when on that unique night He blessed the Bread and gave the Cup with His own hands to His Holy Disciples.<sup>4</sup> As then, likewise now, He uses the officiator as a logical instrument to officiate this High Mystery. He Himself on the Christian Altars invisibly blesses and changes the offerings of bread and wine in an indescribable manner through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, into the His actual Body and Blood. This offering is performed in remembrance of His Sacrifice on the Cross. He Himself was the One Who was offered and is being offered. He is distributed to the faithful as a Spiritual Nourishment and Life-giving Source of Immortality.

St John Chrysostom observed that *“...He made these in that Supper and He Himself now works these.”* We who are standing before the Altar *“...serve; but it is He Himself Who Sanctifies and changes these.”*<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the Holy Eucharist has two important and vital aspects. It is on the one hand the Mystery that nourishes us through the Body and Blood of the Lord; and on the other hand, it is the Sacrifice without the shedding of blood. This Sacrifice is the same as that which was offered by the Saviour and High Priest once and for all. Jesus Christ as the sinless Lamb of God was Sacrificed for the Salvation of the world and the forgiveness of its sins, which are wiped away through His precious Blood.

## **2. The Names of the Mystery**

In relation to the double aspect of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist there are many names ascribed to it. We find these names in Holy Scripture and in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church. Thus, this Holy Mystery is called *“Eucharist”* according to its institution when *“...Jesus took the bread and giving thanks He broke...”* then *“...He took the Cup and giving thanks He gave it...”* to His Disciples.<sup>6</sup> This Mystery is the remembrance of Christ’s death, which is the extreme benefit and expression of Divine Love and the inexpressible Mercy of God Who shows mercy to us.<sup>7</sup>

St John Chrysostom taught that *“...it is a perfect guardian of the benefit, the remembrance of the benefit and a constant thanksgiving. For this reason the Mystery, which is full of Salvation, is celebrated daily in the gatherings and is called Eucharist*

---

<sup>3</sup> St John Chrysostom *To Matthew*, Homily 82, §§ 4 and 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 743. Mogilas, A’ 106, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 638. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term 17, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 761.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. 26:26-30. Mark 14:22-26. Luke 22:15-20. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 328-335.

<sup>5</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 744.

<sup>6</sup> Matth. 26:26-27. Mark 14:23. Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinth. 11:24.

<sup>7</sup> Owen, *Theology*, p. 413.

because it is a remembrance of many benefits, the beginning of God's Providence is manifested and it prepares thanksgiving through all."<sup>8</sup>

From the moment that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, instituted and delivered this Holy Mystery, it was called the "Lord's Supper,"<sup>9</sup> the "...Mystical and Divine Supper..." because "...on the night in which He was betrayed ... as they ate..." Jesus "...took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it..." then "...He also took the Cup after supper."<sup>10</sup> It is also called the "Lord's Table," "Cup of the Lord,"<sup>11</sup> the "Despotic Table" and "Table of Christ"<sup>12</sup> being presented by Christ Himself. His Body and Blood are offered to be eaten and drunk by all those who believe in Him. It is also called the "...breaking of the Bread..."<sup>13</sup> from the "...bread which we break..." which is "...the communion of the Body of Christ."<sup>14</sup>

From the use of the elements in this Holy Mystery it is also called the "Living Bread,"<sup>15</sup> "...the bread which comes down from Heaven..."<sup>16</sup> and the "Lord's Bread", "Bread of God,"<sup>17</sup> the "Heavenly Bread and the Cup of Salvation,"<sup>18</sup> the "daily Bread,"<sup>19</sup> and the "Cup of blessing"<sup>20</sup> because of the prayer of thanksgiving through which "...we bless..." this. The Latin Fathers refer to it as "Sacramentum Calicis."<sup>21</sup>

From the Supernatural change that takes place, it is called "Body of Christ" and "Blood of Christ," Mystical Table and the "Lord's Body."<sup>22</sup> Due to the effect upon those who partake, it is called "Communion of the Body of Christ," "Communion of the Blood of Christ," "Cup of Life,"<sup>23</sup> "Medicine of Immortality," "...the antidote we take in order not to die..."<sup>24</sup> and "Viaticum." It is also called: "Altar,"<sup>25</sup> "Sacrifice without the shedding of blood," "Prosphora" ("Offering"),<sup>26</sup> "Holy Sacrifice," "Mystical" and "Logical"<sup>27</sup> Sacrifice.

### 3. The Superiority of the Holy Mystery

---

<sup>8</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 25, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 331.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:20. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To 1 Corinthians 11:20*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 316.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:23, 24, 25.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:21.

<sup>12</sup> Eusebius, *Evangelic Proof*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 22, 92.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 2:42, 46.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:16.

<sup>15</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>16</sup> John 6:50.

<sup>17</sup> St Ignatius, *To Romans*, 7, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, 4 and 5, § 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1100 and 1120.

<sup>19</sup> St Basil, the Great, *About the Holy Spirit*, ch. 27, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 188.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:16.

<sup>21</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, *ad Ceecil. De lapsis*, in Migne, *P.L.*, 3, 391-397.

<sup>22</sup> *Apostolic Orders* VIII, 13, 15, in *B*, v. 2, p. 158. St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, 4, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1100.

<sup>23</sup> St Isidorus of Pelusium, *Book I, Epistolale* 109, in Migne, *P.G.*, 78, 256.

<sup>24</sup> St Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, 20, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> Heb. 13:10

<sup>26</sup> Heb. 8:3.

<sup>27</sup> *Apostolic Orders* V, 19, 7; VIII, 5, 7 and 46, 15 and 13, 15, in *B*, v. 2, pp. 90, 144, 172 and 158. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Hebrews* 8:4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 736. Eusebius, *Evangelic Proof*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 22, 92.

From the above names, which manifest the essence of the Divine Eucharist, one can understand the extreme importance of this Mystery as well as its superiority to the rest of the Holy Mysteries. This Holy Mystery is not only a Supernatural channel through which Divine Grace is transmitted to the faithful but the Saviour and Redeemer Himself exists within it.<sup>28</sup> In Baptism and Holy Chrismation the Sanctified water and Myrrh become the way through which Divine Grace is transmitted to those who are baptised and anointed, whereas in Eucharist, the use of bread and wine are essentially changed into the exact Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This change occurs in such a manner that “...it cannot be understood but only through faith...” because invisibly “...the Holy Spirit descends and works those things that are above nature and above word and meaning.”<sup>29</sup> No one can deny that through the Holy Mysteries the Divine Grace acts and transmits in a Supernatural way, which surpasses all understanding. The veil of the Mystery and the Supernatural secrecy, which covers the Divine Eucharist, is above any other Holy Mystery. In the Divine Eucharist the way of change, the Presence of Christ in all the parts of the Holy Communion, the unbreakable union of the Body and the Blood of the Lord in all the Holy Altars and its sameness to the human nature of the Lord, the re-enacting of the one, unique Sacrifice which was offered “...once and for all...” are Mysteries that will remain always unapproachable to the human mind. Only through Faith are these accepted and received.

Through this Mystery the Lord accepts to descend and “...not only to be seen... but to be touched, to be eaten and to be engaged.” All these reveal His Love and “...desire which He has for us.” Because of this inexpressible humility of the Lord, man is nourished through His Body, which “...being nailed (on the Cross) wiped out death and the sun seeing Him crucified did not hide its radiance...” and “...the angels seeing (these events) were horrified and dared not see without shame.”<sup>30</sup>

Truthfully and in reality man partakes of Heavenly and Angelic Bread. This Bread we will also eat in Heaven for the Lord is Food for all the Heavenly Powers.<sup>31</sup>

The Lord offers equally to all those who believe in Him His Body and Blood. He does not give “...part of His Body to you, and another part is nourished by the other, but from the same Body everyone partakes...” uniting all in Him and to one another. Thus “...we all become noble because He wants.”<sup>32</sup> St John Chrysostom stated that: “When you see this Body before you, say to yourself, this Body is no longer earth and dust and I am no longer a prisoner.”<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Mogilas, *A' 106*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 389. Jeremias, *A'*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 638. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term 16, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 761.

<sup>29</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. To those who ask, if the Theotokos brought forth two natures, and if two natures were hanged on the Cross*, IV, 80, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1141.

<sup>30</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To John*, Homily 46, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 261. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 203. *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 743.

<sup>31</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *Epistle 7*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 1395.

<sup>32</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 201-203.

<sup>33</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 203.

#### 4. The Bond between the Christian Flock and Eucharist

Right from the beginning of the Apostolic era the importance and distinguishable bond that existed between the Christian Flock and the Supernatural and Mystical Table was emphasised. Around this Mystical Table the faithful gathered as members of one Family and one Body. Thus, according to the teachings of the Book of Acts, the faithful “...continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...”<sup>34</sup> and “...continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people.”<sup>35</sup>

*Didache* gives us instructions for officiating the Holy Mystery every Sunday, forbidding the offerings to non-Christians. “But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been Baptised into the Name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: ‘Do not give what is Holy to dogs.’”<sup>36</sup> <sup>37</sup>

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, verified the teachings of *Didache* but added that “...on the day of the sun...” which is the “Lord’s day,” the faithful gather to partake of the Eucharistic Food, which was “...not received as common bread nor as common drink.”<sup>38</sup>

Very early daily Communion is mentioned. St Basil the Great noted that “...it is good and beneficial...” to have Communion every day. He assured us that in his community the faithful were receiving Holy Communion “...four times...” a week, on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.<sup>39</sup>

St Cyprian also noted that every day the Eucharist was received as the nourishment of Salvation.<sup>40</sup>

St Ambrosius referred to the practice of the Church in Mediolan (Milan), whereby Christ was offered to him every day.<sup>41</sup>

Tertullian also witnessed that the Divine Eucharist was officiated every day, especially on Wednesday and Friday.<sup>42</sup> The Bread of Eucharist was considered by him to be “...our daily bread...”<sup>43</sup> “...which was placed upon the essence of the soul...”<sup>44</sup> or the

---

<sup>34</sup> Acts 2:42.

<sup>35</sup> Acts 2:46-47.

<sup>36</sup> Matth. 7:6.

<sup>37</sup> *Didache*, 9, 5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *1 Apology*, 66, 2, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>39</sup> St Basil the Great, *Epistle 93 to sister Patricia*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 484.

<sup>40</sup> St Cyprian, *De oratio Dominica*, 18, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 549.

<sup>41</sup> St Ambrosius, *In Psalm 118(119), Sermo* 18, 26, in Migne, *P.L.*, 15, 461.

<sup>42</sup> Tertullian, *De idol.*, 7, in Migne, *P.L.*, 1, 745.

<sup>43</sup> Tertullian, *De oratione*, 6, in Migne, *P.L.*, 1, 1263.

<sup>44</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, 5, § 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1120.

daily bread “...panis quotidianus...” as being received daily. He gave the reason to the author of the *De Sacramentis* to ask: “If it is a daily bread, why do you receive it after a year? Receive it every day. Thus, you will live, in order that you will be worthy of partaking of it daily. Whosoever is not worthy to take of it everyday is not worthy either to receive it after a year.”<sup>45</sup>

The Newly Illuminated were encouraged to partake of Divine Eucharist regularly. For a whole week, after their baptism, vested in white, they participated in the Liturgy, not only to be guided in the Mystagogy of the Divine Truths, but to have communion of the Divine Mysteries, being taught the Newness of Life in which they were “born again” through Baptism. To survive in this natural life we need daily nutrition, likewise in the spiritual life, once Baptised and Regenerated, we are called to participate in the Divine Mystery of Eucharist. We constantly need spiritual nourishment to preserve and grow in the New Life of Grace. Precisely for this reason the Lord said: “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.”<sup>46</sup> Consequently the whole life of the faithful is led towards this Holy Mystery by which we are exalted and Sanctified.

As the confirmation of the Mystery of Holy Baptism is the Mystery of Holy Chrismation, likewise the confirmation of Holy Chrismation is the participation in the Holy Mystery of the Divine Eucharist. This Divine Mystery is the centre of all others, for in the Divine Eucharist the ordinations take place; within it the union of those who are joined in the Mystery of Marriage is fulfilled and partake of the offering Gifts; those who turn with repentance are led to the Body and Blood of the Lord; even the Mystery of Holy Unction, the Mystery of healing spiritual wounds, is united with Divine Eucharist

Gennadius of Constantinople stated: “Oh, Mystery more sacred than any other mysteries, and surpassing even that of baptism; for through that (baptism) our Master according to power alone, through this (Eucharist) in essence He has communion with us. In this Mystery the creature is changed to the Creator.”<sup>47</sup>

## 5. Prophetic Announcements and Prefigurations

The Holy Fathers and ecclesiastic writers attempted to find Prophetic announcements and prefigurations concerning the Mystery of Eucharist in the Old Testament. Thus, in Malachi we read: “For from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof My Name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>48</sup> Again we read: “Cursed is the man who had the power, and possessed a male in his flock, and whose vow is upon him, and who Sacrifices a corrupt thing to the Lord: for I Am a great King, says the Lord Almighty, and My Name is glorious among the nations.”<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> St Ambrosius, *De sacramentis*, V, 25, in migne, P.L., 16.

<sup>46</sup> John 6:54.

<sup>47</sup> Gennadius of Constantinople, *About the mysterious body of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in Migne, P.G., 160, 357 and 377.

<sup>48</sup> Mal. 1:11

<sup>49</sup> Mal. 1:14.

The Prophet Zephaniah announced “... then will I turn to the peoples a tongue for her generation, that all may call on the Name of the Lord, to serve Him under one yoke. From the boundaries of the rivers of Ethiopia will I receive My dispersed ones; they shall offer Sacrifices to Me.”<sup>50</sup>

The Prophet Habakkuk announced that “God shall come from Theman, and the Holy One from the dark shady mount Pharan. His excellence covered the Heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And His brightness shall be as light; there were horns in His hands, and He caused a mighty love of His strength. Before His face shall go a report, and it shall go forth into the plains, the earth stood at His feet and trembled: He beheld, and the nations melted away: the mountains were violently burst through, the everlasting hills melted at His everlasting going forth.”<sup>51</sup>

Didache states: “On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your Sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have been reconciled, so that your Sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the Sacrifice which the Lord said, “In every place and time offer Me a pure Sacrifice, for I Am a great King, says the Lord, and My Name is marvellous among the nations.”<sup>52,53</sup>

St Irenaeus used the whole verse of the Prophet Malachi and accepted it as an announcement of the Sacrifice within the Divine Eucharist. He observed that through these words, the Prophet noticed that the people would first cease offering other Sacrifices to God and then the Sacrifice in all places would follow and His Name would be glorified in all nations.<sup>54</sup>

St Cyril of Alexandria noted that the prophecy of the Prophet Malachi was being fulfilled “...and churches everywhere, shepherds and teachers, scholars and those who lead to Mystagogies and Divine Altars, the Lamb is Sacrificed conceivably by the Holy officiators.”<sup>55</sup>

St John of Damascus commented “...this is the pure Sacrifice without the shedding of blood, which from sunrise to sunset is offered as the Lord said through the Prophet.”<sup>56</sup>

St John Chrysostom insisted that the announcement of the offering of this Sacrifice from sunrise to sunset raised the question of “When did these take place?” to which he responded: “You do not have any other appointed time but rather after the appearance of Christ.” “For not only in one city as the Jews...” is this Sacrifice offered but “...from sunrise to sunset.” He continued: “He says a pure Sacrifice...” explaining that if

---

<sup>50</sup> Zephan. 3:9-10.

<sup>51</sup> Hab. 3:3-6.

<sup>52</sup> Mal. 1:14.

<sup>53</sup> Didache, 14, 1-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

<sup>54</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 17, § 5, in Migne, P.G., 7, 1023. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 296-297.

<sup>55</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Zephaniah 3:10*, book II, in Migne, P.G., 71, 1008.

<sup>56</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, P.G., 94, 1152.

someone wanted to compare this to those Sacrifices offered in the Old Testament “...he will find the differences great and infinite concerning why this is mainly said to be pure... For not because of smoke nor through blood, but through the Grace of the Holy Spirit is it presented.”<sup>57</sup>

The Old Testament Sacrifices ceased and were replaced by the Eucharist. The former were pre-announcements and prefigurations according to the observations of St Augustine.<sup>58</sup> Before the coming of Christ, the Flesh and Blood of His Sacrifice was announced and prefigured. At the sufferings of Christ, this Truth was proclaimed. After Christ’s Ascension the Mystery of remembrance is performed.<sup>59</sup> When those Sacrifices ceased “...the power of worship was in shadows and types...” and through the replacement of these by the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, “...the nature of the thing was moved to the greater.” It remains “...unconceivable, the liturgy of God. For the elders of the Holy Churches approach God and offer to Him the Sacrifice without the shedding of blood.”<sup>60</sup> For this reason, “...at the time of Passover the Lord officiated this Divine Mystery, so that you would learn all that in the Old Testament these were pre-figured.” Whereas the Lord in the New Testament “...placed the truth.” As the Passover was celebrated by the Jews “...in remembrance of the miracles in Egypt...” likewise, the Divine Eucharist, which replaces the Judaic Passover according to the assurance of St Paul, “...for indeed Christ, our Passover, was Sacrificed for us.”<sup>61</sup> We officiate in remembrance of the Lord. The blood of the sacrificed lamb in Egypt<sup>62</sup> “...was shed for the salvation of the firstborns...”<sup>63</sup> whereas the Blood of the Lamb of God was shed “...for the forgiveness of sins of the entire world. For this is My Blood, He said, which is shed for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>64,65</sup>

St Ambrosius said “...the Apostle spoke about this type; that our fathers ate spiritual food and drank spiritual water.”<sup>66</sup>

Concerning the prefigurations of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist, the Holy Fathers initially exalted the offering of “bread and wine”<sup>67</sup> by Melchizedek. They believed “...that table prefigured this mystical table, as Melchizedek the Priest was the type and image of the true High Priest Christ.”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the “showbread”<sup>69</sup> as well as the “manna,” prefigured “this Bread” of Eucharist by means of which the Jews were fed in the desert<sup>70</sup> together with the waters that sprang forth from the rock in Choreb.<sup>71</sup> Christ

<sup>57</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Against Jews*, Homily 4, § 12, in Migne, P.G., 48, 902.

<sup>58</sup> St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X, 20, in Migne, P.L., 41, 295.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, *Contra Faustum*, XX, 21, in Migne, P.L., 42, 385. Ibid, VI, 5, in Migne, P.L., 42, 251.

<sup>60</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Habakkuk* 3:6, in Migne, P.G., 71, 916.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Corinth. 5:7.

<sup>62</sup> Gen. 12:3, 5-13.

<sup>63</sup> Gen. 12:21-23.

<sup>64</sup> Matth. 26:28.

<sup>65</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 1, in Migne, P.G., 58, 739.

<sup>66</sup> St Ambrosius, *De mysteriis*, c. IX, 58, in Migne, P.L., 16, 426.

<sup>67</sup> Gen. 14:18.

<sup>68</sup> St John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, IV, 13, in Migne, P.G., 94, 1149. St Epiphanius, *Heresis*, 55, § 6, in Migne, P.G., 41, 981.

<sup>69</sup> Lev. 24:5-9. Ex. 29:32. Matth. 12:4. Heb. 9:2.

<sup>70</sup> Ex. 16:4, 16. John 6:31, 49, 58. Nehemiah. 9:15. Psalm 77(78):24. Heb. 9:4. Rev. 2:17.

<sup>71</sup> Ex. 17:5-7. 1 Corinth. 10:4.

spoke of the manna by comparing it to the true “*Bread of Life*” saying: “*Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give the bread from Heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. For, the Bread of God is He Who comes down from Heaven and gives Life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I Am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’*”<sup>72</sup>

## 6. The Divine Institution

The Divine Institution is clearly expressed in the New Testament. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, pre-announced the establishment of this Holy Mystery, preparing His Holy Disciples to receive the new Christian Passover that He would deliver to them. This Institution of the most Divine and Sacred Mystery was not an inspiration of the moment but an essential act of Divine Providence. This pre-announcement was declared because of the Miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.<sup>73</sup> Christ mentioned the “*living bread*” by proclaiming “*I Am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*”<sup>74</sup> He continued “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from Heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.*”<sup>75</sup>

We have four narrations concerning the establishment of the Divine Mystery of Eucharist in the New Testament, which can be divided into two groups. The first group can be incorporated in the tradition according to St Paul, which consists of the narration of St Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>76</sup> and that which is found in the Holy Gospel according to St Luke.<sup>77</sup> The second group represents the tradition of St Peter, which is found in the narration of St Mark and is almost similar to that found in the Holy Gospel of St Matthew.<sup>78</sup> Although one can distinguish differences between these two groups, they are secondary and non-essential. The essential agreement of the four narrations is not contradictory.

Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, remarked that “*...the most Holy Mystery of the Sacred Eucharist, ... the Lord delivered Himself on that night for the life of the world. He*

---

<sup>72</sup> John 6:31-35.

<sup>73</sup> Matth. 14:13-21. Mark 6:30-44. Luke 9:10-17. John 6:1-14. Cf. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 317.

<sup>74</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>75</sup> John 6:53-58.

<sup>76</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:23-25. Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 153-155.

<sup>77</sup> Luke 22:19-20.

<sup>78</sup> Mark 14:22-24 and Matth. 26:26-28.

*took bread and blessed, gave to His Holy disciples and apostles saying: 'Take, eat; this is My body ... Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'*<sup>79,80</sup>

Mogilas referred to the words of St Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians whereby he “...received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the Cup after supper, saying, ‘This Cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this Cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the Cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks Judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”<sup>81,82</sup>

Kritopoulos mentioned that “...all the Evangelists speak about the Lord that He took bread.”<sup>83</sup>

Jeremias also noted that “...the Lord on the night that He was delivered, took bread and giving thanks He broke and said Take, eat.”<sup>84</sup>

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave this Divine and Heavenly Mystery so that it may be officiated forever until His Second glorious Coming.<sup>85</sup> In the tradition of St Paul it includes the instruction: “Do this in remembrance of Me.”<sup>86</sup> When the end of the world comes and the Kingdom of God is established, the relation and communion between the Lord and the faithful will be perfected, the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist will not only continue, but will be perfected in such a manner that the Cup of the Eucharist will be drunk in perfect communion with the Lord as “new”<sup>87</sup> “until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.”<sup>88</sup>

Eusebius declared that “...we who are on earth partake of the bread which came down from Heaven and partake of the Word Who emptied Himself and became lesser. Those in the Kingdom of Heaven perfectly partake of Him, being nourished through His Divinity and enjoying the theories of the wisdom.”<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Matth. 26:26, 27-28.

<sup>80</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 17, pp. 41.

<sup>81</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:23-30.

<sup>82</sup> Mogilas, *A' 107*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 532.

<sup>83</sup> Kritopoulos, ch. 9, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 639.

<sup>84</sup> Jeremias, *A'*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 761.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 149-152.

<sup>86</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:24, 25.

<sup>87</sup> Luke 22:20.

<sup>88</sup> Luke 22:16.

<sup>89</sup> Eusebius, *To Psalm 33:6-8*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 23, 296.

The Mystery of Divine Eucharist as the communion of the faithful with the Lord and as the inauguration of the close relationship with Him, as between that of the head and the rest of the body, will never cease, but beginning from this life, it will be perfected in the future Kingdom.

## II. THE VISIBLE ASPECT OF THE HOLY MYSTERY, TERMS OF ITS PERFECTION AND PARTICIPATION

The visible elements that are used in the Divine Eucharist are the bread and wine mixed with a small portion of water. These elements are Sanctified by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, which follows immediately after the reciting of the words of institution and the instruction of remembrance. Although the Divine Eucharist is a Sacrifice offered by the whole Orthodox Church, the officiator in the Sanctification as the instrument of the Great and High Priest Who unites and offers and is received, is the Bishop or Presbyter being served and assisted by the Deacon. Participators of the Holy Mystery, by means of both elements, are all those who are Baptised, regardless of their age, who must examine themselves and thus, partake in the Mystery through true repentance.

### 1. The Use of Leavened Bread

The use of leavened bread in the Divine Eucharist was the general practice in the entire Orthodox Church since the Apostolic era until this day. None of the ancient Holy Fathers or ecclesiastic writers used the term “*unleavened bread*” (“*azyma*”) concerning the bread of the Eucharist. All spoke of leavened bread (“*artos*”). This Eucharistic bread through the Eucharist “...*is no longer considered common bread...*”<sup>90</sup> nor is it “...*received as such.*”<sup>91</sup> These phrases imply that before the Eucharist, it was simple and ordinary bread. The bread which Melchizedek offered to Abraham was highlighted very early as the prototype of the Eucharistic Bread and was obviously not “*unleavened bread*” (“*azyma*”) but “*leavened*” (“*artos*”), which was used in the Divine Eucharist.<sup>92</sup>

In the Synoptic Gospels, the Lord ate with His Disciples at Passover. However, we must not think that that Passover was Judaic since, according to the Gospel of St John, it is clearly and undoubtedly stated that “...*before the Feast of the Passover...*”<sup>93</sup> the Last Supper took place and therefore on “*the Preparation Day*”<sup>94</sup> before the Judaic Passover, the Lord was crucified.<sup>95</sup> This is evident from the Synoptics according to which, on the day of Christ’s Crucifixion, Simon the Cyrenian,<sup>96</sup> if it had been the Day of the Judaic Passover, certainly would not have been working or travelling, thus disregarding the Law concerning the Sabbath. Consequently, the Lord by eating the New Christian Passover

---

<sup>90</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 18, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, *P.G.*, 7, 1023. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 299-300.

<sup>91</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 66, 2, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, ch. XXX, v. III, pp. 103-104. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 317-318.

<sup>93</sup> John 13:1.

<sup>94</sup> Matth. 26:17. Mark 14:12. Luke 22:7. John 19:31. John 18:28

<sup>95</sup> Matth. 27:32-44. Mark 15:21-32. Luke 23:26-43. John 19:17-37.

<sup>96</sup> Mark 15:21. Matth. 27:32. Luke 23:26.

with His Holy Apostles and Disciples abolished “...*the chief feast...*” of Judaism, “...*transferred it to a more frightening Table and leads (the Apostles) away from the Judaic costumes.*” It was obvious that by celebrating a New Passover, completely He had put aside the use of the shadowy “*unleavened bread*” (“*azyma*”).

The first Christian Church consisted of Jews who used “*unleavened bread*” (“*azyma*”) during the week of the Judaic Passover. In Holy Scripture it is stated that the Lord, at “...*the breaking of bread...*” used normal, leavened bread. It must therefore be very strongly emphasised that Holy Scripture clearly differentiates the use of the terms “*unleavened bread*” (“*azyma*”) <sup>97</sup> and “*leavened bread*” (“*artos*”) <sup>98</sup> and under no circumstance can there be any confusion. According to the author of the *Sacramentis*, the Bread of Eucharist was always ordinary bread (“*panis usitatus*”). <sup>99</sup>

## 2. The Use of Wine

Wine is the second element used by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the Divine Eucharist, according to the testimonies of the Evangelists. <sup>100</sup> This is witnessed by St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, <sup>101</sup> St Irenaeus <sup>102</sup> and St Cyprian <sup>103</sup> who condemned the heretics for using plain water in their eucharist. <sup>104</sup>

From the beginning, the wine was mixed with water according to Palestinian tradition whereby wine was not drunk without mingling with water. This is reminiscent of the liturgy recorded in the *Apostolic Orders*, according to which the Lord “...*mixed in the Cup wine and water and Sanctified gave it to them saying, ‘Drink of it.’*” <sup>105</sup> It reminds us also of the piercing of the Lord’s side on the Cross from which water and blood came out. <sup>106</sup>

St Cyprian saw this mixing of the wine with water as the symbolic union of Christ with His Church. He observed that when the water is poured in the Cup (Chalice), the people are united with Christ. He explained that if one uses only wine in the Eucharist then the Blood of Christ excludes the Faithful, whereas if there is only water in the Cup, this would exclude Christ. <sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Matth. 26:17. Mark 14:1, 12. Luke 22:1, 7. Acts 12:3. 1 Corinth. 5:7, 8.

<sup>98</sup> **Matth.** 4:3, 4; 6:11; 7:9; 12:4. 14:17,19; 15:2, 26, 33, 34, 36; 16:5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 26:26. **Mark** 3:20; 6:8, 36, 37, 38, 41, 44, 52; 7:2, 5, 27; 8:4, 5, 14, 16, 19; 14:22. **Luke** 4:3; 7:33; 9:3, 13, 16; 11:3, 5, 11; 14:1, 15; 15:17; 22:19; 24:30, 35. **John** 6:5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 23, 26, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41, 48, 50, 51, 58; 13:18; 21:9, 13. **Acts** 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11; 27:35. **1 Corinth.** 10:16, 17; 11:23, 26, 27, 28. **2 Corinth.** 9:10. **2 Tim.** 3:8, 12. **Heb.** 9:2.

<sup>99</sup> St Ambrosius, *Sacramentis*, IV, § 14.

<sup>100</sup> Matth. 26:28. Mark 14:25. Luke 22:18.

<sup>101</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 65, 2, in **B**, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>102</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 2, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1125. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 364-365.

<sup>103</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 392.

<sup>104</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 740.

<sup>105</sup> *Apostolic Orders*, VIII, 12, 37, **B**, v. 2, p. 155. Clement the Alexandrian, *Pedagogus*, II, ch. 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 8, 409.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. John 19:34.

<sup>107</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, 13, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 395.

### 3. The Sanctifying Words

In the ancient Church one does not find any specific prayer which Sanctifies the offering Gifts of Eucharist.<sup>108</sup>

*Didache* instructs the faithful “...on the Lord’s own day gather, break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins beforehand so that your Sacrifice may be pure.”<sup>109</sup>

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr spoke of “...Eucharistic bread and wine and water...” and of “...Eucharistic nourishment through prayer...”<sup>110</sup> without determining which prayer Sanctifies them.

St Irenaeus generally observed that “...the mixed Cup and the bread receive the Word of God and become the Body of Christ in the Eucharist.”<sup>111</sup>

Origen reached the same conclusion, observing that we “...thank the Creator of all with prayers ... presenting bread which becomes the Body (of Christ).” Elsewhere he noted “...that which is Sanctified is by the Word of God and prayer.”<sup>112</sup>

St Gregory of Nyssa on the other hand repeated that “...the bread is Sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”<sup>113</sup>

St Athanasius of Alexandria, in a fragment saved by Eulogius of Constantinople, noted “...the Levites carrying the breads and cup of wine, placed them upon the altar accompanied by many prayers and petitions. This was a pre-figuration of what takes place now. In the Divine Liturgy the bread and the cup are ordinary but when the great and admirable prayers are fulfilled ... the Word comes down upon the Bread and the Cup and they become His Body.”<sup>114</sup>

St Augustine referring to the words which Sanctify the Holy Mystery are characterised by Bartmann as being “...symbolic and unclear.”<sup>115</sup> He spoke of the Bread on the Altar, which is Sanctified by the Word of God into the Body and the Cup into the Blood of Christ.<sup>116</sup> This Mystery is Sanctified by Christ Who changes the two elements into His Body and Blood. Again he spoke of the essence that is taken from the fruits of the earth and Sanctified through the Mysterious prayer into the Body of Christ.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 349.

<sup>109</sup> *Didache*, 14, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

<sup>110</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 65, *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>111</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 2, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1125. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 364.

<sup>112</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, VIII, 33, in *B*, v. 10, p. 199.

<sup>113</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis*, 37, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 97.

<sup>114</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *Fragment in Eulogius of Constantinople*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 1325.

<sup>115</sup> Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 350.

<sup>116</sup> St Augustine, *Sermo 227*, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 1099.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, *De Trinitate*, III, 4, § 10, in Migne, *P.L.*, 42, 874. *Ibid.*, *Epistola 149 ad Paulinum*, c. 2, § 16, in Migne, *P.L.*, 33, 636-637.

In the “*Anaphora*” of St Hippolytus the words of institution were combined with the invocation,<sup>118</sup> which were recited mainly for the faithful in order that they be filled with the Holy Spirit. This “*Anaphora*” beseeches the Holy Spirit to descend upon the offered Gifts of the Holy Church and Sanctify them. As a result, the faithful are “...filled with all blessings and Grace.”<sup>119</sup>

All the Holy Fathers from the 4<sup>th</sup> century onwards, unanimously declared that in the Eucharist the change of the bread and wine takes place after the invocation.<sup>120</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem repeatedly stressed that “...the Bread of the Eucharist, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is no longer ordinary bread but the Body of Christ.” “We ask God Who loves man to send the Holy Spirit upon the presented Gifts and to make the bread the Body of Christ and the wine the Blood of Christ. Whatever the Holy Spirit touches, is changed and Sanctified.”<sup>121</sup>

St Basil the Great referred to “...the words of the invocation which blesses the Eucharistic Bread and Cup.” He stated that we received this tradition “...from the unwritten teachings.”<sup>122</sup> Whereas the invocation and prayer are addressed in order that the Holy Spirit be sent to “...bless and sanctify and make...” the presented Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Not only the Christian East, but the West as well, insisted that the Sanctification is caused by the invocation.<sup>123</sup> Only St Ambrosius declared that Sanctification takes place with the reciting of the words of institution.<sup>124</sup> Tertullian did not refer to the Sanctification at the time of the celebration of the Eucharist but in the change during the Last Supper, according to which the Lord, taking the bread in His Hands and distributing it to His Disciples made it His Body by saying: “*This is My Body.*”<sup>125</sup>

St John Chrysostom stressed that “...the same Christ Who was crucified for us is present...” during the celebration of the Divine Eucharist. He assured us that “...the saying ‘*This is My body*’ changes the present. And as the Commandment of God to ‘*Increase and multiply and fill the earth*’ was said once, but through time became work strengthening our nature for child-bearing, likewise the New Commandment concerning the institution of the Divine Eucharist was also said once and affects every Altar until His second Coming.” Through these teachings he emphasised the irrefutable institution of the Holy Mystery as well as the invisible and continuous perfection of the Great High

---

<sup>118</sup> St Hippolytus, in Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 379.

<sup>119</sup> Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 350.

<sup>120</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 337-353.

<sup>121</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXI, § 3; XXIV, § 7; and XIX, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1089, 1092, 1113, 1116 and 1072.

<sup>122</sup> St Basil the Great, *About the Holy Spirit*, ch. XXVII, § 66, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 188.

<sup>123</sup> Bartmann, *Theologie Dogmatique*, v. II, p. 350. Hieronymus, *Epistola* 146, § 1, in Migne, *P.L.*, 22, 1193. St Isidorus of Pelusium, *Book I, Epistolale* 109, in Migne, *P.G.*, 78, 256. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *Dialogue*, II, in Migne, *P.G.*, 83, 165-168.

<sup>124</sup> St Ambrosius, *De Sacramentis*, IV, cap. 4, § 14, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 459. *Ibid*, *De mysteriis*, IX, 54, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 424.

<sup>125</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcianem*, IV, 40, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 491.

Priest. However, he does not exclude the importance of the invocation. This is clearly manifested from the fact that he repeatedly refers to it.<sup>126</sup>

St John of Damascus, following St John Chrysostom, assured us that the “...*bread of the prothesis (preparation table) and the wine and the water through the invocation and descent of the Holy Spirit are changed Supernaturally into the Body and Blood of Christ.*” He also stressed that “...*the Holy Spirit descends and makes them above any word and understanding.*”<sup>127</sup>

According to the above, we can say that the Sanctification of the precious Gifts (bread and wine) are perfected through the invocation and prayer. No one can deny that the invocation is enough to perfect the whole Mystery of Eucharist as this occurs in Holy Baptism where the calling upon the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to perfect the Holy Mystery of Baptism. In the Divine Eucharist the invocation is based “...*upon the saving Commandment ‘Do this in My remembrance,’ in order to have the exact re-enactment of that which the Lord delivered at the Last Supper. It is necessary to recite the words of institution followed by invocation.*”<sup>128</sup>

The words of institution and invocation consist of two important parts of the whole “*Anaphora*” and without the words of institution, we risk not having whatever Christ delivered. Furthermore without the invocation we are in danger of not having the Sanctification and change of the two elements (Bread and Wine).

“*The bread is changed into the exact Body and the wine is changed into the exact Blood of the Lord through the invocation and sacred prayers by the Grace of the Almighty Spirit.*”<sup>129</sup> “*The bread and the wine and water of the prothesis through the invocation and visitation of the Holy Spirit are changed into the exact Body and Blood of Christ.*”<sup>130</sup> The change is accomplished “...*through the action of the Holy Spirit Who is called at that moment to perfect this Mystery, praying and saying: ‘Send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these presented Gifts and make ...’ After these words the change immediately takes place and the bread changes into the real Body and the wine into the real Blood of Christ.*”<sup>131</sup>

#### **4. The Officiators of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist**

The Bishop or the Presbyter is the officiator and instrument who serves the invisible High Priest, Christ our God, in order to perfect the Holy Mystery.<sup>132</sup> Neither the Bishop

---

<sup>126</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To the betrayal of Judas*, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 380. *Ibid.*, *About priesthood*, III, § 4 and VI, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 642 and 681. *Ibid.*, *To the name of the cemetery and to the Cross*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 398. *Ibid.*, *To the understanding of the apostle and high priest of our faith*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 64, 489.

<sup>127</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1145.

<sup>128</sup> Karmeris, *Synopsis*, p. 101, note 1.

<sup>129</sup> Jeremias, A’, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 394.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, B’, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 460.

<sup>131</sup> Mogilas, A’ 107, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 638.

<sup>132</sup> Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 201-204. Georgopoulos, *Anthology*, pp. 22-23.

nor the Presbyter “... *who is present...*” before the Altar “...*acts, but God acts through him.*” This act is not of any “... *human nature but is the achievement of the Grace of the Spirit Who is present, oversees and prepares the Mystical Sacrifice.*” This is the fundamental teaching of the Orthodox Church, which refers to the entire perfection of the Holy Mysteries. This great truth is stressed in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy whereby “...*no man makes the offering of bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ...*” but “...*the Priest standing and reciting those words...*” which were said in the “...*upper room... at that Supper*” Christ “...*changes and Sanctifies them.*” The officiator prays to the Lord as our High Priest as He Who offers and is being offered and Who accepts the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, which is distributed to the faithful. Christ is He Who invisibly unites those who surround the Holy Altar to Himself in order to offer the Sanctified Gifts not only to them but also through them to all His people. Hence, St John Chrysostom urged the faithful “...*to partake of the Divine Body by approaching, not as receiving from man, but as in the case of the Prophet Isaiah*<sup>133</sup> *who saw the Seraphim touching his lips with the burning coal, and thus partaking of the saving Blood.*”<sup>134</sup>

Besides the above, only the Bishop or the Presbyter serve the invisible High Priest and only they are used by Him as the instruments for the perfection of the Divine Eucharist.<sup>135</sup> The Eucharist is simultaneously a Sacrifice that is offered by the whole Orthodox Church. The plain bread and wine are Sanctified and changed into the actual Body and Blood of Christ by the Grace of the Holy Spirit and through the officiator. They are changed into the Sacrifice of Golgotha, becoming the Sacrifice of the entire Holy Orthodox Church and as such, refer to the Holy Trinity, the only and True God.

The Bishop or Presbyter is the only officiator of the Holy and Heavenly Mystery. The Lord delivered this Mystery to His Apostles and gave them the Commandment “...*do this in remembrance of Me.*”<sup>136</sup> The instruction “*Take, eat...*” and “...*drink of it all of you...*” was addressed only to His Holy Apostles. This is supported by the practice and Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

In the *Didache* we find the instruction: “*Appoint for yourselves Bishops and Deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are humble and not avaricious and true and approved, for they too carry out for you the ministry of the Prophets and Teachers.*”<sup>137</sup>

In the Letter of St Clement of Rome to the Corinthians the Bishops and Deacons are compared to the Priests and Levites of the Old Testament and are recognised as the only officiators. “*Let each of you, brothers, in his proper order, give thanks to God, maintaining a good conscience, not overstepping the designated rule of his ministry, but acting with reverence. Not just anywhere, brothers are the continuous officiators of the daily Sacrifices which are offered... And even there (Jerusalem) the offering is not made*

<sup>133</sup> Is. 6:6-7.

<sup>134</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To the holy Pentecost*, Homily 1, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 49. Ibid, *To the betrayal of Judas*, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 380. Ibid, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 744. Ibid, *About repentance*, Homily 2, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 345.

<sup>135</sup> Mogilas, *A'* 107, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 638. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term 16, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 763.

<sup>136</sup> Luke 22:19.

<sup>137</sup> *Didache*, 15, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

*in every place, but in front of the sanctuary at the altar, the offering having been first inspected for blemishes by the high Priest and the previously mentioned ministers. Those, therefore, who do anything contrary to the duty imposed by his will receive death as the penalty. You see, brothers, as we have been considered worthy of greater knowledge, so much the more are we exposed to danger.”*<sup>138</sup> *“The Apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus the Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the Will of God in good order. Having therefore received their orders and being fully assured by the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of faith in the Word of God, they went forth with the firm assurance that the Holy Spirit gives, preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God was about to come. So, preaching both in the country and in the towns, they appointed their firstfruits, when they had tested them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons for the future believers. And this was no new thing they did, for indeed something had been written about Bishops and Deacons many years ago; for somewhere thus, says the Scripture: ‘I will appoint their Bishops in righteousness and their Deacons in faith’*<sup>139</sup>*”*<sup>140</sup> *“Let us, therefore, serve as soldiers, brothers, with all earnestness under His faultless orders. Let us consider the soldiers who serve under our commanders, how precisely, how readily, how obediently they execute orders. Not all are prefects or tribunes or centurions or captains of fifty and so forth, but each in his own rank executes the orders given by the Emperor and the commanders. The great cannot exist without the small, or the small without the great. There is a certain blending in everything, and therein lies the advantage. Let us take our body as an example. The head without the feet is nothing; likewise, the feet without the head are nothing. Even the smallest parts of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body, yet all the members work together and unite in mutual subjection, that the whole body may be saved.”*<sup>141</sup>

St Ignatius of Antioch very clearly proclaimed that *“...only that Eucharist which is under the authority of the Bishop (or whomever he himself designates) is to be considered valid. Wherever the Bishop appears, there let the congregation be; just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church. It is not permissible either to Baptise or to hold a love feast (the Divine Liturgy) without the Bishop. But whatever he approves is also pleasing to God, in order that everything you do may be trustworthy and valid.”*<sup>142</sup> Elsewhere he stated that *“... when you are subject to the Bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are living, not in accordance with human standards, but in accordance with Jesus Christ Who died for us in order that by believing in His death you might escape death. It is essential, therefore, that you continue your current practice and do nothing without the Bishop, but be subject also to the Presbytery as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ, our Hope, in Whom we shall be found, if we so live. Furthermore, it is necessary that those who are Deacons of the “mysteries” of Jesus Christ please everyone in every respect. For they are not merely ‘Deacons’ of food and drink, but ministers of*

<sup>138</sup> St Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 41, 1-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Is. 60:17

<sup>140</sup> St Clement of Rome, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 42, 1-5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 51.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 37, 1-5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 49.

<sup>142</sup> St Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, 8, 1-2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 112-113.

God's Church. Therefore they must avoid criticism as though it were fire."<sup>143</sup> "Similarly, let everyone respect the Deacons as Jesus Christ, just as they should respect the Bishop, who is a model of the Father, and the Presbyters as God's Council and as the band of Apostles. Without these no group can be called a church."<sup>144</sup> "Take care, therefore, to practice in one Eucharist (for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one Cup which leads to unity through His Blood; there is one Altar, just as there is one Bishop, together with the Presbytery and the Deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God."<sup>145</sup>

According to St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, "...to the presiding of the brothers..." was offered "...the Bread and the Cup mixed with water." The first gave thanks on behalf of "...all the people..." with Eucharist and "...the Deacons gave to each of those who were present... and brought to those who were absent."<sup>146</sup>

St Cyprian stressed that "...if Christ is the High Priest of the Father Who presented Himself and commanded this to be done in His remembrance, it is also certain, that each Priest is in the place of Christ, because he repeats whatever Christ did."<sup>147</sup> St Cyprian also informed us that the Deacons give the Cup.<sup>148</sup>

In the *Apostolic Orders* it is stated that "...the Deacon can neither offer a proper Sacrifice nor Baptise." However, according to the giving of the Eucharist "...the Bishop allows him to give the offering by saying 'Body of Christ' and he who receives, let him say: 'Amen.' Let the Deacon hold the Cup of Life and giving, let him say: 'Blood of Christ', and he who drinks, let him say: 'Amen.'"<sup>149</sup>

Laymen were forbidden to officiate the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist<sup>150</sup>, whereas it was permitted for them to carry the precious Gifts on serious occasions.<sup>151</sup>

## 5. Partakers of the Holy Mystery

Those who are not Baptised are excluded from partaking of Holy Eucharist as well as those who have fallen into major sin and who, in order to become worthy, must purify themselves through pure repentance.<sup>152</sup> In addition the Holy Mystery is never offered to heretics<sup>153</sup> and all those who have separated themselves from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church.

---

<sup>143</sup> St Ignatius, *To Trallians*, 2, 1-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, *To Trallians*, 3, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 98.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, *To Philadelphians*, 4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107.

<sup>146</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *1 Apology*, 65, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>147</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, 14, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 397.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, *De lapsis*, 25, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 50.

<sup>149</sup> *Apostolic Orders*, VIII, 46, 11 and 13, 15, in *B*, v. 2, pp. 171 and 158.

<sup>150</sup> Tertullian, *De exhort. Cast.*, VII, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 971. *Ibid*, *De coron. militiae*, c. 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 99.

<sup>151</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, 44, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 629.

<sup>152</sup> St Symeon, *Euriskomena*, Homily XLI, pp. 188-193.

<sup>153</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1153.

St Paul instructed each of us to “...examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the Cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body.”<sup>154</sup> Those who approach unworthily not only face spiritual consequences but also threats against their health and even their lives.<sup>155</sup>

*Didache* instructs that “... let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been Baptised into the Name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: ‘Do not give what is Holy to dogs.’<sup>156,157</sup> Furthermore, *Didache* urges those who are Baptised to break the Bread on the Lord’s Day “...having first confessed your sins, so that your Sacrifice may be pure.”<sup>158</sup>

Similarly and according to St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, it was required from all those who would partake of the Holy Mystery to believe in the Christian Teaching and to promise that they would live in full agreement and obedience to it. Thus, those who were accepted in Baptism were presented in the gathering of the brothers and were accepted in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>159</sup>

St Cyprian refers to the case of a mother and child who had unworthily approached the Holy Mystery resulting in their sickness and death.<sup>160</sup>

Origen repeatedly refers to the consequences when one does not prepare himself properly before approaching the Divine Mystery. Referring to the words of St Paul, he asked the unworthy if they thought they could escape the Judgement of God by approaching the Eucharist without fear and ignoring that which was written: “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”<sup>161,162</sup> In other instances he used the example of Judas who took “...from Jesus bread similar to that which was given to the rest of the Apostles in the ‘Take, eat,’ but for them it was for Salvation, whereas for Judas it was for condemnation, as after the bread Satan entered in him...” because “...the benefit of the Lord’s Bread is for the user, as long as he partakes of the Bread with a pure mind and clean conscience.”<sup>163</sup>

Finally, it became a custom that one should partake of the Holy Eucharist having fasted. Since infant Baptism is practised within the Orthodox Church, the infants and all those who are worthy must partake of the Heavenly Mysteries.<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:28-29.

<sup>155</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:30.

<sup>156</sup> Matth. 7:6.

<sup>157</sup> *Didache*, 9, 5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 154.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 14, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

<sup>159</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 66, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

<sup>160</sup> St Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 25 and 26, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4.

<sup>161</sup> 1. Corinth. 11:30.

<sup>162</sup> Origen, *To Psalm 37*, Homily II, 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 138b. *Ibid*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 901-904.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, XI, § 14, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 950. *Ibid*, *To Ezekiel*, 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 793.

<sup>164</sup> Kritopoulos, *ch.* 8, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 536. St Cyprian, in Migne, *P.L.*, 20, 592.

### III. INVISIBLE ASPECT OF DIVINE EUCHARIST

#### A. REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST

From the words of institution found in the New Testament, as well as from the Teachings of the Holy Fathers in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, we are informed that in the Holy Mystery of Divine Eucharist we partake of the True Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The change that takes place in the bread and wine is beyond any human understanding. Externally the elements remain as they are. Christ is physically present, offering and being offered to the faithful. The results of this Supernatural change are that the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, because of the continuous Presence of the Lord, is always a vital part of our worship. The faithful partake of the whole Christ Who is distributed but not divided, being present in all the Holy Altars, the one and same Lord Who ascended into Heaven. When the faithful partake of this Heavenly and Divine Mystery, they become partakers of the same Body and Blood of Christ, partakers of the Divine Nature and become members of the one Bread and Body.<sup>165</sup> On the contrary, those who partake unworthily bring Judgement upon themselves.

#### 1. The True Meaning of the Words of Christ

In the Holy Mystery of Divine Eucharist, through the Supernatural change of the elements of the Bread and Wine, the Orthodox Christians partake of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is confirmed by the words of our Lord when He promised to deliver the Holy Mystery as well as when He characterised the Sanctified Bread and the Blessed Cup as being nourishment and drink for the faithful.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ assured us that He is “... *the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever; and the Bread that I shall give is My Flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*”<sup>166</sup> “*This is the Bread which came down from Heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this Bread will live forever.*”<sup>167</sup> “*Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal Life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*”<sup>168</sup> “*For My Flesh is food indeed, and My Blood abides in Me, and I in him. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me, and I in him.*”<sup>169</sup> These words cannot be considered as having an allegoric meaning, for if anyone takes them as such, it would be scandalous as when those who, hearing Christ say them, took them literally and “...*from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*”<sup>170</sup> Our Lord did not defend Himself by trying to explain what He had meant but instead He emphasised “*Most assuredly, I*

---

<sup>165</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 17, part 7, pp. 65-66.

<sup>166</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>167</sup> John 6:58.

<sup>168</sup> John 6:54.

<sup>169</sup> John 6:55-56.

<sup>170</sup> John 6:66.

say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no Life in you.”<sup>171</sup> Seeing that some of His Disciples departed, He addressed the rest by asking them: “Do you also want to go away?”<sup>172</sup>

The Flesh that is offered by the Lord is truly the Body of God.<sup>173</sup> “It is truly Body united to the Deity...” and “...the Bread and the Wine are changed into the Body and Blood of God.”<sup>174</sup> This is the practice and Confession of Faith of the Orthodox Church that proclaims that the words of Christ are taken literally and that His Presence in the Holy Mystery is real and true.<sup>175</sup>

## 2. The Teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Change and Real Presence

It is the common belief of all the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church that through the Supernatural change that occurs in the Divine Eucharist, the Presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is real and essential. In the Teachings of the Apostolic Fathers we have the first testimony clearly confirming this Doctrine.

St Ignatius the Theophorus of Antioch, accusing the Docites “...who deny the good Gift of God...”<sup>176</sup> by not confessing that in the Eucharist the Flesh is that of our Saviour Jesus Christ Who suffered for our sins and rose from the dead. Elsewhere he advised the faithful “...to practice one Eucharist...” because “...there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one Cup which leads to unity through His Blood.”<sup>177</sup>

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, in his 1<sup>st</sup> Apology, described the way of celebrating the Divine Mystery during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century whereby “...the Eucharist is called Food; for we do not receive them as common bread nor as common drink.” He also proclaimed that “...we were taught that the Flesh and Blood of the Incarnated Jesus...” is Food. Furthermore he observed that there is a similarity between the Sanctification of the Eucharist to that of the Incarnation of our Lord “...Jesus Christ our Saviour Who was Incarnated and took up flesh and blood for our Salvation. Thus, the Word through prayer becomes Food.” He also commented that we were taught that this Flesh and Blood is of the Incarnated Word and Son of God. St Justin identified that the Flesh and Blood of the historic and Incarnated Christ is the exact same Blood and Flesh of Christ in the Eucharist. The result of the Incarnation as well as that of the Sanctification of the Eucharist is one and the same. In other words it is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> John 6:53.

<sup>172</sup> John 6:67.

<sup>173</sup> St Ambrosius, *De mysteriis*, c. IX, § 58, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 426.

<sup>174</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1145. St Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book IV, ch. 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 604. *Ibid*, *Against Nestorius*, book IV, ch. 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 192.

<sup>175</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 17, pp. 41-45. Georgopoulos, *Anthology*, p. 32.

<sup>176</sup> St Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, 7, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 112.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, *To Philadelphians*, 4, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107.

<sup>178</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *1 Apology*, 65, *B*, v. 3, p. 197.

Scheeben, in his work *“Les Mystères,”* observed that the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist is some kind of reproduction and extension of His Incarnation. The change of the Bread into His Body through the Power of the Holy Spirit is some kind of Regeneration of the admirable action by which Christ formed His Body in the womb of the Virgin through the Power of the same Spirit. In the Incarnation He appeared for the first time to the world, whereas in the Eucharist He multiplies His real Presence through time and space. This Presence is multiplied in order that the Body of Christ increases and extends through the members who are joined to Him and to one another. The Body of Christ is reproduced through the Sanctification, in order to be united with men through the Communion and to become one Body with Him, in order that He might be Incarnated again in each man, taking up the human nature of each person and uniting it to His.<sup>179</sup>

St Irenaeus constantly spoke of the Mystery of the Eucharist by declaring that *“...the mixed Cup and Bread, receiving the Word of God becomes the Eucharist which is the Body ....”* and *“...the Blood of Christ.”* He presented the Eucharist as the New Sacrifice and offering that the Church received from the Apostles and which is offered to God by the entire world. He emphasised the benefits of the communion, reassuring us that from the Eucharist *“...the hypostasis of our flesh grows and is composed...”* and *“...from the Body and Blood of the Lord it is nourished and becomes its member.”* *“Thus, our bodies receiving the Eucharist are no longer mortal, having the hope of the Eternal Resurrection.”*<sup>180</sup>

Tertullian spoke of Christ as our Bread because He is Life and the Bread is Life.<sup>181</sup> For this reason, His Body is contained within the Bread according His statement: *“This is My Body.”*<sup>182</sup> Hence, the flesh of the Orthodox Christian is nourished by the Flesh and Blood of the Lord.<sup>183</sup> Taking into consideration that the Bread of the Lord at the Communion was placed on the palm of the faithful’s right hand, who then covered it with his left hand to signify the acceptance of the King and receiving of the Body of Christ, he would respond: *“Amen.”*<sup>184</sup> Elsewhere, he cautioned us to be careful that nothing of the Sacred Body falls on the ground.<sup>185</sup>

St Cyprian stressed that it is impossible when the wine is absent, to see His Blood, by Whom we were delivered and have received Life.<sup>186</sup> When the wine is mixed with water in the Cup, it signifies that the people are united with Christ.<sup>187</sup> Concerning the request of the daily bread in the Eucharist, he declared that *“...Christ is our Bread...”* and whoever has communion with Him has Eternal Life. In addition, he taught that those who have fallen (*“lapsis”*) but were receiving Holy Eucharist without repentance and reconciliation with the Church, they were committing violence against the Body and

<sup>179</sup> Scheeben, *Les Mystères*, p. 490.

<sup>180</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 2, § 3; book IV, ch. 17, § 5 and ch. 18, §§ 1 and 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1125-1127 and 1023-1024. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 364, 297 and 297, 299-300.

<sup>181</sup> John 6:35, 48.

<sup>182</sup> Tertullian, *De oratione*, 6, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 1262.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, *De resurrection carne*, 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 2, 852.

<sup>184</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXIV, *Mystagogia* V, § 21, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1125.

<sup>185</sup> Tertullian, *De coron. militiae.*, in migne, *P.L.*, 2, 99.

<sup>186</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, 2, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 386.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, *Epistola* 63, 2, in migne, *P.L.*, 4, 386.

Blood of Christ. Therefore they were sinning against Him through receiving Holy Communion unworthily, which was far more serious than when they had renounced Him. He spoke of penitence for those who unworthily received Communion. The shedding of blood of the Holy Martyrs was considered by him to have received great honour similar to that of the shedding of the Blood of Christ.<sup>188</sup>

The Alexandrian Holy Fathers and ecclesiastic writers are well known for their allegoric interpretation. Nevertheless, they also emphasised the real Presence of Christ in the Divine Eucharist.<sup>189</sup> Origen urged that the Divine Mystery of Eucharist should be carefully and with piety received and cautioned that no part should fall on the ground because this brings great guilt upon the conscious of the faithful.<sup>190</sup> He also referred to the seriousness and severe consequences that follow when one does not prepare and examine himself when approaching the Holy Mysteries. He used the example of Judas who unworthily received the bread from Christ, giving Satan the opportunity to enter into his heart.<sup>191</sup>

St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria, writing to Maximus the Philosopher, verified that we are Deified through participation of the Body of the Word and not that of a mere mortal.<sup>192</sup>

St Gregory of Nyssa observed that “...*the Bread remains bread although it was common before, but once it is officiated in the Mystery, it becomes the actual Body of Christ.*” Elsewhere he commented that “...*we believe that the Bread which is Sanctified, is changed into the Body of God the Word...*” and that the Bread in the Eucharist “...*is Sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, not through drinking and eating ...but immediately it is changed into the Body of the Word, as well as it is said by the Word, that ‘This is My body.’*”<sup>193</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem wondered who would dare to doubt the words of our Lord Who said “*This is My Blood.*” Therefore, who would dare to deny that this is not His Blood?<sup>194</sup> Elsewhere he confirmed that after the invocation “...*the bread becomes the Body of Christ, the wine Blood of Christ.*”<sup>195</sup>

St John Chrysostom recommended that when we see the Body in the Eucharist we must remember: “*This Body the sun saw and hid its radiance... this is that Sanctified Body, which was pierced and from which the Saving Fountains sprang... this is Body He gave us to have and to eat.*” Elsewhere, he wondered: “*How many say: I wanted to see*

---

<sup>188</sup> St Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 16 and 25, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 493 and 499-500. Ibid, *Epistola* 63, 15, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 398.

<sup>189</sup> Clement the Alexandrian, *Pedagogus*, I, ch. 6, in *B*, v. 7, pp. 99 and 100. Ibid, *Pedagogus*, II, ch. 2, in *B*, v. 8, p. 409. Origen, *Against Celsus*, VIII, 33, in *B*, v. 10, p. 199. Ibid, *To Numbers*, Homily XIV, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 701.

<sup>190</sup> Origen, *To Exodus*, Homily XIII, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 391.

<sup>191</sup> John 13:26-27. Origen, *To John*, XXXII, § (16) 24, in Pros. Academy, p. 468.

<sup>192</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *To Maximus the Philosopher*, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 1087.

<sup>193</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *To the baptism of Christ*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 581. Ibid, *Catechesis*, 37, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 95-97.

<sup>194</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XXII *Mystagogia* IV, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1097.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, *Catechesis*, XIX *Mystagogia* I, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1072.

*Him, the prints of His Wound.” He then explained: “Behold, you are seeing Him, you are touching Him, and you are eating Him... He gives Himself not just to be seen but to be touched and to be eaten and to be received within.”*<sup>196</sup>

St Cyril of Alexandria spoke of the Holy Mystery emphasising that “...*the Lord was to be risen with His own flesh and to ascend to the Father. For us to have Salvation, He gave us His own Body and Blood, that through these the power of mortality might be abolished. He inhabits our souls through the Holy Spirit.*” Thus, “*Christ descends and is descended to all of us invisibly and visibly: invisibly as God and visibly in Body. He allows and offers His Holy Flesh ... but we do not eat the Deity in this Mystery but the Word’s own Flesh, which becomes Life-giving Flesh because it belongs to Him Who lives with the Father.*”<sup>197</sup>

St John of Damascus pointed out that in the Eucharist “...*the bread and the wine are changed Supernaturally into the Body and Blood of God... through the invocation and descent of the Holy Spirit.*” “*The bread is not the model of the Body and Blood of Christ. May God forbid! But it is the Deified Body of the Lord.*”<sup>198</sup>

St Ambrosius of Mediolan reminded us that the word of Elijah was so powerful it was able to bring down fire from Heaven. Contemplating how the word of Christ Who brought forth everything from nothingness into being, could change the elements of bread and wine, explained that in this Mystery the elements are truly changed into the actual Body of Christ which was crucified, buried and Resurrected.<sup>199</sup>

In the Divine Eucharist, we have the real and true Presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and not any symbolic or imaginary appearance. The change of the elements of bread and wine takes place by Supernatural means that surpasses all human understanding and which can only be understood through pure and undefiled faith.

### **3. The Permanency and Inextinguishability of the Change**

If real change of the Sanctified elements (bread and wine) take place in the Divine Eucharist, the result of this change is that the Lord is Supernaturally present in the changed elements, not only during the time of the celebration of the Eucharist and the following Communion, but even after these in the remaining parts of the Sanctified elements or in the “*Artophorion*” (Tabernacle) which is preserved throughout the year for the use of the sick or extraordinary circumstances.

---

<sup>196</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, §§ 2, 4-5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 603. Ibid, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, §§ 4, 5. Ibid, *About repentance*, Homily 9, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 203, 58, 743, 49, 345.

<sup>197</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Matthew 26:26*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 72, 452. Ibid, *To John 20:27*, book XII, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 725. Ibid, *Against Nestorius*, IV, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 76, 189.

<sup>198</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1148.

<sup>199</sup> St Ambrosius, *De mysteriis*, c. IX, 52, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 424.

In the ancient Orthodox Church, the Sanctified Bread and Wine that were changed into the actual Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, were sent to those who were absent from the Divine Liturgy, especially to those who were imprisoned due to the persecutions. It was customary for Orthodox Christians to have the precious Gifts in their homes, in order to receive Holy Communion daily.<sup>200</sup>

During the period of Great Lent a complete Divine Liturgy is allowed only on Saturdays and Sundays. The ancient tradition of the Presanctified Gifts was practised whereby the offered Gifts (the Body and Blood) of Christ were Sanctified during the previous Sunday's Liturgy and offered on Wednesdays and Fridays.

St Cyril of Alexandria opposed the opinion that the remaining parts of the Eucharist lose their Sanctified Grace if they were to remain until the following day. He characterised this concept as madness, for Christ's is incorruptible. The power of the blessing and the Life-giving Grace is constant.<sup>201</sup>

The permanent, continuous and real Presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the Eucharist obliges us to approach Holy Communion with fear "*...as Isaiah was touched by one of the Seraphim with the burning ember.*" We must "*...receive the Sacred Body as though touching the Divine and Precious with our lips, likewise partaking of the saving Blood.*"<sup>202</sup>

We are obliged even afterwards to accept the Body and Blood of God which is preserved in the *Artophorion* (Tabernacle) or which is transferred from it by the officiator (Bishop or Priest) to be given to the sick. We must respect it with the proper honour and worship as the Body and Blood of the Lord. The Sanctified elements of the Eucharist are preserved in the Orthodox Church as "*...the Holy things for the Holy people of God.*"

St Cyril of Jerusalem instructed the faithful to kneel and recite the "*Amen*" in order to receive the Consecrated Bread during the Service with respect.<sup>203</sup>

St Ambrosius of Mediolan observed that the use of the term "*footstool*" in Psalm 98:5 must be understood as being "*... the flesh of Christ, which we worship to this day in the Mysteries.*"<sup>204</sup>

St Augustine giving the same interpretation for the term "*footstool*," remarked that "*...no one should eat that Flesh...*" in the Mystery, "*...if he does not previously worship it. Hence, one understands in which way he must worship this footstool of the Despot.*"<sup>205</sup>

---

<sup>200</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *I Apology*, 65, in *B*, v. 3, p. 197. St Basil, the Great, *Epistle 93 to sister Caesaria*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 485. Tertullian, *De oratione* 19, in Migne, *P.L.*, 1, 1286. St Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 26, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4.

<sup>201</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *Epistle to Kalosorius*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 76, 1073.

<sup>202</sup> St John Chrysostom, *About repentance*, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 345.

<sup>203</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* V, 22, in Migne, *P.G.*, 1125.

<sup>204</sup> St Ambrosius, *De Spiritu Sancto*, III, II, 79, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 742.

<sup>205</sup> St Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalm 98*, 9, in Migne, *P.L.*, 37, 1264.

*“The honour which must be given to these frightening Mysteries, must be as that which is offered to Christ Himself ... for such reason when we worship each one we must say: I believe, Lord, and confess, that You are truly the Christ.”*<sup>206</sup> *“This Body and Blood of the Lord in the Mystery of Eucharist we are obliged to honour with great respect and to worship; for one is the worship of the only Begotten Son and of His Body and Blood.”*<sup>207</sup> *“We do not offer this Holy Mystery for the townsquare, but only when it is presented to a house of one who is ill; for it is not given to us to be transferred in the townsquare, but to partake of it with piety for the forgiveness of sins, according to the Despotic words.”*<sup>208</sup>

This honouring worship is required because through the change of the Eucharistic elements and the real and essential Presence of Christ, we have in them *“...the same Body of the Lord Deified...”*<sup>209</sup> and *“...not simple bread, but united with the Deity...”* without the two Natures in Christ being confused as one. They remain *“...one, that of the Body, which is united in Him and the other is the Deity; so that together are not one Nature, but two.”* We have Christ present as He lives glorified in Heaven and *“...whosoever partakes of the Body, partakes of the Blood... that which sits in the Heavenly places and which is worshipped by the Angels, that which is close to the Power, this we eat.”*<sup>210</sup> As Orthodox Christians we believe that *“...the Eucharistic Bread is not united hypostatically with the Deity of the Word, but is truly changed ... into the real Body of the Lord, which was born in Bethlehem from the Ever-virgin Mary, the Theotokos, was Baptised in the Jordan, suffered, buried, raised, ascended, seated on the Right Hand of God the Father and will come again on the clouds of Heaven. The wine is changed to the same true Blood of the Lord, which when hanging on the cross was shed for the Life of the world.”*<sup>211</sup>

One can understand why the Lord in the Gospel of St John spoke of Himself as *“...the Bread which came down from Heaven...”*<sup>212</sup> and the Holy Fathers referred to this Heavenly Bread as spiritual food.

St Ambrosius observed that in the Mystery of the Eucharist, Christ is present, because it is the Body of Christ, not material food, but spiritual Food. The Apostle spoke of the type that prefigured this Mystery, saying: *“All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.”*<sup>213</sup> This Holy Father expressed this opinion because Christ is Spirit.<sup>214</sup>

St Athanasius of Alexandria verified that the Flesh of the Lord *“...and His Blood are given as spiritual Food, in order that through them Resurrection and Eternal Life is given.”* Referring to the words of Christ: *“It is the Spirit Who gives Life whereas the flesh*

---

<sup>206</sup> Mogilas, *A' 107*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 639.

<sup>207</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term 17, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 762.

<sup>208</sup> Kritopoulos, *ch. 9*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 537.

<sup>209</sup> Jeremias, *2<sup>nd</sup> Answer*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 460.

<sup>210</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.L.*, 94, 1148-1149. St John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians 3*, § 3, in Montfaucon, v. 11, p. 24.

<sup>211</sup> Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, Term 17, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 761.

<sup>212</sup> John 6:41.

<sup>213</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:3-4.

<sup>214</sup> St Ambrosius, *De mysteriis*, Cap. IX, § 58, in migne, *P.L.*, 16, 426.

*profits nothing.*<sup>215</sup> He observed that: “...the mentioned Flesh is Food from Above, spiritual and not material.”<sup>216</sup>

The Lord is not simply flesh. Neither does He urge us towards “*flesh eating*” or cannibalism for this Flesh is not sold in the butcher’s shop but is received in the Divine Eucharist wherein He invites us to eat His Body.<sup>217</sup> This Bread is not like other food that “...enters the mouth, goes into the stomach and is eliminated...”<sup>218</sup> nor is it “...consumed, or perishable.” It is “...Life-giving Spirit because it was conceived from the Life-giving Spirit. This is said without refuting the Nature of the Body” but manifests “...the Life-giving and Divine Body.”<sup>219</sup>

Surely, the Body of Christ is truly body and not spirit. As St Paul assured us: “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”<sup>220</sup> “So, this corruptible has put on incorruptibility, and this mortal has put on immortality.”<sup>221</sup> “The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from Heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the Heavenly Man, so also are those who are Heavenly.”<sup>222</sup>

#### 4. The Benefits of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist

The first benefit that the faithful receive from their communion with the Divine Eucharist is their union with Christ and the growth in the Newness of Life.<sup>223</sup> The Lord declared His flesh “... is true food...” and His Blood “... is truly drink.” “As the bread is suitable...” for preserving and strengthening human life, “...likewise the Word is suitable for the soul.” The “...Heavenly Bread and the saving Cup Sanctify the soul and body, our whole nature.” As without bread the preservation of bodily life is impossible, likewise “...he who does not eat...” the Heavenly Bread and “...does not drink the Blood of the Lord, does not have Life in him.” Without the Flesh of the Lord “...it is impossible to live.”<sup>224</sup>

Those who worthily partake of the Divine Gifts of the Eucharist become noble because “...they are Sanctified in soul and body.”<sup>225</sup> The Divine Eucharist as Heavenly and Supernatural Food preserves and strengthens the life of Grace, which is transmitted through the Holy Mystery of Baptism. Although day by day the old man and his remaining relics of sin (“*concupiscentia*”) pass away, his will is simultaneously

---

<sup>215</sup> John 6:62-63.

<sup>216</sup> St Athanasius the Great, *To Serapion Epistle* 4, § 19, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 665.

<sup>217</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* IV, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1100.

<sup>218</sup> Matth. 15:17.

<sup>219</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1152.

<sup>220</sup> 1 Corinth. 15:44.

<sup>221</sup> 1 Corinth. 15:54.

<sup>222</sup> 1 Corinth. 15:47-48. Cf. Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 359.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 204-208.

<sup>224</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* IV, § 5; and V, § 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1100. St John Chrysostom, *To John*, holimy 47, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 265.

<sup>225</sup> Clement the Alexandrian, *Pedagogus*, I, 6, in *B*, v. 7, p.139.

strengthened to resist any temptation and he progresses “...until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>226</sup>

It is understandable that “...he who eats the Sacred Flesh of Christ...” is strengthened and progresses in the Newness of Life in Christ since “...the Flesh has in itself the Word which is according to its Nature real Life...” and “...our Lord Jesus Christ through His own Flesh implants this Life within us as a seed of immortality, abolishing all mortality in us.”<sup>227</sup> Through the Eucharist, the faithful “...eat and drink the Life.”

St Augustine urged the faithful: “Eat the Life, drink the Life; you will have the Life...” which is offered through the Mystery.<sup>228</sup>

St Basil the Great concluded that “... to have Communion every day and to partake of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ is good and beneficial.”<sup>229</sup>

Taking into consideration that we who partake with worthiness in the Divine Eucharist progress in Sanctification and in the Newness of Life in Christ, gradually becoming free of all tendencies towards evil and the falls of human weakness. St John of Damascus characterised this Divine Food of the Eucharist as “...the purification from all stain...” through which “...when we become clean we are united to the Body of the Lord in His Spirit and we become Body of Christ.”<sup>230</sup> In the transmission of the Divine Mysteries the officiator reminds us of the forgiveness of sins by reciting aloud the words: “The servant of God ... is receiving the precious Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and Eternal Life.”<sup>231</sup> The “...for the forgiveness of sins...” refers to our daily sins that do not “lead to death” and not to the mortal and serious sins. St Paul reminds each faithful to: “... let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the Bread and drink of the Cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks Judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord’s Body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”<sup>232</sup> Those who approach with an evil and unclean conscience, not only do not receive forgiveness of sins, but become worthy of Judgement and Condemnation, for they do not discern the Holiness and Divinity of the Holy Mystery, but through their ungodliness they desecrate the Holy of all Holies.

The putting to death of the old man and the progress of the Life of Grace is perfected through our union with Christ in such a way that when we eat with worthiness, the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, we have Him within our hearts,

---

<sup>226</sup> Ephes. 4:13.

<sup>227</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book VI, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 581. *Ibid*, *To John*, book VI, ch. 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 73, 565. St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 201.

<sup>228</sup> St Augustine, *Sermo CXXXI*, 1, in Migne, *P.L.*, 38, 729.

<sup>229</sup> St Basil the Great, *Epistle 93 to patricia Caesaria*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 484.

<sup>230</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1152.

<sup>231</sup> Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

<sup>232</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:28-30.

dwelling and living, because we are united as one with Him.<sup>233</sup> Through the Eucharist we are related to Christ and become even more closer to Him than to our closest relatives. In the Divine Eucharist our union with Christ is continuously renewed and always strengthened. Through the Eucharist we do not only live through Christ, but in Christ and for Christ.<sup>234</sup> This main fruit of the union with Christ was strongly proclaimed by the Holy Greek Fathers of the Orthodox Church, especially by St Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>235</sup> St John Chrysostom,<sup>236</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa,<sup>237</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria<sup>238</sup> and St John of Damascus.<sup>239</sup>

If every Orthodox Christian is united with Christ through the Divine Eucharist, it is obvious that through Christ everyone is united to one another. St Paul accentuated the unity of all through the participation in the one Eucharistic Bread by declaring: “... we, though many, are one Bread and one Body, for we all partake of that one Bread”.<sup>240</sup>

*Didache*, in the prayers of the breaking of the bread and the Cup, calls upon the Heavenly Father with the following words:

*“First, concerning the Cup:*

*We give you thanks, our Father,  
For the Holy vine of David your servant,  
which you have made known to us  
through Jesus, your servant;  
to you be the glory forever.*

*And concerning the broken bread:*

*We give you thanks, our Father,  
For the life and knowledge  
Which you have made known to us  
Through Jesus, your servant;  
To you be the glory forever.*

*Just as this broken bread was scattered  
Upon the mountains and then was  
Gathered together and became one,  
So many your churches be gathered together  
From the ends of the earth into your kingdom;*

---

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 358-369.

<sup>234</sup> Scheeben, *Les Mystères*, p. 498. St Dionysius, *About Ecclesiastic Hierarchy*, 3, 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 3, 469.

<sup>235</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* IV, § 33, 1100.

<sup>236</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 744. *Ibid*, *To John*, Homily 46, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 260. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 200.

<sup>237</sup> St Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechesis* 37, in Migne, *P.G.*, 45, 93-97.

<sup>238</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Luke* 22:20, in Migne, *P.G.*, 72, 912. *Ibid*, *To Matthew* 26:26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 72, 452.

<sup>239</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1153.

<sup>240</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:17.

*For yours is the glory and the power  
Through Jesus Christ forever.”<sup>241</sup>*

St Cyprian in his 63<sup>rd</sup> Epistle, referring to the mixing of the Wine with water in the Cup of the Eucharist, saw the sign of the unity of the people of God with Christ. As it is impossible to separate the wine and the water, likewise the Orthodox Church, based upon Christ, cannot be separated from Him.<sup>242</sup> He also pointed out that through the Mystery of Eucharist, the people appear to be united as one and as the grains of wheat are many but are gathered into one harvest, likewise in Christ Who is the Heavenly Bread, we know that our number is united into one Body.<sup>243</sup>

St John Chrysostom, interpreting the abovementioned verse of St Paul commented: “*For what is the Bread? (It is the) Body of Christ. What happens to those who participate? (They become) not many bodies, but one Body. For as the bread is composed of many grains that are unseen because of their blending together, likewise we are united to Christ and to one another. For you are not from another body, but everyone from the same Body.*”<sup>244</sup>

St Augustine agreed with the aforementioned belief, exalting the Eucharist as the sign of the unity and the bond of Love. He emphasised our incorporation in the Mystical Body of Christ as the fruit of the Divine Communion.<sup>245</sup>

St John of Damascus stated that the Divine Eucharist is called “*Communion*” “*...because we have communion and are united through it to one another. Because we all participate from the one Bread, we become the one Body and one Blood of Christ and members of one another, being of the same Body of Christ.*”<sup>246</sup> Due to this sacred bond and the unity between one another, St John warned us that it is forbidden for any Orthodox Christian to partake of the communion of the heretics.

The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church stressed that the Bread of the Eucharist “*...is Medicine of Immortality and the Antidote against death so as to live in Jesus Christ forever.*” The unity of our Life with Christ begins in this world, fades away at the separation of the soul from the body at the time of our bodily death but continues in the After Life. Thus the Bread is truly “*...the Medicine of Immortality...*” and “*...the Antidote that we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ.*”<sup>247</sup>

St Irenaeus proclaimed that “*...our bodies, receiving the Eucharist, are no longer mortal because they have the hope of the Resurrection.*”<sup>248</sup>

---

<sup>241</sup> *Didache*, 9, 2-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 154.

<sup>242</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, 13, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 395.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, *Epistola* 63 ad Ceacil. *De lapsis*, 13, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 395.

<sup>244</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 24, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 200.

<sup>245</sup> St Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium, Tractatus XXVI*, 13, in Migne, *P.L.*, 35, 1613.

<sup>246</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1153.

<sup>247</sup> St Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, 20, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 93.

<sup>248</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 18, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1029. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 300.

In other words, although those who partake of the Deified Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will taste the common Cup of death, the Supernatural Life that is transmitted to them by the Lord, will continue. And as the Lord was gloriously Risen, we too will not merely be Regenerated but will receive an immortal body similar to the Body of our Risen Lord. The glorious and blessed Immortality of the soul and body will only be for those who are proved to be worthy. They will enjoy Immortality for ever and ever whereas those who are proved to be unworthy servants, will suffer for all Eternity. *“And these (the ungodly) will go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Eternal Life.”*<sup>249</sup>

#### **IV. THE DIVINE EUCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE AND ITS FRUITS**

The invisible aspect of the Divine Eucharist is that of a Sacrifice in which the High Priest is offered to God as the Sacrificial Lamb.<sup>250</sup> The Sacrificial character of the Divine Eucharist, prefigured in the Old Testament, is testified to by the many prayers of Sanctification of the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine during the institution of the Holy Mystery. The Holy Fathers, concerning the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, assured us that the Blood and the character of the Divine Eucharist is characterised as the Blood of the New Testament. This Sacrifice is identical to the one, absolute and “...*once and for all...*” Sacrifice of the Cross. It is the Sacrifice without the shedding of blood, which receives its Power completely based upon the fruits of the Salvation of the entire world (General Salvation) and for every individual personally (personal Salvation). As a Sacrifice, the Eucharist is not only a Eucharistic Sacrifice as well as the glory and worship of God but the real re-enactment of the Sacrifice of the Lord on the Cross. It is the Atonement Sacrifice and the Sacrifice of Redemption whereby, presenting the Sacrificial Lamb on the Cross, we beseech the forgiveness of our sins. The Redeeming character of the Divine Eucharist is based upon the offering of this Sacrifice and for those who have fallen asleep for whom we pray that the Lord will grant rest.

##### **1. Sacrifice and Mystery**

The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist according to its other aspect as the only true Sacrifice replaced the typical, shadowy sacrifices of the Old Testament because that which is offered is not an irrational animal or fruit of the earth but our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Although the Divine Eucharist as a Mystery and as a Sacrifice is simultaneously perfected by the same Sanctification, it keeps the two inseparable features of the Mystery and the Sacrifice that differ according to their nature. Because the Eucharist as a Mystery is offered as the Heavenly Food to the faithful, uniting them to Christ and to one another while nourishing their souls to the hope of Resurrection of Eternal Life, it is moreover a Sacrifice offered to God, offering Christ as the Redeeming Sacrificial offering to Him. As a Mystery and as a Sacrifice the Divine Eucharist differs according to its goal. The Sacrifice is offered to God while the Mystery

---

<sup>249</sup> Matth. 25:46.

<sup>250</sup> Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 335-336.

is received by us as Heavenly Food. The Sacrifice is an Act of worship that is offered by the entire Orthodox Church to the glory and thanksgiving of God. The Mystery is received for Sanctification and is the Gift of Grace that is offered to each individual faithful. Finally, the Eucharist as a Mystery is a permanent reality since once the offerings are Sanctified they continuously remain the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacrifice of the Eucharist is extended only within the boundaries of time, when it is offered to God as an act of worship and an offering of the entire community to God. Once the Sacrifice is offered, it ceases while the Sanctified Gifts remain forever.

The Eucharist is the manifestation of the Church as the New Age. In the Divine Liturgy the Presence of our Risen Lord is a reality and we participate in the Heavenly Kingdom. It is not a repetition of His Coming into the world but the elevation of the Church into His Presence and the participation of the Church in His Heavenly Glory.<sup>251</sup>

## 2. The Prophetic Prefigurations of the Eucharist

St Cyprian regarded the prophetic prefigurations of Holy Scripture that predicted the Divine Eucharist as the only True Sacrifice such as that of the Sacrifice of Melchizedek.<sup>252</sup> It was the prefiguration of the Mystery of the Lord's Sacrifice because Christ offered a Sacrifice to God the Father as had Melchizedek. In other words, He offered Bread and Wine which were His Body and Blood.<sup>253</sup>

St John of Damascus believed "...*that table pre-figured this mystical table, in the same manner as that Priest was the type and pre-figuration of the true High Priest, Christ.*"<sup>254</sup>

All the Sacrifices of the Old Testament were considered as types, not only of the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the Cross, but also as the Sacrifice of the Eucharist

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr felt that "...*the offering of semolina was a type of the Bread of the Eucharist, which is offered in remembrance of the Passion, which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for the cleansing of the souls of men from all evilness.*"<sup>255</sup>

St Augustine, referring to the reason why Christ wanted to be a daily Sacrifice of the Orthodox Church, commented that this true Sacrifice had many and various signs such as the Sacrifices of the Old Testament Saints.<sup>256</sup>

The *Didache* considered the words of the Prophet Malachi as being a prophetic announcement of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist,<sup>257</sup> as did St Justin<sup>258</sup> and Irenaeus:<sup>259</sup>

---

<sup>251</sup> Schmemmann, *The Church Praying*, p. 96.

<sup>252</sup> Gen. 14:18.

<sup>253</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, 4, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 387.

<sup>254</sup> St John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the holy and glorious mysteries of the Lord*, IV, 86, 13, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1149.

<sup>255</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Dialogue*, 41, § 1, in *B*, v. 3, p. 244.

<sup>256</sup> St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X, c.20, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 298.

<sup>257</sup> *Didache*, 14, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

“...because even among you the doors shall be shut, and one will not kindle the fire of Mine Altar for nothing, I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a Sacrifice at your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof My Name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering: for My Name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty.”<sup>260</sup>

In reference to this prophecy St John Chrysostom asked the Jews: “When did these take place? When in all places was incense offered to God? When a pure Sacrifice?” Then he pointed out: “You have no other time except now after the appearance of Christ.”<sup>261</sup>

St Cyril of Alexandria, referring to the same prophecy, said: “... so the Church is everywhere and ... Divine Altars on which the Lamb is Sacrificed by the Holy officiators and by Indians and Ethiopians, and this is the way which was clearly said by the Prophet.”<sup>262</sup>

Truly the offered sacrifices of the pagans before the Coming of Christ were regarded as unclean and an abomination, whereas those of the Jews were not pure, nor were they offered in all places except in Jerusalem. However, the one absolute Sacrifice that was offered once and for all humanity, was offered in one place. Therefore the Holy fathers applied the abovementioned prophecy of Malachi to the Divine Eucharist.

### 3. The New Testament Proof Concerning the Eucharist as a Sacrifice

The Tradition concerning the separate Sanctification of the two elements within the Eucharist was correctly accentuated. The separate elements of Bread and Wine, belonging to the one and same Body, symbolically represents the separation of the Blood of Christ from His Body when the Sacrifice on the Cross was offered.

The words of institution of the Holy Mystery testify to the Sacrificial nature of the Divine Eucharist. Truly, the Lord gave the bread to His Disciples and proclaimed that “...this is My Body which is given for you...”<sup>263</sup> thereby indicating that His Body is delivered as a Sacrificial Victim for His Disciples who represented all Faithful. Likewise, at the offering of the Cup He said: “This is My Blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.”<sup>264</sup>

In addition, in all four accounts of the institution of the Holy Mystery, the Blood in the Cup is characterised by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as “...the

---

<sup>258</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Dialogue*, 41, § 3, in **B**, v. 3, p. 244.

<sup>259</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 17, § 5 and ch. 18, § 1 in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1023 and 1024. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 297.

<sup>260</sup> Mal. 1:10-11.

<sup>261</sup> St John Chrysostom, *Against Jewss*, Homily 5, § 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 902.

<sup>262</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Zephaniah 3:10*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 71, 1008.

<sup>263</sup> Luke 22:19

<sup>264</sup> Matth. 26:28.

*Cup of the New Covenant...*<sup>265</sup> compared to the Old Testament blood, which was the blood of sacrifice. Truly, the Covenant with Abraham, like that with Israel<sup>266</sup> and Moses, was sealed with a Sacrifice.<sup>267</sup> In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is evident that “...*neither the first...*” Covenant “...*without blood, was inaugurated...*”<sup>268</sup> but Moses “...*taking the blood of bulls and goats with water...*” sprinkled “...*the Book of the Covenant and upon the people saying. Behold the blood of the Covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.*”<sup>269</sup> So Christ offers His Blood to His Disciples to drink as “...*the Blood of the New Covenant...*”<sup>270</sup> and as the Blood of Sacrifice.

Christ added the instruction: “*Do this in remembrance of Me.*”<sup>271</sup> The Lord instructed His Holy Apostles to renew and repeat whatever He taught them that night, in remembrance of Him. St Paul assured us that this is real remembrance of His Death “...*for as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.*”<sup>272</sup>

On the other hand St Paul in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians emphasised: “*The Cup of blessing which we bless, is ... the communion of the Blood of Christ... The Bread which we break, is ... the communion of the Body of Christ... For we, though many, are one Bread and one Body; for we all partake of that one Bread. Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the Cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s Table and of the table of demons.*”<sup>273</sup> The Orthodox Christians have a Mystical Table that gathers them together. On this Table “...*the Bread, which we break, is the Communion of the Body of Christ...*” and “...*the Cup, which we bless, is the Communion of the Blood of Christ.*” As the sacrifices and the participation in them brought the Israelites in communion with God and the idolaters in communion with demons, likewise the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist places us in communion with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and consequently they are a Sacrifice to God. In Hebrews, it is proclaimed that “...*we have an Altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.*”<sup>274</sup>

#### **4. The Teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Holy Mystery of Eucharist as a Sacrifice**

*Didache* notes: “*On the Lord’s own day gather together and break bread and give thanks, having first confessed your sins so that your Sacrifice may be pure. But let no*

---

<sup>265</sup> Matth. 26:28.

<sup>266</sup> Gen. 28:13-22.

<sup>267</sup> Gen. 15:9-18.

<sup>268</sup> Heb. 10:18-20.

<sup>269</sup> Ex. 24:5-8.

<sup>270</sup> Luke 22:20.

<sup>271</sup> Luke 22:19.

<sup>272</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:26.

<sup>273</sup> 1 Corinth. 10:16-21.

<sup>274</sup> Heb. 13:10.

*one who has a quarrel with a companion join you until they have been reconciled, so that your Sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is the Sacrifice concerning that which the Lord said, "In every place and time offer Me a pure Sacrifice, for I Am a great King, says the Lord, and My Name is marvellous among the nations."*<sup>275,276</sup>

St Ignatius the Theophorus of Antioch accused the Docites "...who deny the good Gift of God..."<sup>277</sup> of not confessing the truth that in the Eucharist, the Flesh is that of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and has risen from the dead. Elsewhere, he sternly warned the faithful to "...take care, therefore, to practice in one Eucharist (for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one Cup which leads to unity through His Blood; there is one Altar, just as there is one Bishop, together with the Presbytery and the Deacons, my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do, you do in accordance with God."<sup>278</sup>

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, found in "...the offering of semolina..." the "...type of the Bread of the Eucharist, which is offered in remembrance of the Passion, which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for the cleansing of the souls of men from all evilness..."<sup>279</sup> and referred to the prophecy of the Prophet Malachi.

St Irenaeus, proclaiming that God has no need of Sacrifices, believed that in the Old Testament He would not have asked for Sacrifices of blood and burnt offerings, but through them He announced the true meaning of Sacrifice, which found its perfection in faith, obedience and righteousness. Continuing, he described how the Lord instructed the Apostles to offer the Sacrifice by taking bread and giving thanks and saying: "*This is My Body*" and with the Cup saying: "*This is My Blood.*" Thus, He taught the new Sacrifice of the New Testament, which the Church received from the Apostles and constantly offers it throughout the entire world thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi.<sup>280</sup>

According to Irenaeus, the Divine Eucharist is the Sacrifice of the New Testament foretold by the Prophet Malachi, which was instituted by Christ Who delivered it to His Holy Apostles from whom the Church received it.

St Cyprian stated that the Priest offers the Divine Eucharist exactly in the imitation of Christ. It is a true and complete Sacrifice.<sup>281</sup> Therefore, if the wine be excluded from the Cup then likewise the Blood of Christ would be excluded. Consequently it would not be the Sacrifice that our Lord offered.<sup>282</sup>

---

<sup>275</sup> Mal. 1:14.

<sup>276</sup> *Didache*, 14, 1-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 157.

<sup>277</sup> St Ignatius, *To Smyrnaeans*, 7, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 112.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, *To Philadelphians*, 4, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 107.

<sup>279</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Dialogue*, 41, § 1, in *B*, v. 3, p. 244.

<sup>280</sup> St Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 17, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1023. Cf. *Ibid*, in Hadjephraimides, p. 296.

<sup>281</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* 63, § 14, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 398.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid*.

Furthermore, St Cyril of Jerusalem,<sup>283</sup> St John Chrysostom,<sup>284</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria<sup>285</sup> and, generally speaking, all the Greek Fathers, used different terms to signify the Sacrificial Nature of the Divine Eucharist.

### 5. The Essence of the Divine Eucharist as a Sacrifice

We are taught that the essence of the Divine Eucharist as a Sacrifice is according to the exact words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who said: “*Do this in My remembrance...*”<sup>286</sup> whereas, according to the explanation of St Paul who instructed us to “... *do... often, as you drink it in remembrance of (Christ). For as often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.*”<sup>287</sup> It is obvious, therefore, that the Divine Eucharist is regarded as a Sacrifice that is directly related to the Sacrifice on the Cross and which was offered by our Lord. Furthermore, we offer that same Sacrifice in the Divine Eucharist and, although it is offered in many places, it always remains one and the same Sacrifice, not many, separate Sacrifices. Christ is simultaneously in the Divine Eucharist as He Who offers and as He Who is being offered. He is both the High Priest and the Sacrificial Victim.<sup>288</sup>

The Jews did not sacrifice Jesus Christ on the Cross. They were merely the instruments whereby the Lord Himself Sacrificed His own Life, as He alone has the Power to do: “*I lay down My Life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have Power to lay it down, and I have Power to take it again. This Command I have received from My Father.*”<sup>289</sup> On the Cross He was not only the Sacrificial Victim but also He Who offered the Sacrifice. Thus the Divine Eucharist is nothing more than His Sacrifice on the Cross.

When we say “*in remembrance,*” we must understand that the Divine Eucharist is not simply a remembrance of the Sacrifice on the Cross, but a real, true and effective remembrance because we have before us the same Body of Christ that was crucified and the same Blood of Christ that was shed on the Cross.

The Sacrifice on the Cross was offered “...*once and for all.*”<sup>290</sup> It can never be repeated with blood because its validity is beyond any value and is sufficient for the Salvation of the entire world. In addition, because Christ has “...*been raised from the dead, He dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.*”<sup>291</sup> This historic Sacrifice, which was offered “...*once and for all...*” is Mysteriously repeated through the Divine Eucharist, which as a Sacrifice bring forth all the fruits of that Sacrifice on the Cross and offers us the same Body and the same Blood that was crucified on Golgotha.

---

<sup>283</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia*, 5, §§ 8, 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1117.

<sup>284</sup> St John Chrysostom, *About Priesthood*, 3, §§ 4 and 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 682. *Ibid*, *To the Holy Pentecost*, Homily 1, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 458-459. *Ibid*, *To Hebrews*, Homily 17, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 131.

<sup>285</sup> St Cyril of Alexandria, *To Zephaniah 3:10 and to Habakkuk 3:7*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 71, 1008 and 916.

<sup>286</sup> Luke 22:19.

<sup>287</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:25-26.

<sup>288</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Hebrews*, Homily 17, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 131. *Ibid*, *To the betrayal of Judas*, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 380.

<sup>289</sup> John 10:17-18.

<sup>290</sup> Rom. 6:10.

<sup>291</sup> Rom. 6:9.

It is true, that the re-enactment presents Christ, in reality covered under the elements of the bread and wine. It is a real remembrance of Christ because in the Eucharist the Lord on the Cross is essentially and in reality present. The Gifts and benefits for the whole human race derived from the Sacrifice on the Cross. The Sacrifice in the Eucharist does not intend to fulfil the Sacrifice of the Cross because the Lord, “...*after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever...by one offering He has perfected those who are being Sanctified.*”<sup>292</sup> The Divine Eucharist is for the purpose of our benefit and the good things that result from the Sacrifice of the Cross, making these familiar to the faithful, who refer to and partake of God.

The difference between the two Sacrifices is in that:

1. Christ on the Cross offered Himself as a Sacrifice to God the Father, without any mediator Priest, whereas in the Eucharist He offers Himself using the officiator as an instrument. He offers Himself, not only because He is invisibly present, uniting the faithful, but also, because He provides the Sacrificial Victim to the Church, He has the authority to offer the Sacrifice.

2. Only the Sacrifice on the Cross shed Blood, whereas the Divine Eucharist is a bloodless Sacrifice. The High Priest, Christ, “...*having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.*”<sup>293</sup> Consequently it pleases Christ to have a true Sacrifice within His Church, without the shedding of blood and which is able to offer to the faithful the Gifts that arose from it.

3. In the Sacrifice on the Cross, which was offered once and for all, “...*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.*”<sup>294</sup> That Sacrifice was a Sacrifice of Christ to the Father by means of which He reconciled the world to Him. The Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a Sacrifice that the reconciled Church offers not once, as that Sacrifice was offered once and for all, but is offered continuously “... *until He comes...*”<sup>295</sup> again.

Regardless of these differences, we cannot speak of two Sacrifices, independent of one another because the Sacrifice of the Eucharist depends directly upon the Sacrifice of the Cross, which is an absolute Sacrifice, whereas the Sacrifice of the Eucharist is a relative Sacrifice. The Sacrifice of the Cross does not depend on any other Sacrifice but is independent as its absolute Power being completely sufficient and perfect, is self-contained. On the contrary, the Divine Eucharist completely relies upon the Sacrifice on the Cross from which it receives the Victim, this being the remembrance, re-enactment and transmission of the Gifts to the faithful.

In the Divine Liturgy we distinguish three main parts: the Preparation, the Sanctification and the Holy Communion. The Preparation is obviously not the essential part of the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice because during this part of the Divine Liturgy,

---

<sup>292</sup> Heb. 10:12, 14.

<sup>293</sup> Rom. 6:9.

<sup>294</sup> 2 Corinth. 5:19.

<sup>295</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:26.

the Gifts are offered by the faithful. At this point, the bread and wine are ordinary elements that are prepared for the Sacrifice. Neither can Holy Communion, which is the central point of the Holy Eucharist as a Mystery, be considered the essential act of the Sacrifice. Holy Communion presupposes the Sacrifice and is not its critical point. The only remaining part of the Divine Liturgy is that of the Sanctification, during which the presented Gifts (bread and wine) are changed into the real Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Through the double blessing, one on each Gift, the Mysterious re-enactment, that of the symbolic and real separation of the shed Blood from the Body of the Lord, takes place. The Sacrifice, therefore, occurs during the Sanctification when "...through word, the Word is called..." by the officiator and without the shedding of blood, He separately Sanctifies the elements of the Body and Blood.

## 6. The Fruits of the Divine Eucharist as a Sacrifice

We recognise the results or fruits of the Divine Eucharist as a Sacrifice when we consider that it is a Sacrifice of worship and thanksgiving as well as a Sacrifice of imploring and mediating. Furthermore, we must remember that the nature of the Sacrifice as worship and thanksgiving is due to the Lord, at the institution of the Holy Mystery, giving thanks to the Father before the blessing after which He broke the bread and gave it to His Disciples. With thanksgiving, He again blessed the Cup.<sup>296</sup> In addition, according to St Paul, when we celebrate the Divine Eucharist we proclaim the Death of the Lord.<sup>297</sup> This Death is of the greatest of all the benefits of God towards mankind. It is the perfect expression of worship, devotion and the logical Sacrifice of Christ to His Father. It is the highest recognition of the Justice, Dominion and Majesty of God as well as being the most pleasing Sacrifice to God.

It is obviously evident that the Orthodox Church, by offering this Sacrifice to God through the Divine Eucharist, expresses her gratitude to Him and confesses her infinite obligation to His Goodness and to the Reconciliatory Justice. It also offers the Holiest and most God-pleasing Gift of the spotless and absolute Holy Sacrifice.<sup>298</sup>

Even the word "*Eucharist*" reveals the thanksgiving nature of the Holy Mystery as a Sacrifice. Furthermore, since the beginning, before the blessing and Sanctification of the offering Gifts, a thanksgiving was offered to God for all that He has done for mankind and for our redemption from the evil one.<sup>299</sup>

The imploring and meditating nature of the Sacrifice of the Divine Eucharist is testified to by the imploring part of the Divine Liturgy, in which we address petitions to God: for all Orthodox Churches, for the rulers and all civil authorities, for the people who travel by land, sea and air, for the soldiers, for the Bishop and all the Orthodox people, for the sick, and all those who need the help of God, for those suffering affliction, in danger and necessity, for those in prison and generally, for all those who are under any

---

<sup>296</sup> Matth. 26:26, 27. Mark 14:22, 23. Luke 22:17, 19. 1 Corinth. 11:24, 25.

<sup>297</sup> 1 Corinth. 11:26.

<sup>298</sup> Jeremias, *Answer 1*, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. I, p. 404

<sup>299</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Dialogue*, 41, in *B*, v. 3, p. 244.

kind of suppression as well as for the Salvation of all humanity.<sup>300</sup> This form of petition developed according to the instructions of our Lord Who promised us: “... if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My Name, I Am there in the midst of them.”<sup>301</sup>

St Justin believed that the propitiatory nature of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist of “...the offering of semolina...” for the healing of the leper was considered as “...a type of the Bread of the Eucharist, which is offered in remembrance of the Passion, which our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for the cleansing of the souls of men from all evilness.”<sup>302</sup> Through the Eucharist souls are cleansed from all human wickedness because our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, guaranteed us that His Body and Blood are for the forgiveness of sins.

St Cyril of Jerusalem characterised the Eucharist as “...a Sacrifice of propitiation.”<sup>303</sup>

St John Chrysostom, referring to the Sacrifice of Propitiation that was mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, commented that “...this Sacrifice is a type of (propitiation) for we offer Him always, not a different lamb now and tomorrow another, but always the same.” Elsewhere he compared the Holy Eucharist to the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament Passover.<sup>304</sup>

The propitiatory nature of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist is also evident in the offering for those who have reposed.

Tertullian mentioned the offerings for those who have fallen asleep at the annual celebration of their departure.<sup>305</sup>

St Cyril of Jerusalem characterised the Eucharist more strongly as “...a Sacrifice of Propitiation...” stating that it is offered for those Holy Fathers who have fallen asleep as well as for all faithful, believing that it is a great help for the souls for whom the prayers of the Sacred and awesome Sacrifice are offered.<sup>306</sup> In addition, the *Apostolic Orders* instruct the faithful to “...gather in the cemeteries...” and to offer the Divine Eucharist.<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* V, § 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1116.

<sup>301</sup> Matth. 18:19-20.

<sup>302</sup> St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, *Dialogue*, 41, § 1, in *B*, v. 3, p. 244.

<sup>303</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* V, § 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1116.

<sup>304</sup> St John Chrysostom, *To Hebrews*, Homily 17, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 131. *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 739. *Ibid*, *To the Cross*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 49, 398. *Ibid*, *About Priesthood*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 642.

<sup>305</sup> Tertullian, *De monogamia* 10, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 992. *Ibid*, *De exhort Cast*, 11, in Migne, *P.L.*, 2, 975.

<sup>306</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* V, §§ 9 and 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1116-1117.

<sup>307</sup> *Apostolic Orders*, VI, 30, 2, in *B*, v. 2, p. 115.

St Cyril of Jerusalem mentioned that on the spiritual propitiation Sacrifice “... we commemorate those who have fallen asleep; first Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs.”<sup>308</sup>

In the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom after the Sanctification, the officiator, addressing God, says: “Again we offer to You this logical Sacrifice, without the shedding of blood, for those who have fallen asleep in the faith: Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, and all spirits of the just who were perfected in faith, especially for our Blessed, Glorious Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, for the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, for the Holy Glorious and All-lauded Apostles.”<sup>309</sup>

This custom of commemorating the Saints in the Divine Liturgy is an ancient one.<sup>310</sup> It is mentioned in “*The Martyrdom of (St) Polycarp*.” “There gathering together, as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his Martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.”<sup>311</sup>

It is obvious that the Sacrifice of the Divine Eucharist is not offered to the Saints or in the name of the Saints, but to God Who crowns them and exalts them within His Orthodox Church as “...the first-fruits of the faith...” and as Victors through His Grace.

The commemoration of the Saints is triumphantly offered and with gratitude for their Grace and Glory. The Orthodox Church exalts them as soldiers of Christ and as the Victorious Army of God.

The Power and results of Divine Eucharist as a Sacrifice in the Divine Liturgy acts regardless of the moral status, virtue, worthiness or unworthiness of the officiator. It is a pure and Holy Sacrifice, which cannot be influenced by the unworthiness or sinfulness of the officiator. Again the Church acts “*ex opere operato*,” because the Church is the Bride of Christ Who “...gave Himself for her, that He might Sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be Holy and without blemish.”<sup>312</sup>

As a Sacrifice of the Orthodox Church, which is offered by the Bishop or Priest and all those who participate in the Divine Mystery, it acts “*ex opera operantis*,” according to the level of dedication, virtue, internal intentions and proper preparation of each individual. Androustos noted that the imploring Sacrifice is determined by the Will of

---

<sup>308</sup> St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogia* V, § 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1116.

<sup>309</sup> Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

<sup>310</sup> St Cyprian, *Epistola* XXXVII, 2 AND XXXIV, 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 337 and 331. Origen, *About prayer*, 31, 5, in *B*, v. 10, p. 304.

<sup>311</sup> *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 18, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 142.

<sup>312</sup> Ephes. 5:25-27.

the Divine Wisdom and Love, which does not always grant the requested good things, even to those who are worthy because they would not benefit from them.<sup>313</sup>

## 7. The Sacrament of Sacraments: The Great Communion<sup>314</sup>

In the lives of the great Saints, the bonds that confined fallen nature were already to some extent broken. But more than this, in the Church's whole Life of Grace, especially in the Sacraments, there is a glorification of earthly existence through the penetration of the Divine Actuality. And the consummation of this blending of two worlds is the Sacrament of Sacraments, the Lord's Supper. The founders of the Church had already experienced the Presence of the Glorified Lord at the Lord's Supper. A Succession of appearances of the Risen Christ to His Disciples are connected with the taking of food. He was recognised by His Disciples at Emmaus "...while He broke bread." The earliest Eucharistic prayer that has come down to us (in the *Didache*) cries in Aramaic: "*Come, O Lord!*" So, too, in the Liturgies of the Eastern Church – the Lord appears to the faithful and they receive Him with joy: "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!*" "*Today the invisible Heavenly Powers serve with us, for lo! the King of Glory enters; behold the Mysterious Sacrifice; it is accomplished and is carried in pomp.*" "*Let all mankind keep silence and stand in fear and trembling and think upon no earthly thing, for the King of Kings, the Lord of Lord's cometh to be Sacrificed and to offer Himself for the nourishment of them that believe.*"

It is the sphere of exalted reality into which the faithful are admitted, between fear and joy. Thrilled and trembling with awe the invisible Hosts of Heaven stand around the Altar upon which the Sacrifice of Golgotha is re-enacted. This is, however, not only the suffering, but - to emphasise this once more - at the same time the Glorified, the Living Lord. Therefore to receive His Body and Blood is to receive Eternal Life. Thus, St Irenaeus and the early Fathers believed that this is the spirit of the prayers and praises of the Liturgy. And here, again, we are not dealing with an outward, mechanically assumed life; it must be a life morally fruitful and only in a spirit of moral purity and holiness may the Sacrament be approached. "*The Holy to the Holy ones!*" This warning is pronounced by the Priest before Holy Communion to which the congregation replies, trembling: "*One only is Holy, one only is Lord, Jesus Christ in the glory of God the Father.*" Hence, this fervent appeal, this continuous, unceasing prayer from the congregation, this ardent wrestling with God, this humble appeal of the unworthy sinner for meekness and cleansing of the heart, which flows like a mighty stream through the whole Liturgy.

Only to the contrite, only to him who in his innermost heart prostrates himself before God's Grace and Mercy, only to him who in spirit bends the knee in fear and trembling before the Holiness of the Sacrament, only to him who trusts in God's Mercy, only to him who knocks and seeks and prays, and who realising his own unworthiness, throws himself penitent, trembling but hopeful, upon God's Grace; only to such as say, not only with the lips but from the depths of the heart: "*I believe, Lord, and I*

---

<sup>313</sup> Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 376.

<sup>314</sup> Arseniev, *Mysticism*, pp.55-61.

*acknowledge Thee to be the Son of God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the most sinful...*” – only to such who attain this spiritual state does the Sacrament bring Blessing, Redemption of soul and body, “...*deliverance from the burden of many sins...*” “...*entry into Thy Kingdom...*” and Eternal Life. This effect of the Sacrament – physical as well as spiritual - of which the earliest Fathers spoke, beginning with St Ignatius, Tertullian and St Irenaeus, as well as the earliest Liturgical prayers that have come down to us (since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century), is frequently reflected in the Communion prayers of the Eastern Church. I will quote one that Simeon Metaphrastes of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (which is the third of the thanksgiving prayers following the Communion): “*Thou Who hast willingly given Thy Flesh for my nourishment, Thou Fire that consumes the unworthy, consume me not. O my Creator! Rather penetrate my limbs, my bones, my innermost being, my heart! Burn up the thorns of my misdeeds; cleanse my soul and Sanctify my spirit and strengthen my joints and bones. Nail me wholly to fear of Thee! Protect me always, shield and guard me from all deeds or words that destroy the soul. Cleanse, wash, and adorn me, make me better, and teach and enlighten me, that, having become as a partaker of Thy Sacrament, Thy dwelling, all sin and passion may flee from me like fire.*” In another prayer: “*O awful Mystery, O Mercy of God! How can I, even I – unclean that I am, receive the Sacred Body and Blood and become incorruptible!*”

It is not only for the individual that the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has a central, living and Mystic meaning, but for the whole Church, yes, for all mankind. For here the Divine mingles with the human, the terrestrial; here in the Holy Eucharist praise and Sacrifice are offered to the Lord for the whole world and by the whole world (“...*offering Thine to Thee from Thine, for all men and all things...*”), and the entire Universe is hereby potentially ennobled and Sanctified in that earthly elements of wine and bread become the Glorified Body and Blood of the Son of God. That is why the idea of all Creation assembled in spirit around the Eucharistic Altar so constantly recurs in the old Liturgies of the East. For through Him, through His Death and through the Glorification of His Risen Body, here Mystically represented, Creation partakes of the glory of the Redemption. “*Verily Heaven and earth are filled with Thy Glory through the Coming of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ...*” declares the old Egyptian Liturgy of St Mark. Not only the Presence but also the Power of the Living Lord is experienced here as well as the approach of the all-embracing Kingdom of His Glory. In the Lord’s Supper we have a particularly powerful expression of the fundamental, all-pervading idea of the great totality, the Mystic Communion, of the all-embracing, Mystical Body of Christ. We find a similar concept in Roman Catholicism. Perhaps some differences appear between the two ecclesiastical traditions concerning the fundamental idea – nay, rather, experience – of the great Mystical Communion. We point this out, not in a spirit of controversy, but merely with a view to defining the characteristics of the Eastern Orthodox Church that focuses upon God and the individual soul. For the Orthodox Church the individual soul and her relationship to God constitutes the most precious and essential sacredness of religion. But this communion of the soul with God is not a dialogue but a mighty harmony of many tones, a great organism, a powerful Kingdom, a comprehensive Brotherhood, a Church of God into which the individual is caught up as a member of the whole Body and which expands and grows into the infinite

until it embraces not only all mankind but the whole of Creation, the whole Cosmos, in a Kingdom of Eternal Life. It is a cosmic, ecumenical concept.

I cannot refrain from quoting at this point the wonderful words of perhaps the greatest Russian Theologian (not a professional Theologian!) and “*Church philosopher*,” Alexei Khomiakov, (from his little tract on the Church): “*We know that when one of us falls, he falls alone, but no man is Saved alone. He who is Saved is Saved within the Church, as a member of the Church, in union with the other members. Does he believe? – Then he is in the Communion of Faith. Does he love? – Then he is in the Communion of Love. Does he pray? – Then he is in the Communion of Prayer. . . . Do not ask: ‘What prayer can I spare for the living or the dead, since my prayer does not suffice for myself?’ For if you do not understand how to pray, of what avail is prayer for yourself? But it is the Spirit of Love Who prays also within you. . . . Nor say: ‘Why should another need my prayer, when he prays himself and Christ Himself intercedes for him?’ When you pray, the Spirit of Love prays within you. Nor say: ‘God’s Judgement is irrevocable’ – for your prayers lie in God’s path and He has foreseen them. If you are a member of the Church, your prayers are required for all the members of the Church. For if the hand were to say that it had no need of the blood nor of the rest of the body and that it would not give its blood to the rest of the body, the hand would wither. In the same way you are necessary to the Church so long as you are of the Church; but if you renounce the Brotherhood of the Church, you will die and cease to be a member. The prayer of the Church is a prayer one for the other and her breath is praise of the Lord.*”

The great unity of the Church is not, however, regarded as something formally authoritative, something capable of expression in a juridical formula. The Eastern Orthodox Church recognises no formal, juridical authority. For her, Christ, the Apostles and the Church Councils are not “*authority*.” There is no question of authority but an infinite stream of the Life of Grace, which has its source in Christ and within each individual. We do not have to deal with an external, authoritative power but with the essential principle of the Life of God within His Church and within ourselves. This way of life, the Life of Grace, raises us above our petty, individual selves on condition that we have not cut ourselves off from the whole Body of Christ. The Eastern Orthodox Church believes that this mighty stream of Grace shall sweep along with it and absorb all things, all brethren, all mankind, all creatures that long for deliverance from the bonds of corruption and death and for the “*...glorious freedom of the children of God.*” And this explains, as we have seen, that strong eschatological bias, that yearning, fervent cry of the Church, that joyous expectation of the coming Consummation: “*Arise, O God, for Thou shall inherit all nations!*” “*Arise, O God, judge the earth, for Thou reigned in eternity!*” Nor is this mere expectation, mere eschatology; it is joyful consciousness of the possession now, already, of Eternal Life: “*Christ is Risen!*” “*Truly He is Risen!*” “*From death to life and from the earth to Heaven Christ hath led us, who sing our song of triumph!*”