

The Divine Liturgy – 'A Pearl of Great Price'

Supplementing the talk by Father Michael Harper

‘And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me”’.

Luke 22:19

The Divine Liturgy (Eucharist)

- A was founded by Christ
- B is a ‘must’ for Christians
- C was central to the life of the Church from Pentecost on.

The Divine Liturgy is:

- A God’s banquet, our constant nourishment
- B a two-way encounter: with God and with one another
- C a listening-post: for we hear God speak to us
- D a gift: Christ gives himself to us, we give ourselves to Christ.

In the Divine Liturgy:

- A Christ is gloriously present
- B there are various entrances: of the angels, of the Gospels from the holy place, into the world and back to the altar
- C there is much giving of thanks; above all, for everything the Triune God is
- D the Holy Spirit is called to transform us and the holy gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ
- E we receive the Body and Blood of Christ so as to be changed into His likeness.



The Holy Communion
Fresco, Sanctuary, Monastery of Voronet, Romania

Before the Divine Liturgy:

- A we need to prepare – by prayer, fasting, and confession
- B the Priest prepares the bread – called prosphora – and wine, praying over them at the Proskomedia.

After the Divine Liturgy:

We receive the blessed bread (antidoron) – before taking the good news of Christ to the world as a sign of God’s grace given freely to all, without pre-conditions. We don’t store our blessings – we share them.



Prosfora (Byzantine style)



The Epiklesis or Calling-down of the Holy Spirit on the People and the Gifts

Photo © Mark Crawley, Parish of St Ephraim, Cambridge

‘In the words “Take, eat and drink” is contained the abyss of God’s love for mankind.’

St John of Kronstadt

‘The Divine Liturgy is a continual miracle, it is the final mystery, beyond this it is not possible to go, nothing can be added to it. It is the sacrament of the Kingdom in time and beyond time.’

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

Recommended Reading

i. Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, also his *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (St Vladimir’s Seminary Press: New York, 1987) ISBN 0-88141-018-7

ii. Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary On the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J.M. Hussey & P.A. McNulty (SPCK: London, 1978) ISBN 0-281-03593.

Your notes:
