

Do This In Remembrance Of Me

Reflections on the Mass

From the beginning of the Church, the central act of Christian worship has been an act of obedience. On the night before he gave his life for the life of the world, on the same night that he would be betrayed, rejected and humiliated, knowing all that was to come, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread and wine and said, “this is my body, this is my blood; do this in remembrance of me.” At that time he gave new meaning to the old Jewish Passover. Under the old covenant, the blood of the lamb had saved children and heirs from death. Now Christ has become our Passover, as by his blood we are saved and set free from the power of sin and death. The full meaning of Christ’s words at the Last Supper is made clear by his actions on the Cross as he gave his body and blood for us. The victorious power of these actions is made manifest by his resurrection. As we do these things in remembrance of him, we must strive to recall the fulness of Christ’s life, but most particularly we must strive to recall the events of the three holy days that we call the *Triduum Sacrum*, the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Pascha. We understand the Mass through the events of these sacred days. We strive to remember these holy things and to make them present realities in our lives, and by our remembrance, God is with us.

When we use the word ‘Mass’ (which, as we shall see, actually comes from the dismissal, implying that the holy action has now been completed) we recall the Sacrifice that Christ has made for us. When we speak of the Holy Eucharist, we recall that this is our greatest act of thanksgiving (the Greek word *eucharistia* means thanksgiving). When we speak of Holy Communion we recall that God gives himself to us, communes with us, in this way and that through this act we are mystically joined to all the faithful in every time and place. When we speak of the Holy Mysteries we acknowledge that this is an act of divine love beyond our comprehension. When we speak of the Liturgy we recall that this is the work of the people, the work of God’s people (the Greek word *leitourgia* refers both to priestly ministry and to public service). All of these names for this service of worship speak of the meaning of Christ’s actions. We could easily spend a great amount of time looking solely at the meaning of the Mass, or at the history of the Mass, but instead (in this presentation) we will go through the Liturgy of St. Gregory section by section, primarily in the form known as “Sung Mass,” commenting on what we do and why - and in the process we will encounter some of the meaning and some of the history. In another presentation I have spoken on the things that we use in our worship, including the vestments and the vessels, so now we begin with the Mass itself.

Typically at St. Gregory’s we sing the Office, either Matins or Vespers before Mass. This is part of our preparation, just as fasting and (at times) confession may be a part of our preparation. There is also an office of preparation which one may pray in the Orthodox Missal. By a variety of means we prepare to be in the presence of God and to receive God, and the first part of the Mass continues this preparation.

The Asperges

Before the Sunday Mass the priest blesses Holy Water. This water will be used for a variety of priestly blessings and for the faithful to take (dipping their fingers into the water in the stoop at the door of the Church and making the sign of the cross upon themselves) as they enter the Church. On Sundays for which a procession is not appointed, the Priest sprinkles this water over the faithful in the ceremony known as the *Asperges*. Parts of the Mass are typically known by the first word or words of the text in Latin. The name *Asperges* comes from the first word in Latin of the chant which is sung at this time: “*Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo...*” The text is from Psalm 51: “Thou shalt purge me, O Lord, with hyssop...” During the Paschal season the *Vidi Aquam* is sung in place of the *Asperges*: “I beheld water, which proceeded from the temple...” This text is based on verses of Ezekiel 47. Both chants are structured in the same manner as the introit: antiphon, Psalm verse, *Gloria Patri*, then the antiphon is repeated. The *Asperges*, dating from the 9th or 10th centuries, serves as a reminder of both our Baptisms whereby we enter the Church and our need for repentance whereby we return to our true home. Holy Water is sprinkled over the people using a metal sprinkler or brush, called the *aspergillum*, and the water is carried in a bucket, called the *aspersorium*. The *Asperges* is omitted at Low Mass.

Before the Sunday Liturgy, unless a Procession is ordered, the following Memento of Baptism is sung, while the people are sprinkled with Holy Water. The Celebrant wears the cope held back by acolytes.

THE ASPERGES

Ant. Thou shalt purge me, * O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. *Ps. 51.* Have mercy upon me, O God: after thy great goodness. *V.* Glory be to the Father...

THE VIDI AQUAM

(during the Paschal season)

Ant. I beheld water, * which proceeded from the temple, on the right side thereof, alleluia: and all they to whom that water came were healed every one; and they say, alleluia, alleluia. *Ps. 118.* O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is gracious: and his mercy endureth for ever. Glory be to the Father...

At the conclusion of the Asperges and the Vidi Aquam is sung:

V. O Lord, show thy mercy upon us (Alleluia);

R. And grant us thy salvation (Alleluia).

V. Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray: Graciously hear us, O Lord Holy, Father Almighty, Everlasting God: and vouchsafe to send thy holy angel from heaven; to guard and cherish, protect and visit, and to defend all who dwell in this thy holy habitation. Through Christ our Lord. *R.* Amen.

The Prayers of Preparation at the foot of the altar

In the early days there was silent prayer before the Mass, even as we still see with the prostration of the Sacred Ministers at the beginning of the Good Friday Liturgy. By the 11th c. there were set rites of preparation, which, beginning with the Frankish church, included a confession. Pope Innocent III in the 13th c. set the form of preparation for the Missal of the Roman Curia (the papal court), which essentially became the form we have to this day. These private prayers are a dialogue between the priest and servers. They begin with “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” and with the sign of the Cross. We were baptized “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” and marked as Christ’s own with the sign of the Cross at our Baptisms. This beginning of the Mass continues to stress the connection between Baptism and the Mass which we noted in the *asperges*. Then follows Ps. 43 with vs.4 as an antiphon, a fitting song as we approach God’s altar. Then follows the confession or the *confiteor*, and the absolution, and a few more appropriate verses from the psalms.

The priest, as he approaches the altar, prays an ancient prayer from the *Leonine* sacramentary (5-6th c.), asking for pardon as he enters the holy of holies. Then, as the priest kisses the altar, symbolic of the Church kissing Christ, he prays again to be forgiven, asking for the prayers of the saints whose relics are within the Altar.

THE PREPARATION FOR MASS

When the Priest, having vested, approaches the Altar, he makes the due reverence, and standing at the foot of the altar, makes the sign of the Cross upon himself and says:

V. ✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

He continues with hands joined before his breast:

V. I will go unto the altar of God:

R. Even unto the God of my joy and gladness.

Note that the Psalm is omitted in Requiem Masses, and during Passion-tide.

V. Ps. 43. Give sentence with me, O God, and defend my cause against the ungodly people: O deliver me from the deceitful and wicked man.

R. For thou art the God of my strength; why hast thou put me from thee: and why go I so heavily, while the enemy oppresses me?

V. O send out thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me: and bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy dwelling.

R. And that I may go unto the altar of God, even the God of my joy and gladness: and upon the harp will I give thanks unto thee, O God, my God.

V. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul: and why art thou so disquieted within me?

R. O put thy trust in God: for I will yet give him thanks, which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

V. I will go unto the altar of God:

R. Even unto the God of my joy and gladness.

V. ✠ Our help is in the Name of the Lord:

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

Then, with hands joined, he bows and makes the Confession.

V. I confess to God Almighty, to Blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints, and you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, *(He strikes his breast thrice, saying)* by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault. Wherefore I beg blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you, brethren, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

R. God Almighty have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee to everlasting life.

V. Amen.

He stands erect, and the ministers repeat the Confession saying "and thee, father..."

R. I confess to God Almighty...

V. God Almighty have mercy upon *you*, forgive *you your* sins, and bring *you* to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

V. ✠ The Almighty and merciful Lord grant unto us pardon, absolution, and remission of our sins.

R. Amen.

He bows his head and continues:

V. Wilt thou not turn again and quicken us, O God?

R. That thy people may rejoice in thee.

V. O Lord, show thy mercy upon us.

R. And grant us thy salvation.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto thee.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

And extending and joining his hands, he says: V. Let us pray...

He ascends to the altar, saying the following prayer. Take away from us, we beseech thee, O Lord, all our iniquities, that we may enter the holy of holies with pure minds. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And kissing the altar, he says: We beseech thee, O Lord, by the prayers of thy Saints [whose relics are here], that thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive us all our sins. Amen.

The Introit

The Introit announces the mystery or the feast or points us toward the focus of the Day, as the drama of the Mass begins. From earliest times, psalms have been sung in Christian worship. The introit was the psalm sung at the beginning, originally as much as was needed, then shortened as the distance of the procession became shorter and the music for the antiphon became more

elaborate. The same was true with the psalms sung at the offertory and the communion, which were gradually shortened until nothing remained but the antiphon. At the introit, however, the chant was shortened to the antiphon, one verse, the *Gloria Patri* (which originated in the East as a denial of Arianism), and the repeated antiphon. Most of the time, the antiphon comes from the same psalm as the verse, at other times it may come from one of the Old Testament prophets, or occasionally it is an original composition of the Church, (e.g. for the feast of All Saints: “Rejoice we all in the Lord, keeping feast day in honor of all the Saints: in whose solemnity the Angels rejoice, and glorify the Son of God”).

The Introit is the first of the *Propers* that we hear at Mass. The term *Propers* refers to the variable portions of the Mass, to those elements which change day by day; the *Ordinary of the Mass* refers to those portions which do not change. Each set of Mass Propers is named by the Latin *incipit*, or first word or words of the Introit and we often call a particular Sunday by the name of the introit. Well known examples include *Gaudete* (Advent III), *Laetare* (Lent IV), and *Quasimodo* (Low Sunday). In like manner the Mass for the Departed is known by the incipit of the introit, *Requiem*.

The priest blesses incense and censes the altar while the choir sings the Introit. Incense is called for in the directions for worship in the Old Testament and it is mentioned every time worship in heaven is described in the Bible. St. Ambrose was the first to write of the practice of Christians censing the altar. Incense is used to show that something is holy; it also symbolizes our prayers ascending to God.

At Solemn Mass incense is set and blessed (Be thou ☩ blessed by him in whose honor thou shalt be burnt. Amen.), after which the altar and Priest are censed as choir sings the Introit. But NOTE, that incense is not used during the Introit at Masses for the Dead. The Priest makes the sign of the Cross and reads the introit.

Kyrie eleison

The *Kyrie* is of Eastern origin, and has always been sung in the West in Greek. Some scholars say that it is the sole reminder for us that the liturgical language of the Western Church was Greek until about the third century. Others believe that it was not introduced until the fourth century or later. In the Eastern liturgy there are several litanies; after most petitions *Kyrie eleison* (or “Lord have mercy”) is sung. The *Kyrie* in the Mass could be the remnant of the entrance litany. At the Litany of the Saints at the Paschal Vigil the *Kyrie* is sung at the end of the litany as the Mass begins. The addition of *Christi eleison* is of Western origin. The number of repetitions was not set at first (the cantors continued singing until the bishop gave the singers the sign to stop). Gradually the number of petitions came to be set at nine: three for the Father, three for the Son, and three for the Holy Spirit.

As the chants for the *Kyrie* became increasingly ornate and melismatic, additional words were added to the *Kyrie*, expanding the petitions. This was known as *farcing* and the extra words as *tropes*. The first words of these tropes were retained as the names for musical settings of the Mass, *Cum júbilo*, *Orbis factor*... Here is an example of a farced *Kyrie* from the Sarum liturgy:

Kyrie, King and Father unbegotten, True Essence of the Godhead, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Fount of light and Creator of all things, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Thou who hast signed us with the seal of Thine image, have mercy on us.
Christe, True God and True Man, have mercy on us.
Christe, Rising Sun, through whom are all things, have mercy on us.
Christe, Perfection of Wisdom, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, vivifying Spirit and power of life, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Breath of the Father and the Son, in Whom are all things, have mercy on us.
Kyrie, Purger of sin and Almoner of grace, we beseech Thee abandon us not because of our Sins,
O Consoler of the sorrowing soul, have mercy on us.

By the 13th century tropes had fallen out of favor and the Kyrie remains one of our simplest and most profound prayers: Lord have mercy... We pray, in this manner, for ourselves, for others, for the whole world, that God will be with us, in this Mass, and throughout our lives, now and always.

Then is sung

Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.
Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison. Christe, eleison.
Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison. Kyrie, eleison.

Gloria in excelsis

The *Gloria in excelsis* is a beautiful Trinitarian doxology which begins with the hymn of the angels in Bethlehem. It is a hymn of joy and we do not sing it in penitential seasons, except on feast days. It praises the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and continues to ask their mercy upon us. The *Gloria* also comes from the East, where it is not a part of the Eucharist, but of Matins. It is one of the great, early Christian psalms, like the *Te deum* and the *Phos hilaron*. Before the 5th c. it was sung only at Christmas Midnight Mass, then at all pontifical masses. Priests were not allowed to include the Gloria on ordinary Sundays until the 11th century. It is a song we should sing with all our heart and soul, to proclaim our love and adoration for God.

When appointed, the Gloria follows. The priest extends and joins his hands, and bowing his head a little begins:

Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, to men of good will. We praise thee, we bless thee, (*bow*) we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son, (*bow*) Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, (*bow*) receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, ☩ art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Collects

The priest then kisses the altar and turns to the people, saying “the Lord be with you.” In a way, the priest receives Christ so that he can give Christ. This is one of the greatest things we can wish for another person, “the Lord be with you,” (and the priest says this many times during the Mass). The people return the wish, “And with thy spirit.” To say “and also with you” is not quite the same thing; our spirit is what is eternal and where the Holy Spirit may dwell within us, and when the Holy Spirit dwells with our Spirit, we are made holy, and this is one of the chief goals of the Christian life.

The prayer or prayers that follow are called the *collect(s)*. There are two reasons given for this name: first, the prayer said over the assembled people was called *ad collectam* and second because a prayer that summed up or gathered the prayers of the faithful was *colligere*. The collect of the day is said first, and may be followed by the collect(s) of minor commemorations and/or seasonal collects.

The Western collects are prayers of a distinct, set form. There is an address (“O God), then a reminder of a divine attribute, a mystery of faith, or an example of saintly living (“who for our redemption gave thy Son to the death of the Cross”); then a request connected to what has just been called to mind (“grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may live forever in thy kingdom”); and the collect is concluded by saying that we pray this through Christ (“through Christ our Lord. Amen”). For the first thousand years or so, all collects were addressed to the Father, but as the Church continued to fight Arianism in Gaul, collects addressed to the Son were added - though never to the Holy Spirit. We know that some of the collects were composed by Pope St. Damasus (d. 384). In this form of prayer we are connected to nearly all generations of Christians in the West. The collects are succinct, for the most part (typical of liturgical Latin), and they help us focus on the emphasis of the day and the season.

The Priest kisses the Altar in the midst and turns to the people and sings:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. Let us pray.

The Celebrant turns to the altar and sings the Collect(s) and the People respond: Amen.

Epistle

The first lesson follows. The reading of lessons was a feature in the worship of the Synagogue, and it was taken into the worship of the early Church. In some places there were three or five lessons. The old Roman Mass had three lessons: Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospel. By the time of St. Gregory, however, we find the two lessons we are accustomed to today. The masses for Ember Days are an exception with up to seven lessons, and we still have three lessons on Good Friday. The sequence of lessons (the lectionary) was essentially set during the period between St. Leo and St. Gregory, that is between 405 and 604; this sequence survived in

the English Church until the Reformation and in the Roman Church until the Second Vatican Council did away with it in favor of a new three-year lectionary cycle. A passage of Scripture is called a *pericope*. In many places the *pericope* for reading the Epistles and Gospels were marked in the margins of Bibles with the first and last word.

After the reading the reader kneels and receives the priest's blessing. The people respond "Thanks be to God" to the good news they have heard.

Gradual, Alleluia, Sequence & Tract

Chants follow the epistle, and depending on the season and feast day, may include the *Gradual, Alleluia, Sequence, and Tract*. These are a continuation of the psalm singing of synagogue worship. They form an interlude between the lessons. The gradual is said to be the oldest example of psalm singing in the Mass (unlike the other chants which originally accompanied a procession, the gradual was sung entirely for its own sake). It is called the *Gradual* from the Latin *gradus*, as it was sung from the steps leading to the *ambo*. In Gregorian Chant, the melodies are very elaborate for the gradual, providing a moment for meditation. When there were three lessons, the gradual was sung after the first lesson and the *Alleluia* was sung after the second lesson. Before the time of St. Gregory, the *Alleluia* was sung only during Easter-tide, and it was St. Gregory who extended its use to all Sundays and feast days throughout the year, except during Lent and Pre-lent. "Alleluia," which simply means "praise God," is a exclamation of joy and a fitting preparation to hear the Gospel, the good news. From Septuagesima until Easter, a psalm called the *tract* replaces the *Alleluia*, and is sung in a simpler manner.

On certain occasions (Pascha, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Requiems, and the two feasts of the Sorrows of the Mother of God), a *sequence* is sung after the Gradual and/or *Alleluia*. They are also called *proses*, as they are written without poetic meter. The sequences may have grown from an elaboration of the last syllable of the *Alleluia* in much the same manner as the tropes developed for the Kyrie. Although the Roman Rite only retained five sequences following the Council of Trent (16th c.), there were many in use throughout Europe before that time. *Salus aeterna* ("Thou forever our salvation," *St. Ambrose Hymnal* #41) is an example of a Sequence hymn that was not retained in the Roman Rite after Trent.

The people sit. The Epistle appointed is sung and the People respond: R. Thanks be to God.

The Gradual, Tract or Alleluia, and Sequence follow as appointed. The Deacon or Priest who is to sing the Gospel then says: Cleanse my heart and my lips, O almighty God, who didst cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaiah with a burning coal, and in thy gracious mercy so purify me that I may worthily proclaim thy holy Gospel. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel

The chanting or reading of the Gospel is the high point of the *Mass of the Catechumens* and the liturgy surrounds it with special ceremonial. The deacon, or priest, who is to chant the Gospel says preparatory prayers and asks for a blessing to worthily proclaim the Gospel. The prayer recalls Isaiah 6:6-7 "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand,

which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged...”

In a High or Sung Mass, the Gospel may be sung from the north end of the altar or taken out in procession, and is accompanied by incense and candles. The Gospel Book may be elaborately decorated and the people stand as the Gospel procession begins. Originally the Gospel was sung from the *ambo*, a raised platform (the predecessor of the pulpit). From the middle ages, the Gospel was typically proclaimed toward the north, a cold and unhappy place where barbarians lived who most needed to hear the Gospel (we still move the Gospel book to the north side at this time as a reminder that we are to be evangelists and missionaries today). When the Gospel is announced, the people may sign themselves with the cross on the forehead, lips, and breast (as we are to keep the faith with our minds and our mouths and in our hearts). Until the 13th century, the Gospel book was taken to all the clergy to kiss after the Gospel was sung, and sometimes to all the faithful as well, as it is in the Byzantine Rite in Matins to this day. Our Rite today appoints the celebrant alone to kiss the book as he says “By these Gospel words, may our sins be blotted out.”

In the time of St. Justin Martyr (d.c. 165), the reader read “as long as time allows” until the celebrant gave the sign to stop. Some attribute our list of which Gospel lessons are appointed to be read on which occasions to Pope Damasus (d. 384), some to St. Jerome (d. 420), but it was certainly set by the time of Pope St. Gregory (d. 604).

If one other than the Celebrant is to sing the Gospel, he receives the blessing from the Celebrant, first saying: Bid, sir, a blessing. *The Priest answers:* May the Lord be in *thy* heart and on *thy* lips, that *thou mayest* worthily attend to his Holy Gospel. Amen.

Incense is set with appropriate prayers and the Gospel Book is taken into the midst of the congregation. The Book is censed after the salutation. The Deacon or Priest sings the Gospel, first singing:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. The ✠ continuation (beginning) of the Holy Gospel according to_____.

R. Glory be to thee, O Lord.

After the Gospel, the People say

R. Praise be to thee, O Christ.

Returning to the Altar, the Celebrant kisses the Book, saying Through the words of the Gospel may our sins be blotted out.

The Celebrant is censed.

Homily

The Homily or Sermon may follow. In Luke 4:16-22, we hear that our Savior read from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah in the synagogue and then explained what it meant. We have early homilies by many of the fathers of the Church: Augustine, Leo, Gregory, Ambrose, Cyril, John Chrysostom, Basil... These patristic homilies help us to understand how the Church has understood and applied Scripture and doctrine through the ages. A homily is usually a pastoral commentary on one of the lessons or on the meaning of a feast day. It should help us understand and apply the teaching of the Church to our own lives today.

The Sermon may follow here and announcements may be made.

Creed

The Creed follows on all Sundays and major feast days. It is, in essence, an answer to the Gospel and the homily: "I believe..." At Baptism, the catechumen says the Creed immediately before Baptism; now the faithful say the Creed immediately before the consecration of and reception of Holy Communion. The Creed we say within the Mass is called the Nicene Creed. The composition of this Creed was begun by the Council of Nicea in 325, in answer to the heresy of Arianism and completed by the Council of Constantinople in 381. It was probably based on the Baptismal Creed in use in Jerusalem before that time. It was not used within the Eucharist in the East until the 5th century when this practice began in Antioch and spread throughout the East. Rome did not adopt the use of the Creed in the Mass till 1014.

Christ tells us, in St. John's Gospel (15:26), that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. Of course, we know that the Creed came from the Council without the *filioque* (Latin for "and the Son") which was added later in the West, first in Spain in the 6th century or so as an attempt to answer lingering Arianism (the heresy which taught that Jesus was not God, but a created being). By the 9th century the Creed was being sung in the Mass with the *filioque* throughout the Gallican Church, though Rome still rejected the *filioque*. By the 11th century, however, the *filioque* had become a major point of division between the East and the West. As Western Rite Orthodox Christians we sing the Creed as given by the Councils, echoing the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Ceremonially, within the Creed, we normally bow at the name of Jesus, we genuflect at the mention of the Incarnation, we bow at the mention of worship of the Holy Trinity, and we make the sign of the Cross at the mention of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

The Nicene Creed is sung on Sundays and other Major Feasts.

The priest extends and joins his hands, and bowing his head a little begins:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord (*bow*) Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his

Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven (*here genuflect*), and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man (*rise*); and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is (*bow*) worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, ☩ and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Offertory

Now we come to the offertory. My Liturgics professor in seminary was fond of saying that there were only three problematic places in the liturgy; three places that had greatly expanded through the ages: “the beginning, the middle, and the end”. Now we come to that middle part. In the early days, the catechumens were dismissed at this time, sent home, and were not allowed to be present at the consecration until their baptisms. We no longer send catechumens home at this point.

The offertory begins with “let us pray...” but without any prayer to follow. This is the last remnant of the *prayers of the faithful* which had formed a part of the early liturgy. The Solemn Collects that we hear on Good Friday are an indication of the form that these prayers followed, but they had disappeared for the most part by the 5th or 6th century. Now, the offertory antiphon is sung after the “let us pray” and this antiphon is all that remains of a longer offertory psalm that was sung as an offertory procession brought the bread and the wine and alms to the altar. The procession disappeared by the 9th or 10th century. In the early centuries, in the West, the bread was typical household bread, round but marked with a cross or sometimes in the shape of a crown. The use of unleavened bread, specially prepared and shaped like a coin, became the norm in the West by the 9th or 10th century. This meant that the faithful could no longer bring and offer the bread as a part of the procession.

While today we think of the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed and the issue of Papal supremacy to be the primary causes of the schism between the East and the West in the 11th century, at the time polemics focused more on the use of leavened vs. unleavened bread in the Eucharist. It appears that Christians used common household bread for the Mass in early days, typically leavened. The earliest clear references to the use of unleavened bread in the West date from the 9th century. Those advocating the use of leavened bread said that it is living bread, bread that has risen and that unleavened bread is Scripturally associated with mourning, thus inappropriate for use in the Eucharist. Those advocating the use of unleavened bread claimed that they were following the Scriptural mandate to use unleavened bread at Passover, and referred to the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8). An encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1895 declared: “The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of the seven

Ecumenical Councils, according to the example of our Savior, celebrated the divine Eucharist for more than a thousand years throughout the East and West with leavened bread, as the truth-loving papal theologians themselves also bear witness; but the Papal Church from the eleventh century made an innovation also in the sacrament of the divine Eucharist by introducing unleavened bread.” As Western Rite Orthodox Christians we use leavened bread as a matter of obedience, both to Tradition and to our bishops.

In the days before the wafers were introduced, there would sometimes be a substantial pile of bread brought forth and offered. The *secret* for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist recalls this, saying, “We load thine altar, O Lord, with these our oblations...” What was not required for consecration was given to the support of the clergy and the poor, and a portion was blessed and given to those who did not receive communion (this is likely the origin of the practice of *blessed bread* or *pain benit*) and for this reason it was blessed here at the offertory. We are to use red wine; at St. Gregory’s we use *Mavrodaphne*, a sweet Greek wine from the region near the Gulf of Corinth.

As the choir sings the chant of the *offertory*, the priest prepares the altar for the consecration of the bread and wine. Before Mass, the chalice was prepared; while there is a prescribed service of preparation in the Eastern Rite, the preparation takes place without ceremonial in the Western Rite. In the sacristy a purificator (a folded square of linen that will be used to cleanse the chalice) is placed on top of the chalice, followed by the paten on which is placed the priest’s host (the portion of bread to be consecrated for the priest), then the pall covers the host and finally the assembly is veiled and the burse with the corporal is placed on top. Only a Bishop, Priest, Deacon or Subdeacon is to handle the chalice within the liturgy.

Now, at the offertory, the corporal is spread on the altar, over the *Antimension*. The *Antimension* (a Greek word meaning ‘in place of the table’) is a cloth, printed with an icon of the burial of Christ and which may have relics of the saints sewn into it. It is our permission from the bishop to serve the liturgy. No *Antimension*, no liturgy. It serves in much the same manner as the Altar Stone did in the Latin Rite. In normal Western Rite use, the *Antimension* stays under the fair linen cloth that covers the altar.

After receiving and offering the bread (the accompanying prayer is from the 9th century), the celebrant pours wine and a little water into the chalice. This mixture follows the ancient practice of mixing water and wine at meals; it was probably done at the Last Supper. This action was mentioned as taking place in the Mass in the writings of St. Irenaeus in the 2nd century, and it was explained by St. Cyprian: it signifies the union between Christ and the Church. As Christ partook of our human nature, so we are called to partake of His divine nature. The water which is poured into the chalice represents us, the faithful. And we also recall that when Christ’s side was pierced with a spear on the Cross, water and Blood flowed out together (symbolic of Baptism and Holy Communion). The prayer said here dates from about the 6th century. The prayer “Come, O almighty...” has sometimes been seen as an *epiclesis* (an invocation of the Holy Spirit) of a sort in the Roman Rite, but it is not explicit.

Next follows the censuring of the gifts, the altar, the clergy, and the people. This practice arose in the Gallican Church in the 8th or 9th century and spread slowly to Rome by the 12th century. As the priest asks God's blessing on the incense, he calls on the intercession of St. Michael the Archangel, thought to be the angel of the Apocalypse mentioned in Revelation 8:3 "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne." And Luke 1:11 similarly mentions an Angel, "and there appeared unto him (Zacharias) an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense," although this angel is clearly identified as Gabriel. The censuring of the oblation and the altar symbolizes the prayers of the Church rising up to God like a cloud of incense, as shown by Ps. 140, verses 1 and 2 which are said at this time. The censuring of the people shows our participation in the offering of these things and these prayers and it points to the divine presence within us.

The *lavabo* follows, both literally and symbolically cleansing the priest's hands for what is to follow. "I will wash my hands in innocency and so will I go to thine altar..." The prayer "Receive, O Holy Trinity..." (pre-11th c.) then sums up the offertory and places these actions in the context of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord (which give the Mass its true meaning) and in the context of the Communion of the saints (with whom we are connected by the actions of Holy Communion); the whole Church together, both living and departed, is worshiping before the altar of God.

The bread called *Antidoron* or "*pain benit*" is blessed at this time. *Antidoron* (meaning "in place of the gifts") is blessed bread given to all in the spirit of Christian fellowship). The alms are received as a part of what we offer to God. In the *Orate, fratres* "Pray, brethren..." the priest asks for the assent and co-operation of the faithful in this offering "To the praise and glory of God and to the benefit of all the Holy Church."

The Celebrant kisses the Altar and turning to the people, sings:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. Let us pray.

The Offertory verse follows. As the priest prepares and offers the bread and wine, he says the following prayers, quietly:

At the offering of the bread. Accept, O holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, this unspotted host which I, unworthy servant, offer unto thee, my living and true God, for my innumerable sins, offences and negligences, as also for those here present and for all faithful Christians, both living and dead, that it may avail me and them unto life everlasting. Amen.

Making the sign of the Cross with the Paten, he places the Host upon the Corporal and places half the Paten under the Corporal to the right.

As wine and water are mixed in the chalice, he blesses the water, saying: ✠ O God, who in creating human nature hast wonderfully dignified it and still more wonderfully reformed it, grant

that by the mystery of this water and wine, we may become partakers of his divine nature who deigned to partake of our human nature, thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God; throughout all ages of ages. Amen.

At the offering of the Chalice he makes the sign of the cross with the Chalice above the corpora, saying: We offer unto thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching thy mercy, that it may ascend before thy divine majesty as a sweet odour for our salvation and for that of the whole world. Amen.

Then he covers the Chalice and with hands joined he says: Accept us, O Lord, in the spirit of humility and contrition of heart: and grant that the sacrifice we offer this day in thy sight may be pleasing to thee, O Lord God.

He raises his eyes to heaven and lowers them, as he extends his hands, raises, joins and lowers them, then blesses the gifts: Come, O almighty and eternal God the Sanctifier, bless ☩ this sacrifice prepared for the glory of thy holy Name.

At Solemn Mass incense is set with the following prayers: Through the intercession of Blessed Michael the Archangel standing at the right hand of the altar of incense, and of all his elect, may the Lord vouchsafe to bless this incense, and to receive it for a sweet smelling savour. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Oblations, altar, Priest, servers, and people are censed while the Priest says: May this incense, which thou hast blest, ascend unto thee, O Lord: and may thy mercy descend upon us. *Ps. 141:1-3:* Let my prayer, O Lord, be set forth in thy sight as the incense: and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips: O let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing, let me not be occupied in ungodly works. *As the Priest gives up the thurible, he says:* The Lord kindle in us the fire of his love, and the flame of eternal charity. Amen.

The Priest now washes his hands, saying: Ps. 26:6. Note that the Gloria Patri is omitted during Passiontide. I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to thine altar. That I may show the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth. O shut not up my soul with the sinners, nor my life with the bloodthirsty: in whose hands is wickedness, and their right hand is full of gifts. But as for me, I will walk innocently: O deliver me and be merciful unto me. My foot standeth right, I will praise the Lord in the congregations. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Bowing slightly, with joined hands resting on the altar, he prays: Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we make to thee in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honour of blessed Mary Ever-Virgin, of blessed John (the) Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of all Saints; that it may be available to their honour and our

salvation: and that they may vouchsafe to intercede for us in heaven, whose memory we celebrate on earth. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bread for Antidoron may be blessed. The Celebrant kisses the altar and turns to the people. He may state the intention of the Mass. He then says:

V. Pray, brethren, that this my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.

R. May the Lord receive this sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of his Name, both to our benefit and that of all his holy Church.

V. Amen.

Secret

Yet again the priest presents the gifts on the altar to God as he prays the *secret*. Some have said that the Secret is actually the prayer that follows the “let us pray” said back at the beginning of the offertory and it may have originally been the only offertory prayer said over the bread and wine. The Secrets are written in the same form as the collects, which we hear at the beginning of the Mass. Beginning in Gaul, this prayer was said in a “low voice” while the Offertory psalm was being sung and the name *secret* may come from this practice or it may come from the Latin *secernere* which means to separate or set apart. The secrets normally mention the offerings of bread and wine and ask for the grace which comes from receiving Christ’s Body and Blood, or for the grace commemorated on a particular feast day. Sometimes the *secret* seems to imply that the bread and wine are already consecrated. This is similar to the respect given to the bread and wine in the Great Entrance of the Byzantine Liturgy - this bread and wine has been set aside to become the Body and Blood of Christ, and the entire service, as a whole, is the act of consecration. The early Christians never speculated on when the consecration actually takes place. This is the bread, and this is the wine that will become for us the Bread of heaven and the Cup of immortality.

The number of secrets corresponds to that of the collects: first the secret of the day, followed by the secret of minor commemoration(s) and/or seasonal secrets. At the conclusion of the secrets the priest raises his voice and sings the *ekphonesis* (Greek for “utterance” or “something said out loud”). This serves as a ‘warning’ that the secrets have ended and that the dialogue of the *Sursum Corda* is about to begin.

The Celebrant turns to the Altar and continues with the Secret Prayer(s). At the conclusion he raises his voice and sings:

Throughout all ages of ages.

People. Amen.

Now we come to the central portion of the Mass: the Eucharistic prayer and consecration of the Bread and Wine, that become the Body and Blood of Christ. Following the example of our Lord, who at the Last Supper, took bread and wine and gave thanks, in all ancient rites of Holy Communion, the central prayer is in the form of a *thanksgiving*. In all forms, the celebrant begins

by inviting the faithful to give thanks to God, and then the celebrant continues to give thanks, thanking God for what He has done, especially for the coming of the Son of God on earth; he remembers our Lord's life and specifically what our Lord did the night before He died - as He took the bread and wine, blessed them, broke the bread, and gave them to His disciples. The celebrant continues remembering and giving thanks for the resurrection, the ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Petitions, asking for what is needed for ourselves and for others, are woven through the prayer, but the central focus is *thanksgiving*.

In the Roman form of the Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving, we find a link back to the earliest days of the Church. Monsignor Klas Gamber, a 20th century Roman Catholic scholar of the liturgy had this to say: "In contrast to the liturgies of the Eastern Church, which continued their development well into the Middle Ages, but remained fixed thereafter, the Roman Liturgy, in its simple, even plain forms, which originated in early Christianity, has remained almost unchanged for centuries. There is no question that the Roman liturgy is the oldest Christian Rite..." We know that Pope Damasus I (d. 384) made revisions to the liturgy, as did St. Gregory the Great (d. 604) - mostly in terms of giving our service its present organization, but the basic form of the liturgy, including the text of the Eucharistic prayer is virtually unchanged from the earliest times.

Sursum Corda and Preface

The Eucharistic prayer begins with the *Sursum corda*, which is common to all liturgies. It is one of the oldest liturgical formulas we know of. Lamantations 3:41 may be its source, "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." The Jewish grace before meals includes the form "let us give thanks to *Adonai* our God."

Then follows the *Preface*, the variable introduction to the Eucharistic prayer which changes with the seasons or occasion. The Leonine Sacramentary (5th or 6th c.) had 267 prefaces, almost one for each Mass; this was decreased to 53 in the Gelasian Sacramentary (6th or 7th c.), and to ten in the Gregorian Sacramentary (7th or 8th c.). We have sixteen in *The Orthodox Missal* and two others have been approved for our use. In the Preface, we give thanks to God, we recall the reason for our thanksgiving, we offer this thanks in the Name of Christ and then join our voices with that of the angels.

The Celebrant then turns to the people and sings:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. Lift up your hearts.

R. We lift them up unto the Lord.

V. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

R. It is meet and right so to do.

The Celebrant faces the Altar and continues with hands raised:

It is very meet, right, just and availing unto salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty everlasting God. *Here shall follow the proper preface, if there be one.* Through Christ our Lord, by whom the angels praise thy majesty, the Dominions adore thee, the Powers tremble, the Heavens and the heavenly Host and the blessed Seraphim join with one glad voice in extolling thee. To their voices we pray thee, let ours be added, while we say with humble praise:

Sanctus and Benedictus

The *Preface* leads us to the *Sanctus*: the first portion is taken from Isaiah's vision of worship in heaven, "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke (Isaiah 6)." St. Clement of Rome (d.c. 101) spoke of the *Sanctus* and Pope Sixtus (d. 128) required the inclusion of the *Sanctus* within the Eucharistic prayer. We join our voices with the heavenly host and our worship here on earth is patterned after what we know, from Scripture, of worship in heaven.

The *Benedictus*, which follows, repeats the joyful shout of the people as Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and we find it first in Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD." Together, the *Sanctus* and the *Benedictus* give us an opportunity to praise and adore, to proclaim the greatness of God, both for what God has done for us and is about to do, once again, in feeding us with His own Body and Blood.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. ☩ Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The Canon of the Mass

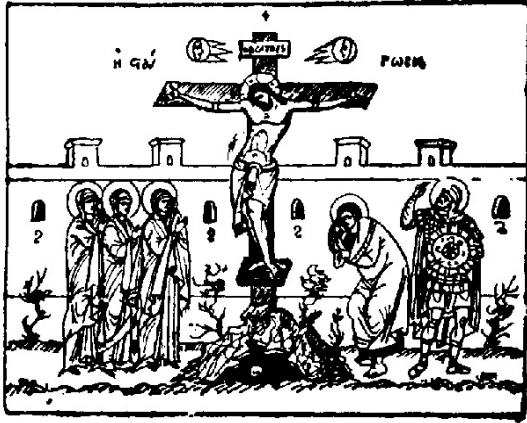
In Greek, the Eucharistic prayer is called the *anaphora*, the prayer of offering or oblation. But in Latin from ancient times, and certainly before the time of St. Gregory, the prayer has been called the *Canon*. The *Canon*, is the central act and portion of the Mass. A *canon* is a norm or a rule, so this prayer for us is the lawful manner, the fixed firm rule by which we say Mass. Some scholars believe that our *Canon* was set by Pope Damasus (d. 384) as the fixed manner in which Mass would be said, as opposed to the other various methods that were in existence at that time: all in Rome would now conform to this manner. Scholars believe that some portions of the prayer go all the way back to perhaps the first century in Rome, most other portions were in place by the 4th and 5th century, and the entire prayer (with the exception of the prayer for the departed) was set by the time of St. Gregory. So, in a sense it is misleading to call our liturgy "the liturgy of St. Gregory" for he simply provided the organization we now have for material that was already ancient, making only a few additions. Sometimes you will hear our liturgy referred to as "the liturgy of St. Peter," being the liturgy of the final see of that Apostle.

The canon begins, after the Sanctus and Benedictus, with the words “Te igitur...” in Latin, translated as “Therefore” in our Missal and the Canon ends with the *ekphonesis* “throughout all ages of ages. Amen” before the Lord’s prayer. In the early centuries of the Church, the Canon was said out loud; in fact in places the entire Canon was sung (in a tone much like the Preface). That one of our Offertory prayers is called the *secret*, is a reminder that at one time only that prayer was said “in a low voice,” and that only because of the lengthy musical setting of the Offertory psalm. In the 6th century, the Emperor Justinian published a law requiring bishops and priests to “make the divine oblation and the prayer which is said in holy baptism not secretly, but with a voice that may be heard by the faithful people.” This tells us that the Canon was being said secretly by some at this time. Before long, however, the custom spread. Sometimes the explanation is given that a Palestinian monk, living in Rome, told a story about a group of boys playing in Church one day. The boys were standing at the altar and one of them began saying the words of the Canon. Then lightening came down from heaven, struck the church and nearly killed the boys. Their bishop promptly began saying the Canon silently.

In the middle ages the mystic meaning was given of shielding the sacred text from the unfaithful (but the unfaithful had already theoretically been dismissed - “*catechumens depart!*”). This shielding of what is most holy is not unlike closing the curtains on the iconostasis in the Eastern Rite. By the 9th century the practice of saying the Canon silently had become obligatory throughout the West, as it was by this time throughout the East as well. Practically this also had the benefit of shortening the service, which had become longer and longer. We still see a clear example of this in the Byzantine rite, where the priest will be saying his part, the deacon may be saying his part, and the chanters or choir singing the people’s part - all at the same time. The service would be much longer if each participant waited for the other to complete their parts. This phenomena of having the priest and the choir each offering their own parts simultaneously arose in the West as musical settings of the Mass became more lengthy and elaborate. The priest began the Canon while the choir sang the lengthy *Sanctus*. The priest would then say the words of institution after the Sanctus; then the choir would sing the *Benedictus* while the priest would say the remainder of the Canon. The normal practice today within our Western Rite Vicariate is for the Canon to be said out loud.

Each of the paragraphs of the Canon is known by the first word or two in Latin [*Te igitur, Memento, Communicantes...*]. As the priest begins the Canon [*Te igitur*] he raises and joins his hands, in a reverent gesture of gathering the faithful as we enter the Holy of Holies. In the middle ages, the “T” of *Te igitur* was made into a richly illuminated cross in the missals, and the priest kissed the cross at this point; now we kiss the altar, both reverently emphasizing our prayer and showing our desire to surrender to Christ and have union with Christ. We ask the Father, through the Son to accept and bless our offerings of bread and wine, and we state that we make this offering for the whole Church, for her peace and for her unity. And as that peace and unity are closely connected to the proper governance of Church and society, we pray for our bishops and for our secular ruler. The prayer closes with petition for all those believers who hold the true and apostolic faith.

The Preface ended, the Priest extending, slightly raising and joining his hands, raising his eyes to heaven, and at once lowering them, bowing profoundly before the Altar, with his hands placed upon it, says:



HEREFORE, most merciful Father, we humbly pray and beseech thee *(He kisses the Altar, rises and with hands joined before his breast, says)* through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, that thou wouldst be pleased to accept and bless these ✠ gifts, these ✠ offerings, these ✠ holy, spotless sacrifices, *(with extended hands)* which we offer thee in the first place for thy holy Catholic Church, that thou wouldst vouchsafe to keep her in peace under thy protection, to bring her to unity and to guide her throughout the world: likewise for **IGNATIUS** our Patriarch, for **PHILIP** our

Metropolitan, (for *N.*, our Bishop), for the Holy Synod of Antioch, for the President of these United States, and for all Orthodox believers who hold the Catholic and apostolic faith.

The next prayer *Memento* is for the remembrance before God of the living who are in need. This includes both those present and those who will be named for special need. This prayer is all that remains of the *diptychs*. The *diptychs* were boards upon which the names of the living and the departed were written for whom the Mass would be offered. In time, the names of the Orthodox bishops were inscribed on the diptychs. To this day, when celebrating the Liturgy, our bishops remember our Archbishop, and our Archbishop remembers our Patriarch, and the Patriarch remembers the chief bishops of all the autocephalous (or self-governing) Orthodox Churches. In this way we remember all those with whom we share faith and communion. It was also something of a sign of honor to have your name read aloud from the *diptychs* and the faithful would go so far as to write their names on the altar itself in order to have their names heard, thus Charlemagne ordered the clergy to commemorate the names in silence. We are no longer concerned about people writing their names on the altar, so it is permissible to audibly mention those we are praying for!

Remember, O Lord, thy servants and all here present whose faith and devotion are known unto thee, for whom we offer, or who offer to thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves and those belonging to them, for the salvation of their souls, for their health and welfare, and who pay their vows to thee, the eternal, living and true God. *(He joins his hands and specific intentions may be made. Then with hands extended he says)*

The prayer *Communicantes* (“In communion with...”) is essentially a continuation of the previous paragraph, as here we remember and proclaim our unity of fellowship with the saints. With joy and honor we mention the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most blest of all mankind, with her title “Mother of God” given to her at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Then we recall the twelve apostles, with Paul filling out the twelve (Saints Peter and Paul are the patrons of Rome, as well

as of Antioch). Then follows mention of five of the early popes (all martyrs), St. Cyprian the martyr-bishop of Carthage, St. Lawrence the martyr-Deacon of Rome, and five lay martyrs. In some places, local saints were added to the list (Martin, Hillary, Benedict, Etheldreda...) and this gave rise to the term “canonization,” which eventually acquired a somewhat different meaning. Our list of saints, fixed by St. Gregory the Great, is the list of the Church in Rome. On the great festivals - Christmas, Epiphany, Maundy Thursday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost - a short, variable reminder of the mystery being celebrated introduces this paragraph. The prayer closes with our request for the intercession of the saints.

In communion with, *(Here is sometimes made mention of the day itself, as indicated below)* and venerating first the memory of the glorious and ever-virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord and God Jesus Christ; and also of thy blessed apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, and Jude: of Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Laurence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmos and Damian; and of all thy saints, through whose prayers grant that in all things we may be guarded by the help of thy protection. *(He joins his hands) Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*

On the Nativity of the Lord and through the Octave is said: In communion with and in honor of this most holy day [night], whereon Blessed Mary, the glory of her maidenhood yet abiding, brought forth the Savior to this world: and venerating first the memory of the same glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the same our Lord and God Jesus Christ: and also of thy blessed Apostles...

On the Epiphany of the Lord and through the Octave is said: In communion with and in honor of this most holy day, whereon thy only-begotten Son, co-eternal with thee in thy glory, manifestly appeared in the true substance of our flesh: and venerating first the memory of the glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the same our Lord and God Jesus Christ: and also of thy blessed Apostles...

From Holy Saturday to the following Saturday is said: In communion with and in honor of this most holy day [night], whereon Jesus Christ our Lord did rise again in his own flesh: and venerating first the memory of the glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the same our Lord and God Jesus Christ: and also of thy blessed Apostles...

On the Ascension of the Lord and through the Octave is said: In communion with and in honor of this most holy day whereon our Lord thy only-begotten Son, set on high at the right hand of thy glory our frail human nature in union with himself: and venerating first the memory of the glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the same our Lord and God Jesus Christ: and also of thy blessed Apostles...

From the Vigil of Pentecost to the following Saturday inclusive is said: In communion with and in honor of this most holy day of Pentecost whereon the Holy Ghost appeared to the Apostles in countless tongues of fire: and venerating first the memory of the glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of the our Lord and God Jesus Christ: and also of thy blessed Apostles...

The server then rings a bell, which has never been required by the rubrics, but became customary, especially in France, and this might now be a signal to kneel for the words of institution, if you have previously been standing. The prayer *Hanc igitur* contains three petitions which are attributed to St. Gregory: “to order our days in thy peace, to deliver us from eternal damnation, and to number us in the flock of thine elect.” We can readily understand the addition of these petitions when we remember the perilous times in which Gregory lived, guiding the Church and the city of Rome through plague and military attack. The celebrant is instructed to stretch out his hands over the bread and wine during this prayer. This practice is mentioned by St. Hippolytus, in Rome, in the 3rd century, and it comes to us from Leviticus 1:4, “And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.” This gesture designates the gifts that are offered as a substitute and sacrifice in place of ourselves. During the octave of Easter and the Octave of Pentecost this paragraph is altered to make particular mention of those new Christians who have entered the Church through Holy Baptism at these times.

Holding his hands spread out over the gifts, he says:

We therefore pray thee, O Lord, mercifully to accept this offering of our service and that of all thy family; to order our days in thy peace, to deliver us from eternal damnation, and to number us in the flock of thine elect. *(He joins his hands)* Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In place of the preceding, from Holy Saturday until Saturday in Easter Week inclusive and from the Vigil of Pentecost until the following Saturday inclusive is said: We therefore pray thee, O Lord, mercifully to accept this offering of our service and that of all thy family, which we offer unto thee on behalf also of those whom thou hast vouchsafed to regenerate by water and the Holy Ghost, granting unto them remission of all their sins, we beseech thee, O Lord, graciously to accept: and order our days in thy peace, to deliver us from eternal damnation, and to number us in the flock of thine elect. *(He joins his hands)* Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the next prayer, *Quam oblationem*, (“Which offering...”), God is asked to bless the offering that it may become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. The repeated request shows how emphatic our request has become; this is our final request before the words of Institution. The priest makes the sign of the Cross five times during this prayer; these are five of the 33 times in the Mass that the priest makes the sign of the Cross, symbolically one for each year of our Lord’s earthly life. And now we are prepared to hear the words of our Lord Himself as He took the Bread and the Wine, gave thanks to His Father, broke the Bread, and gave His own Body and Blood to His disciples.

Which offering, we beseech thee, O God, to ☩ bless, ☩ consecrate, approve, make ☩ worthy and acceptable in every way, that it may become for us the ☩ Body and ☩ Blood of thy most beloved Son, *(He joins his hands)* Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Words of Institution

We now come to the central portion of the Canon, to what is called the “words of institution” or the institution narrative. The celebrant repeats the words that Christ said over the bread and wine at the Last Supper, but this is more than a mere retelling of what was said and done at that meal, for we believe that what is said at this point comes to pass. We hear the priest say the words, but it is Christ who speaks and causes what is spoken to be reality. At creation, God said “let there be light” and there was light. Now God says “this is my body, this is my blood” and it is so.

The text for this paragraph in our missal is essentially as St. Ambrose quotes it in the 4th century, but it most likely comes to us from the first century, and may be the oldest portion of our Eucharistic prayer. Francois Amiot, a French scholar of the 20th century wrote “the text of the Roman canon does not entirely resemble any of the four accounts of the institution in the new testament; it represents very possibly an even older tradition; the Eucharist had already been celebrated for something like a quarter century when, in 55 or 56, St. Paul wrote his account of the Lord’s supper in his first letter to the Corinthians.” Again, we should remember that St. Peter was the first bishop of Rome (after serving as bishop of Antioch) and that both he and St. Paul shaped the Church in Rome. The Roman Church was founded on Apostolic tradition and practice.

The paragraph begins by saying, “Who, the day before he suffered...” This is the normal Western form, whereas the Eastern liturgies follow St. Paul’s words to the Corinthians, “On the night when he was betrayed...” “With his eyes lifted up to heaven” is not mentioned in the accounts of the last supper, but is a feature of other important miracles: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Mk. 6:41: “And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples...”) - a foreshadowing of the Eucharist; and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:41; “So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.’”). The words for the bread are from Mt. 26:26 (“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’”) and the words for the chalice from 1 Cor. 11:25 and Luke 22:20 (“In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’” and “likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”). The command to repeat this action is found only in St. Paul and St. Luke. The words “the mystery of faith” may be a reference from 1 Tim. 3:9 (“they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”) and are found in the Gelasian Sacramentary (some think that these may have been words the deacon shouted out at this point). With both the Bread and the Cup, our Lord gives thanks, giving the name Eucharist to the entire service.

According to Roman Catholic theology of the 12th and 13th centuries and following, it is the words of institution which make the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. This is a part of the late Roman (Scholastic) desire to define everything, rather than accepting the reality of mystery. Using the categories of Aristotelian philosophy, the Roman Catholic Church said that the “substance” of the bread and wine changed at this point to become the Body and Blood of Christ, while the “accident”, the external form, remained the same. This is the meaning

of “Transubstantiation.” The Orthodox Church simply declares that the consecrated Bread and Wine *are* the Body and Blood of Christ. This is a great Mystery and we do not attempt to say how this happens. From an older, and more Orthodox perspective, we see the entire service is seen as consecratory.

With the late Roman emphasis on the words of institution as the moment of consecration, the ceremonial surrounding these words became more elaborate (certainly by the 12th - 14th c.). The ceremony of the elevation is a good example of this. All liturgies have an elevation; in the Eastern Rite the elevation occurs at: “Holy things are for the holy.” In time, in the Roman liturgy, the elevation at the words of institution became the central focus of the Mass. The elevation is both an act of offering to God and a showing to the faithful of the good things they are about to receive. Before the 12th century or so, the celebrant lifted up the Bread and the Cup as he said the words, put them down and went on, but as popular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament increased, the celebrant was encouraged to lift the elements higher so that the faithful could see them, and the popular belief arose that the most important thing about the Mass was seeing the elevation. The bell was rung early to warn people it was coming, school boys were let out of class to see the elevations, and just before the Reformation it was written that “the rude people of the country in diverse parts of England will cry out to the priest “hold up Sir John, hold up. Heave it a little higher” in order to better see the elevations. The ringing of the tower bell at the elevations let people working in the fields or at home know that the consecration was taking place, and that they should stop their work and pray. For us, the elevations are a time of devotion, to remember and to give thanks for the gifts of Christ’s Body and Blood, but without defining any sort of precise moment of consecration. We do these things in remembrance of what Christ has done for us, and we give thanks.

Who, the day before he suffered, took bread (*He takes the bread*) into his holy and venerable hands and, with his eyes lifted up to heaven unto thee, God his almighty Father, giving thanks unto thee, he blessed, brake and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat ye all of this, for THIS IS MY BODY.

The Celebrant genuflects, elevates the Host, replaces the Host on the Corporal and genuflects again. Then having uncovered the Chalice, he says:

In like manner after he had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into his holy and venerable hands (*He takes the chalice*), again giving thanks & unto thee, he blessed it, and gave it to his disciples saying: Take and drink ye all of this, for THIS IS THE CUP OF MY BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL TESTAMENT, THE MYSTERY OF FAITH, WHICH SHALL BE SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS. (*He sets the Chalice upon the Corporal*) As oft as ye shall do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of me.

The Celebrant genuflects, elevates the Chalice, replaces the Chalice on the Corporal, then genuflects again. He continues with hands extended:

The next prayer “Wherefore, O Lord...” is called the *Anamnesis*, from the Greek word meaning memorial, as we do these things in remembrance of Christ’s Passion, Resurrection and

Ascension. Recalling these things, the priest, the acolytes, and all the people offer God bread and wine that He has made, and that by God's blessing now become the holy Bread of eternal life and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.

Wherefore, O Lord, we thy servants, as also thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed Passion of the same Christ, thy Son our Lord, his Resurrection from the dead and glorious Ascension into heaven, offer unto thy most excellent majesty of thy gifts bestowed upon us (*He joins his hands*) a pure ☩ host, a holy ☩ host, a spotless ☩ host, the holy ☩ bread of eternal life, and the chalice ☩ of everlasting salvation. (*With hands extended he continues*)

The next prayer asks God to accept this our sacrifice in the same manner he accepted the gifts of three Old Testament figures whose offerings prefigured Christ's offering of himself on the Cross. Abel's offering was that of an innocent man who reverently gave God the first fruits, the best portion, of his flock, and who was killed because of his goodness by his own brother (Gen. 4:4 - "and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering.") Abraham, a man of great faith, was prepared to obediently sacrifice his own son, Isaac, in answer to a test; then God himself provided the sheep for the sacrifice. Melchizedek is a mysterious figure mentioned in Genesis and in Hebrews, chapter 7. He is called "priest of the Most High God." His priesthood prefigures Christ's priesthood, in that it is without beginning and without end (Gen. 14:18 - "and Melchizedek King of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.").

The words "a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim" were added by Pope St. Leo as a protest against the Manichean heresy, which thought of matter (especially wine), as evil. Orthodox Christianity regards matter, created by God, as good.

Upon which vouchsafe to look with a favorable and serene countenance, and to accept them as thou wert graciously pleased to accept the gifts of thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and that which thy high priest Melchisedech offered unto thee, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

Then follows the *epiclesis* (the invocation of the Holy Spirit), an Orthodox addition to the Roman canon. Orthodox scholars have been divided as to whether the Roman canon was complete without a specific invocation of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood, and so that there be no question, an *epiclesis* in the manner found in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom has been added. The triple *Amen* by all present is our "so be it" added to this prayer.

And we beseech thee, O Lord, to send ☩ down thy Holy Spirit upon these offerings, that he would make this bread the precious ☩ Body of thy Christ, and that which is in this Cup the precious ☩ Blood of thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ, transmuting them by thy Holy Spirit. *R.* AMEN. AMEN. AMEN. *The bell is rung thrice. The Celebrant kneels, or bows profoundly with hands joined on the Altar.*

Then the celebrant asks that these gifts be carried by the hands of an angel to God's presence in heaven, that our sacrifice may be a part of that heavenly sacrifice where Christ continually offers himself to the Father in love, and by this connection we may be filled with all heavenly blessings. The question of the identity of the angel has received much discussion. Some have said that the angel is Christ himself (Is. 9:6 in the LXX says "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'angel of Great counsel'..."). Others have said that the 'angel' is the Holy Spirit, or St. Michael, but the more likely explanation is the unnamed angel of the Apocalypse who continually offers the prayers of the saints to God before his throne (Rev. 8:3-4: "and another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne; and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God."). Some scholars have suggested that an *epiclesis*, an invocation of the Holy Spirit, was originally a part of this prayer.

He stands and continues, with hands raised:

We humbly beseech thee, almighty God, to command that these things be borne by the hands of thy holy angel to thine altar on high, into the presence of thy divine majesty, that so many of us (*He kisses the Altar*) as shall partake at this altar of the most sacred ☩ Body and ☩ Blood of thy Son, (*He signs himself*) may be ☩ filled with all heavenly benediction. (*He joins his hands*) Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The prayer for the departed follows. It is an addition from about the 8th century, although the text itself is older. It is a continuation of the remembrance of names on the diptychs that we spoke of earlier. It is a reminder for us of the unity of the faithful in Christ, both living and departed. Those who have "gone before us with the sign of faith" are the baptized faithful who have died. They now "rest in the sleep of peace." The language used in this prayer is similar to that used in inscriptions in the catacombs where the peace of Christ is a continual theme. The word used for "refreshment" originally meant the funeral meal, but now for us, this place of "refreshment, light and peace" is heaven itself.

Be mindful also, O Lord, of thy servants who are gone before us with the sign of faith, and who rest in the sleep of peace. (*Here the departed are commemorated, then with hands extended he proceeds*) To them, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant we pray thee a place of refreshment, light and peace, through the same (*He joins his hands and bows his head*) Christ our Lord. Amen. (*he strikes his breast with his right hand, saying*)

The next prayer continues with the request that we, like the faithful departed, may have fellowship with the saints. The list of saints complements the earlier list and this list was also probably set by St. Gregory. Saints John the Baptist, Stephen the first martyr, Mathias and Barnabas (who later became apostles), Ignatius (the third bishop of Antioch), Pope Alexander I (d. 119), Marcellinus (a priest) and Peter (an exorcist) martyred under Diocletian. Felicity and Perpetua who confessed their faith and were martyred at Carthage (203), Agatha was a young girl martyred in Sicily, Lucy another virgin martyred under Diocletian, Agnes a virgin killed in Rome in the 4th century, Cecilia a Roman martyr of the 3rd century, Anastasia a Roman persecuted by

her husband for helping the Christians and visiting the prisons, martyred in Macedonia in 304. We ask to be with all the saints, who are in the presence of God, not by our own merits, not by our own goodness, but by God's grace and mercy. In some of the early forms of the Canon, a blessing followed here (*e.g. wine, oil, fruit*) and, at the Unction Mass on Wednesday evening in Holy Week, you will note that the Oil of Unction is blessed at this point in the Mass. It may be that the reference to "all these good things" was originally a reference to those things that had just been blessed, but for us, "all these good things" refers all that we have spoken of in the Eucharistic prayer.

To us sinners also, (*with hands extended*) thy servants, confiding in the multitude of thy mercies, grant some lot and partnership with thy holy apostles and martyrs: with John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucia, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and with all thy saints, into whose company we pray thee of thy mercy to admit us, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences (*He joins his hands*). Through Christ our Lord.

The concluding doxology is taken, in part, from Romans 11:36 ("for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.") The Father has created all good things, and we give thanks to Him, together with the Son and the Holy Spirit. The celebrant now lifts the consecrated bread and wine in another minor elevation, singing the end of the canon (in the second *ekphrasis*). And the faithful, with all devotion, respond *Amen* - truly, so be it.

By whom O Lord, thou dost ever create, ✠ sanctify, ✠ quicken, ✠ bless and bestow upon us all these good things. (*He uncovers the Chalice, genuflects, and takes the Host and signs over the Chalice*) For by ✠ him, and with ✠ him, and in ✠ him is to thee, God the Father ✠ almighty, in the unity of the ✠ Holy Spirit, (*He elevates the Chalice and Host a little*) all honor and glory... throughout all ages of ages. *R.* Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Now that the offering of the bread and wine to God, that it may become Christ's own Body and Blood has been accomplished, we turn to prepare to receive this heavenly food, partaking of the life of Christ and joining ourselves with all the faithful, both living and departed. Our preparation continues with the singing of the Lord's Prayer. Although a part of the Mass from at least the 3rd or 4th centuries, it was placed in its current location by St. Gregory the Great. St. Gregory said that "We say the Lord's Prayer immediately after the Canon because it was the custom of the Apostles to consecrate the offering of the Sacrifice by this prayer alone, and it seemed very unseemly to me that we should say the prayer which some scholar had composed over the oblation and that we should not say the very tradition which our Redeemer composed over his own Body and Blood." The introduction to the prayer reminds us that we pray this way because Christ taught us to pray in this manner. In saying this prayer, which Tertullian called the "epitome of the Gospel", we unite ourselves to the will and spirit of Christ, giving glory to the Father and asking for what is needed. Many of the Fathers have seen "our daily bread" as a reference to the life-giving Bread of the Eucharist, as the Mass was celebrated daily from ancient

time. For many centuries, the Lord's Prayer was typically sung by the Celebrant alone, the people only responding with the last petition "But deliver us from evil. Amen"

He returns the Chalice and Host to the Corporal, covers the Chalice, genuflects, rises and sings:

Let us pray. Instructed by saving precepts and following thy divine institution, we presume to say: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Then follows the "*Libera nos*" also called the *embolism* (which is something inserted, like the extra day in a leap year). It is an expansion of the last petition of the Lord's Prayer, present in different forms in most rites. In the Eastern Rite after the Lord's Prayer we hear, "For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen." The *embolism* is typically sung in the Mozarabic, Ambrosian, Gallican, and Byzantine Liturgies, though said in the "low voice" at Rome. Praying to be delivered from sin and all evil, we ask the prayers of the saints that we may have peace in our time and be preserved from inner disquietude, that noisiness of the soul that is so disruptive to the spiritual life. Ss. Peter and Paul are mentioned as the patrons of the Church of Rome, as they are of the Church of Antioch, and St. Andrew is mentioned, both as first-called of the Apostles, and because of St. Gregory's devotion to St. Andrew (Gregory brought a large relic of St. Andrew with him when he returned to Rome from Constantinople and the monastery which he had built on his family estate in Rome was dedicated to St. Andrew). During the Middle Ages the celebrant was allowed to add saints' names here at his discretion. During the *Libera nos* the celebrant takes the paten, makes the sign of the Cross with it and slips it under the host.

Then, as the celebrant breaks the bread, he sings "world without end." This is third of the four actions we make after the example of our Lord at the Last Supper (He took, blest, broke, and gave). One of the many names given to the Eucharist is "the breaking of the Bread" (e.g. Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."). Immediately after the fraction, the celebrant takes a portion of the host and drops it into the chalice of consecrated wine (this is called the *commingling*). In the days of St. Gregory, the ceremonial surrounding the fraction and commingling was much more elaborate. A particle of the consecrated bread, called the *sancta*, kept from the preceding Mass, was placed in the chalice at this time. Another particle from this consecration would then be kept as the *sancta* for the next Mass. Also (in the period between the 4th-10th c.), a particle called the *fermentum* would be taken from the Bishop's Mass to all the area churches, to the priests who were not able to attend the Bishop's celebration. They in turn would place it into the chalice at the masses in their own churches. The *fermentum* was a sign of unity with the bishop and St. Irenaeus wrote of sending the Eucharist to other bishops. These actions with the *sancta* and the *fermentum* helped to emphasize that all masses - past, present, and future - are in fact unified. St. Paul said to the Corinthians "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (1 Cor. 10:17)." The Eucharist is the great sign of our unity as Christians; by it we are united with God, we are united with our Bishops, we are united with the saints and all the faithful departed, and we are united with each other.

The Priest, holding the Paten upright on the Altar, continues, saying:

Deliver us, we beseech thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and to come; and at the intercession of the blessed and glorious Mary, Ever-Virgin Mother of God, of thy blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, Andrew, and all thy Saints, *(He signs himself with the Paten)* graciously give peace in our time, *(He kisses the Paten)* that aided by the help of thy loving kindness, we may both be ever free from sin and secure from all disquietude. *(He puts the Paten under the Host, uncovers the Chalice, genuflects, rises, and breaks the Host over the Chalice)* Through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, *(He places the right half of the Host on the Paten. Then from the left half he breaks a particle)* who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God. *He places the left half on the Paten and holds the particle over the Chalice as he sings:* Ever one God world without end. **R. Amen.**

The Peace

The actions of the *fermentum* have been simplified to one commingling, as the celebrant sings “the Peace of the Lord be always with you.” The *commingling* reminds us also that there is one Sacrament of Christ’s Body and Blood, and not two separate sacraments. The celebrant breaks the Host into three pieces: the smallest he drops into the Chalice; the second was formerly used as the *sancta* for another Mass and as *viaticum* for the dying, but now typically the celebrant receives all the particles as he makes his communion. The words said during the *commingling* are “The peace of the Lord be always with you.” This is called the peace or the *pax*. The kiss of peace as a sign of Christian fellowship goes all the way back to the New Testament. In Romans 16:16, Paul says “Salute one another with an holy kiss” and I Peter 5:14 says, “Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” Tertullian and Justin Martyr speak of the *Peace* and most liturgies make mention of it. It has moved around in location within the liturgy and it has a somewhat checkered history. It is clearly biblical, but it has been prone to abuse, and so it has been suppressed at times and highly ceremonialized at others. Until the 8th c., men and women exchanged the peace, but separately. At times, it has been customary to kiss the Paten, or to pass around a *pax board* (a small panel or tablet, usually decorated with a representation of the Crucifixion). Since the 13th c. a ceremonial embrace between the Sacred Ministers at High Mass symbolizes this desire for Christ’s peace among all Christians (and we will return to this in a moment).

He makes the sign of the Cross with the particle over the Chalice, as follows:

V. The ☩ Peace of the ☩ Lord be always ☩ with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Putting the particle into the Chalice he says (quietly): May this commixture and consecration of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ avail us who partake thereof unto life eternal. Amen.

Agnus Dei

The *Agnus Dei* is then sung. In John 1:29, St. John the Baptist says of Christ, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Originally added to the liturgy by Pope St. Sergius I (d. 701), who was born in Antioch, the *Agnus Dei* was sung during the fraction, which took quite some time. First sung once, then twice in the 11th c. and (as it seems that nothing is ever done just twice in the Church) it was sung three times by the 12th c. with “Grant us thy peace” at the 3rd petition. The *Agnus Dei* recalls that Christ has become our Passover lamb, who saves us from sin and death, granting us mercy and peace.

The Agnus Dei is then is sung.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.

In Masses for the Dead, in place of "have mercy upon us" is said "Grant them rest", and in place of "grant us thy peace", is said: "grant them rest eternal".

The Celebrant says the following prayers quietly before receiving his communion. O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst say to thine Apostles, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, regard not our sins, but the faith of thy Church; and grant her that peace and unity which are agreeable to thy will. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever. Amen.

At High Mass the Peace is exchanged here by the clergy (the celebrant kissing the altar, receiving the peace of Christ, then passing the peace to the Deacon, the deacon to the subdeacon, the subdeacon to the attending clergy).

The celebrant then continues with his own private prayers before receiving Communion. Both of the following prayers are of Gallican origin, the first known to Alcuin in the 8th c. These prayers are also suitable and appropriate for all the faithful to say as a part of their preparation.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who by the will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Ghost hast, by thy death, given life to the world, deliver me, I beseech thee, by this thy most holy Body and Blood, from all iniquities and from every evil. Make me ever obedient to thy commandments, and suffer me not to be ever separated from thee, who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the same Spirit, God, throughout all ages of ages. Amen.

Let not the participation of thy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I albeit unworthy, receive, be to me for judgement and condemnation; but by thy goodness may it be a safeguard and remedy both to soul and body, who with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest, God, throughout all ages of ages. Amen.

Then, as the celebrant makes his communion, he takes the host and says “I will receive the bread of heaven, and call upon the name of the LORD.” [Ps. 116:12] followed by the words of Mt. 8:8

with only slight variation “Lord I am not worthy...” He signs himself with the host and consumes it, then quoting Psalm 116 again he receives the chalice.

At the Priest's Communion, he says: I will take the bread of heaven and call upon the Name of the Lord. *(Then thrice, as he strikes his breast)* Lord, I am not worthy: that thou shouldest enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed. *The bell is rung thrice.*

The Priest receives the Body, saying: May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto everlasting life. Amen. *After which, he says:* What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me? I will receive the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord. I will call upon the Lord, which is worthy to be praised, so shall I be safe from mine enemies. *He then receives the Precious Blood, saying:* May the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul unto everlasting life. Amen.

He then shows the Host and the Chalice to the people, saying the words of St. John the Baptist “Behold the Lamb of God...”, followed by the words of the centurion, from Mt. 8:8, as the priest said them earlier. Origen, St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine all speak of the appropriateness of these words before receiving communion.

Facing the people, holding a Host above the Chalice, the Celebrant says the following Invitation: ☩ Behold the Lamb of God; behold him that takest away the sins of the world. *The Celebrant and People respond three times:* Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The priest turns to the altar and places the Host and Chalice on the corporal.

From the 12th century or so, the reception of communion became less and less frequent, and often the celebrant alone would receive at a Mass (this practice continued well into the 20th c.). When people did receive communion they adopted the prayers of preparation for receiving communion *outside of Mass* as their preparation for receiving within the Mass [the *Confiteor*, etc.], but for us, the prayer “I believe and I confess...” from the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom forms a fitting and final preparation (in some places the *Confiteor* and absolution is also said here). “I believe and I confess...” was added recently (in the early 1990's) by our Patriarch, Ignatius IV. In addition to being a wonderful form for preparation, it also emphasizes our Orthodox unity, as it is said by *all* Orthodox Christians before receiving Holy Communion.

The people say this prayer of preparation before receiving the Sacrament

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is truly thine own immaculate Body, and that this is truly thine own precious Blood. Wherefore I pray thee, have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance; and make me worthy to partake without condemnation of thine immaculate Mysteries, unto remission of my sins and unto life everlasting. Amen. Of thy mystic Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant: for

I will not speak of thy Mystery to thine enemies, neither will I give thee a kiss as did Judas; but like the thief will I confess thee: Remember me, O Lord, in thy Kingdom. Not unto judgement nor unto condemnation be my partaking of thy Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body.

Communion

Then follows the reception of Holy Communion by all Orthodox Christians who are properly prepared. As we have noted, our preparations include prayer and fasting, may include confession as needed, and should include preparing our hearts to receive God.

In the early days of the Church, communion was given in both kinds (the Body and the Blood). Communion was received standing, except on fast days. The host was received either in the mouth or in the hand. St. Cyril, St. Bede, Tertullian, and St. Augustine all say that the host was received in the hand. St. Gregory, in the Dialogues, speaks of people receiving the host directly in their mouths, which eventually became the most common manner.

The practice of *intinction* (dipping the consecrated bread into the consecrated wine and then placing it onto the communicant's tongue) is followed in many of our parishes. This practice was common in the East until the 18th century when it was replaced by giving communion with a spoon, and common in the West until the 11th century.

From the 8th to the 12th centuries the faithful in many places received the Consecrated Wine through a reed or a tube like a straw (an example can be seen at The Cloisters in New York City). By the 12th c. communion under two kinds became less and less common, until it was abolished entirely (for the laity) in 1415. Until the 4th c. most people communicated daily, at church when possible, *at home* on other days (from the reserved Sacrament). Reception became less frequent through the centuries, until the Lateran Council in 1215 had to specify once a year at Easter as an absolute minimum for the faithful.

As communion is received, a *Communion* sentence is sung. We know that in the 4th c. during Communion, a Psalm was sung (Psalms 23 and 34 were commonly used, or the Introit Psalm might be repeated). As with the introit and other chants, between the 10th and 12th c. the psalm nearly disappeared, leaving only the antiphon we have now. The *Communion* is typically a psalm verse, though it may be from the Old or New Testament or composed specifically for the occasion (for example, for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the choir sings, "Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, that bare the Son of the everlasting Father."). The singing of hymns or psalms during the distribution of communion is similar to the practice that was lost.

The proper Communion sentence is then said or sung. The Orthodox Faithful, duly prepared, make their Communions at this time. The Body and Blood of Christ are administered together with these words: May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.

Ablutions

After all have been communicated, the celebrant washes his fingers, assisted by an acolyte. This is called the *ablutions*. These two washings cleanse the vessels and the fingers of the celebrant, making sure that all is reverently consumed. The two ancient prayers (the first is from the 4th c.) speak of the effects of receiving Holy Communion.

At the ablutions, the Priest says: What we have partaken with our mouth, O Lord, may we receive with a pure heart, and of a temporal gift, may it become to us an eternal remedy. May thy Body and Blood which I have received, cleave unto my heart, O Lord; and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me, having been fed with this pure and holy sacrament. Who livest and reignest in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, throughout all ages of ages. Amen.

Then follows the *Post-communion*, a collect-like prayer, the last of the propers in the Mass. The selection and number of *Post-communions* corresponds to the selection and number of collects. Thanking God for what we have received, the Post-communions use wonderful expressions of our belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (speaking of ‘heavenly food’, ‘life-giving food’, ‘heavenly mysteries’ ...).

In weekdays of Lent, a *prayer over the people* follows here. The deacon (or priest) says “Bow your heads before the Lord” and the celebrant says the proper prayer for each day. These prayers may have originally been part of the reception of penitents back into the Church at Pascha.

Then the priest, turning to the people, sings:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. Let us pray.

After which he turns to the Altar and sings the Postcommunion Collects.

Dismissal

Then follows the dismissal. We sing the “Ite, missa est” in Latin because it does not readily translate into English. Essentially it means “Go, this is the dismissal.” The Mass was divided into two sections which have been called the “Mass of the catechumens” and the “Mass of the faithful.” The catechumens were dismissed at the end of the first part of the Mass, now the faithful are dismissed at the end of the entire liturgy. On penitential days, the faithful remained in Church for additional prayers, so “Let us bless the Lord” was sung instead. In both cases, the faithful respond “Thanks be to God” for all that God has done for them, especially for what they have received in Holy Communion. At Requiem Masses, “May they rest in peace. Amen” is said as the dismissal. Eventually, as people remained in church to hear the *missa*, or dismissal, the name “Mass” was applied to the entire liturgy and both St. Ambrose and St. Augustine speak of this.

Then, turning to the People, he says:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Then, if it is a day upon which the Gloria has been said, the priest turns to the people and says:

V. Ite missa est.

R. Deo Gratias

From the Easter Vigil through the Low Saturday "Alleluia, alleluia" is added to the dismissal and response.

V. Ite missa est, alleluia, alleluia.

R. Deo Gratias, alleluia, alleluia.

If the Gloria has not been said the dismissal is "Let us bless the Lord.

V. Let us bless the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Or, at a Requiem

V. May they rest in peace.

R. Amen.

The Blessing

We might expect the liturgy to end with the dismissal, but as I said about the beginning and the offertory, there are three places where the liturgy has been prone to grow - and this is the final such place. While the faithful sing "Deo Gracias, the celebrant says a prayer asking the Holy Trinity to accept what has been offered and to make it fruitful for all who have received, then he blesses the people. Originally, only the bishops gave the blessing, but by the 11th century, the priests were allowed to bless as well.

The Priest then says (quietly): Let the obedient performance of my bounden duty be pleasing unto thee, O Holy Trinity; and grant that this sacrifice which I, unworthy that I am, have offered in the sight of thy majesty, may be acceptable unto thee and may through thy mercy, obtain thy

favour for myself and for all those in whose behalf I have offered it. Who livest and reignest, God, throughout all ages of ages. Amen.

Then the people kneeling, the priest kisses the altar, turns to the people and says this blessing:

The blessing of God Almighty, the ☩ Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit descend upon you, and remain with you always. *R.* Amen.

Last Gospel

Then follows the Last Gospel, which is normally the beginning of St. John's Gospel (except on days when there are two masses of sufficient rank that the Gospel of the lesser Mass is read as the Last Gospel). The prologue of John (verses 1-14) is the great proclamation of the Incarnation. It serves as the Christmas Day Gospel in the West and as the Resurrection Gospel in the East. It is a great statement of our belief in what God has done for us, and the fitting response is "Thanks be to God." In a sense, the Last Gospel is not a part of the Mass, *per se*, but part of the prayers of thanksgiving following Mass. It had been a part of the priest's prayers said on the way back to the Sacristy, but it was so popular among the people, that it became a fixture at the end of the Mass. Now there are other prayers of thanksgiving that the celebrant and people may say, as time and circumstance permit (some of these are found on page 26 and following of *The Orthodox Missal*).

Then the priest goes to the Gospel corner, and there, with hands joined, says:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. ✠ The Beginning of the Holy Gospel according to John.

Or if another Gospel is to be read, he says: ✠ The Continuation of the Holy Gospel according to N. *R.* Glory be to thee, O Lord.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made; in him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (*genuflect*) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. *R.* Thanks be to God.

We have now come to the end of our study of the Mass, the Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Holy Mysteries. Each of these names points to some aspect of this great action we do "in remembrance" of what Christ did that night taking the bread and wine, blessing, breaking the bread, and giving them to his disciples. The full meaning of what he did that night was made clear the next day on the Cross, as he gave his Body and Blood for the life of the world. What we do at our altar and what is done at every altar around the world, today and for the past nearly two thousand years, is a part of what Christ did that night with the apostles, and what he did the next day on the Cross. Our sacrifice is a part of his sacrifice. Our praise and

worship is a part of the praise and worship of all the faithful, living and departed. When we receive the bread and wine, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, partaking of the life of God. This is the bread of angels, life-giving bread, food for life in the kingdom. When we are present at Mass, we experience a fore-taste of life in the kingdom, God is with us and we receive his love, his healing, his forgiveness, we are fed by His Presence. When we have received these holy things, we are prepared to go back out into the world, to do the work God gives us to do, to bear witness, spreading the good news by what we do and say, for we go out to be vehicles for God's love in the world, bearing the Presence of Christ within us. The Mass feeds us and strengthens us to do all these things, to grow to be as we should. *Thanks be to God.*

(A note from Fr. Nicholas Alford: I hope that there is not a single original thought in this outline, but rather that I have presented the timeless teaching of our Church in a manner which some may find helpful. I am indebted to many scholars, both Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican for their work on the liturgy which helped in preparing this presentation. Some of these works are listed below. This presentation grew out of a Lenten series and was not intended to be exhaustive or complete. I hope that this paper may serve as a general introduction to the Holy Eucharist to help a few of the faithful better understand something of a great and wondrous Mystery.)

For further reading:

The Mass: a study of the Roman Liturgy by Adrian Fortesque, 1912

A History of the Mass by Francois Amiot, 1959

The Early Liturgy: to the time of Gregory the Great by Josef Jungmann, 1959

The Shape of the Liturgy by Dom Gregory Dix, 1945

The Eucharist by Alexander Schmemmann, 1988

The Heavenly Banquet: understanding the Divine Liturgy by Emmanuel Hatzidakis, 2008

Offering the Lamb: reflections on the Western Rite Mass in the Orthodox Church by Michael Keiser, 2006

"Leavened and Unleavened: Some Theological Implications of the Schism of 1054" by John Erickson in *The Challenge of Our Past*, 1991.

Various articles on sections of the Mass from the Catholic Encyclopedia, 1917 (on-line at: <http://newadvent.org/cathen/index.html>)