



**August 30, 2009**  
**12<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**AFTERFEAST OF THE DORMITION**  
**OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY;**  
**MARTYR AND PRESBYTER MYRON**

**RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE THREE:**

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted the world great mercy!

[http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO\\_Bulletin/Resurrectional\\_Troparion\\_Tone\\_3.mp3](http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO_Bulletin/Resurrectional_Troparion_Tone_3.mp3)

**DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS TROPARION - TONE ONE:**

In giving birth you preserved your virginity! In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos! You were translated to Life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers deliver our souls from death! [http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO\\_Bulletin/Dormition\\_Troparion\\_Tone\\_1.mp3](http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO_Bulletin/Dormition_Troparion_Tone_1.mp3)

**HOLY MARTYR MYRON TROPARION - TONE FOUR:**

Your Holy Martyr Myron, O Lord, through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God. For having Your strength, he laid low his adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons. Through his intercessions save our souls!

**RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE THREE:**

On this day You did rise from the tomb, O Merciful One, leading us from the gates of death. On this day Adam exults as Eve rejoices; with the prophets and the patriarchs they unceasingly praise the divine majesty of Your power!

[http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO\\_Bulletin/Resurrectional\\_Kontakion\\_Tone\\_3.mp3](http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO_Bulletin/Resurrectional_Kontakion_Tone_3.mp3)

**HOLY MARTYR MYRON KONTAKION - TONE FOUR:**

From your childhood you longed for Christ, all-glorious one, keeping His commandments and running to Him with all your being, all-honored Myron. Now you zealously pray with the angels, asking remission of sins for those who celebrate your memory.

**DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS KONTAKION - TONE TWO:**

Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.

**HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS INSTEAD OF "IT IS TRULY MEET" - TONE ONE:**

The angels were struck with wonder as they looked upon the dormition of the Virgin; seeing how the Virgin went up from earth to heaven. The limits of nature are overcome in You, O Pure Virgin: for birthgiving remains virginal and life is united to death! A Virgin after childbearing and alive after death! You ever save Your inheritance, O Theotokos.

## EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

### **THE PROKIMENON (PSALM 47: 6) IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> TONE:**

*Sing praises to our God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!*

### **1 Corinthians, 15: 1-11**

Brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

### **THE ALLELUIA VERSES: PSALM 31: 1, 2**

In Thee O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!

Be Thou a God of protection for me, a house of refuge, in order to save me!

### **Epistle Commentary**

The Holy Apostle Paul writes of the universality—the oneness—of the Gospel of Christ. There is only one Gospel, which preaches that Christ died for us, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. In this passage, St. Paul writes of the apostolic tradition which he delivers to the Corinthians, that he receives from direct experience with the Risen Lord and the interactions with the original apostles. The apostles are all unified by the Grace of God. Therefore, so long as one receives the Gospel of Christ through this Grace, and hold fast to it, one can be united in the salvation of Christ.



*Icon of the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos*

## GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

### **Matthew 19: 16-26**

At that time, a young man came to Jesus and said, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

#### **Gospel Commentary**

The man in this gospel has an earnest desire to enter into the Kingdom of God. He follows God’s commandments, but senses that even so, he is still lacking—not worthy of the Kingdom. His inquiry of Christ is not a test, but a genuine desire to know how to become closer with God. Yet, what he learns saddens him greatly, for Christ senses that this man’s wealth has become an idol for him. He, like many of us, places too much faith in his material possessions. He trusts that *they* will help him through difficult situations, instead of God. St. John Chrysostom tells us that giving away possessions is the least of Christ’s instructions here; following Him in all things is a far greater and more difficult calling. We must all be wary of our wealth becoming an impediment to following Christ.

## SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

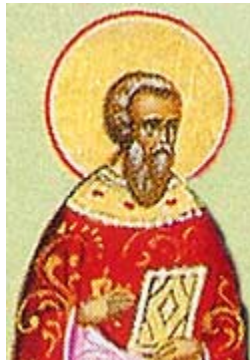
### **Reflection from *The Prologue* for August 17/August 30 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic**

The Lord does not allow His faithful servants to be shamed. It often happened that the martyrs of Christ, ridiculed and mocked before the courts, unexpectedly performed a miracle, which instilled fear in the unbelievers. Either the idols fell, or thunder destroyed the temples of the heathen, or an unexpected downpour of rain extinguished the fire prepared for their burning, or the torturers beat themselves with stones and rods and so forth. Thus, while he was torturing St. Myron, Antipater suddenly went insane and killed himself. St. Alypius the Iconographer was already at the end of his life when he received an order from a man to paint an icon of the Dormition of the Most-holy Theotokos. As the feast was approaching, this man came several times to see if the icon was completed. But the icon

was not even begun by the eve of the Feast of the Dormition, when the icon was supposed to have been placed in the church. When this man had gone home grief stricken, a young man suddenly appeared in Alypius's cell and immediately sat down to paint the icon. He worked very quickly and with great expertise. When the icon was completed, it shone like the sun. After showing the icon to the astonished Alypius, the young man took the icon to the church for which it had been ordered. The next day, that man who had ordered the icon went to the church and, to his great surprise, saw the icon in its place. Then he came to the monastery and, along with the abbot, entered Alypius's cell. "How was this man's icon painted so swiftly, and who painted it?" asked the abbot. The ailing Alypius replied: "An angel painted it, and he is standing here now, to take me away." And with that, he gave up the spirit.

### **The Holy Martyr Myron the Presbyter**

Myron was a priest in the town of Achaia. He was of wealthy and prominent origin, yet was kind and meek by nature—a lover of both God and man. During the reign of Emperor Decius, on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, pagans charged into the church, dragged Myron out of the service, and subjected him to torture by fire. During this torture, an angel appeared to him and encouraged him. The pagans began to peel his skin in strips from his head to his feet. The martyr grabbed one such strip of skin and struck his torturer, the judge, on the face with it. As though possessed, Antipater the judge grabbed a sword and killed himself. Finally, the pagans took Myron to the city of Cyzicus, and slew him there with the sword, in the year 250.



*Holy Martyr Myron the Presbyter*

### **The Holy Martyr Patroclus**

Patroclus was a citizen of the city of Trychasia, present day Troyes in France. He inherited great wealth from his parents and, as a true Christian, used it to perform daily acts of mercy for the less fortunate, while he himself lived a life of asceticism, taking food only once a day after the setting of the sun. Because of the sanctity of his life, the Lord granted Patroclus the power of healing, and he was known throughout the land as a miracle-worker. Emperor Aurelian, arriving in Gaul, ordered that Patroclus be brought before him. St. Patroclus proclaimed his faith in Christ before the emperor, and did not conceal anything. "O Emperor, if you desire something of my wealth, I will give it to you, for I see you as poor," said St. Patroclus to the emperor. To this the emperor replied: "How is it that you call me, the emperor, poor, when I have countless riches?" St. Patroclus then said: "You have only transient earthly treasures. You are poor, for you are not in possession of yourself, nor do you possess the Christian Faith in your heart." He was condemned to death and given over to the soldiers to be taken to a bog near the river to be slain, and to be left to sink into the mud. But the saint of God prayed to God that his body not remain in the mud, and by the

power of God he suddenly became invisible to the soldiers and was transported to the other side of the river. After a long search, the soldiers found him and slew him on a dry spot of land. Two beggars, to whom Patroclus often gave alms, happened by, recognized the body of their benefactor, and buried it with honor.

### **The Venerable Elias of Calabria**

Elias was a Greek by descent, and was the abbot of the Monastery of Mellicia, in Calabria in southern Italy. During the iconoclast rebellion in the East, many eastern monks fled to Calabria with icons. In time, the monastic life was spread widely throughout Calabria. The Calabrian monks were distinguished by their great learning and austerity of life. At one point, there were so many Orthodox monasteries and monks in Calabria that Calabria was compared with Egypt of old. Later, through the centuries, Orthodox Calabria came under the authority of the Archbishop of Ohrid. Venerable Elias died in Thessalonica in the year 903.

### **The Venerable Alypius the Iconographer of the Monastery of the Kiev Caves**

Portraying the images of the saints on wood, Alypius imitated their good works in his own soul. He healed a man of leprosy, saw an angel of God, and died peacefully in the Lord in his old age in the year 1114.

## **IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Mark your calendars for Diocesan Days, September 4-6, 2009**

Follow this link for information on the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Days:

[http://www.westsrbdio.org/Diocesan\\_Days/Diocesan\\_Days\\_2009/xhtml/index.html](http://www.westsrbdio.org/Diocesan_Days/Diocesan_Days_2009/xhtml/index.html)

For **Continual Education in Liturgy and Theology**, we recommend the following article:

[http://www.westsrbdio.org/Theology/The Eucharist and the Kingdom of God.doc](http://www.westsrbdio.org/Theology/The_Eucharist_and_the_Kingdom_of_God.doc)

Serbian version: [http://www.verujem.org/pdf/zizijulas\\_evharistija.pdf](http://www.verujem.org/pdf/zizijulas_evharistija.pdf)

We will offer the same article here in sections on a weekly basis; today, the end of the article: Parts XI and XII.

## **THE EUCHARIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

*For the things of the Old Testament are the shadow.  
Those of the New are an image. Truth is the state of things to come.  
(Maximus the Confessor)*

### **XI. Communion of the Holy Spirit**

It is not fortuitous that according to one of the hymns for Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is He who "holds together the whole institution of the Church." The thing that often escapes us is that, in the New Testament, the Spirit is given to men *after* Christ's Resurrection, precisely because His coming into the world signals *the coming of the "last days" in history* (Acts 2:17). It is no exaggeration to identify the

Kingdom and the Holy Spirit: “Thy Kingdom come: that is, the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> So the linking of the Holy Spirit with “holding together the whole institution of the Church” suggests that both the “institution” of the Church and the framework within which it becomes a reality, the eucharistic synaxis in other words, derive their meaning from the Kingdom of God.

The Divine Eucharist is normally approached from a Christological point of view, while the Holy Spirit usually plays only a subsidiary role in eucharistic theology. This is due to Western influence. The dispute over this question between the Orthodox and the Latins after the Schism is well known. The question cannot be solved merely through history, because there are indeed ancient Liturgies in which the Epiklesis is either absent, or appears in a secondary position. The issue is above all *theological*, and its significance touches on the question which concerns us here.

If the Eucharist were simply a repetition of a past event, then one wonders why the action of the Last Supper is not copied exactly at the Liturgy: at the Last Supper, Christ first blessed the bread and wine and then spoke the words “Take, eat . . . ,” while in the Liturgy the order is reversed. It is obvious that in the Eucharist we are not copying a historical event. As Nicolas Kavalas writes, the description of the Last Supper at the Eucharist—and the repetition of the Lord’s words “Take, eat . . .”—takes place “in the form of a narrative,” while the work of transforming the Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ belongs to the Holy Spirit. The transformation of the Gifts requires the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit in His coming brings the “last days” into history (Acts 2:17). The presence of Christ in the Eucharist cannot exist outside this Pneumatological and eschatological framework. The “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist presupposes and entails the gathering “in one place” of the eschatological community which the Spirit holds together. Only within the framework of this gathering does the transformation of the elements into the Body and Blood of Christ take place.

This observation gives rise to certain important conclusions:

(a) The Eucharist is a gathering and a *liturgy*. It is a great mistake to speak of the Eucharist without reference to the Liturgy. Academic theology makes this mistake frequently. The theologian concerned with the doctrine of the Eucharist should be a liturgiologist, or at least well informed in questions of liturgics. For the Mystery of the transformation of the Gifts and the “real presence” of Christ cannot be separated off and examined in isolation; it has to be examined as an organic unity with all the basic liturgical actions which make up the recapitulation of the divine Economy and the imaging of the Kingdom. We have seen that this is the way Ignatius, Maximus above all, and other Fathers view the

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<sup>1</sup> Maximus, PG 90:885.

Eucharist. The basic liturgical rubrics and actions are not ornamental trappings of the mystery: they are the very backbone of the mystery.

(b) As a gathering, the Eucharist presupposes the presence and participation of all “orders” and ministries.<sup>2</sup> All these together image the eschatological community, as also the transcending of all divisions, both natural (age, race, sex, etc.) and social (rich, poor, different professions, etc.). A Eucharist just for students, for children, for lawyers or doctors, for members of “societies,” etc., distorts the image of the Kingdom and is not justified for any reason whatsoever, whether pastoral or any other.

(c) The Eucharist is a *communion* and *partaking* of the Body and Blood of Christ, which is “*full of the Holy Spirit.*”<sup>3</sup> We partake of Christ but, at the same time, “in the communion of the Holy Spirit” (Liturgy of St. Basil). “And *unite all of us* who partake of the one Bread and the one Cup one to another *in the communion of the one Holy Spirit,*” as the Liturgy of St. Basil prays to the Father at the sacred moment of the Anaphora. The Spirit does not come down only “upon these gifts here set forth” but also “upon us” (the celebrants and the eucharistic gathering). Thus the “real presence” of Christ is broadened to include the Head and the Body in one unity in the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist as communion of the Holy Spirit becomes a “communion of the holy” in a double sense: communion in the holy things, and communion of saints (i.e., holy people).<sup>4</sup> The Eucharist thus becomes the *mystery of love*.

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<sup>2</sup> For this reason, it is unthinkable in our Church that the Eucharist should be celebrated by the priest or bishop or lay person on his own (on the last point, see the interesting evidence of the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus: PG 87:2869-71). The presence and participation of all these “orders” is essential, because only thus is the Eucharist brought to completion as an image of the Kingdom. (When the bishop is not physically present, his presence is absolutely essential in the form of the “appointed time” which the priest takes from the bishop’s throne, the Antimension signed by his own bishop, upon which he performs the Eucharist, and the commemoration of this bishop during the Anaphora at “Among the first remember, O Lord..,” Thus each Divine Liturgy presupposes the basic structure of the Church: bishop—priest (deacons)—people of God. A Liturgy without the presence of the bishop, either direct or indirect in the form we have alluded to, is as unthinkable as one at which no laity are present. These things are not mere formalities, but touch upon the very being of the Church.)

<sup>3</sup> Characteristic is the phrase “The fullness of the cup of faith of the Holy Spirit” which the celebrant pronounces every time he places the portion of the Lamb in the Holy Chalice before Holy Communion. He repeats the same thing when he pours in the Zeon (warm water). During the discussions between Latins and Orthodox after the Schism the latter regarded the Zeon as a serious point of disagreement, because its symbolism in Byzantium was connected with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> On this double meaning of “communion of the holy,” see the minutely detailed examination of patristic sources in W. Elert’s “Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche,” *Hauptsächlich des Ostens*, 1954.

*Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. . . . So faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:8-13).*

The eschatological character of the Eucharist is essentially linked to the eschatological character of love, which is the experiential quintessence of the Kingdom. All asceticism and all cleansing from the passions is in essence a *precondition* for the Eucharist, because the Eucharist cannot be understood apart from love. Love is not simply a virtue; it is an ontological category, not simply an ethical one. Love is that which will survive into the “age which does not end or grow old” when all the gifts which impress us today, such as knowledge, prophecy, etc., will pass away.<sup>5</sup>

Of all the forms of love, the most significant from the viewpoint both of the Eucharist and of the last times is *love for our enemies*. This love is not simply a matter of ethics (imitation of Christ and obedience to His commandment), but has *ontological* content directly connected with the Eucharist and its eschatological character, as St. Maximus tries to show in a profound analysis of the petition of the Lord’s Prayer “forgive us our trespasses . . . ,” which he connects with the previous petition, “give us this day our daily bread.” The argument is complex, like the whole of his language, but the following points from his *Interpretation of the Our Father* deserve our attention:

The essence of the ontological character of love for our enemies resides in the fact that if remembrance of the wrongs our enemy has done us becomes “stamped on our mind,” this *sunders* nature “according to the will (γνώμη),” because through remembrance of wrong one appears to be, and indeed is, “separated from some other man, while being oneself a man.” Love for enemies, in consequence, is actually a union of the will and the principle of nature (“the will being in union with the principle [λόγος] of nature”). Through this love, human nature ceases to rebel against itself because of the will, and this leads also to reconciliation with

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<sup>5</sup> A phenomenon worth noting, and particularly evident today, is the way people go running after impressive spiritual gifts such as foresight, clairvoyance, etc., and consider these the supreme indications of holiness and of the presence of the Holy Spirit. These people remind us of the Jews who “seek after a sign” in order to believe. But these gifts—which, much to St. Paul’s sorrow, the Corinthians of his time also considered the most important (see 1 Cor. 12-13)—are much inferior to love because, as St. Paul writes, unlike love they will not survive into the last times.

God, because “once the will is in union with the principle of nature, the free choice of those who have achieved this is not in a state of rebellion against God.”<sup>6</sup> Much in consequence depends for us on free will, if our nature is to be able to transcend division and death. This requires dying to the “present age” and passing over to the “life which does not grow old”:

He who prays for the bread of spiritual knowledge (the bread of the Kingdom) having forgiven his debtors their debts, as he knows that he is by nature mortal . . . anticipates nature according to his will . . . in order not to take with him any mark of the depravity of the present age when he departs to the life that does not grow old . . . .”<sup>7</sup>

If one does not forgive one’s enemies, one submits to nature as it is in the “present age,” in other words to division, to its “rebellion,” and to death, and endangers its true being which the bread of the Eucharist offers to man as the bread of the “age to come” of the Kingdom: “For I think that by “today” it means this age. . . . That bread which Thou didst prepare for us in the beginning *that our nature might be immortal* do Thou give us today, *while we are in the present life of mortality* . . . that it may conquer death,” etc.<sup>8</sup>

After these remarks, it is not surprising that in the patristic texts one finds interpretations of the Eucharist which place an almost excessive emphasis on forgiveness of enemies, focusing our attention on this point. St. Anastasius of Sinai (+ c. 700), commenting in his *Homily on the Holy Synaxis* on the Divine Liturgy (which like Maximus he calls simply “Synaxis”), says among other things about the petition “Forgive us our trespasses. . . .”

“Therefore, I pray you, let us flee this wicked and unpardonable sin (of remembrance of wrong). And if you want to learn that the darkening from remembrance of wrong is worse than any other sin, then listen. Every other sin takes a brief while to commit and is soon over, as when someone commits fornication, and afterward realizes the enormity of his sin and comes to consciousness of it; but remembrance of wrong has a passion which never ceases to burn. . . . Where remembrance of wrong has put down roots, nothing is of any avail; not fasting, or prayer, or tears, or confession, or supplication, or virginity, or alms, or any other good thing. For remembrance of wrong toward our brother destroys everything.

I often hear many people saying, ‘Alas, how shall I be saved? I haven’t the strength to fast, I don’t know how to keep vigil, I can’t live in virginity, I couldn’t bear to leave the world—so how can I be saved?’ How? I will tell you how.

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<sup>6</sup> PG 90:901; St Macarios of Corinth and St Nicodemos, comp., *The Philokalia: The Complete Text*, Vol. 2, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 301.

<sup>7</sup> PG 90:904; *Philokalia*, vol. 2, pp. 301-2.

<sup>8</sup> PG 90:897; *Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 299.

Forgive and you will be forgiven . . . here is a short cut to salvation. And I will show you another. What is that? Judge not, it says, and you will not be judged. So here is another path without fasting or vigil or labor. . . . He who judges before Christ's coming is Antichrist, because he abrogates the position that belongs to Christ. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

These "exaggerated" words of Anastasius, combined with those of Maximus,<sup>10</sup> do not only explain why the Church has from the beginning regarded reconciliation with our enemies as an inviolable precondition for participation in the Eucharist (Matt. 5:23); they also show us how firmly the Eucharist is bound up with the Kingdom of God. The crucial point in the whole business is that we have to encounter the other person not as he was yesterday or is today, but *as he will be in the future in the last times*, which means as a member and our neighbor in the Kingdom. Because the *future* gives all things their true substance: their place in the Kingdom. And this is precisely what eludes our judgment, because it belongs exclusively to God and to the other person's freedom: "You perhaps see him sinning, *but you do not know in what sort of end he will pass from life.*"<sup>11</sup> Thus the eschatological orientation of the Eucharist creates its own ethos: the *eucharistic* ethos, the ethos of forgiveness, which is not merely an inner state but is experienced as *gathering* and *coexistence with the person who has hurt us*, in a future which we do not control and which has no end, the "age which does not end or grow old." In order for the Eucharist to be "for forgiveness of sins and unto eternal life" for those who take part in it and receive Communion, it must also be for forgiveness on our part of the sins of others and "unto eternal life" *with them* in the gathering of the Kingdom.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> PG 89:825-849.

<sup>10</sup> What St. Maximus writes about slander, both in matters of "life" and matters of "faith" (it seems that the saint endured both), is profoundly striking: "There is no pain of the soul that weighs more heavily than slander, whether one is slandered as to faith or as to life. And no one can scorn this except only the man who, like Susannah, looks to God who alone is able to rescue him from calamity as he did her, and tell people the truth, as he did about her; he can also comfort his soul with hope. As he prays from his soul for the person who has slandered him, in that same measure God too reveals the truth to those who have been scandalized" (PG 90:1069). There is always a strong temptation to counter-attack the slanderer so that souls are not scandalized. Maximus does not seem to approve this approach: he runs the risk of people being scandalized so as to secure the love and forgiveness (i.e., non-punishment) of the slanderer, leaving it to God to inform those who have been scandalized. How alien all this sounds to our modern mentality, even a modern "Christian" mentality!

<sup>11</sup> Anastasius, *ibid.*, 845.

<sup>12</sup> Many spiritual fathers do not allow people to receive Holy Communion if they have not been reconciled with their enemies. This is not only in conformity with Christ's commandment (Matt. 5:23), but also follows from the fact that the Eucharist is an image and foretaste of the Kingdom, in which we shall be called to coexist with our enemies eternally. The exhortation "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess" is an essential element in the Divine Liturgy.

## XII. Transfiguration of the world

“Always, now and ever and to the ages of ages!” With this exclamation, in front of which celebrants unfortunately add “Blessed is our God”<sup>13</sup> the Holy Things are taken from the altar to be transferred to the table of preparation at the end of the Liturgy. Whatever interpretation may be given to this exclamation, the fact that it was not originally connected with the phrase “Blessed is our God” refers us to the eschatological perspective of the Eucharist: either—as favored by many interpreters of the Liturgy—in the form of Christ’s promise that He will be with His disciples in the Church “unto the end of the age,” or in the sense that in the Liturgy we enter upon the “age which does not end or grow old” in St. Basil’s words (“ages of ages” signifies the endless duration of time). In either case, this exclamation shows that the Eucharist, and all that it entails and offers, is not confined within our fragmented time but extends unto the age which has no end. The consequences for our existence of this extension of the Eucharist “unto ages of ages” are momentous. They signal transcendence of the tragic state which has tormented us since the Fall and offer us the taste of a life fitting to the uncreated God.

By being an “image of the Kingdom,” the Eucharist inevitably underlines the paradox of “already, but not yet” which is contained in Christian eschatology. The Resurrection of Christ has signaled the final victory over corruption and death, but this victory has not yet been realized in history. Death remains the *last* enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), in other words the enemy who will be defeated last of all, since his sting is still wounding creation. This is of course a sting which, as we know, does not ultimately put us to death (1 Cor. 15:55), and we know that this makes the death of those who participate in the body of the Risen Christ into a “falling asleep.” But this does not remove the expectation with which we *look for* the last times, when the Resurrection of Christ will become the resurrection also of our own bodies, as we confess in our Creed. This intense *looking forward*, this

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The unity of the faith, which again is an essential and inviolable precondition for Eucharistic communion, is formally manifested in the recitation of the Creed; this is also eschatological in character according to St. Maximus, as we saw above (section 6). Thus faith and love are united in the same Eucharistic event, which images the future Kingdom of God within the world and history.

<sup>13</sup> According to liturgiologists (Trembelas, Fountoulis, *et al.*), the phrase “Blessed is our God” did not originally belong at the beginning of the exclamation but was added later, and, if nothing else, should not be said aloud. See I. Fountoulis, *Answers to Liturgical Queries*, II (1982), pp. 350f. We consider this very significant from a theological point of view. The addition of “Blessed is our God” changes the sense of the exclamation so that it becomes doxological (it should be noted that “Blessed . . .” occurs at the beginning and not the end of the divine services), whereas without this addition it denotes the extension of the Mystery into the age of the Kingdom “that does not end or grow old,” which is also the purpose of this exclamation at the end of the Liturgy.

longing for the Second Coming and the resurrection of the body—which we tend to forget—is not done away with or destroyed by the Eucharist. On the contrary, the Eucharist makes it more intense: *maranatha*, “Yea, come, O Lord” (Rev. 22:17). If the Eucharist as an image of the last times is used as a sort of “painkiller” to help us forget that evil and sin still torment creation, that will be a grave misunderstanding. The eschatological character of the Eucharist does not attenuate but rather intensifies the struggle against the evil which surrounds us, both “moral” evil, as it is usually called, and “natural” evil. As an image of the Kingdom, the Eucharist makes us appreciate more deeply the contrast between the world as it is, and the world as it will be in the last times. What the Eucharist destroys is the “being-unto death” of existentialism, the ontological coupling of being and non-being, life and death, a coupling which leads either to despair or to indifference concerning the transfiguration of the world.

The Eucharist calls us to look not only “upwards” but also “forward.” It does not call upon us to go out of space and time, but to believe that thanks to the economy of the Holy Trinity which has been realized in the person and the work of Christ, “with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit,” space and time are capable of receiving transfiguration; and that the Kingdom of God is not something that will displace material creation, but will transfigure it, cleansing it from those elements which bring about corruption and death. The Eucharist gives us the assurance that matter is sacred and worthy of every honor since the time when the Son of God became incarnate,<sup>14</sup> and that time too is sanctified by His incarnate presence. Thanks to the eschatological character of the Eucharist, it is clearly shown that the problem faced by created beings lies not with matter or with the time and space in which they live, but with their cleansing and transfiguration so that these elements become carriers of life rather than death. Thus the Eucharist as “communion of the last times” reveals to us that the whole of creation is destined by God’s love to be set free at last from corruption and death and to live “unto ages of ages,” having as its head the “last Adam,” Him who made a reality what the “first Adam” refused and failed to do: the communion of what is created with God.

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In approaching the Eucharist principally as Liturgy—for this is how members of the Orthodox Church experience it—we have tried to see, with the help of testimonies both from Scripture and from the Fathers, what it means for the Eucharist to form an image of the Kingdom of God—a manifestation, a prefiguration and a foretaste of that Kingdom. Our aim has been to show that it

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<sup>14</sup> “[A]nd I do not cease to venerate matter, through which my salvation was brought about” (St. John of Damascus, *Against those who attack the Holy Icons*, PG 94:1245).

is not permissible for either academic theology or liturgical practice to play down or in various ways obscure the eschatological character of the Eucharist. This character is to be found throughout Holy Scripture and patristic thinking, and indeed in our liturgical typikon—often despised by dogmatic theologians—despite the alterations that this has undergone at various times as a result of the indifference or ignorance of our clergy; and it proves that what we have in the Eucharist is not a flight or deliverance from space and time or from history, but the biblical perspective of the *transfiguration* of space and time, as indeed of all the creation which God’s love made “very good.”

Our aim has also been to do what we can to help rid our people of conceptions and “experiences” of the Eucharist influenced by Western pietism—a pietism which has corroded our worship more than we ever imagined which tend to deprive our Liturgy of its resurrectional and festive character or to turn it into a medium for individual piety and psychological compunction and an instrument of mission or pastoral work.<sup>15</sup> In a period when our local Churches are fragmented, we have also considered it essential to stress the communal and “catholic” character of the Eucharist as a “gathering in one place” of the whole of the local Church; because the Kingdom of God is a *gathering*, but a gathering which is *structured* in a particular way, with Christ as its center and head, surrounded by the Apostles. This structure, imaged in the Eucharist and transferred to the structure of the Church itself as a unity of the people of God around the bishop, is rooted in the eucharistic imaging of the Kingdom and for this reason contains an ultimate truth which may not be overlooked for the sake of a supposedly “spiritual” understanding of the Church. Our aim, finally, has been to demonstrate the anthropological and cosmological consequences of the eschatological character of the Eucharist, consequences which are often forgotten under the influence of the same individualistic tendencies which have invaded the territory of our Church.

These consequences call upon us to draw from the Eucharist an *eschatological consciousness and ethos* (something which has tended to disappear, imprisoned as people are—even people in the Church) in a perspective which is confined to the world and to history, in both our personal and communal lives. But the person who “lives in the Eucharist and through the Eucharist,” to recall Fr. Florovsky’s

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<sup>15</sup> The argument put forward to justify the inept and novel practice (introduced just this century) of shifting the sermon from its natural position after the reading of the Gospel to the time of the Communion Hymn, by which time the Anaphora has been accomplished and our communion with God’s eternal life is imminent, is revealing. The argument that more people have gathered by that time shows that the missionary or pastoral criterion has prevailed over that of structure and imagery: it does not even cross our minds that by making this shift we are altering the image of the Kingdom and turning back to front the whole movement and progress from history toward the Kingdom, and it is like putting the first act of a play after the final act!

words, (when, of course, that Eucharist is properly celebrated) becomes accustomed to looking not only “upwards” but also “forward.” In other words, he gets into the habit of placing himself, his works, and history itself under the light and the judgment of the Kingdom, always and in everything seeking its *ultimate* meaning (“Seek ye first the Kingdom of heaven and its righteousness” [in other words, its love], Matt. 6:33), of leaving the final judgment of other people in the hands of God, and of seeing in all things the ultimate destiny of their incorporation and survival in Christ unto “the age which does not end or grow old.” With its eschatological perspective the Eucharist heals us of self-love, the source of all the passions, shatters the very backbone of individualism, and teaches us to exist in a gathering with others and with all the beings of God’s creation. Thus the Eucharist ceases to be a “religious experience” or a means to individual salvation and becomes a *mode of being*, a way of life, illuminated by the vision and the expectation of the future, by that which the world will be when it is finally transfigured into the Kingdom of God.