



July 19, 2009
6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Venerable Sisoës the Great (429 A.D.)

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - Tone Five:

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word, coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born for our salvation from the Virgin; for He willed to be lifted upon the Cross in the Flesh, to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

ВАСКРСНИ ТРОПАР - глас 5: Сабезначалнога Оцу и Духу Логоса, Који се од Дјеве родио за наше спасење, опевајмо верни, и поклонимо се; јер је благоволео да телом узиђе на Крст, и смрт претрпи, и васкрсне (све) умрле, славним васкрсењем Својим.

TROPARION TO VENERABLE SISOES THE GREAT – Tone One:

O dweller of the desert and angel in the body, you were shown to be a wonderworker, our God-bearing Father Sisoës. You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil and prayer: healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith. Glory to Him who gave you strength! Glory to Him who granted you a crown! Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

ТРОПАР ПРЕПОДОБНОМ СИСОЈУ ВЕЛИКОМ - глас 1:

Као пустињски житељ и у телу Анђео и чудотворац, показао си се богоносни оче наш Сисоје. Постом, бдењем и молитвама, небеске дарове си примио, исцељујући болести оних који ти са вером долазе. Слава Ономе који ти је дао снагу, који те је прославио и који кроз тебе дарује свима исцељење.

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - Tone Five:

You did descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty; resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of Man, and we all cry to You: O Lord, save us!

Васкрсни Кондак – глас 5: У Ад си сишао, Спаситељу мој, Ти који си уништио врата Пакла као Најсилнији. Умрле си као Творац са Собом васкрсао и Адам би избављен од проклетства, Човекољупче. Због тога Ти сви кличемо: Спаси нас Господе!

KONTAKION TO VENERABLE SISOES THE GREAT – Tone Four:

In asceticism you were revealed to be an earthly angel, continually enlightening the thoughts of the faithful with divine signs. Therefore we honor you with faith, O venerable Sisoës.

КОНДАК ПРЕПОДОБНОМ СИСОЈУ, глас 4. Подвижавајући се, постао си као Анђео на Земљи, озарујући верне, свети, божанственим помислима свагда: Зато те са вером поштујемо, свети оче Сисоје.

HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD - tone six:

Steadfast Protectress of Christians and constant advocate before the Creator, do not despise the cry of us sinners; but in your goodness come speedily to help us who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you!

ХИМНА БОГОРОДИЦИ – глас 6:

Непостидна заштитнице Хришћана, незаменљива пред Творцем Посреднице, не презри гласе мољења нас грешних, него као Блага притекни у помоћ нама који Ти са вером вапијемо: Пожури на молитву и похитај на умољавање, Богородице, свагдашња Заштитнице оних који те поштују.

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

The Prokeimenon—Psalm 12: 7 in the Fifth Tone:

Thou, O Lord, shall protect us and preserve us from this generation forever!

Romans 12: 6-14

Brethren, having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

The Alleluia Verses – Psalm 89: 1, 2

I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation. Thou hast said: Mercy will be established forever, and My truth will be prepared in the heavens.

Epistle Commentary

Ministry requires functioning together, fitting into the corporate whole of the Church. Each person has a “measure of faith” and divine gifting. St. Paul gives examples of gifts here but of course there are many more. These timeless exhortations to practice specific virtues are reminders to the Romans, *and us*, that true Christian faith is a faith that works!

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

Matthew 9: 1-8

At that time, Jesus got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, “This Man blasphemes!” But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” - then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

Gospel Commentary

As shown by the healing of the **paralytic**, faith is an indispensable condition for salvation. And faith is collective as well as personal: the faith of the paralytic’s friends is required for his healing and the saving faith of the paralytic impresses the **multitudes**.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for July 6/July 19 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

From where do we know that there is life after death? We know from Christ the Lord—on the basis of His words, His Resurrection, and His many appearances after death. Philosophers who recognize life after death recognize it on the basis of their thinking, but we recognize it on the basis of experience, especially the experience of holy men who neither knew how to proclaim falsehoods nor were even capable of it. When Sisoes lay on his deathbed, his face was radiant. The monks, his disciples, stood around him. St. Sisoes gazed around and said: “Behold, here comes Abba Anthony!” He remained silent for a while and then said: “Behold, here come the prophets!” In that moment his face glowed even more and he said: “Behold, here come the apostles!” Then he said: “Behold, here come the angels to take away my soul!” Finally, his face shone as the sun and all were overcome by great fear, and the elder said: “Behold, here comes the Lord. Look at Him, all of you! Behold, He is saying, ‘Bring to me the chosen vessel from the desert.’” After that the saint gave up his soul. And how many similar visions have been seen—and all by the most reliable witnesses!

The Venerable Sisoes the Great

Sisoes was an Egyptian by birth and a disciple of St. Anthony the Great. Following the death of his great teacher, St. Sisoes settled on a desert mountain called Anthony’s, where St. Anthony had earlier lived in asceticism. By imposing on himself difficult labors, he tamed himself to such an extent that he became meek and guileless as a lamb. Therefore God endowed Sisoes with abundant grace—so that he was able to heal the sick, drive out unclean spirits, and resurrect the dead. For sixty years Sisoes lived in asceticism in the wilderness, and he was a source of living wisdom for all the monks and laymen who came to him for counsel. Just before his repose his face shone as the sun. The monks stood around him and they were astonished at this manifestation. And when the saint

gave up his soul, the entire room was filled with a sweet-smelling fragrance. Sisoës reposed in extreme old age, in the year 429. St. Sisoës taught the monks: “Whatever way temptation comes to man, a man should give himself over to the will of God, and recognize that the temptation came because of his sins. If something good happens, it should be said that it happened according to God’s providence.” One monk asked Sisoës: “How can I please God and be saved?” The saint answered: “If you wish to please God, withdraw from the world, separate yourself from the earth, put aside creation, draw near to the Creator, and unite yourself to God with prayers and tears—then you will find rest in this age and in the age to come.” A monk also asked Sisoës: “How can I attain humility?” The saint replied: “When someone learns to acknowledge every man as being better than himself, then he has attained humility.” Ammon complained to Sisoës that he could not memorize the wise sayings that he read, in order to be able to repeat them in conversation with men. The saint replied to him: “That is not necessary. It is necessary to attain purity of mind and to speak from that purity, placing your hope in God.”

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE: Summer Camp Week Three Has Been Filled!

This has been announced for three weeks. Reverend clergy, please include this notice in your parish bulletin/announcements.

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

Follow this link for information on the 13th Annual Diocesan Days:

http://www.westsrbdio.org/Diocesan_Days/Diocesan_Days_2009/xhtmll/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

Serbian version: http://www.verujem.org/pdf/zizijulas_evharistija.pdf

We will offer the same article here in sections on a weekly basis; today is Part II and III.

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)

(...)

II. The Kingdom which is to come—the cause and archetype of the Church

Amidst the wealth of patristic evidence for a connection between the Eucharist and the Kingdom, we may single out one truly important passage from St. Maximus the Confessor which, so far as we know, has not yet received the attention it deserves from our theologians. This passage indicates not only the unbreakable connection between the Eucharist and the Kingdom, but also the *radical overturning of the ancient Greek notion of causality*. Apart from anything else, this demonstrates how unjust and far from the

reality is the very prevalent notion that Maximus was influenced by ancient Greek philosophy, Platonic and Aristotelian. First we shall set out this passage in its entirety, so that we can go on to comment on it in relation to our theme. In his *Scholia* on Dionysius the Areopagite's work *On the Church Hierarchy*, Maximus writes:

“[The Areopagite] calls images (εἰκόνες) of what is true the rites that are now performed in the synaxis. . . . For these things are symbols, not the truth. . . . From the effects. That is, from what is accomplished visibly to the things that are unseen and secret, which are the causes and archetypes of things perceptible. For those things are called causes which in no way owe the cause of their being to anything else. Or from the effects to the causes, that is, from the perceptible symbols to what is noetic and spiritual. Or from the imperfect to the more perfect, from the type to the image; and from the image to the truth. For the things of the Old Testament are the shadow; those of the New Testament are the image. The truth is the state of things to come.”¹

In this passage, St. Maximus interprets in his own way the concept of the Eucharist as *image* and *symbol* in relation to the concept of *causality*. What takes place in the Divine Eucharist is an “image” and “symbol” of what is “true.” Reading this passage up to a certain point, one seems to be moving in an atmosphere of Platonism. The things “accomplished visibly” are images and symbols of the “unseen” and “secret”: perceptible symbols are images of what is “noetic and spiritual.” In accordance with the Platonic view, the perceptible and visible world is an image of a stable and eternal world which, being noetic and spiritual, is the truth, the true world. In consequence, one would say that what is accomplished in the Divine Liturgy is an image and reflection of the heavenly Liturgy which is accomplished eternally and which is the “archetype” of the earthly Eucharist. That would indeed be a typically Platonic understanding of the Eucharist.

But Maximus has a surprise in store for us at the end of this passage. The Divine Eucharist is for him an image of the true Eucharist which is nothing other than “the state of things to come.” The “truth of what is now accomplished in the synaxis” is to be found not in a Platonic type of ideal reality but in a “reality of the future,” in the Kingdom which is to come. The crucial element which overturns the Platonic relationship between archetype and image is *the category of time*. To get from the image to the prototype we do not have to go outside time, but we certainly have to pass through the expectation of an “event” or state which lies in the future. This changes the whole mentality from a Platonic to a biblical one. For while it is impossible in Platonic thought to pass from the image to the archetype through time, as if the archetype were to be found at the end of history, in the biblical understanding it is essential. On the biblical understanding, as in that of St. Maximus, what is represented in the Eucharist is *what is to come*, *He who comes*, and the *Kingdom* which He will establish.

But this passage is important also because it poses the problem of causality, thus overturning not only Platonic but also Aristotelian notions of “entelechy” and causality. Causes, says Maximus, are those which do not in any way owe their cause to anything else. In ancient Greek and Western thought, as in common sense, a cause is logically but also chronologically prior to its effect. In the thought of St. Maximus, however, the further back we go in time, the further we get away from the archetype, from the cause: the Old Testament is “shadow,” the New Testament is “image,” and the “state of things

¹ PG 4:137.

to come” is truth. In other words the archetype, the cause of “what is accomplished in the synaxis,” lies in the future. *The Eucharist is the result of the Kingdom which is to come.* The Kingdom which is to come, a future event (the state of things to come), being the *cause* of the Eucharist, gives it its true *being*.

This is what comes out of a careful reading of Maximus. Later on we shall look at its existential significance—because this is what concerns theology in the final analysis, and not the historical or philosophical curiosity in which the theologians of our own day usually expend all their energies. For the time being, we note that the biblical connection between Eucharist and Kingdom, far from losing its force in the Patristic period, was securely established on an ontological basis: the Eucharist is not simply connected with the Kingdom which is to come, it draws from it its being and its truth. Liturgical practice formed, and continues to form, the language in which the Church expresses this thesis. And we should pay attention to it.

III. Liturgical practice

We usually think of the order of service as something secondary and unimportant. And it is indeed true that our Liturgy has come to be loaded down with a whole lot of secondary symbolisms and aesthetic decorations; but this does not mean that every rite in the Liturgy is unrelated to its essence. Liturgiologists, who are usually historians of liturgy with no theological or ecclesiological interests, do not enlighten us as to the theological content of the rites and the difference between the essential and the inessential. Thus our clergy especially, but also the laity, either consider every aspect of the order of service equally important and keep it religiously, or—and this is dangerous—they abbreviate, leave things out, change the order of these rites, etc., destroying the “image” of the Kingdom that the Liturgy is meant to be. Thus we end up losing the representation of the last times in our Liturgy, either because we have overloaded it with rites which do not express the coming of the Kingdom, or because we remove or mix up fundamental elements of the Liturgy and thus dangerously distort its eschatological character.

It would take an entire volume to describe what our Liturgy has suffered at the hands of its clergy. Instead of being guardians of the Apostolic Tradition—and let us not forget that Hippolytus gives the title of “Apostolic Tradition” to nothing other than the description of how the Liturgy is performed—our bishops have become as a rule spectators, if not actual perpetrators, of this abuse. But many of these abuses produce such a distortion of the image of the last times that they should be noted, albeit briefly, since we are talking about the Eucharist as an icon of the Kingdom which is to come.

To be continued...