

St. Cyril Orthodox Church

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+ **November 14, 2021** +
21st Sunday after Pentecost.
Holy Apostle Philip (1st cent.)



THIS WEEK: **Wednesday** Vespers at 6:30 pm, followed by a Bible Study at 7 pm.
Thursday Divine Liturgy at 8:30 am.

THE NATIVITY FAST begins tomorrow. We keep a fast for 40 days to prepare spiritually for the great feast of the birth in the flesh of our Savior and Lord. **All adult Orthodox Christians should come to Confession before Christmas. Please do not wait to the last minute.** According to the traditional fasting guidelines of the Church, we abstain during this season from all animal and dairy products, with the exception of shellfish, and on some days fish – consult your wall calendar for more information. If you are unsure how to keep the fasts in your personal circumstances, consult Fr. Benedict. It is good to have your spiritual father's blessing for your fasting discipline.

SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS – Looking ahead for planning purposes:

Friday, December 24 – Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil, 10 am

Friday, December 24 – Vigil of Christmas (Compline & Matins), 7 pm

Saturday, December 25 – Divine Liturgy of Christmas, 10 am

Saturday, December 25 – Vespers, 5 pm

Sunday, December 26 – Matins, 8:30 am; Divine Liturgy 10 am

TREASURER UPDATE – For November, we have received **\$4,234**, including a grant of \$1,667 from the OCA. Our expenses are projected to be **\$10,139**.

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Don't be troubled if you don't feel the love of God in yourself, but think about the Lord, that He is merciful, and guard yourself from sins, and the grace of God will teach you.

- *St. Silouan the Athonite (1938)*

St. Paul cries out: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33) The human mind is truly stupefied, when it uses a teacup to measure the vast ocean of God's knowledge.

- *Metropolitan Augustinos of Florina, Greece*

Be indulgent to others in that in which you yourself sin.

- *St. John, Wonderworker of Kronstadt (+1909)*

The Triune God – by Hieromonk Gregorios of Koutloumousiou
God is One and Yet Three

THE Triune God is without beginning, uncircumscribable [*that is, He cannot be contained*], ineffable [*indescribable*], and incomprehensible. He is almighty and all-sovereign, the creator of all things visible and invisible. He provides for everything. He is life and the source of life, light and the source of light, good and the source of all good.

St. Gregory the Theologian writes: “God always was and always is and always will be; or rather, God always is. For “was” and “will be” are fragments of our time and our perishable nature; but God is Eternal Being, and this is shown by the name He gives to Himself when addressing Moses: *The One-Who-Is* [Exodus 3:14]. He sums up and contains all being in Himself, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future, like some ocean of essence, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature.”

We believe that God is One, that is to say, one essence, and that He exists in three Persons (*hypostases*): The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Triune God are one in all respects, except for their three personal (*hypostatic*) properties: the unbegottenness of the Father, the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit. “The one Holy Trinity is one God and is called Trinity because of the persons and the hypostases . . . None of them existed before the other in any way, neither the Father before the Son, nor the Son before the Father, nor either of them before the Holy Spirit . . . For their beginning was without beginning, simultaneous and co-eternal” [*St. Symeon the New Theologian*]. So the Father never was without the Son, for without the Son He could not have been called “Father.”

No single thing in all creation can depict the Trinitarian Deity. We can be helped a little, however, by images used by the holy Fathers. For instance, St. Gregory Palamas uses the following illustration: “The sun's brightness is born from the sun, and the sun's ray proceeds from it and comes down to us, and neither the brightness nor the rays are ever separated from the sun itself. So just as by calling the ray and the brightness 'sun,' we do not mean any other sun but the one sun, likewise when we call the Word of God and the Holy Spirit 'God,' we don't mean any other God but He who is perceived to be without beginning and without end, together with the Word without beginning and the Holy Spirit. This is what Christ Himself, the Word of God, taught us to believe and confess.”

With Christ's incarnation, the light of the Holy Trinity shone in the world. Gregory the Theologian points out that the words of the Evangelist John, “He was the true Light, which enlightens every man coming into the world” (John 1:9), refer equally to all three persons of the Holy Trinity. And he continues: “This was what the Prophet David meant when he said: *In your light we shall see light* (Psalm 35:10). And now we have both seen and proclaimed a succinct and simple theology of the Holy Trinity; in the Light (that is, in the Holy Spirit), we comprehend that the Son is Light who comes out of the Light (that is, the Father).

“At the heart of the Divine Liturgy lies the Great Mystery of the Holy Eucharist.”

by Metropolitan Sotirios of Pisidia

In the previous sermon, we established that the believer is united with the resurrected Body of Christ by partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord in the Divine Eucharist. By this the words of the Lord are fulfilled: “*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*” (John 6:56). In order to fully understand the broader dimensions of the Great Mystery of the Eucharist, it is necessary to answer the following question:

Why is it called the Mystery of Holy Eucharist?

According to the Holy Evangelists, it was during the Last Supper that Jesus took the bread, **offered a prayer of thanksgiving**, divided it and then gave it to His Disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup and, **after saying a prayer of thanksgiving**, gave it to them, saying: “*Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matthew 26: 26-28). We hear these same words repeated by the Priest in every Divine Liturgy. Because the Last Supper was preceded by a Prayer of Thanksgiving by Jesus, the same thing is done by the officiating priest when the great prayer of the “Anaphora” or the “Eucharistic Prayer” begins. **For this reason** it is called the “Mystery of the Divine Eucharist”, which in the Greek means “Divine **Thanksgiving**.”



This is **not the only reason**, however. The whole Mystery of the Divine Eucharist is a way of **GIVING THANKS TO GOD**. **The individual Christian, as well as the whole Church, offers Gifts of gratitude to the Man-loving God for the innumerable good things – both known and unknown – that He has bestowed and continues to bestow upon us.** This, among other things, is emphasized in the Offertory Prayer, which the Priest prays after the Great Entrance, when the Holy Gifts (the Bread on the Holy Diskos and the Wine in the Holy Chalice) are brought up to the Sacred Altar. The Priest exclaims: “Lord God Almighty... **Enable us to offer You gifts and spiritual sacrifices** ... Deem us worthy... that the good Spirit of Your grace may rest upon us and upon these gifts here offered, and upon all Your people.”

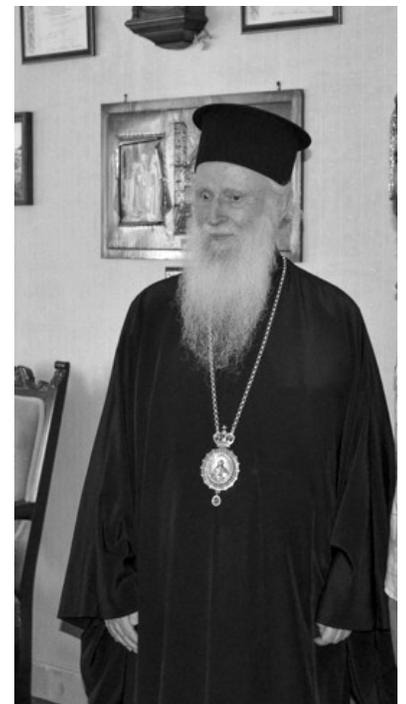
The moment of the “eucharistic sacrifice” of the Holy Gifts is approaching when the Priest, raising the Holy Diskos with the Bread, and the Holy Chalice with the Wine, exclaims: “Your own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for all.” That is to say: **Lord, we wish to offer to You these gifts of gratitude for the infinite good things that You have given us and continue to give us, as we have nothing of our own. That is why we have chosen Bread and Wine, which are Your creations, to be brought to You as Gifts of Thanksgiving. We offer them for everything that You have done for us from the beginning of Creation until this very day, and in every place of Your dominion.**

At this point the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist reaches its climax, as the Priest asks God the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the Holy Gifts in order to accomplish the Mystery: “Make this bread the precious Body of Your Christ and that which is in this Cup, the precious Blood of Your Christ.” Truly, at this very moment a Miracle that is inconceivable to the human mind has taken place. With the transformation of the bread into the body of the Lord, the sacrifice is completed. **On the Holy Altar we now have the Crucified and Risen Christ, and together with the Twelve Disciples in the heavenly upper-room of Jerusalem, we participate in the Supper.** This supper of Gratitude and Thanksgiving differs in no way from the original Last Supper of Holy Thursday. The Holy Altar has become the Table of Oblation; it has become Calvary. This is so, because the Mystery of the Eucharist is an image of the sacrifice on Calvary. In the Divine Eucharist, as on Calvary, Christ is sacrificed. After Calvary we reach the Resurrection. Thus the Eucharist is the uninterrupted Pascha of the Church, and assures us of the joy of the Kingdom to come.

Let us spend a little more time on the concept of the Eucharist as a sacrifice.

First, this aspect is evident in the words of the Lord, when he delivered the Mystery to His Disciples: “*Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Matthew 26: 27-28). The Lord speaks clearly here of the sacrifice of His **Blood**, which is “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” It is indeed remarkable, that the Lord, when speaking of the sacrifice of His Blood, **has not yet been crucified**. Nevertheless, He uses the word “poured out” as though it already is now poured out. He does not use the future tense and say for example: this is my blood that “will be poured out”, but my blood which “is poured out”.

What is the meaning of this? The enlightened Fathers of the Church reveal to us the following: **The Lord shed His Holy Blood only once** on Calvary for the life and salvation of the world, for all who have lived since Adam and will live until the Second Coming. In the Divine Liturgy the common understanding of time, which is divided into days, years and centuries, becomes irrelevant. For God, as we know, there is no present, no past and no future. Everything before Him is an eternal present. In a similar way, at the time of the performance of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, “liturgical time” applies, through which everything is transformed into the present, **so that humans of every age can have the opportunity to approach the Mystery with the Twelve Disciples in Jerusalem and benefit from it.**



Metropolitan Sotirios