



August 2, 2009

8TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Feast of the Holy, Glorious Prophet Elias (Elijah)

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE SEVEN:

By Your Cross, You did destroy death! To the thief, You did open Paradise! For the myrrh bearers, You did change weeping into joy! And You did command Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy! *Audio File:*

http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO_Bulletin/Resurrectional_Troparion_Tone_7.wav

TROPARION FOR THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET ELIJAH—TONE FOUR:

An Angel in the flesh and the cornerstone of the prophets, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ, glorious Elijah sent grace from on High to Elisha, to dispel diseases and to cleanse lepers. Therefore he pours forth healing on those who honor him!

RESURRECTIONAL KONTAKION - TONE SEVEN:

The dominion of death can no longer hold man captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers! Hell is bound, while the prophets rejoice and cry: The Savior has come to those in faith! Enter you faithful into the Resurrection. *Audio File:*

http://www.westsrbdio.org/AUDIO_Bulletin/Resurrectional_Kontakion_Tone_7.wav

KONTAKION TO THE HOLY GLORIOUS PROPHET ELIJAH—TONE TWO:

O Prophet Elijah of great renown, seer of the mighty works of God, by your command you held back the rain! Pray for us to the only lover of mankind.

HYMN TO THE MOTHER OF GOD - TONE SIX:

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

ХИМНА БОГОРОДИЦИ – ГЛАС 6:

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

EPISTLE & COMMENTARY

THE PROKIMENON: PSALM 29: 11 IN THE 7TH TONE:

The Lord shall give strength to His people! The Lord shall bless His people with peace!

1 CORINTHIANS, 1:10-18

Brethren, now I plead with you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

THE ALLELUIA VERSES: PSALM 92: 1, 2

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High! To declare Thy mercy in the morning and Thy truth by night!

1 CORINTHIANS EPISTLE COMMENTARY

Is Christ divided? Or is the Church? The answer to all questions in this passage is *no*. One can leave the Church, but not divide it! Factionalism, however, brings great harm to the Church, for it seeks to give the apostle a place only Christ should occupy. Many looked upon the apostles as teachers of philosophy rather than preachers of the Cross.

Why is the message of the cross....foolishness to unbelievers? "It is a mark of them that perish not to recognize the things which lead to salvation" (St. John Chrysostom). We who bear witness to Christ must not be discouraged when those outside of Him mock, for so did once even Paul himself. Being saved, present tense, refers to the process by which the Cross transforms us with the Power of God.

GOSPEL & COMMENTARY

Matthew 14: 14-22

At that time, when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” He said, “Bring them here to Me.” Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

For the Holy, Glorious Prophet Elias (Elijah) Luke 4: 22-30

So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “You will surely say this proverb to me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’” Then He said, Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and they rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him over the cliff. Then, passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

MATTHEW GOSPEL COMMENTARY

This miracle, reported by all four evangelists, shows Jesus feeding a great multitude of His people as He fed the Israelites in the desert (Ex. 16). The Church Fathers see in this an image of the Eucharist, an idea made clear in Jn. 6. The significance of this Eucharistic imagery is also seen in what was used to feed the people: five loaves of bread, reminding us of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Law, and two fish, reminding us of the writings of the Fisher’s of Men, the Apostles who wrote the Gospels and Epistles.

SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

Reflection from *The Prologue* for July 20/August 2 by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

Writing about the life of his sister St. Macrina, St. Gregory of Nyssa hesitates to enumerate her miracles, saying: "... that I may not be responsible for the sin of unbelief among weak men." His term for those who do not believe is "weak." Truly, there is nothing weaker than a man without faith. The man without faith believes in the power of dead things and dead elements of nature, but does not believe in the power of God or of men of God. This is spiritual dullness, and this dullness is equivalent to spiritual death. Thus, living souls believe and dead souls do not believe. Living souls believe in the powerful miracles of the Prophet Elias. These miracles give them courage and joy, for they know that they are a manifestation of God's might. When God manifests His might through lifeless things and elements of nature, why would He not manifest it through living and holy men? The Prophet Elias's appearance on Mount Tabor at the time of the Transfiguration of the Lord in particular gives the faithful the greatest joy. During his life on earth, this great prophet gave proof of the existence of the One and Living God and, by his appearance on Mount Tabor hundreds of years after his departure from the earth, he gave mankind visible proof of life after death.

The Holy Prophet Elias

Prophet Elias—the God-seer, miracle-worker and zealot for faith in God—was born of the tribe of Aaron in the town of Tishba, for which he was called the Tishbite. When Elias was born, his father Sabbas saw angels of God hovering around the child, wrapping the child in fire and feeding him flames. That was a foreshadowing of Elias's fiery character and his God-given fiery power. He spent his entire youth in divine contemplation and prayer, withdrawing frequently into the wilderness to contemplate and pray in tranquility. At that time the Jewish kingdom was divided into two unequal parts: the kingdom of Judah consisting of only two tribes—the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with their capital in Jerusalem; and the kingdom of Israel consisting of the remaining ten tribes, with their capital in Samaria. The former was governed by the descendants of Solomon, and the latter was governed by the descendants of Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon. The greatest confrontation that the prophet Elias had was with the Israelite King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel for they worshiped idols and were turning the people away from serving the One Living God. In addition Jezebel, a Syrian, persuaded her husband to erect a temple to the Syrian god Baal and appointed many priests to the service of this false god. Through great miracles Elias displayed the power and authority of God. He closed up the heavens, so that there was no rain for three years and six months; he called fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice to God, which the pagan priests were unable to do for the false god, Baal; he brought rain by his prayer; he miraculously multiplied flour and oil in the home of the widow at Zarephath, and resurrected her son; he prophesied to Ahab that the dogs would lick up his blood, and to Jezebel that the dogs would consume her flesh—all of which came to pass; and he performed many other miracles, and prophesied other events as well. He spoke with God, and heard the voice of God in the calm after the wind, earthquake and fire on Mount

Horeb. Before his death, he designated Elisha as his successor in the prophetic calling; and, with his mantle, he divided the waters of the Jordan. Finally, he was taken up into the heavens in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. On Mount Tabor he appeared together with Moses beside our Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of the world, Elias will appear again, to put an end to the power of Antichrist (Revelation 11)

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

http://www.westsrbdio.org/Diocesan_Days/Diocesan_Days_2009/xhtml/index.html

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

http://www.westsrbdio.org/Theology/The_Eucharist_and_the_Kingdom_of_God.pdf

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

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

THE EUCHARIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

For the things of the Old Testament are the shadow.

Those of the New are an image. Truth is the state of things to come.

(Maximus the Confessor)

VI. The Eucharist as a movement and progression

With the weakening of the temporal dimension of the Eucharist as icon of the Kingdom which we look for, *which is to come*, there has also been a gradual loss of the sense that in the Divine Eucharist there is a movement “toward the End”; the

¹In the Greek Synaxarion the following miracle of the holy Prophet Elias is recorded: “A certain Paisius, Abbot of the Monastery of the holy Prophet Elias in Jerusalem, came to Constantinople, and from Constantinople went to Belgrade, at the time that Patriarch Paisius was there. At that time there lived in Belgrade an Orthodox Christian who had a Roman Catholic wife. On St. Elias’s day his wife was going to knead bread, but her husband said to her, ‘Today is the Feast of the Prophet Elias, and you shouldn’t work.’ His wife replied that this feast had passed ten days earlier (according to the papal calendar). And so a quarrel arose between them. The stubborn woman kneaded the dough, but lo the wonder! The dough turned to stone in her hands. All the neighbors gathered to see the miracle and each one took a piece of the stone. Paisius also happened to be there, and he likewise took a piece of the stone as evidence of the miracle of God and took it with him to Jerusalem. Paisius placed the stone before an icon of the holy Prophet Elias in his monastery.”

journey of the world, in Maximus' phrase, toward the Kingdom, and the coming of the Kingdom to the world. This terrible falsification has come about with the complete disappearance of the dimension of *entrance* within the Eucharist. Yes, the so-called "entrances" (great and little) have been preserved in the Liturgy; except that "entrances" is precisely what they are not. In reality they are circles made by the celebrant when he "enters" into the altar where he was before. Since the prothesis and skevophylakion ceased to exist as special annexes of the church building,* the clergy have gone into the altar (all that remains of the church proper) to do the proskomidia and put on their vestments. But then what is the point of the entrance, little or great? In fact it has no point, since the Eucharist has ceased to signify the journey to the Kingdom or the coming of the Kingdom, and become something static that takes place in space without reference to time.

From this point of view, it is interesting to look at the interpretations of the entrance in liturgical sources from the period when the entrance was a real entrance of the clergy and people, headed by the bishop, into the church and the altar. These interpretations are dominated by a typology which has the entry of the bishop as an image of Christ's first coming to earth in the flesh, with a clear description of the progression to the eschaton. In the seventh century, as St. Maximus demonstrates in his *Mystagogy*,¹ this early typology still survives. For this Father, the bishop's entry into the church to celebrate the Eucharist is an image of the Lord's first coming to earth, and everything that follows leads directly to the eschatological setting of the Kingdom: the sacred readings, and in particular the Gospel, represent "the end of this world," after which "the bishop comes down from the throne" for the judgment, with the dismissal of the catechumens and the closing of the doors. From that moment on, everything takes place before the throne of God in His Kingdom. The "entry of the holy and venerable mysteries [clearly the so-called "Great Entrance"] is the beginning and prelude to the new teaching about God's economy toward us which *will be* imparted in heaven [note once again the future tense, which distances us from a Platonic type of correspondence between the heavenly and the earthly]. . . . For God the Word says, I will not drink . . . any more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom." The kiss of peace also has an eschatological meaning, indicating "the concord that *will prevail* [again, a reference to future time] amongst all at the time when the

* Early churches would have a separate building or annex where sacred vessels and vestments were kept, and where people would leave their Eucharistic offerings on their way into church. The bread and wine for the Eucharist were selected from among these and prepared in the same place. (Translator's note)

¹ PG 91: 688ff.

ineffable good things which are to come are revealed." Even the Creed, despite its historical content, leads us to the future: "The confession by everyone of the divine Creed points forward to the mystical thanksgiving which *will be rendered in the age to come* for the most marvelous principles and ways of God's most wise Providence toward us, by which we have been saved." The hymn "Holy, Holy, Holy" also leads us spiritually to *the future* state: "It indicates the union and equality in honor with the bodiless spiritual powers which *will be manifest in the future.*" The Our Father also represents the future adoption "in which all the saints *shall be called and shall be* sons of God through the grace which *will come* upon them."

There exists, then, a continuous progression within the Eucharist; a progression which, according to Maximus at least (things change somewhat in later Byzantine commentators on the Liturgy) literally *moves us along* and sets us in the Kingdom which is to come. Everything in the Liturgy moves forward: nothing is static. The symbolism in the Liturgy is not that of a parable or allegory. It is the symbolism of an *icon* as that is understood by the Fathers of the Church, meaning participation in the *ontological content of the prototype*. And the prototype in this case, as can be seen in the passages of St. Maximus just quoted, is the Kingdom which is to come, and our ultimate reconciliation and union with God when we are incorporated into Christ.

From all this one can understand how significant is the dimension of movement and progression in the typikon of the Liturgy. It is a pity to give the impression that everything in the Liturgy is performed in a static manner. The abolition of the entrances is a great liturgical loss. It is true, certainly, that the church architecture which now prevails does not permit the priests to make a real entrance as they did in the ancient Church. The bishops, however, are able to make an entrance, and it is a shame that they no longer do it, clearly because they no longer appreciate its significance.²

VII. The sacrifice of the paschal lamb

The Divine Eucharist is *a sacrifice*. The patristic tradition in both East and West lays great stress on this aspect of the Eucharist. So, for instance: Cyril of

² It makes no sense for the bishop to go into the sanctuary, put on his vestments there, and come out of the altar so as to go in again at the Little Entrance, when he could be vested outside the altar during matins—when matins is celebrated together with the Liturgy, or just before the beginning of the Liturgy when it is not—(without the exclamations of the relevant verses, if it is not a festive Liturgy). In all the Slavic Orthodox Churches this order is observed, thus preserving the character of the Little Entrance as a genuine entrance. In the Greek-speaking Churches, however (with the possible exception of the Church of Cyprus), it is not observed. And yet the significance of these despised liturgical details is real.

Jerusalem (*Catechesis* 23:8, 9), Gregory the Theologian (*Orations* 2:95 and 4:52), Cyril of Alexandria (*On the Mystical Supper* 5) and John Chrysostom (*On the Epistle to the Hebrews* 17:3),³ as well as the Divine Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Basil the Great which are celebrated in the Orthodox Church, call the Eucharist a *sacrifice* which is “unbloody,” “reasonable,” etc. This sacrifice is none other than the death on the Cross of Christ, whose Body and Blood are offered “for many” (Mark 14:24, Matt. 26:28); in other words, they have the effect of *deliverance* from sins, which are “forgiven” thanks to this sacrifice and the “communion” of the “many” in it, which is the fount of “eternal life.”

This sacrificial character of the Divine Eucharist is indisputable both in biblical consciousness and theology, and in that of the Fathers and the Liturgy, The point that we often tend to overlook or underestimate is the connection and relationship between this sacrificial character of the Eucharist and the coming of the Kingdom of God, the “last times.” The Eucharist is indisputably the very sacrifice of the Lord upon the Cross. But what is the relationship of this sacrifice with the coming of the Kingdom? This question is of vital importance for theology, and also for the way in which we as believers experience this great mystery of the Church.

All the indications from the story of the Last Supper, handed down to us by the Gospels and the Apostle Paul, testify that with the words “this is My Body” and “this is My Blood” Christ was referring to Himself as the *Paschal Lamb* (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7ff., “for Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed for us”). This identification of Christ with the paschal lamb was so widespread in the early Church that it was repeated without elucidation, not only by the Apostle Paul but also by other texts from the apostolic age, such as 1 Peter (1:19), Revelation (5:6, 12 and 12:11), St. John’s Gospel (1:29, 36), *et al.* So it is not by chance that in the language of the Church’s liturgy, the portion of the eucharistic bread which is changed into the Body of Christ at the Divine Eucharist came to be called the Lamb.

The sacrifice of the paschal lamb has its roots in the exodus of Israel from Egypt, as described in the Book of Exodus (12:6). In the case of the Last Supper, however, it is clear that we have not merely a remembrance and repetition of the sacrifice of the Lamb in Exodus, such as took place at every celebration of the Jewish Passover, but the sacrifice of the *perfect, eschatological* paschal Lamb. This

³ Chrysostom insists particularly on this aspect of the Eucharist, which he connects with the Last Supper and the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and also with heavenly worship and the Kingdom. See *On Hebrews* 11:2,3 and 14:1-2; *On the Priesthood* 3:4, and elsewhere. As to Latin Fathers, see for instance Ambrose (*On the Duties of the Clergy* 1:248; *On Faith* 4:124, and elsewhere), and Augustine (*Confessions* 9:32; *Enchiridion* 110; *On Psalms* 21 and 33; *City of God* 10:20, etc.).

is borne out by many elements in the story of the Last Supper in the Gospels, as also by the liturgical practice of the early Church. Let us refer to some of these as examples.

We have already underlined, at the beginning of this study, the fact that the Lord clearly links the Last Supper with the Kingdom of God, according to the account given us by the Gospels. What we must note here is the connection of the sacrifice to which Christ refers there with the *New Covenant*. It has already been observed by biblical scholars that the term "Covenant" should be regarded as equivalent to the term "Kingdom of heaven."⁴ The sacrifice of Christ as the Paschal Lamb is the fulfillment of the eschatological purpose of the sacrifice both of the original paschal Lamb in Exodus, and of all the subsequent sacrifices performed by the Jews in imitation of the sacrifice of that lamb. So when Christ says at the Last Supper, and the Church repeats in the course of the Eucharist, that "this is My Blood, the Blood of the New Covenant," our thoughts are directed toward the coming and establishment of the Kingdom of God, and not simply toward an event which took place in the past. The sacrifice of the Lord upon the Cross cannot be isolated from its eschatological significance. Remission of sins is itself linked in the New Testament with the coming of the Kingdom (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4; John 30:23, etc.), and this surely applies especially to the remission of sins which stems from the sacrifice of Christ as Paschal Lamb.

Things are still clearer in the book of Revelation, which without a doubt contains elements or fragments of ancient eucharistic liturgy.⁵ In this book the description of Christ as the Lamb occurs repeatedly, and, without any doubt, in connection with the paschal lamb of Exodus 12:6. The eschatological significance that Revelation gives to the Lamb comes across clearly from the following remarks, which are of profound significance:

(a) The "lamb that was slain" has the authority to open the book with seven seals, the contents and meaning of which are revealed only at the end of history.

(b) The sacrifice of the Lamb does not concern only the people of Israel, but people "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (5:9). The universal character of this salvation suggests the end of history and the dawning of the "day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 5:2, etc.). It is characteristic that the Apostle Paul, who awaits the Second Coming of Christ imminently, regards as its "first

⁴ See J. Behm, "Diatheke," in G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1935).

⁵ See P. Prigent, *Apocalypse et Liturgie* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1964). On the influence of this book on the Orthodox Liturgy, see P. Bratsiotis, "L'Apocalypse de saint Jean dans le culte de l'Église grecque orthodoxe." *Revue d'Histoire et Philosophie religieuses* 42 (1962): pp. 116-121.

fruits” the return of the gentiles and their grafting into the trunk of Israel (2 Thess. 2:13).

Thus the fact that the blood of the Lamb is shed “for all” refers us to the “Servant” of God in the book of Isaiah (chapters 52 and 53) who “bore the sin of many and was given up for their sins” (53:12, LXX), but who also in the last times *will bring together the scattered Israel* and will be “a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (49:6), because “many nations will wonder at Him . . . for they that have been told of Him shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand” (52:15, LXX).

(c) In particular, we should note the connection in the Book of Revelation between the Lamb that was slain and the “new song,” the “alleluia” which is repeated three times by a great multitude and by the whole of creation (“like the sound of many waters”) in the context of the marriage of the Lamb and the worship of Him (19:1-8).

The fact that this “alleluia” is an eschatological hymn is made clear by the reason given for it in the text itself, “For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (19:6): in other words, the Kingdom of God has been established. This is also why, despite the fact that the lamb has been *slain*, the prevailing tone is one of joy: “let us rejoice and be glad” (19:7), recalling the “in gladness” of Acts (2:46) in connection with the celebration of the Eucharist by the first Christians.

These observations take on even greater interest if this hymn is connected with the Last Supper itself. The Gospels note (Matt. 26:30, Mark 14:26) that immediately after the supper and the words of Christ, which connect it with the Kingdom, “when [Christ and the Disciples] *had sung a hymn*, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” As expert scholars indicate, this refers to the *hallel* which followed the Jewish paschal meal, in other words the singing of Psalms 114-118 (113-117) antiphonally, with one of the group reading the text aloud while the others (cf. the “multitude” or the “people” in Revelation) would respond with “alleluia” after the middle of each verse. Already in Christ’s time these psalms had an eschatological-messianic meaning for the Jews. But does not the same apply to us Orthodox, who preserve faithfully the liturgical tradition of the ancient Church, which carries on the worship of the first Church? The verses which end Psalm 118 (117)—“This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it”—are clearly eschatological in Orthodox worship, since “this day” for us is the day of the Resurrection. The final verses of that psalm (“Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord . . . the Lord is God and has appeared unto us,” etc.) have the same eschatological character.

Conclusion: the Last Supper and the Lamb slain for our salvation cannot be understood without reference to the “last day,” the “day of the Lord,” the Parousia and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In the words of St. Cyril

of Alexandria, the Eucharist is not simply “the performance of the dread sacrifice” but “the gift of immortality and a pledge of life without end.”⁶

This conclusion is reinforced and confirmed by another observation; the ancient Church never celebrated its Mystical Supper, the Divine Eucharist, on the same day as the Lord’s death, but *after* it. It is known from history that Christians in Asia Minor in the second century celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of Nisan, the same day as the Jewish Passover. It is significant, however, that they did not celebrate the Eucharist except at dawn the next day, in other words after the Jews’ paschal meal, during which the Christians fasted. The fact that even today the Orthodox Church, following the ancient tradition, waits for the Jewish Passover to pass and only then celebrates its own Passover (Easter) is not simply due, as is often held, to an anti-Jewish stance on its part; apart from anything else, it is due to the fact that the Passover of the Church, which is associated with joy and gladness, cannot precede the moment in time at which, historically, the Last Supper took place and the Crucifixion followed. That time is a time of fasting, while Easter is a time of *festivity*.

Have we ever seriously thought why the Church dissociated not only its Passover, but also its Eucharist, from fasting, and linked it with the radiance of the Resurrection? It is significant, as we noted earlier, that celebration of the Eucharist on fast days was forbidden by the Church. (The exception of the Exaltation of the Cross and the commemoration of the Forerunner does not negate the rule.) This has been confined, of course, to the period of Great Lent,⁷ but the sense remains: the Eucharist is an eschatological event and cannot be other than festive, joyful and radiant. Its sacrificial character is transformed into the joy of the Resurrection, which means eschatological joy. In Christ there is no such thing as sacrifice without deliverance. And deliverance does not just mean remission of personal sins, in accordance with the Western spirit, Latin and Protestant, but the ultimate transfiguration of the world, the overcoming of corruption and death. This is what we celebrate when we perform the Eucharist: a sacrifice on the Cross which takes its meaning from the Resurrection, as the first realization in history of the Kingdom which is to come.

To be continued...

⁶ PG 77:1028.

⁷ According to the testimony of the historians Socrates (*Church History* 5:22) and Sozomen (*Church History* 7:19), in the early Church, at least in Alexandria, the Eucharist was not celebrated on any fast day throughout the year, and not just during Lent.