

# The Evolution Of The Byzantine Liturgy

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## ***Part I: From the beginning to the Trisagion***

Among Eastern Christians, both Orthodox and Catholics, there is certain ferment for the reform of their Liturgy. I became aware of this interest during the years I lived in Beirut, and from my contacts with the Orthodox in Greece. In Europe and here in America, the awareness of the need to have a more pastoral Liturgy is now more acute. Clergy and learned laymen feel and love the beauty of the Byzantine Liturgy. But sometimes they wonder: Do the faithful penetrate to its riches? Or rather, do not most of these riches remain actually concealed from the people?

I am not going to pose as a pioneer of liturgical reform. I want only make clear that no one can achieve any useful and lasting reform unless he is well acquainted with the historical evolution of the Liturgy, otherwise the would-be reformer, guided only by his own private taste, keeps those aspects of the Liturgy he likes and rejects those he dislikes, working without any objective criterion.

But this is not the method of the true liturgist. For by studying the liturgy we can arrive at certain principles that will make our conclusions more objective and fruitful.

Some of the elements of the Liturgy have undergone a particular evolution and development. Pieces added to the Liturgy in order to meet specific needs or purposes have been kept in the celebration long after these needs or purposes ceased to exist. Conversely, certain older ways of doing things, rites and ceremonies long ago fallen into disuse might today be preferable to the later developments that replaced them.

In order to uncover the additions and replacements and evaluate them in their proper context, we must first try to get a general view of the historical evolution of the Byzantine Liturgy—and that is not an easy task. But at least some aspects of this evolution will be dealt with in the following lectures. Today we shall consider the development of the so-called "Little Entrance."

## **The entrance in the 4th century and in our times**

When we examine the ancient documents dealing with the Antiochene and Byzantine Liturgies, the writings of St. John Chrysostom, for instance, we find that the Liturgy began with a greeting of the bishop to the people: "Peace be with you." Immediately after responding to this greeting, the people sat down and the Holy Scripture was read to them. But in today's celebration of the Byzantine Liturgy, rather lengthy ceremonies and prayers precede the reading of the Epistle. In very solemn circumstances these ceremonies can fill an entire hour, as in fact they did in the patriarchal Liturgies celebrated on Mount Athos during the commemoration of the 1000th anniversary of the founding of the Great Lavra. Thus we see that from the time of St. John Chrysostom, when the Liturgy began with the readings, until the present day, the Byzantine Liturgy has acquired many elements that did not belong to it in its original shape.

The elements that we find today in the introductory part of the Byzantine Liturgy are, briefly: the litany of peace, three antiphons, and two small litanies, plus the three accompanying prayers; the prayer of the Entrance and the Entrance itself, the Troparia and Kontakia, the Trisagion. Where do all these elements come from?

If we go back to the time of St. John Chrysostom, that is to say, to the Liturgy as found in his day, we find the bishop and the priests entering the church and greeting the people with "Peace be with you," and the people answering, "And with your spirit." In other words, we have a primitive entrance that had no correspondent chant. The people, priests and bishop simply entered from outside the church without singing. After the greeting, clergy and people sat down and listened to the scripture readings. During the readings the clergy sat on a platform in the middle of the church, the ancient *bema*. The faithful also sat in the nave, along the sides of this *bema*, their clergy right in the midst of them.

### **The Trisagion, processional hymn**

After the fourth century, other elements were gradually added. One of these elements is the chant of the Trisagion.

The Trisagion was an old troparion sung during penitential processions. In the fifth century it was not uncommon to hold penitential processions through the city of Constantinople, to entreat God to protect the town from earthquakes and other calamities. The legend about the origin of the Trisagion actually connects the revelation of this hymn with an earthquake that struck the capital before 450 A. D.

According to this legend, the earthquake was catastrophic, and the people gathered in prayer outside the town, asking God to have mercy upon them: *Kyrie, eleison* (Lord, have mercy). Suddenly a boy was taken up into heaven, where he heard the chant of the angels: "Holy is God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal Have mercy on us!" The boy returned to earth and told the crowd what the angels were singing; at this, the people themselves started singing the same chant, the Trisagion, and the earthquake ceased.

And thereafter, the Trisagion was sung in penitential processions, which went from one church to another where the Liturgy was then celebrated. Before it arrived at the second church, the procession would make one or several stops at appointed *stations*, to pray to God for the special favor sought. One customary station was the Forum of Constantinople, a large plaza in the town. Here was recited a special prayer, the *Ectenes* or Insistent Litany, which later was incorporated into the Liturgy itself. Sometimes, the patriarch himself recited other prayers asking God to protect the town. On the most solemn occasions, such as the beginning of the year (September 1st) or the anniversary of the foundation of the city (May 11th), three antiphons were sung; these were followed by the reading of the Epistle and Gospel. The Insistent Litany (*ectenes*) ended the prayer at the station, and the procession moved towards the church singing a psalm with a troparion repeated after each verse.

In ancient times, the Troparion sung on the way to the church was the Trisagion itself, repeated by the people after each verse of the chosen psalm. This was usually, it seems, Psalm 79 (80): "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou who leadest Joseph like a flock," because to the present day the bishop sings, intercalated with the Trisagion, verses 14-15, of this same psalm:

*Turn again, O God of hosts! look down from heaven and see; have regard for this vine, the stock which thy right hand planted.*

Before the procession started from the first church, the "Prayer of the Trisagion" was recited by the patriarch. From its text we can see its relationship to a procession of penance:

*... you do not despise the sinner, but ordain repentance for his salvation ... accept, O Master, from the lips of us sinners the thrice-holy hymn, and deal with us according to your kindness: forgive us every offense, whether of malice or of weakness, sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may serve you in holiness all the days of our life ...*

At the end of the procession, as it entered the second church, the singers, to conclude the psalm, intoned the "Glory be to the Father, etc.," and the Trisagion was repeated twice more. This explains why today the Trisagion is repeated after the "Glory be to the Father." Then, once the procession was inside the second church, the Liturgy began as usual with the celebrant's greeting to the people: "Peace be to all," and the scriptural readings.

### **The Trisagion incorporated into the Liturgy**

Thus we see that formerly the Trisagion was sung during special processions. But the sixth century documents from Constantinople show us that even on days when there was no procession, the Trisagion was sung. When the clergy made their entrance into the church for the celebration of the Liturgy, the Trisagion was used as the entrance hymn. A new element then, formerly belonging to the processions, had been incorporated into the Liturgy.

Along with the Trisagion, but probably in a later epoch, two other pieces were taken from the processions and added to the Liturgy: the prayer before the Trisagion, and the Insistent Litany, which was placed after the reading of the Gospel, just as it was during the station at the Forum—on special occasions.

### **The variable troparia**

The Trisagion, therefore, was used in the sixth century as the usual Introit (Entrance Hymn) for Sundays and feast days. Probably to avoid monotony, variable Introits were gradually composed to fit the particular feast or Sunday's commemoration of the Redemption.

Every new Introit was made up of a Troparion and an appropriate psalm. For Sundays, they chose Psalm 94 (95): "O come, let us sing to the Lord"; the Troparion was the well-known "O only-begotten Son" (*O Monogenes*), into which the whole mystery of the Redemption, from the Incarnation to the victory over death, is highly condensed:

*O only-begotten Son and Word of God! You, being immortal, deigned for our salvation to take flesh of the holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary.*

*Without change you became man, and were crucified, O Christ our God, thus you conquered death by*

*death.*

*You who are one of the Holy Trinity, and are glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us!*

This Troparion was composed at the time of Justinian and introduced into the Liturgy by this emperor before 540. Gradually it came to be sung also on Saturdays, and finally on every day that did not have its own Introit-Troparion.

As the Troparion "O only-begotten Son" is rather long, the whole of it was not sung after each verse of Psalm 94, but only the final phrase: "Being one of the Holy Trinity," etc. But the entire Troparion was sung at the beginning and at the end of the psalm.

There were special Troparia and psalms for feast days. On Christmas day, for instance, Psalm 109 (110) was adopted: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand,'" and the accompanying special Troparion was: "Your Nativity, O Christ our Lord, has given rise to the light of knowledge," etc.

After the tenth century, under Palestinian influence, eight special Troparia of the Resurrection were introduced as Introits for eight successive Sundays; Psalm 94 was not changed. Here is the Troparion of the second musical mode:

*When you descended unto death, O life immortal, you destroyed death by the brightness of your divinity. And when you raised up the dead from the Abyss, all the heavenly Powers cried out: "O Giver of Life, Christ God, glory to you."*

As usual, the Troparion was sung in full at the beginning and end of the psalm, while after each verse only the final acclamation was repeated: "O Giver of Life," etc.

The adoption of the new Troparia of the Resurrection caused the old Troparion "O only-begotten Son" to be transferred to the second antiphon, where it is today. Therefore, we have to investigate next how these antiphons originated.

### **The three antiphons**

Three antiphonal psalms were sung in Constantinople not only at solemn processions, but also at the Vespers Office and other liturgical services.

During the processions, the singing of the antiphons took place at a stop or station. These three antiphons were independent of the processional Troparion and psalm sung while the procession marched to the church.

We saw already that the Trisagion with its psalm, originally a procession chant, became the first Introit or entrance hymn of the Liturgy, and that in more recent times, variable entrance hymns were composed, without suppressing the Trisagion.

Between the seventh and eighth centuries a new development took place in the Liturgy: the preparation of bread and wine, which until that time had been done after the lessons and litanies (that is, at the beginning of the

Eucharistic part of the Liturgy), was transferred to the very beginning, before the first entrance. While this rite of preparation was going on, it was necessary to fill the time with some pious exercise, and three antiphons, similar to those sung in the Forum on certain days, were added to the beginning of the Liturgy. The already existing entrance hymn became the third antiphon, thus losing its function as an Introit, and the two new antiphons were placed before it.

Thus for the third antiphon or entrance hymn, the old processional Psalm 94 (95), "O come, let us sing to the Lord ... let us come into His presence with thanksgiving," was kept. For the first and second antiphons two preceding psalms were chosen, Psalm 91 (92), "It is good to give thanks to the Lord"; and Psalm 92 (93), "The Lord reigns; He is robed in majesty." Psalm 93 (94), "O Lord, Thou God of vengeance," hardly suitable for a joyful celebration, was happily avoided!

## **The prayers**

Today there are four prayers interspersed between the singing of the antiphons. The first three are called the prayers of the first, of the second and of the third antiphon. The fourth one is the prayer of the entrance.

The prayer of the entrance is certainly old and was recited before the church door, when clergy and people arrived in procession for the celebration of the Liturgy. As the diaconal invitation ("Let us pray to the Lord") shows, the prayer was recited aloud, and supposed a momentary interruption in the singing of the processional hymn.

But the origin of the three prayers of the antiphons poses a more difficult problem. It is worthwhile to point out in what the problem consists and to propose a solution.

Let us begin with the second prayer:

*O Lord our God, save your people and bless your inheritance; preserve the fullness of your Church; sanctify those who love the beauty of your house; glorify them in return by your divine power, and do not forsake us who place our hope in you.*

There is no allusion in this text to the singing of a psalm. The prayer is composed of phrases without any strict connection, among which the first phrase is practically a blessing of the people.

If we compare the text of this prayer with that of the *opisthambonos* (prayer behind the ambo) recited at the end of the Liturgy, we see that the beginning of the *opisthambonos* is very similar to the prayer of the second antiphon. Moreover, if we consult the old manuscripts, it appears that the text of our prayer is not only similar, but exactly the same, as the beginning of the *opisthambonos*. We have here, therefore, two recensions of the same prayer, but one of them, as it is still recited in the prayer of the second antiphon, is the more primitive; the second one, found in today's *opisthambonos*, is a prolonged recension of the same text.

As the prayer behind the ambo was formerly the final blessing of the Liturgy, we can conclude that the present prayer of the second antiphon was also a final blessing and was not composed to accompany the singing of a psalm.

The prayer of the third antiphon has quite a different style:

*You, who have given us these common prayers in which we unite our voices, and who promised to grant the petitions of two or three that unite their voices to invoke your name: grant now the petitions of your servants for their benefit, giving to us in this world the knowledge of your truth and, in the future world, life eternal.*

The "prayers" mentioned in the text are certainly not the singing of a psalm. To what prayers, then, does it refer? To prayers made in common, where many voices join to pray; prayers that contain petitions. All these hints lead us to wonder whether this could be in connection with a litany prayer, in which the deacon proposes the petitions and all the people, with one voice, answer in common.

The prayer of the first antiphon reads:

*O Lord our God, whose might is beyond comparison, whose glory surpasses all understanding, whose mercy is without limits, whose love for men is beyond expression: do you, O Master, in your kindness, look down upon us and this holy church, and bestow upon us and upon those praying with us your abundant mercies and your benefits.*

Here again, no phrase of the text makes the prayer apt to precede the singing of a psalm. On the contrary, we find in it a distinction between clergy ("on us") and people ("those praying with us"), although both are united in a common prayer. A prayer of clergy and people together, said aloud, is probably again a litany of supplication. If we compare this third prayer, with the so-called "second prayer of the faithful" in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, we find in both, in almost the same words, the same distinction between clergy and people (we = clergy; those who pray with us = people). As the second prayer of the faithful is without any doubt the final prayer of a litany, this parallelism confirms our hypothesis.

As a conclusion to these considerations, we see that the three prayers now in the Liturgy under the title of "prayers of the antiphons" were not composed for such a purpose; actually, two of them—the first and the third—seem to have been in connection with a litany, while the second is a final blessing. On the other hand, the three prayers form a definite group, so that they must have once been together, but in a different place in the Liturgy. Since two of them make allusion to a litany, let us consider the place of the litanies in the Liturgy and the relation between litanies and prayers.

In the documents of the fourth and fifth centuries, the litanies of supplication are always found at the end of the offices; so much so, that in Jerusalem the bishop used to attend only the last part of the Vespertine Office, precisely because it was there that the litany-supplication was made.

Now the Liturgy, as we know, is composed of two parts. The first part, or Liturgy of the Word, is constructed like an office; the second part is the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Thus, the litanies in the Liturgy had their place at the end of the first part, after the readings and the dismissal of the catechumens.

A litany was always accompanied by one or several prayers; in this matter, we find two different traditions: that of Antioch, which had one prayer that followed the litany, and that of Asia Minor (the oldest document of this tradition comes from the Synod of Laodicea) which had two prayers, one before or during the litany and one

after, plus a final prayer of blessing.

In the Byzantine Rite we must distinguish carefully between the Liturgy, which belongs to the Asia Minor tradition (Constantinople), and the Divine Office, which follows the Palestinian tradition, related to Antioch. Hence in the Liturgy we find two prayers under the name of prayers of the faithful. The first prayer was to be said silently during the recitation of the litany (great *synapte*, *mirnaya*), the second was to be said aloud, as the conclusion of the litany-supplication. The old Constantinopolitan morning and evening services, now defunct, followed similarly the Asia Minor tradition: two prayers of the faithful, plus the prayer of inclination or blessing.

So, if we want to identify the present-day "prayers of the antiphons," which, as we saw, have no relation whatever to the singing of psalms, we should consider them as an ancient triplet of "prayers of the faithful" (prayer during the litany, prayer after the litany, prayer of blessing), belonging to the old Constantinopolitan rite. In our opinion, which cannot be fully explained at this moment, they were the old prayers of the faithful of the Liturgy of St. Basil. The present prayers of the faithful in this Liturgy must have some different origin, and were composed not to accompany a litany, but as a preparation for the Eucharistic consecration.

### **The great synapte**

All during the preceding discussion we have been presupposing that the great *synapte* (*mirnaya*), called also "prayer of the faithful" or litany-supplication or simply "litany," which is found nowadays at the very beginning of the Liturgy, before the first antiphon, was formerly placed elsewhere.

In fact, in the documents of the fourth and fifth centuries, the *synapte* was recited after the Gospel, once the catechumens and all the other categories of people not in full communion with the Church had been dismissed (*energumens* = those who were possessed by the devil or suffered from various kinds of nervous diseases; *illuminandi* = those who had to receive Baptism the same year; *penitents* = those who were temporarily excluded from the ecclesiastical communion because of some grave public sin). Later on, probably in the eighth century, the great *synapte* was transferred to a new place, before the Trisagion, immediately after the Entrance; there it remained in the celebration until the twelfth century. Only after this epoch, at least in Constantinople, was the great *synapte* put in the place it occupies now, at the beginning of the Liturgy.

What could have been the reason why the *synapte* was transferred from after the dismissals to before the Trisagion? Probably the introduction into the Liturgy, immediately after the Gospel, of the *ectenés* or "Insistent Litany," that formerly belonged to the processions.

### **A pastoral judgment**

In this chapter, we have seen many changes being made in the simple primitive structure of the Entrance ceremony. By way of conclusion we might ask whether these changes have improved the pastoral meaning of this first part of the Byzantine Liturgy.

In the very beginning, when the Liturgy started directly with the readings, the theological meaning was clear: in Christian life God has the initiative. We must first of all listen to Him, be called by Him, learn from Him, and only then ask for a remedy to our necessities.

The subsequent developments that created before the readings a processional hymn, first the Trisagion, later the psalm and Troparion (now called the third antiphon), respected the old line of thought; they kept God as the center of the celebration; the Liturgy still opened with His praise and glorification. These Entrance Hymns are, we may say, the explicit acknowledgement of God's presence, and they contain acts of praise and adoration which this presence demands. This was implicit when the Liturgy began with the readings, for we cannot listen to the Word of God without being aware of His presence. With the adoption of the Entrance Hymns, however, this presence was more deeply and easily felt. We must say then that this development brought real progress in the building of the Liturgy.

The addition, since the eighth century, of the first and second antiphons followed the same line, but it had already some inconveniences. The opening praise of God became unduly long and obscured the fact that the capital point in the Liturgy of the Word was the Word of God itself. At the same time, the Old Testament reading was dropped and, probably, the old responsorial psalm, the Prokeimenon, was shortened. So, ancient, variable and pastorally valuable elements were put away, while new ones fixed and less pastoral were introduced.

The change of the *synapte's* place to the very beginning of the Liturgy, that took place in the twelfth century, put the emphasis on man's needs rather than on God's praise. We think that this anthropocentric opening has less religious value than the old theocentric one. The very celebration of the Liturgy is a school of Christian spirituality; the faithful should be educated to consider God more important than themselves and their needs.

## ***Part II: From the scriptural readings to the Anaphora***

The Liturgy of the Word is commonly presented as the instructional part of the Liturgy. Without denying its evident instructional character, we may ask why the instruction takes place before the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and, furthermore, why the Church never allows the Sacrifice to be celebrated without being preceded by the readings of the Holy Scripture?

It would seem, then, that the interpretation of the Liturgy of the Word as an instructional service is not adequate. The instruction could be done at any other office. There must be some specific link between Word and Sacrifice that makes them inseparable. We see the foundation of such a link in John's Gospel (15,3): "You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you." Christ's Word purifies those who listen to it and our need for purification will never be stronger than when we are to receive His Body and Blood.

The Liturgy of the Word, besides being an instruction, is chiefly a purification, a conversion to God, an opening of the heart for a greater docility to the Spirit. In the various Eucharistic Liturgies, this is often expressed in the prayers or invocations found before or after the readings. In the Latin Mass, for instance, once the Gospel is finished the priest kisses the book and says: "By the Gospel just read, may our sins be effaced." And in the prayer before the Gospel that is found nowadays in the Byzantine Liturgy, the priest prays God that as an effect of the evangelic reading, "curbing the desires of the flesh, we may enter into a

life according to the Spirit, pleasing you in all our thoughts and actions."

## **Number of readings**

We have now in the Byzantine Liturgy two readings, the Epistle and the Gospel. Until the seventh century there were, however, three: one from the Old Testament (Prophecy), plus the Epistle and Gospel. This was also the tradition of the Spanish, Gallican, Roman, Milanese and Armenian Liturgies.

The three readings of the Liturgy are still present in the great vigils of the Byzantine Liturgy: On Christmas Eve, vigil of the Epiphany and Holy Saturday.

On Christmas Eve, when the Liturgy is celebrated after the Vespereal Office, we find now eight readings of the Old Testament and, after the singing of the Trisagion, the Epistle and the Gospel. But if we consult the old *Typica*, it appears that the Trisagion was sung between the seventh and eighth prophecy. So the Vespers had seven readings, while the Liturgy three: Prophecy, Epistle, Gospel.

The same structure, though with some peculiarities, exists in the Epiphany vigil. The vespereal readings were similarly seven; but, according to the *Typica*, five other readings were available in case the patriarch retired for some time to his palace and did not return in time for the Trisagion. After the Trisagion, we had again a Prophecy (the thirteenth in today's vigil), Epistle and Gospel.

On Holy Saturday, there was a repertoire of seven other prophecies in addition to the usual seven, because while the readings took place in the main church, the patriarch baptized in the baptistry outside. If the number of catechumens was very great and there was not time to finish the baptism during the reading of the seven ordinary lessons, seven other lessons were available to fill the time. The last one (now the fifteenth), belonged to the Liturgy, with the Epistle and the Gospel.

## **The cycle of the lessons**

Today we have a proper Epistle and Gospel for each day of the year, except in Lent, when we have readings only for Saturday and Sunday. The reason for this exception was that the Liturgy was always celebrated in a spirit of joy and thanksgiving. Therefore, it was not considered fitting to celebrate the Eucharist on days of strict fasting and sorrow.

The cycle of readings for the year, however, was not organized all at one time, nor do all of its parts have the same antiquity. The oldest cycle was fixed for the readings of Sundays and Easter Week. Then came a special cycle of readings for Saturdays. Later on, in the monasteries where the Liturgy was celebrated every day, the monks selected from the rest of the New Testament passages for the ordinary days. This explains the difference in the order of readings in the Byzantine lectionary. There is a distinct order for the Sunday readings, each passage coming after the preceding passage of the previous Sunday. The same holds for Saturdays; the same for ferial days. Hence we have actually three different orders of readings.

## The psalms between the readings

When the Byzantine Liturgy had three readings, in the two intervals responsorial psalms were sung: between the Prophecy and the Epistle, the psalm called *Prokeimenon*; between the Epistle and the Gospel, the *Alleluia*. The same was true in the Roman Liturgy. But, while in the Byzantine Liturgy the suppression of the Prophecy respected the place of the *Prokeimenon*, which is still always found before the Epistle, in the Roman Liturgy, when the Prophecy was suppressed, the first psalm (*Responsorium Graduate*) was transferred to after the Epistle and so, today, there are two psalms between the Epistle and the Gospel of the Latin Mass.

We might perhaps clarify what is meant by a responsorial psalm and how it differs from an antiphonal psalm.

For the execution of a responsorial psalm two performers are needed: the soloist (psalmist), who intones the refrain (= responsorium) and sings the verses of the psalm, and the choir, constituted by the mass of the faithful, repeat the refrain after each verse or group of verses sung by the soloist. The refrain is always a selected verse of the same psalm, and is called in Greek *Prokeimenon*, that is, (*verse*) placed before (*the psalm*) to be intoned by the soloist and then repeated by the people. Notice that the responsorial psalm never ends with the singing of the "Glory be to the Father."

The antiphonal execution of a psalm requires four performers: two soloists and two choirs of people. The soloists sing alternatively the verses of the psalm. Each choir answers to a soloist, singing the antiphon, or antiphons. The antiphon, generally called *Troparion*, in the Byzantine Church, can be the same for both choirs or different; it is not taken from the psalm itself, but is an ecclesiastical composition, or simply the *Alleluia*. The antiphonal psalm always ends with the doxology "Glory be to the Father."

The responsorial psalm is more conducive to spiritual recollection and meditation; therefore this way of execution is used for the psalms between the readings. The antiphonal psalm, where two choirs alternate, is used mostly for processions.

## The prayer before the Gospel

The number and place of prayers in connection with the readings differ according to the different rites. In the Roman Rite, for example, there is no proper prayer before the lessons, for the *Munda cor meum*, said before the Gospel, is only a request of purification for the deacon who is to read it, not a prayer for the community that is going to listen.

In the present Byzantine Liturgy the prayer before the Gospel is recited on behalf of the whole assembly:

*O gracious Master, make shine in our hearts the spotless light of your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds, so that we may understand your evangelical message. Instill in us also a respect of your blessed commandments, so that, curbing all the desires of the flesh, we may enter into a life according to the Spirit,*

*pleasing you in all our thoughts and actions,*

In this beautiful prayer we beg God to give us the fruits of the Gospel, namely, to live a life according to the Spirit. We expect everything from God, nothing from ourselves: it is He who makes shine in our hearts His light, and then opens the eyes of our minds to see that light and to understand His evangelical message. From Him we receive respect for His commandments, and the fruit of this respect is a life that pleases Him in everything.

This prayer, though, does not belong to the Constantinopolitan tradition. In fact, the Byzantine Liturgy, like the Roman, had no prayer before the Gospel. This prayer belongs to the Liturgy of St. James, used in Jerusalem, and does not appear in the Byzantine Liturgy before the twelfth century.

### **The ectenes or insistent litany**

After the reading of the Gospel we have the recitation of the *Insistent Litany*. Why the qualificative *insistent*? It is the translation of the Greek word *ektenes*, meaning insistent, fervent (Slavic *sugubaya*). We find the adverbial form *ektenos* in the Acts of the Apostles; Peter was in prison and the whole Church prayed *insistently* for him.

The litany begins with the exhortation: "Let us say with our whole soul and our whole mind, let us say." Why the repetition of the verb? Because in this exhortation are merged two different phrases. According to the old manuscripts, the deacon began by teaching the people what they had to answer: "Let us say, 'Lord, have mercy'". Then, he began again: "With our whole soul and our whole mind let us say." The people had already been instructed, so they responded: "Lord, have mercy."

The deacon continues, beginning with the supplication, "O Lord almighty, God of our Fathers, we pray you, hear and have mercy." We begin to see why this litany is called insistent. In the litany of peace (*synapte*), the deacon exhorts the people: "Let us pray to the Lord." But here, he addresses God directly. Besides, he insists with the three verbs, "we *pray* you, *hear* and *have* mercy."

Again the deacon continues: "Have mercy on us, O God, according to your great mercy" (inspired by Ps. 50), we pray you, hear and have mercy." At this moment, the people answer "Lord, have mercy" three times. A new reason why the litany is called *insistent*.

The prayer of the litany is connected with this latter petition, as it appears in the Greek liturgical books, for it is a development of the supplication for mercy:

*Accept, O Lord our God, this insistent supplication from your servants, have mercy on us according to your great mercy and send down your benefits upon us and upon all your people, who expect from you great and abundant mercy.*

After the prayer the deacon begins a new style of petitions, beginning "We also pray" and not ending with the three verbs characteristic of this litany, "we pray you, hear and have mercy." The number and contents

of these petitions vary in the different local usages of the Byzantine Rite.

Consulting the old documents, we see that the petition before the prayer, "Have mercy on us, O God," etc., was the last petition of the litany, but also that other petitions, which have now disappeared, were intercalated between this one and the first, "O Lord almighty," etc. Two of those petitions were typical: "You, rich in mercy and abundant in compassion, we pray you, hear and have mercy," and "You, who do not want the death of the sinner, but that he repent and find life, we pray you, hear and have mercy." Several petitions for the city, good weather, etc., identical with those recited in the *synapte*, could also be intercalated.

After the last petition, "Have mercy, on us, O God," the people sang the "Lord, have mercy" not only three times, but nine or twelve times, with their hands raised. Thus, the insistent litany ended with a moving petition for mercy. While the bishop recited the doxology, "For you are a merciful and gracious God," he turned to the people and gave three blessings.

### **The origin of the ectenes**

The *ectenes*, either in its old formulary or in its present one, proposes universal intentions. Now, is it possible, according to tradition, that such a litany could be recited before the dismissal of the catechumens? We must answer no. In the *Apostolic Constitutions* and other ancient descriptions of the Liturgy, we find that immediately after the homily the dismissal of all those who were not admitted to the Eucharist took place. Thus catechumens, energumens, *illuminandi* (those soon to be baptized) and penitents were dismissed before any catholic, universal prayer was made by the faithful in common.

As we have seen before, the *ectenes* was a penitential litany recited at the stations of penitential processions. The ancient petitions, now omitted, that we quoted in the preceding paragraph, show perfectly this penitential character. Along with the antiphons and the Trisagion, the *ectenes* did not belong to the Liturgy, but to the processions, and was recited on the most solemn occasions right after the Gospel read in the Forum.

### **The successive dismissals**

The dismissal of the catechumens was preceded by a litany-prayer on their behalf and was concluded by a prayer of blessing said by the bishop with his hands extended over the catechumens who bowed their heads at the invitation of the deacon. As *blessing* (Greek: *eulogeo*; Latin: *benedico*) means to wish something good to somebody, the bishop asks God to grant to the catechumens the second birth through Baptism, with its effects: the remission of sins and the robe of incorruption.

We must explain the apparently opposite sense of the two first exhortations in the litany for the catechumens. The deacon starts by saying: "Catechumens, pray to the Lord," and immediately after: "Faithful, let us pray for the catechumens." Actually, the catechumens, as is shown by the *Apostolic Constitutions*, were exhorted to a silent prayer, kneeling, while the faithful, who are the Church, intercede

for them before God by answering to the intentions proposed by the deacon. At the end, the catechumens were given a sign to stand up and incline their heads to receive the bishop's blessing, or final prayer.

Similar Dismissals, with a litany and blessing, were made for the other three categories, *energumens*, *illuminandi* and penitents.

## **The prayers of the faithful**

Immediately afterwards, the deacon began the litany of the faithful: "All we faithful, in peace let us pray to the Lord." The Byzantine Liturgy has now two litanies and two prayers of the faithful, because it was thought that each prayer had to have its own litany. In the first lecture, though, we have already seen that two prayers, one said during the recitation of the litany and one after, were in the true Constantinopolitan tradition. The

litany we are speaking about (*oratio fulelium* = prayer of the faithful) was nothing else but the great *synapte* that now is placed at the very beginning of the Liturgy. It is called the prayer of the faithful, not because they pray for their needs, but because it is the community of the faithful, namely the Church, that prays for the universal needs. Therefore, this litany-prayer is also called "catholic," i.e. universal; another name for the same is "irenic" (*mirnaya*) or litany of peace, because in the first three petitions we pray for this gift.

It is interesting to note that in the first prayer of the faithful the priest says: "We thank you, O Lord, God of Powers, for having deemed us worthy to stand at this time before your holy altar and to prostrate ourselves before your mercy, for our sins and for the people's transgressions." And in the second prayer: "Again and again we fall down before you." This means that at the beginning of the litany the community made a prostration and remained kneeling until the end. Kneeling during the litany appears in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and in the writings of St. John Chrysostom. Is it possible that these prayers were used in the Sunday Liturgy, when it was forbidden to kneel? We must remember that these prayers belong to the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, and we know that this Liturgy was not used on Sundays. The Liturgy of St. Basil was the Sunday service, as it still is now on the Sundays of Lent.

## **The Eucharistic sacrifice**

### **The transfer of the Gifts**

Once the Liturgy of the Word is finished the choir starts singing the Cherubic Hymn: "Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim, and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now set aside all earthly cares; that we may welcome the King of all, invisibly escorted by angelic hosts. Alleluia."

This troparion, repeated three times in the old days, is a processional hymn, corresponding to the Roman *antiphona ad offertorium*.

During the singing of the Cherubic Hymn, the priest recites the prayer that appears in the manuscripts as belonging to the Liturgy of St. Basil. In literary genus it is a prayer of apology for the priest who is about to

celebrate the Divine Sacrifice, a prayer in which he confesses his utter un-worthiness to perform this awesome honor of offering the unbloody sacrifice. The divine presence and service is terrible and awesome for the angels, let alone for men bound by carnal desires and pleasures. But Christ, God-become-man, has been appointed our High Priest. He has thus given us the possibility of celebrating this Sacrifice. The priest, aware of his unworthiness, begs to be purified, so that he may be made worthy to stand before God's holy altar and consecrate His sacred Body and Blood. Christ, the true priest and victim, must make up for his representative's deficiencies.

After saying the prayer, the priest, together with the deacon, recites the Cherubic Hymn that is being sung by the choir. This needless repetition by the priest of parts sung by the people was prevalent in the Roman Rite until the recent reform. Actually the celebration of the Liturgy means a cooperation of many actors, each with his assigned part; it is pointless for two persons to do the same thing at the same time.

Then the priest and the deacon go to the side table and, taking the paten and the chalice, go out of the sanctuary through the side door and enter again through the central doors. During the procession, the singing of the Cherubic Hymn is interrupted, and the deacon and the priest greet the people saying: "May God, the Lord, remember you in His kingdom." These greetings were made in ancient times in a soft voice, without interrupting the hymn; gradually the greeting came to be sung aloud. In the Slavic churches, other intercessions, for the authorities and other intentions, are added.

Entering the sanctuary, the concelebrants deposit the paten and chalice on the altar, while reciting the troparion: "The noble Joseph took down from the Cross your most pure Body, wrapped it in a clean shroud, and with fragrant spices laid it in burial in a new tomb."

Why is this troparion sung at this time? Theodore of Mopsuestia was the first to say that the deposition of the gifts on the altar signifies the deposition of our Lord in the sepulcher.

Some people call such an interpretation "symbolism." We prefer to call it "allegory." A symbol is something that naturally leads us to some superior reality and in some way contains it. An allegory is a meaning somewhat arbitrarily imposed upon an act or object, and thus the object leads us to some other reality only because we ourselves attach to it a signification that does not arise from the thing itself. Let us give another example. It would be symbolical to interpret the first entrance into the church as an approach to God, as an entering into His presence. It would be allegorical to interpret it as signifying the coming of Our Lord into the world through His Incarnation; the same action could also apply to His entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday or to some other mystery.

Similarly, the linking of the placing of the gifts on the altar with the deposition of the Body of Christ in the sepulcher is an allegory. Theodore continued his allegorical explanation of the Liturgy, applying the Epiclesis to the Resurrection. In our times, it seems that the symbolical action to signify the Resurrection is the commixtion of the Body and Blood after the fraction, and that the death is signified by the double consecration. Thus, the old allegory of Theodore seems to create confusion.

Let us point out that it is not necessary to look for allegorical meanings all through the Liturgy. The whole of it is a mystery and every part of it participates in this mysterious character; such was Chrysostom's idea in his explanations of the Liturgy. He never indulges in the elaborate and forced explanations of Theodore.

More harm than good was done pastorally when liturgists forgot the sense of the entire mystery of the Liturgy as a commemoration of our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord and sought to find personal edification and devotion in each single part of the Liturgy as a separate entity. One loses thus the central unity of the single mystery, and ends with his attention dispersed and scattered about disjointed parts of the Liturgy.

### **The dialogue between the concelebrants**

The dialogue between the bishop and the concelebrating priests—as it is done in the pontifical Liturgy—forms a beautiful and ancient *Orate fratres* with the accent placed on the presence of the Holy Spirit as a preparation for the Eucharist.

The bishop says: "Pray for me, brethren and fellow-celebrants," and they reply with the words of Gabriel to the Mother of God transformed from a statement to a wish: "May the Holy Spirit come upon you and the power of the Most High overshadow you." The next phrase, said by the bishop, is more recent: "May this same Spirit assist us in our service all the days of our life."

### **The prayer of the offering**

After the entrance has been completed, the priest prays silently the prayer of the offering while the deacon recites a litany.

This prayer presents several problems, first of all that of its title. Does offering (*proskomide*) here mean "offertory," and is the prayer thus meant to go with the offering of bread and wine? Let us consider the text of the prayer:

*O Lord God almighty, who alone are holy and receive the sacrifice of praise from those who call upon you with their whole heart, accept the prayer also of us sinners; bring us to your holy altar, enable us to offer you gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our sins and for the people's transgressions, and deem us worthy to find favor in your sight, that our sacrifice may be pleasing to you, and that the good Spirit of your grace may rest upon us, upon these gifts here present, and upon all your people.*

As we see, this is a prayer for the celebrating clergy, who ask God to make them approach His holy altar and to look upon them with favor, so that the sacrifice and its fruits—the descent of the Holy Spirit—can be accomplished.

Someone might wonder about the translation "bring us to your holy altar." Since the personal pronoun *us* is not in the Greek text, this phrase is generally interpreted as referring to the prayer mentioned before: "bring *it* (the prayer) to your holy altar." For many reasons, especially because the "holy altar" indicates the altar of

the church and not the heavenly one, and because the Liturgies of St. Basil and St. Mark refer the phrase explicitly to the *celebrants* and not to the *prayer*, the phrase must be translated as we have done before.

Thus this prayer is not a prayer for the gifts, but for the clergy; it is not an offertory prayer but a prayer for the entrance of the celebrants as they went in procession from the *bema* or *ambon* in the middle of the church to the sanctuary. The text supposes that this is the first time the celebrants approach the altar, and consequently, that the whole Liturgy of the Word has been celebrated outside the sanctuary, according to the Antiochene and old Constantinopolitan tradition. The moment for reciting this prayer would be precisely during the procession, while the clergy approach the altar and the gifts are put on it.

The title "prayer of the offering" means "prayer of the anaphora" because the word *proskomide* is used in this sense; the prayer is thus the opening prayer of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Was there in the Liturgy an offertory prayer? Certainly, and it was introduced by the exhortation of the deacon still found in the litany: "For the precious gifts here present, let us pray to the Lord." The prayer corresponding to this exhortation is found presently at the end of the preparation of the gifts, before the Liturgy: "O God, our God, who have sent forth the heavenly Bread ... bless these gifts placed here before you and accept (them on your heavenly altar. Remember ... those who brought the offerings and those for whom they offered them..."

We know that before the eighth century, the preparation of the gifts was made immediately before the Eucharistic Liturgy began, somewhat like the preparation still made by the bishop in the pontifical Mass of today. All the actual prayers and commemorations did not exist; they were introduced from the tenth century on. Only the prayer for the gifts existed, and was recited after the deposition of the gifts on the altar.

### **The litany**

The text of the litany now recited after the entrance with the gifts is very old; it is found already in the writings of St. John Chrysostom and in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Its petitions, beginning with, "That this whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and without sin, let us pray to the Lord," are on behalf of the community present; it differs from the litany of peace or *synapte*, where the petitions are for the most part universal.

This litany was never recited independently, but only as an appendix to the *synapte*. Since the fourth century we find it at the end of the morning and evening services, just as it is now in the Byzantine Office. Generally, the litany of peace was said kneeling, while this litany of particular needs was recited standing. The link between the two litanies was the phrase: "Help and save us, have mercy on us...", in which there was usually a mention to "raise us, O God, by your grace," and at that moment the people stood up.

In the old documents, this litany ends the whole celebration; it is followed only by the final blessing. Its scope was to make the passage from worship to the concrete living of the coming day or night. This explains why it was not recited in the Liturgy of the Word at the end of the *synapte*, because the faithful did

not go out, but remained in the church. On the contrary, it was added to the litany for the catechumens, who after the bishop's blessing had to leave the celebration. This litany, then, does not belong to a Liturgy where only faithful are present.

### **The old entrance to the sanctuary**

Summing up the ideas we have exposed, we can describe the Entrance to the sanctuary as it was practised in ancient times.

The Liturgy of the Word, up until the end of the "prayer of the faithful," that is, the *synapte* or litany of peace, was celebrated in the nave of the church; the clergy were in the center, facing the sanctuary. Once the litany was finished, the choir started the offertory hymn, now the Cherubic Hymn. The bishop and priests went from the center of the church to the sanctuary, reciting the prayer of the Entrance (prayer of the *proskomide*: "O Lord God almighty, who alone are holy..."), while the deacons brought the gifts from the diakonikon or side sacristy where they had been prepared. The bishop placed the gifts on the altar and recited the prayer: "O God, our God, who have sent forth the heavenly Bread which was introduced by the deacon who said: "For the precious gifts here present, let us pray to the Lord." Then the Anaphora began.

### **The peace**

Today, after the litany, the priest turns to the people and says: "Peace to all," the introductory greeting to the ceremony of peace. The deacon invites the people: "Let us love one another so that with one mind we may profess (our faith)" and the people answer: "(In) the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity, one in substance and undivided."

In this exhortation and answer, we find two things joined together; one is the invitation to the kiss of peace: "Let us love one another," as it is found in the most ancient manuscripts of the Byzantine Liturgy; the second part: "So that with one mind ..." is of much later addition and introduces the Creed.

The Creed, as is known, is not a primitive element in the Liturgy. The faith, especially the mystery of the Redemption, was exposed in the Anaphora itself. The Creed or Symbol of the faith is a formula to be recited by the catechumen who was to receive Baptism; this is the reason why, being an individual profession of faith, it begins in the singular: "I believe." The Syriac and Spanish Liturgies, when the Creed was introduced into the Liturgy, adopted the plural form: "We believe," more adapted to the profession of faith of a community. The Symbol was introduced into the Byzantine Liturgy by Patriarch Timothy (512-518), but the allusion to the Creed in the diaconal exhortation to the kiss of peace was added only towards the eleventh or twelfth century.

In the fourth century, the kiss of peace was the seal of every ecclesiastical service. In the Liturgy, it took place, at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, before the translation of the gifts. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, in the eighth book, indicate this clearly: everyone kisses his neighbor, the men the other men, and the women the women; and then the deacons bring the bread and wine.

## **Two interpretations of the peace**

In spite of its pertaining to the end of the Liturgy of the Word, Chrysostom saw in the kiss of peace a preparation for the Eucharistic Sacrifice. He makes allusion to the passage of St. Matthew (5, 23-24): "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Thus this secondary sense became the direct preparation for the offering of the *Anaphora*.

Actually, the idea of "peace" in the Liturgy can be conceived in two ways. The first way, that of Chrysostom, considers the peace as a preliminary condition to the acceptance of our offering by God. The peace does not descend from the altar to the faithful, through the priest and the deacons, but is given among each category of those who attend the Liturgy: the priests with the priests, the deacons with the deacons, the faithful with the faithful. This peace has the sense of a reconciliation with each one's neighbor. Such is the predominant idea of peace in the Byzantine Liturgy; this separated reconciliation among the different categories explains also why the peace among the faithful disappeared, for there was no distinct person in charge of initiating the ceremony.

The other concept of peace is present in the Roman Liturgy. Christ is our peace, He Who has reconciled heaven and earth and men with the heavenly Father. Hence the peace is given after the gifts have been consecrated, as a fruit of the expiation performed by Christ. So the celebrant takes the peace from the altar, transmits it to the deacon, and so forth down to the faithful.

## **The invitation to the Creed**

Today, the invitation to the Creed is made with a strange phrase: "The doors, the doors! In wisdom let us be attentive!" Many think it is because of the symbol of faith that is now about to be recited by the faithful, that the doors are to be barred to all non-Christians.

Actually, the phrase has two parts of different origin. The first: "The doors, the doors!" was said before the transfer of the gifts, after the sub-deacons had gone through the church checking to see that all those previously dismissed had actually left. The doors were closed, so that no one could enter. The fact that this admonition is pronounced after the peace is understandable if we consider that the peace was the final act of the Liturgy of the Word, and the closing of the doors the first of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Both the admonition and the peace were transferred together.

The second part of the phrase: "In wisdom, let us be attentive!" appears in older times simply as "Let us be attentive!" What is the meaning or rather the liturgical purpose of the exclamation "Wisdom"?

In the Liturgy it occurs for the first time when the deacon, carrying the Gospel at the first entrance, says "Wisdom." Some may think this refers to the Wisdom of God contained in the Gospel, but in the tenth century we find it said also before the *ectenes*; it is also said today at the end of the morning and evening services, without any connection with the Gospel.

Before the *prokeimenon* the deacon says successively: "Let us be attentive," "Wisdom," "Let us be attentive," "Wisdom," to introduce the "Peace to all," the *prokeimenon*, the title of the "Apostle" and the reading itself. It is clear that in this case the purpose is to keep alive the faithful's attention; it is, then, an equivalent of "Let us be attentive." The same must be said for its use on other occasions. At the first Entrance, the deacon calls for attention so that the people will rise at the entrance of the patriarch. "Wisdom" is a beautiful word, full of biblical reminiscences, and it is used to avoid the monotony of a too frequent repetition of "Let us be attentive."

We can conclude this second chapter with a word about the waving of the veil over the gifts during the recitation of the Creed. This ceremony seems usually to perplex an Occidental. In the Greek text of the Liturgy we find two rubrics for this action. The first one says: "The priest, lifting the veil, shakes it open over the holy Gifts." The second one, before the blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...", rules: "The priest, lifting the veil from the Gifts, places it aside." Thus according to the rubrics, there are two places where the veil should be lifted. Actually, since the Creed is not primitive in the Liturgy, both rubrics for the removal of the veil are one and the same. Immediately before beginning the Anaphora, while the deacon says the admonition, "Let us stand aright...", the priest lifts the veil from the Gifts. The Ukrainians keep this old custom and lift the veil after the Creed. The rubric of waving the veil is very recent and does not appear in some places until the nineteenth century.

## **Conclusion**

In this second section of the Liturgy, from the first Entrance to the Anaphora, we have seen some interesting liturgical developments.

One important highlight is the community as a whole listening to the Word of God in the first part of the Liturgy. The platform in the middle of the church, called *ambon* or *bema*, around which the people stood, helped to create a unity between clergy and the faithful. In this initial part of the Liturgy there is no remarkable difference between bishop, priest and laity. All need to hear the Word of God and be purified by it. The Liturgy seems to point out to us the important lesson that in its initial part, all, regardless of any dignity or ordination received, are equal as concerns their personal need for instruction in the Word of God, and for purification, before the awesome mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice begins. This is the reason why some old documents indicated that the bishop put on the liturgical vestments only at the offertory, when the clergy advance to the altar as chosen ministers after this purification has been attained.

The stage is now set for the solemn unfolding of the Anaphora or Canon of the Byzantine Liturgy.

## ***Part III: Anaphora — Epiclesis***

The Byzantine Liturgy Anaphora is introduced, as in the Roman Rite (Canon) and the other Liturgies, with a dialogue between bishop or priest and people.

Before the dialogue starts, the deacon admonishes the people to stand properly: "Let us stand aright, let us

stand in awe, let us be attentive to offer the holy oblation in peace." To this invitation, the people respond with a phrase that has caused some misunderstanding: "Mercy of peace, sacrifice of praise," translating literally the Greek text, but what could this mean? We are helped by the Armenian Liturgy, where we find this translation: "Mercy, peace, sacrifice of praise." Those three terms are in apposition to the word "oblation" in the preceding phrase of the deacon; thus, the meaning of the people's response is: "(The holy oblation which is) mercy, (is) peace, (is) sacrifice of praise."

Then the celebrant gives a solemn blessing to the people present: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all," taken from 2 Cor. 13, 13. We will explain later the meaning of these words, when discussing the fruits of Communion.

After the invitation to lift their hearts, the celebrant exhorts the people to give thanks to the Lord, and the people agree saying: "It is proper and just." After this brief response, still used in Greek churches, the following prayer, which begins with the same words, was said aloud. Only in later times, when the prayer became to be recited silently, a phrase was added to the original response, to stretch the singing throughout the recitation of the prayer. The phrase was: "... to worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in substance and undivided." By this addition, however, the sense of the response is changed, for the thought of worshipping the Holy Trinity replaces the original sense of giving thanks to the Lord.

Now we come to the actual Anaphora. The first prayer, before the *Sanctus*, is called in the Roman Rite the *Preface*. The liturgical meaning of this word is a solemn proclamation, something said aloud before an assembly.

The *Sanctus* does not appear in the very old anaphoras, so that the prayer was one; when the *Sanctus* was added, the single prayer was divided into two parts. The present prayer before the *Sanctus* praises and gives thanks to God for His marvels, for creation and redemption in general. After the *Sanctus*, the praise continues especially for the coming of Christ, and ends by narrating the institution of the Eucharist.

Immediately there follows the *Anamnesis*, or the specific commemoration of the mysteries more closely related to our redemption, and the *Epiclesis*, or invocation to obtain the descent of the Holy Spirit, which closed the ancient type of anaphora.

Thus, the Anaphora, which is really one single prayer, has two parts: the prayer of praise and thanksgiving for the marvels of God on our behalf, divided into two sections by the *Sanctus*, and the *Anamnesis-Epiclesis* which must be considered together. The commemorations of the dead and the living which now follow the *Epiclesis* were added later.

## **The Anaphora of Hippolytus**

As an example to show the basic structure of the old Anaphora, I would like to quote that of the Liturgy of Hippolytus, dating from the third century. After the familiar introductory dialogue the bishop recited the whole Anaphora aloud, as a single prayer, without interruption. We put in the titles corresponding to the

division adopted above:

"We render thanks unto you, O God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you did send to us to be a Savior and a redeemer and the Messenger of your counsel.

"He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you made all things and in whom You were well pleased.

"Him You did send from heaven into the Virgin's womb, and He was conceived within her and was made flesh, demonstrating to be Your Son by being born of the Holy Spirit and a Virgin.

"He fulfilled Your will and prepared for You a holy people, stretched forth His hands to suffer, that He might release from suffering them who have believed in You.

"He, when He was betrayed to voluntary suffering, that He might abolish death and rend the bonds of the devil and trample down Hell and enlighten the righteous and restore order by His resurrection, taking bread and giving thanks to You, said:

"Take, eat, this is My Body, which is broken for you for the remission of sins.

"Likewise, also, the cup, saying:

"This is My Blood, which is shed for you.

"When you do this, you do it in My commemoration.

*(Anamnesis)*

"Doing, therefore, the commemoration of His death and resurrection, we offer to You the Bread and the Cup, giving thanks to You because You have bidden us to stand before You and minister as priests to You,

*(Epiclesis)*

"and we pray You that You would send Your Holy Spirit upon the oblation of Your Holy Church, and grant to all who partake to be united, that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit for the confirmation of their faith in truth, that we may praise and glorify You, through Your beloved Child, Jesus Christ, through whom glory and honor be unto You, with the Holy Spirit in Your Holy Church, now and forever and world without end. Amen."

We see that the *Sanctus* does not exist yet and that the *Anamnesis-Epiclesis* is built like a single element.

## **Chrysostom's Anaphora**

In Chrysostom's Anaphora, the first part starts by considering the whole of salvation: creation, sin, redemption and future eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Like the entire anaphora, it is addressed to God the Father. We also offer our thanks for all the benefits He has bestowed upon us and for the present

Liturgy, that God deigns to accept from our hands, although He has in heaven the great Liturgy of all the angels, who acclaim Him singing the triumphal hymn: "Holy, holy, holy..."

In the Roman Rite, the "Holy, holy..." is attributed to the angels and men together; in the Byzantine Liturgy it is described as the angels' hymn; only after the *Sanctus* the Church joins her voice to the heavenly choirs. The prayer continues by considering God's love for mankind, that made him send his Son in order to accomplish the divine plan of salvation which started immediately after Original Sin. An indirect allusion to the Lord's Passion introduces the narration of the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist.

### **The command**

It is scarcely understandable how the command, "Do this in commemoration of me," is not mentioned after the words about the Chalice. This is the only Anaphora, among both Orientals and Occidentals, in which such words are missing. We find it naturally in the Liturgy of St. Basil.

On the other hand, the command is required by the text of the following Anamnesis.- "Commemorating, therefore, this command of the Savior ... and all that was done in our behalf ... we offer to You ... and we implore and pray and entreat You: send down Your Holy Spirit ... ."

This command, in the singular, cannot be the double one: "Take, eat," "take, drink." Besides, if the command referred to these words, its fulfillment would consist in taking the bread and wine and receiving them. So, if the fulfillment of the command, according to the *Anamnesis-Epiclesis*, consists in commemorating, in doing the offering and in asking for the conversion of the gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ, the command itself must refer to the words, "Do this in commemoration of me."

In this command, our Savior tells us to *commemorate* and to *do*. Therefore, in the *Anamnesis-Epiclesis* we find both elements: commemoration and action. The commemoration is clear; the action consists in the offering and the epicletic asking for the Spirit to transform the gifts.

### **The anamnesis**

We notice that in the *Anamnesis* not only the mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection are commemorated, but also the Ascension, the sitting at the right of the Father and the final coming of the Lord. Thus, the whole mystery of our redemption is included, up to the resurrection of our bodies; only then will the redemption be complete, for "we ourselves ... groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8, 23); this redemption is our resurrection, the necessary consequence of Christ's resurrection, because "if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ... but in fact Christ has been raised from the dead ... as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15, 13, 20, 22); but it is the Eucharist that gives us that eternal life: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jo. 6, 54).

## The epiclesis

Earlier in the Liturgy, we have already seen some allusions to the *Epiclesis* in the prayer before the Creed (prayer of the proskomide or preparation of the Gifts): "... that the good Spirit of Your grace may rest upon us, upon these gifts here present and upon all your people."

In this prayer, the descent of the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a future event; in the *Epiclesis*, the explicit petition is made to the heavenly Father: "... send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts lying before us, and make this bread the precious Body of Your Christ, and that which is in this chalice, the precious Blood of Your Christ, changing them by your Holy Spirit."

Western theology holds that the consecration occurs when the words of Institution are pronounced in the Mass. No doubt it so happens in the Roman Liturgy, but is it necessary that consecration takes place always through such words?

## The consecration of the Last Supper

We must first of all consider whether Our Lord consecrated with the present words of Institution. If He consecrated with these words, "Take, eat, this is my Body," and He wanted us to do the same, there would be no possibility of change.

In the Synoptic Gospel texts (Matt. 26, 26-29; Mark 14, 22-25; Luke 22, 19-20) along with Paul's account in I Cor. 11, 23-26, we find three verbs repeated: Christ *pronounced the blessing* (or *gave thanks*), *broke*, *gave*. Around these three actions of Christ in the Last Supper the Eu-charistic part of all the Liturgies is built.

The *blessing* action was by means of a pronounced prayer of blessing and thanksgiving which, according to the Jewish usage, began: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, Eternal King." To this corresponds our Canon or Anaphora. The verb *broke* means the fraction of the bread; *gave* refers to Communion. So in every Liturgy we find the three actions: the Canon or Anaphora, then the Fraction, finally the Communion.

If the early Christians had understood that Our Lord had consecrated after the fraction, that is, after "He broke," every Christian Liturgy would have the Consecration after the Fraction, because the Eucharistic Liturgy was built to imitate the actions of Our Lord in the Last Supper. But there is no Christian Liturgy, neither Eastern nor Western, that has the Consecration after the Fraction. The primitive Church thought that the words, "Take, eat, this is my Body," pronounced after the breaking of the bread, when He gave it to the Apostles, were meant for the distribution of Communion.

Actually, these words are similar to any formula for distributing Communion, as, for instance, the Catholic priest says: "The Body of Christ." Christ Himself had naturally to say: "This is My Body."

This is confirmed by Mark's Gospel, speaking about the Chalice: "He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And He said to them, 'This is My Blood of the covenant

which is poured out for many'." It is certainly impossible that Christ used these last words to consecrate, after the Apostles had already drunk of the chalice. And even if we admit that Mark's redaction of the scene could have rearranged the order of the events we must at least admit that the Evangelist, who redacted the passage, did not intend to convey to the readers that the words, "This is My Blood," were consecratory.

In the historical framework which designates the events of the Last Supper, the Byzantine Liturgy says: "On the night when He was to be betrayed, or rather, when He was to surrender Himself for the life of the world, He took bread into His holy and pure and immaculate hands, gave thanks and said the blessing, consecrated, broke and gave to His holy Disciples and Apostles, saying: Take, eat,..." In the historical narration the consecratory action is placed before the Fraction. Thus the Liturgy explicitly asserts that the Consecration took place in the Last Supper before the Fraction. This word, *agiasas*, meaning *consecrated* or *sanctified*, was adopted by the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom from the Anaphora of St. Basil. We find it also in all the Syrian anaphoras.

The placing of the consecration before the fraction at the Last Supper is not exclusively an Eastern tradition, but is also found in the West. So, Gaudentius of Brescia (c. 400 A. D.) in his second homily on the book of Exodus (PL 20, 858-9) says: "For when He (Christ) offered the consecrated bread and wine to His disciples, He said thus: This is My Body, this is My Blood'."

Such belief is found even in the Middle Ages. Pope Innocent III (12-13th centuries), in his treatise, *De Sacro Altaris Mysteriorum* (lib. 4, ch. 6; PL 217, 859), fully agrees with those who in his epoch thought that Christ had consecrated before the fraction, because, as he says, "it is unthinkable that He would have given (the bread) before having consecrated." He, however, sustains the opinion that Christ with the words, "This is my Body," expressed the formula for the future consecrations.

Thus we can safely conclude that in the Last Supper, the words of 'Institution belonged to Communion, not to the Consecration.

### **The consecration in the liturgy**

Another question completely different is: "By what words is the Consecration effected today in the Liturgy?" If the words of Institution were not meant by Christ for Consecration, the early Church could determine which words were going to effect it. So the Occidental Church, for many centuries, has appointed the words of Institution as consecratory words, and there is no doubt that it is through them that the Latin priest consecrates.

But what about the Eastern Liturgies? The Catholic Church has never denied the validity of the Orthodox Liturgy, and we have recently seen, in the meeting of Pope Paul VI and Athanasios I, that the Pope presented the Greek Patriarch with a chalice for the Eucharistic Celebration. But Rome, while she recognizes the validity of the Greek Eucharist, knows that the Greeks consider the words of institution as a part of the historical narration and the *Epiclesis* as effecting the consecration; so, practically, Rome accepts

the possibility of a consecratory *Epiclesis*.

On the other hand, no Western theologian can be naive enough to object that the Greeks validly consecrate because they actually do say the words of Institution. A human action such as consecration in the Liturgy depends not only on the words, but at the same time on the intention of the celebrant. If the Orthodox, according to an old tradition, want to consecrate with the *Epiclesis*, and the Roman Church acknowledges the validity of their Liturgy, Rome must be also approving of their way of consecration.

A part at least of the patristic tradition held the consecratory force of the *Epiclesis*, seeing at the same time in our Lord's words, at the Institution, the primary source of the consecrating power.

Among the many available texts, we can quote Chrysostom's treatise on the priesthood (VI, 4; PG 48, 681): "But when (the priest) calls for the Holy Spirit and performs that dread sacrifice, and keeps on touching the common Master of all, tell me, how shall we rank him?" And in the same treatise, comparing the priest with Elias the prophet, he says: "The priest stands, bringing down not fire, but the Holy Spirit" (III, 4).

Before Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem says in his catechesis (23, 7; PG 32, 1116): "We call upon God the lover of mankind to send forth His Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before Him: that He may make the bread the Body of Christ, and the wine the Blood of Christ; for whatsoever the Holy Spirit has touched is sanctified and changed."

In the same fourth century, St. Ambrose of Milan thought that the consecration happens through the words of Institution. So we see that the different Churches, being in union with each other, used different formulas for consecration; all those usages were considered as legitimate.

The difference of opinions continued in the following centuries. Hence, Pope Gelasius (492-96): "How will the heavenly Spirit when invoked come for the consecration of the divine mystery, if the priest who implores Him to be present be rejected as full of criminal deeds?" This passage shows the existence of an *epiclesis* in the Roman Mass at the time, and that it was considered as consecratory.

St. John of Damascus, who died about 760, following the doctrine of St. John Chrysostom says in his treatise on the Orthodox Faith (PG 94, 1145): "The bread of the *prothesis* (preparation) and the wine and water, are supernaturally changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, through the *Epiclesis* and the coming down of the Holy Spirit."

Still among the Western Fathers, St. Isidore of Seville, commenting on the Mozarabic Mass, wrote this way (PL 83, 752-53) about the prayer following the words of the Institution, in which the *Epiclesis* is contained: "The sixth prayer follows after this, the 'conformation' of the sacrament, that the oblation which is offered to God, having been hallowed by the Holy Spirit, may be 'conformed' to the Body and Blood of Christ." And farther on, he says (*ibid.* 755): "These then are visible things, yet when hallowed by the Holy Spirit they pass into the Sacrament of the divine Body."

This difference of opinion still holds between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches, the Catholic asserting their consecration to take place at the words of the Institution, the Orthodox on their side, at the *Epiclesis*. Do these two positions exclude each other? The latest developments in the relations between the two Churches show rather, as we said before, an acceptance on this point of each other's position. So, by way of fact, it seems that a solution is given to the old controversy, each Church respecting the freedom and the authority of the other to determine the sacramental words.

This point reveals in itself a different nuance of religious psychology between the Eastern and the Western mind. In the Western sacramental formulas the person of the priest appears in the foreground: "I baptize you," "I confirm you," "I absolve you," "This is my Body;" in all of them there appears an identification of the priest with Christ. The Eastern priest never assumes such a place, and his presence, though necessary, is not expressed in the words: "The servant of God is baptized," he says in Baptism; "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," in Confirmation; "May God forgive your sins," in Confession.

Similarly, in the Eucharist, according to the same spirituality, the priest, the qualified mediator between God and the people, asks God to send His Spirit and perform the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; the priest knows that, in virtue of his ordination, his prayer will have infallible effect.

Thus in conclusion we see that the question of the *Epiclesis* and the exact moment of consecration is not a real, theological problem. The teaching Church has the power within certain limits to specify the words and gestures that constitute the form of a sacrament. She has done so on many occasions; the last one was the determination by Pope Pius XII that the only gesture necessary for valid priestly ordination was the imposition of hands by the ordaining bishop, even if in former times many thought that the transmission of the instruments to the *ordinandi* was necessary for validity.

## **The commemorations of dead and living**

Today, the Anaphora contains as an appendix two mementos, or a commemoration of the dead and the living.

In the first one, among the dead the first remembered are the saints. The memento is built as a prayer in their favor. But, we might ask, why do we pray for the saints that have already entered into heaven? How can our prayers help them?

Two old Greek commentators of the Liturgy have tried to solve the theological problem. Theodore of Andida (XI century) could not see a solution to the difficulty unless we suppose that the priest is here speaking in the name of Christ Himself and identifying this liturgical celebration with the sacrifice of the Cross. It is certain that all sanctity comes from Christ's sacrifice; He offered it to the eternal Father for all mankind, but some persons have partaken more fully of the fruits of Christ's redemption, so as to become favorites of God and models of the Christian life; such are the saints, and in the first place Mary, Christ's Mother. In this way, Christ could offer his sacrifice first of all for those who would be the most selected

fruits of His redemption.

In the fourteenth century, Nicholas Cabasilas offers this explanation. Eucharistic Sacrifice means a sacrifice of thanksgiving; one of its aims is to thank God. So we can offer this sacrifice for the saints, in the sense of giving thanks to God for the saints He has given us.

The commemoration of the saints is very ancient, and we think that the original theology contained in it was very different. In early times, the Holy Fathers thought that eternal life was not fully obtained until the resurrection of the dead. Even the souls of saints did not arrive in Heaven before the final resurrection, but remained in a place often called Paradise, where they enjoyed incomplete beatitude. The prayer in the Liturgy had probably the sense of asking God to give them the final resurrection and full happiness. This conception, however, is somehow obsolete in our day, as it was already in Theodore of Andida's or in Nicholas Cabasilas' time. So any of these authors' interpretations could be acceptable in our day.

Such evolution in eschatological ideas took place also in the Western Church. There is for instance the antiphon, "May the Angels bring you to Paradise," used in Roman funerals, but this paradise is probably not Heaven, because later on in the same antiphon the text follows: "And may you have eternal rest with Lazarus, the poor man," who according to the Gospel, was in the bosom of Abraham, not in Heaven.

### **Structure of the commemorations**

Having exposed the theological problem, let us look at the structure of these commemorations. The first one, for the saints and dead, has three parts: the general enumeration of categories, without proper names; the explicit commemoration of some saints, beginning with Our Lady; and the variable commemoration of the dead.

In the first part, we find now ten categories of saints: forefathers, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics. Actually, the category "forefathers" is an addition that does not appear in the old manuscripts; so the categories are nine, parallel to the nine hierarchies of angels.

After the second part, where the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Baptist, the Apostles and the saint of the day are commemorated, the deacon used to read aloud the names of the departed belonging to the community from the diptychs of the dead that form the variable part of the memento. During the commemoration, the priest first, and then the deacon takes the censer and incenses the sacred table. The incensation at this place is not done in honor of the Holy Sacrament, nor exclusively of Our Lady, but for all the dead. Incense represents the prayers of the saints, according to *Apocalypse* 8, and at the same time has a propitiatory sense that is here applied for the departed souls.

The commemoration of the living has also three parts: enumeration of the different categories; explicit commemoration of the ecclesiastical authority; and one variable group of those who belong to the community and find themselves in some difficult trial, such as the sick.

The third part or variable commemoration of the living was made by the deacon out of the diptychs, and finished by the phrase, "And for all men and women," which was repeated by the choir.

We may now summarize the Anaphora in a few words. The first part, after the dialogue, is the Eucharistic prayer and contains praise, blessing to God, and thanksgiving for His benefits. This prayer is interrupted by the *Sanctus* and ends with the institution of the Eucharist.

Then comes the ecclesiastical action, which is bound to the preceding prayer carrying out the Savior's command, "Do this in commemoration of Me." In it, the Church makes memory of the mysteries of the Redemption, offers the gifts to God and asks Him to transform them by His Holy Spirit, so that all who receive them may also receive the remission of sins and be united by the Holy Spirit into a unique body—the Mystical Body of Christ.

This was as far as the ancient Anaphora went. Afterwards the commemoration of the dead and the living were appended. The whole Anaphora is closed by the doxology: "And grant that we, with one voice and one heart, may glorify and praise your magnificent and sublime name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever. Amen."

#### ***Part IV: Fruits of Holy Communion***

To understand the fruits of Holy Communion, as they are expressed in the Byzantine Liturgy, we must recall the text of the *Epiclesis* exposed in the preceding part. It is there that we find the fruits of Holy Communion outlined: "That to those who partake of them, they may be for the purification of the soul, for the remission of sins, for communion in Your Holy Spirit, for the fullness of the (heavenly) kingdom, for confidence in You, not for judgment or condemnation."

The first mentioned fruit of Holy Communion is the purification of the soul and the remission of sins. Here we must point out that our translation, *purification of the soul*, does not correspond to the present Greek text. The reason is that in Greek we have two words with the same pronunciation: *nepsis*, meaning sobriety or vigilance; and *nipsis*, meaning washing. The liturgical text has *nepsis*, but it must be an error because of the identical pronunciation. *Nepsis* is actually a specialized ascetical word, never found in reference to the soul, the principle of organic life, as it appears in this place: *nepsis psyches*. It refers always to the mind, the *nous*. So in this context the word should be *nipsis*, referring to a true washing or purification of the soul from every stain of sin, as the first fruit of the Eucharist.

In the prayer of preparation for Communion found before the *Our Father*, a similar petition is directed to God: "... grant us to partake of Your heavenly and awesome mysteries ... with a pure conscience, for the remission of sins, for the pardon of transgressions, for communion in the Holy Spirit, for the inheritance of the Kingdom of heaven, for confidence in You, not for judgment or condemnation." Here we find all the chief fruits of the Eucharist repeated in practically the same words as found in the *Epiclesis*. Before all, we see the petition for remission of sins and pardon of transgressions that corresponds to that of the *Epiclesis*,

confirming our proposal of the word *nipsis* (purification) instead of *nepsis* (sobriety).

Also the Roman Mass asks for the remission of sins as a fruit of the Eucharist: *Libera me per hoc sacrosanctum Corpus et Sanguinem tuum ab omnibus iniquitatibus meis ...* ("Deliver me through this, Your most holy Body and Blood, from all my iniquities"). And after Communion with the chalice, the priest says: "... *praesta ut in me non remaneat scelerum macula, quern pura et sancta refecerunt sacramenta*" ("grant that no stain of sin may be left in me, now that I am renewed by this pure and holy sacrament").

The remission of sins and our purification are the first fruits of the Eucharist, are the first fruits of the Eucharist, as they were fruits of Christ's Blood shed on the Cross; and at the same time they remove any obstacle to the obtaining of the central fruit, "the Communion of Your Holy Spirit."

### **The "Communion of the Holy Spirit"**

This phrase comes from St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians (13,13): 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion (or fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all.' We have already referred to this passage as the source of the solemn greeting that introduces the Anaphora.

It should be noted that the genitive case can have a subjective or an objective sense. The English words, *the love of God*, can mean either that love that God has for us (God being the subject) or the love that we have for God (God being the object). In Paul's phrase the genitive is subjective so that the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause of the communion; the sense would be well expressed by the paraphrase *the communion effected by the Holy Spirit*. If we want a concise translation, perhaps the best one would be *the communion in the Holy Spirit*, as we wrote above.

### **The sense of "communion"**

Both St. Paul and St. John use the Greek word *koinonia* in the sense of intimate union, which we translate by *communion*.

St. John, in his First Epistle (1, 3), says: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship (*koinonia*) with us; and our fellowship (*koinonia*) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." So the Christians, by their union with the Apostles, will obtain union with God, Father and Son, through the action of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul explicitly says.

This union with God is achieved, according to St. Paul, by way of filial adoption: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son born of woman, born under the law ... so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4, 4-6). And it is the infusion of the Holy Spirit that makes us sons of God and brothers of Christ: "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... when we cry, 'Abba! Father,' it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8, 14-17).

The Holy Spirit that makes us sons of God is sent to the Church by Christ, risen from the dead and glorified.

He is the Giver of the Spirit, but it is the resurrected Christ we receive in the Eucharist, and the permanent gift He pours into us is precisely the Holy Spirit.

To signify that we receive the risen Christ, the Church, in all the Liturgies, instituted a special ceremony before Holy Communion, the commingling of the species of the bread, the Body of Christ, with the species of the wine, the Blood of Christ, symbol of life. As the separation of bread and wine served as a symbol of the Lord's death, so their mingling is a symbol of His resurrection. The Byzantine priest uses this formula when he puts the particle of consecrated bread into the chalice: "The fullness of the Holy Spirit"; for it is because of the fullness of the Spirit that dwells in Him, that Christ became a life-giving spirit (I Cor. 15, 45).

The Byzantine Liturgy added a new ceremony to the ordinary mingling, to stress the presence of the risen Christ in the Eucharist: we mean the mingling of hot water with the consecrated wine. The priest blesses the boiling water by saying: "Blessed is the warmth of your holy (Gifts)." The warmth can be either the symbol of life or that of the Holy Spirit, meant in St. John's Gospel by the living water; possibly both significations are intended: life given by the Holy Spirit.

Putting in order the different aspects we considered, we can say that in Holy Communion we receive the resurrected Christ, the Giver of the Spirit; He infused in us again His Holy Spirit who, making always deeper our divine adoption, unites us more and more intimately to God our Father, to Christ our Chief and Brother, and to all those who like us are sons of God; He accomplishes the unity of the faithful, who become a single body, the Church, the Kingdom of God in this world, whose bond is divine love, infused in our hearts by the Spirit.

The instrumental role of the priesthood in this descent of the Holy Spirit is put in evidence by the prayer of the offering: "... that the good Spirit of Your grace may rest upon us (the celebrants), upon these gifts here present and upon all Your people." There are not three independent descents, but one; the Holy Spirit descends into the Gifts through the bishops and priests, who by their ordination possess a special plenitude of the Spirit, and by partaking of the gifts, upon the people. So, the celebrants receive, we can say, two effusions of the Spirit: the first effusion, a ministerial one, for the consecration of the Gifts; the second, as all the faithful, for the "communion in the Spirit" with God and men. But even if in the first effusion, the Spirit does not descend for the sake of the individual priest, but for the whole Church, nobody, however, would deny that this passing through of the Spirit would produce fruits of sanctity in the priest.

The other fruits of the Eucharist enumerated in the Epiiclesis are only adumbrations of the central fruit: "the union in the Holy Spirit," as also the "fullness of the Kingdom." In the present Greek text the words are: "the fullness of the heavenly Kingdom," but the word *heavenly* does not appear in the old manuscripts. In fact, if the prayer is asking for a fruit of the present Eucharist, fruit that should be obtained by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, it is clear that this fruit cannot be the fullness of the heavenly Kingdom, which will take place only at the end of time. The petition about the heavenly Kingdom is found in the prayer before the *Our Father*, in a future form: "the inheritance of the heavenly Kingdom," whose token is the Eucharist. This being so, what is the meaning of the petition, "the fullness of the Kingdom?" The Kingdom here, which cannot be directly and in the first place the Kingdom of heaven, must be the Church itself, a

manifestation of the Kingdom of God in this world. We ask, therefore, to be penetrated and deeply rooted in the life of the Church-Community, so that we may participate more fully in its life and activity. Our fraternal love, the union in the Holy Spirit, is first manifested in a fully participated life in the Christian community. This ecclesiastical fraternity and cooperation is the pledge of the future hope and right to the inheritance of the heavenly Kingdom.

The last mentioned fruit of the Eucharist is "for assurance in Your presence," according to the meaning of the Greek word *parrhesia*. The word means actually freedom from fear. It appears in the Acts of the Apostles, for instance, when Peter and John return to the little Christian community to narrate what the chief priests and elders had said during their trial; the community prays to God that the Apostles may "with all confidence" preach the Word of God (*meta parrhesias*; Acts 4, 29). This Christian attitude of assurance is the natural consequence of our filial adoption. The Holy Spirit teaches us to call God "Abba," Father; we live in His house, the Church, and we are heirs of his Kingdom. We know God so loved this world that He gave His only Son, so that we could through faith, escape perdition and obtain eternal life. Thus, without any fear, we trust completely in His paternal love for us.

The last petition of the series, "And not for judgment or condemnation," if subjected to logical analysis, seems to have its proper place not here, but in the prayer before the *Our Father*, where it is repeated. Obviously, the actual descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Gifts cannot be a source of condemnation—such a disaster could have as its cause only our bad disposition, the obstacle or indignity we oppose to His action. But in the Epiclesis, there is no question about the subjective dispositions of the participants, only about the fruits of the spirit. On the contrary, the prayer before the *Our Father*, which is the prayer of preparation for Holy Communion, asks God to grant us a pure conscience in order to receive worthily the Holy Mysteries, so that they will produce in us the proper fruits, not judgment or condemnation. In this context, the petition is fully justified.

### **The litany before the *Our Father***

Is this litany original? It begins with an exhortation, "After commemorating all the saints, again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord," which links this litany with the preceding commemorations. The word *saints* is probably understood here in the archaic sense of all the Christians, alluding to both commemorations of the dead and of the living.

The two following exhortations are really one: "For the precious Gifts that have been offered and consecrated, let us pray to the Lord, that our God, the Lover of mankind ... may send down upon us in return His divine grace and the Gift of the Holy Spirit." Here we find an old manner of building litany petitions, composed of three parts: firstly, the intention ("For the precious Gifts ..."); secondly, the exhortation ("let us pray to the Lord"); and thirdly, the purpose ("that our God ... the Gift of the Holy Spirit"). In the third part is mentioned again the Gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, Gift of God, as the fruit of the Eucharist.

All the other petitions of the litany are taken from the *synapte* or the *attests* (prayer-petition) and do not belong to this place. The only original exhortation is the last one, which ends the litany and introduces the prayers "Asking for unity in faith and communion in the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God." This part of the Liturgy, preparatory to Holy Communion, insists more and more on the motive of unity: here we are exhorted to ask for a double unity—in faith and in charity—bonds that constitute and keep together the Church of God.

The prayer is purposely linked to this final exhortation. The exhortation ends: "let us commend ... and our whole lives...;" the prayer begins: "To you, O Lover of Mankind, we entrust our whole Me and hope..." It is the prayer of preparation for communion, already commented on, together with the *Epiclesis*. This prayer has no doxology, because it is continued by the introduction to the *Our Father* and the *Our Father* itself.

### **The *Our Father***

It is interesting to compare the introduction to the *Our Father* as recited in the Byzantine Liturgy with that of the Roman Mass. In the latter, the priest says: "Taught by Our Savior's command, and formed by the Word of God, we dare to say..." In the Byzantine Liturgy we have the same idea of daring, but flowing naturally from the preceding prayers for the fruits of the Eucharist: "And grant us O Lord, that we may with confidence, without condemnation, dare to call you, the God of Heaven, Father, and say...". We ask again for the assurance of sons of God, before the awesome fact that the God of Heaven allows us to call Him Father. The emphasis again as the preparation draws near to the actual reception of the Holy Eucharist is on filial assurance in the presence of God the Father and not servile fear of condemnation.

The *Our Father*, not only because Our Lord gave it to us as the perfect prayer, but because it summarizes so very succinctly the fruits of the Eucharist, forms the principal prayer of preparation for Holy Communion. I would like to point out two features of the *Our Father* that refer directly to its place in the Liturgy. The first is the Greek word *epiousion* that both in Matthew (6, 11) and Luke (11, 3) qualifies the bread. In English is translated by *daily*, under the influence of the Latin liturgical text of the *Our Father*. But the Vulgate itself, which translates it *quotidianum* ("daily") in Luke 11, 3, uses the strange word *supersubstantialem* ("supernatural," "supersubstantial") in Matthew 6, 11. The latter translation could correspond to the meaning of the Greek word; actually, it seems that the word used by Our Lord in the Aramaic language had the meaning of "future," that is, the bread of the future Kingdom of God. As we live in the first phase of the eschatological times, we can perfectly apply the bread spoken of in the *Our Father* to the Eucharistic Bread. "Give us this day our future bread" cannot have other meaning than the Eucharist itself, which conceals the Life of the future Kingdom.

The second feature derives from the first: "and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." The forgiveness of sins is presented as a fruit of the heavenly bread; and at the same time, it exacts from us a general forgiveness of all our enemies, of all the injuries inflicted on us. The Eucharist will not produce its fruit unless we forgive beforehand every offense. We think these two petitions of the *Our*

*Father* have been the motive why it has been introduced in all the Liturgies and precisely as an element of the preparation for Holy Communion. It is a prayer that forces us to forgive others and to repent of our sins, in order to benefit from the fruits of the Eucharist we are going to receive. So the *Our Father* is the center of a penitential act before Holy Communion.

The doxology at the end of the *Our Father*, though it does not belong to the critical text of the Gospels, is found in the *Didache*—without the Trinitarian interpolation—since the first century. Our Lord Himself must have used some doxology at the end of the prayer, because it would be foreign to the Jewish mentality to end a prayer with the mention of the devil (the evil one) as in Matthew, or of die temptation, as in Luke. All the Oriental rites have the doxology at the end of the *Our Father*.

The greeting, "Peace to all," that follows precedes the blessing of the people. Chrysostom tells us that before every blessing of the bishop or priest there is the greeting, "Peace to all." Then the deacon exhorts the people: "Bow your heads to the Lord." As they bow their heads, the priest blesses them, reciting the prayer of blessing and, according to the ancient usage, stretching his hands over the people. Now, however, the priest bows with the people, facing the altar, and the prayer is said in silence, so that the sense of blessing has been lost.

The blessing at this place is meant as a preparation for Holy Communion. The text of the prayer, though, in the Liturgy of Chrysostom makes no reference to the Eucharist. Its petition, in an accurate translation of the Greek, reads: "Therefore, O Master, make straight for our good the present way according to the need of each: sail with those who sail, travel with those who travel, cure those who are sick, O Healer of souls and bodies." This prayer is no doubt an ancient prayer of blessing, not for this place, but for the end of an office. In the Liturgy of Saint Basil and in that of the Presanctified the prayer of blessing after the *Our Father* makes allusion to the reception of Holy Communion.

The deacon invites the faithful to receive Holy Communion with the words: "Approach with fear of God and faith." The Greeks add: "and love." The original invitation was simple: "Approach with fear of God." But the Greek word *phobos*, used in this invitation, does not correspond to the English *fear*; it fundamentally means *filial reverence*. As in the psalms which begin with "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord," or in a similar way, this fear is the reverence of a son towards a loving father and includes the abhorrence of doing anything offensive to Him.

After Holy Communion there is an old troparion that in ancient times ended the singing of die Communion psalm. The best recension says: "May our lips be filled with praise, O Lord, to sing Your glory, for You have granted us to partake of Your holy mysteries; keep us in Your holiness, all the day long meditating Your justice." This meditation or consideration would be an aftermath of Holy Communion. However, it is difficult to put God's justice in relation with Holy Communion. The last phrase is inspired by Psalm 70, 24, and justice has the typical biblical sense that is so akin to mercy. In fact, God is called just because He defends the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted. This biblical sense of justice has no connection with punishment or vengeance: this is called "God's anger" by Holy Scripture. So justice is the paternal

providence by which God follows His people, defends them, and consoles them in times of distress. The secret to obtain that merciful justice is to be the poor of God, to acknowledge that we are helpless in the way of salvation, but that we depend entirely on God. The Publican in the Temple, who confessed his misery and asked God to forgive him, a sinner, was justified; that is, he obtained God's favor, His help, His grace. The self-sufficient Pharisee was ignored by God.

So the meaning of the petition contained in the troparion would be to be kept in that holiness which God has communicated to us through the sacrament, and to persevere in a spirit of humble gratitude, knowing that we do not deserve such a grace.

In the prayer of thanksgiving, for Holy Communion, the Church asks God to direct our lives: "make straight our path, ... guard our life, make firm our steps," being confirmed in our Christian attitude by fear of God, filial reverence and love for Him. For that purpose, the prayer of the Mother of God and of the Saints, our brethren who were pleasing to God, will accompany us in the difficulties of concrete life.