

## LITURGICAL PROBLEMS OF HOLY WEEK

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### *The Liturgical “Problems”?*

When we mention “liturgical problems,” what exactly do we mean? Is a liturgical practice defined as problematic because it is considered from a historical point of view? That is, is it problematic because at some time in the past it was done in a different way and now some points have changed? Or perhaps it may be considered problematic for the totally opposite reason: *not because it has changed, but because it has not changed*; that is, because this or that rite has persisted in an archaic and worn-out form, unrelated to the concern or the interests of contemporary people and is, thus, tiring for them?

In my opinion, if a service or a liturgical custom presents problems, it is not due to either reason. The conclusions of historical investigations (when these result in the discovery of alterations in a service), or the dissatisfaction of contemporary people when they are called to participate in a monotonous or disorganized ceremony, are simply indications that perhaps “something is not right!” The reason why a liturgical practice is characterized as problematic is, firstly, theological and pastoral and, only secondly, historical.<sup>1</sup>

Orthodox liturgy, with its different particular elements (prayers, hymns, movements, symbols, etc.), must have a theological and pastoral character. This requirement entails the following points:

- 1 The worship of the Church has a pastoral character, and therefore, the pastors of the Church are the ones who preside at this worship. The worship of the Church has, as well, a theological character, and therefore it is no accident that the authors of the divine services, the writers of the prayers and hymns of the Church have included the greatest theologians of our Church, such as John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, John of Damascus, etc.

- it must reveal the basic truths of the faith;
- it must lead the faithful into experiential participation in these truths; and
- it must inspire in the faithful a way of life in accord with these truths.

Orthodox worship must lead to the opening of the faithful to the horizon of the infinite divine love and to the self-offering of humankind to the hands of the incomprehensible divine philanthropy. Orthodox worship must generate an attitude of humility and repentance, inflame hope and optimism, and plant reciprocal love. A service or a liturgical custom, which simply “moves” or “pleases” or “impresses” the faithful, is not in accord with the tradition. The faithful, at the end of every service, must be in a position not to say simply “It was so beautiful!,” but “We have seen the true light. ...”<sup>2</sup>

Then the question to be asked is the following: Do the services of Holy Week, in their contemporary form, reveal to the faithful the truths of their faith, do they lead them to an experiential participation in these truths, do they inspire in them a way of life in accord with these truths?<sup>3</sup>

I would like to emphasize here that, in spite of the fact that Orthodox worship preserves, to a great extent, its theological clarity and pastoral dynamism, we cannot deny that there are problems. The services of Holy Week in particular, in their present form, appear more to serve certain *emotional* and *psychological* needs of the faithful, or even the *selfish* fulfillment of certain religious *obligations* on the part of the faithful, notably in the easiest possible manner and with the best accommodation of time, than to reveal to them the truth and lead them to commitment!

However, in order to analyze and understand all of this better, let

2 The hymn of the Byzantine eucharistic liturgy, chanted immediately after having received Holy Communion.

3 In what follows, I am writing with reference primarily to the liturgical customs of the Orthodox Church in Greece, or of the Greek tradition within Orthodoxy in Europe and North America, the liturgical tradition with which I am most familiar.

us attempt a brief reference to the historical shaping of the services of Holy Week.

### *The Historical Shaping of the Services of Holy Week*

Perhaps no other unit of our liturgical tradition presents such constant and continuous development than Holy Week.<sup>4</sup> In order to understand to what a degree Holy Week constitutes a constantly developing liturgical phenomenon, it is enough to open the current Typicon of the Church of Constantinople (the *Typicon* of Violakes<sup>5</sup>), at the chapter for Holy Week, and to find the Procession of the Cross for the evening of Holy Thursday described as follows: "... the Procession of the Cross takes place as is already customary almost everywhere. ..."<sup>6</sup> As regards the service of light at the Resurrection Office, the following is given *in a footnote*: "It is usual in certain places that at this hour the presiding bishop, standing before the Royal Doors, with the dikiro-trikirion lit from the perpetual light before the Holy Table, invites the people to light their candles, singing, "Come, receive light from the light that never sets. ..."<sup>7</sup> The Typicon of Violakes was published in Constantinople in 1888, yet it clearly indicates that only at that point,

4 For the history of the evolution of the Holy Week liturgical practices of the Byzantine tradition, see: G. Bertoniere, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 193 (Rome: 1972); A. Calivas, *Great Week and Pascha in the Greek Orthodox Church* (Boston: 1992); S. Janeras, *Le Vendredi-Saint dans la Tradition Liturgique Byzantine. Structure et Histoire des Offices*, *Analecta Liturgica*, 12 = *Studia Anselmiana*, 99 (Rome: 1988); A. Kollampampil (ed.), *Hebdomadae Sanctae Celebratio, Conspectus Historicus, Comparativus*, *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae, Subsidia* 93 (Rome: 1997), especially chapters I and II; R. Taft, "In the Bridegroom's Absence. The Paschal Triduum in the Byzantine Church," in idem. *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond*, *Variorum Collected Studies Series*, CS494 (Aldershot: Brookfield, 1995), 71-97; in the same volume, "A Tale of two Cities. The Byzantine Holy Week Triduum as a Paradigm of Liturgical History," 21-41. As far as I know the book of Fr. Calivas A. is the only one that covers the whole of Holy Week.

5 George Violakes, *Τυπικὸν τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας* (= *Order of the Services of the Great Church*) (Athens: n.d.).

6 Ibid. 359.

7 Ibid. 367, footnote 1.

that is, little more than a century ago, two of the principle liturgical practices of Holy Week were just beginning to be established!

However, before we get to recent liturgical customs, we must refer to the sources of the order of services of Holy Week. Holy Week is basically the result of the combination of three ancient liturgical traditions:

- The ancient cathedral rite of Constantinople.
- The ancient cathedral rite of Jerusalem.
- The ancient rite of the monastic communities of Palestine.

Each one of these three traditions had its own special theological, liturgical and pastoral character.

### *Constantinople*

The chief characteristic of structure and the content of the services of Constantinople was the simplicity and sobriety of its ritual. The remembrance of the Passion and the Resurrection was compressed into the three last days of Holy Week. The order of divine services was this: each day, as during the rest of the year, orthros (matins) was celebrated in the morning and vespers in the afternoon, and as on the other days of great lent, the third-sixth hour was celebrated before noon. Holy Thursday was devoted to the recollection of the last supper and a vesperal liturgy was celebrated. Holy Friday was devoted to the crucifixion and burial of the Lord. Certainly, neither the procession of the Crucified nor of the epitaphios<sup>8</sup> existed. In the afternoon of Holy Friday, vespers and the presanctified liturgy were celebrated. Beside this, the exorcisms, the renunciation of Satan and the enrollment of those who were to be baptized, were performed after the third-sixth hour. Furthermore, in the morning of Holy Thursday and Holy Friday the holy spear was placed out for veneration.

8 "Epitaphios" is a liturgical item of the Orthodox Tradition. It is a symbolic representation of the tomb of Christ: a portable table made out of wood, with four narrow columns on the four corners, covered by an elaborate canopy. Upon this table is placed an embroidered icon of lamentation, depicting Jesus after his deposition from the cross laid down on the plaque of his tomb, surrounded by his disciples and the myrrh-bearing women lamenting over his death.

The Sunday of Pascha, of course, was devoted to the resurrection. It was celebrated with a vigil that began in the evening of Holy Saturday. The vigil was made up of great vespers, the baptism of the catechumens, and the liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. The baptism of the catechumens took place in the baptistery. The faithful waited for them, assembled in the principle church, listening to the prescribed texts from the Old Testament, texts that were prophecies or prefigurations of the resurrection of the Lord. At the beginning of the eucharist, the newly enlightened would come into the church in a procession following the bishop, and so they were received by the faithful at the resurrection liturgy with glory and gladness.<sup>9</sup>

In accord with this, the experience of the death and resurrection of Christ was achieved in two principal ways: the biblical readings of the divine services and the participation in the joy of the baptism of the newly enlightened. The presence of the newly baptized during the divine liturgy of the resurrection was a living image of the presence of the risen Christ among the faithful.

### *Jerusalem*

In Jerusalem, the order of Holy Week had a more “dramatic” character. The services of Holy Week were a ritual reliving of the historical events that had taken place during the last week of the earthly life of the Lord. Everything began with Palm Sunday. The services of each day were celebrated with processions, biblical readings, and hymns in the place where the events of that week had taken place. A kind of re-presentation of the events was pursued. For example, on Palm Sunday they welcomed the bishop at the entrance to the Holy City, waving palms or olive branches. *Two great vigils* marked the cycle of services of Holy week: the vigil of the passion which began

9 The main source of information about the liturgical practices of Constantinople is the Typicon of the Great Church, critical edition by Juan Mateos based on the Greek manuscript Holy Cross 40 of the 10th century. See J. Matéos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église. Ms. Sainte Croix no. 40, X<sup>e</sup> siècle. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 165, 166 (Rome, 1962–63), 2 vols.

on the evening of Holy Thursday and ended on the morning of Holy Friday; and the vigil of the resurrection which began on the evening of Holy Saturday and ended in the early hours of the Sunday of the Pascha.<sup>10</sup>

A careful study of the sources makes clear the fact that the present order of Holy Week is the combination of these two rites. A simple observation confirms this truth: the "vigil" of Holy Thursday occurs in only one of the two codexes of the Typicon of Hagia Sophia: the later one!<sup>11</sup>

### *Monastic Rite*

As we said, though, a third factor enriched the combination of the two Typica. This third factor was the monastic rite. The chief characteristic of the monastic rite of Holy Week was the theological interpretation and the spiritual contemplation of the significant events of the passion and resurrection of the Lord, by means of poetic theological compositions: *hymns* or *troparia*. The *troparia* of Holy Week had a profound theological and didactic character. They constitute the basic hymnological element which we still enjoy today, every evening, in the services of Holy Week. As far as the time and the timing of the services is concerned, we need to know that in the monasteries there was an all-night service almost daily—not because it was Holy Week, but because, in accord with the monastic order, it is usual for orthros to begin at 1 or 2AM and to finish at the first hours of the morning. The monastic all-night vigil by itself differs from what is usual, because it begins before midnight and ends late in the morning. There were *two* such all-

10 The main sources of information about the ancient liturgical practices of Jerusalem are: *Itinerarium Egeriae*, the well known fourth-century diary of the pilgrimage of Egeria in the Holy Land; critical edition by P. Maraval, *Égérie, Journal de Voyage (Itinéraire)*, Sources Chrétiennes, 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982); and the two versions of the Jerusalem Lectionary, the first probably from the fifth century, edited by A. Ch. Rénoux, *Le codex Arménien Jérusalem 121*, 2 vols., *Patrologia Orientalis* 35/1, 36/2 (Turnhout, 1969, 1971); and the second between the fifth and eighth centuries, edited by M. Tarchnisvili, *Le grand Lectionnaire de l'Église de Jérusalem*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 188, 189 (Louvain: 1959, 1960).

11 See J. Matéos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, vol. 2, 76–79.

night vigils in Holy Week in the monastic rite: the vigil of the passion, from the evening of Holy Thursday until the morning of Holy Friday, and the vigil of the resurrection, from the evening of Holy Saturday, until the morning of the Sunday of Pascha.<sup>12</sup>

### *Other Factors and Recent Developments*

There were other factors, which, over the centuries, influenced the formation of the worship of Holy Week. Moreover, as we have seen above in the examples from the Typikon of Violakes, the order of the services of Holy Week are in the process of change, even into the present.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have space for the further presentation of that ferment, which brought the order of Holy Week finally to its present form. We would note only the fact that the last two centuries put their seal on the liturgical development of Holy Week in two ways:

1. The transfer of the divine services to a different time and day from that to which they naturally belong.
2. The addition of certain recent liturgical actions with a primarily *representational* or *mimetic* character.

In a few words, as far as the first development is concerned, the services of orthros were transferred to the evening of the preceding days, likewise, the two all-night vigils were restricted to an abbreviated service of orthros in the evening of the preceding day. The services of vespers were transferred to the morning of the same day. It is clear that the reasons for these transfers are purely practical, but ... liturgically clumsy.

As far as the second development is concerned, the liturgical acts

12 For further material, see the material listed in footnote 3, above, where can be found a rich catalogue of sources regarding the emergence and the growth of the Monastic Typikon.

13 Each time that we study the history of worship, we must remember that the liturgical spirit of the primitive Church was one thing, and the liturgical spirit of the Church of the fourth century another. The liturgical spirit was one thing before the conflict over the icons and another afterwards. Likewise, the liturgical spirit of the last centuries and the liturgical spirit of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are two completely different things.

which have been added are: the procession of the icon of the Bridegroom before the Gospel reading at orthros on the three first days of Holy Week; the rite of the anointing of the sick on the afternoon of Holy Wednesday; the procession of the Crucified after the fifth Gospel of Holy Thursday evening service; the taking down of the body of the Crucified during vespers on Holy Friday; the procession with the epitaphios on Holy Friday evening; and the rite of lighting the candles at the Resurrection. All of these are inventions of the nineteenth century and later. Likewise, there have been added certain paraliturgical customs, such as the so-called Holy Communion of workers before the divine liturgy of Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and, in many places, the Saturday of Lazarus.

### *The Principal Problems*

#### *Repetitions*

If we wished to speak about the problems of a purely liturgical character, then the first thing to be mentioned is the *repetitions* of certain liturgical elements in the Holy Week divine services. An example of this is *the infinite repetition of the same Gospel readings*. The narration of the Passion is repeated by means of almost identical texts in the following services:

- In the service of the Twelve Gospels (which is the orthros of Holy Friday sung today in the evening of Holy Thursday).
- In the service of the royal hours sung in the morning of Holy Friday.
- And likewise in the service of vespers (sung in the afternoon of Holy Friday).

Another typical example is the repetition of the liturgical representation—mimesis—of the *funeral procession and burial* of the Lord, which is repeated at least four times on Holy Friday:

- During the Gospel reading at vespers, the priest takes down the body of the Lord from the cross, wraps it in a white linen cloth, and carries it into the sanctuary.

- During the aposticha of the same service, when the embroidered icon of the burial of Christ is carried in procession in the nave.
- At the procession of the epitaphios around the church in orthros (which is celebrated on the evening of Holy Friday).
- Finally after this procession, when the embroidered icon is brought by the priest into the Sanctuary and placed on the Holy Table.

The reason for these repetitions is that the combination of the three traditions was accomplished without any planning or forethought.

### *The Dislocation of the Services*

Perhaps, though, the chief problem is the detachment of the divine services from their natural place, and their unfortunate relocation to the preceding part of the day: the morning services were transferred to the evening of the preceding day, and the evening services to the morning of the same day. To understand the character of this problem, we must refer a little to the relationship of worship to the reality of time. The different acts of worship are celebrated at a definite time of day or a definite day of the week or a definite day of the year, for three basic reasons:

- Either because the events of the sacred history, commemorated in a service, took place on this precise day or hour, for example, the connection of the resurrection with Sunday.
- Or because this particular hour or day has some special meaning in the life of people, for instance, the beginning or the end of the day. Consequently, is natural for people to pray at these moments; it is absolutely natural to begin and close a day with prayers, thus we have the services of orthros and vespers.
- Or finally, for symbolic reasons. When a service has a character which transcends historical time and becomes a foretaste of the kingdom of God, again a certain connec-

tion with a certain day or hour is sought, which can express this transcendence symbolically with some particular metaphoric meaning. For instance, Sunday as first but also as the "eighth" day of the week, is adequate to symbolize the day of the parousia and the world to come.

According to this analysis, the first consequence of the dislocation of the services of Holy Week has to do with the violation of all these just mentioned fundamental forms of connection between time and liturgy. The Church from the apostolic times has devoted daily services, which constitute the common prayers of the faithful for the beginning and end of the day. The basic prayers and hymns of these services, the symbols used, the theology of the texts, are bound organically with the particular hour of the day during which the service is celebrated. However, during Holy Week, every morning we do vespers, and consequently we sing the "Hail, gladsome light," saying to God that we praise him *now* that we "have come to the setting of the sun," we beseech God to receive our *evening* prayers as an "evening sacrifice," while the time at that moment is 9 or 10 in the *morning*. Correspondingly, every *evening* we have *orthros* thanking God who has given us the light of the day after the completion of our nightly rest, however it might be 10PM and we are about to go to bed.

### *Confusion*

This transposition of the divine services of Holy Week has the following further consequences. Their dislocation causes the confusion of the faithful as to when things happened. The majority of people think that Christ was crucified on Holy Thursday, buried on Holy Friday and rose on Holy Saturday. Why? Because on Holy Thursday we process with the Crucified, on Holy Friday with the epitaphios, and on the morning and evening of Holy Saturday we have resurrection services. No one suspects that what we do on the evening of Holy Thursday ought to happen in the morning of Holy Friday, what we do on the evening of Holy Friday must happen on the morning of Holy Saturday, and what we do on Holy Saturday belongs to the Sunday of Pascha!

As a result, this confusion has other further serious consequences as to the distortion of the theological and pastoral character of Holy Week. One of these is the loss of the deepest meaning of Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and the Sunday of Pascha: Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday and the Sunday of Pascha do not exist theologically in our contemporary Holy Week Ritual. There is basically a *double* Holy Friday (Holy Thursday *and* Holy Friday) and a hasty *premature* paschal rite (Holy Saturday).

More analytically, the "true" Holy Thursday has been lost from the calendar of holy days. In the thinking of each of the faithful today, Holy Thursday is the day of the crucifixion. No one could suppose that Holy Thursday is a day dedicated to the remembrance of the last supper and the institution of the sacrament of the holy eucharist. However, on Holy Thursday, just as with other feasts of the Lord, the Church had the opportunity to initiate the faithful in one of the foundational truths of the faith with the celebration of orthros and vespers, and the participation in holy eucharist. With the incomparable hymnology of vespers and orthros, the very special literary beauty and theological strength of hymns are applied to the significance of the particular commemoration. With the celebration of the eucharist, the Church offers the possibility of immediate experience and sacramental participation in what is commemorated. This principle was applied to the commemoration of the institution of the greatest sacrament in Holy Thursday, by means of the celebration of orthros and evening eucharist on that day. The day had a joyful character, and therefore, while for the whole week a strict fast was kept, on Holy Thursday wine and oil were permitted. In earlier times of the history of the Church, in some places, even meat was permitted on Holy Thursday! Today, then, instead of the whole day being joyful and constituting an initiation into this event, instead of the divine liturgy being celebrated majestically in the evening, with the participation of all the faithful with a joyous, festive character as befits the recollection of such a meaningful event, the divine liturgy is celebrated hurriedly in the morning, under the pressure of the multitude of faithful, who,

with the behavior of barbarian hordes, rush to complete the annual *obligation* of receiving Holy Communion! Likewise, orthros of Holy Thursday with its profound theological canon is not celebrated at all in most churches, because in the evening of Holy Wednesday (when, according to the current, predominating custom, the orthros of Holy Thursday should be performed), only the service of anointing is celebrated. Consequently, in the Greek-American publications of the services of Holy Week, *orthros of Holy Thursday does not even exist*; it was already thought *superfluous* to print this service. Finally, the paradoxical situation must be noted: either the break in the absolute fast and the joyful character of the day are ignored, or a strict fast is not kept according to the prescriptions of the calendar, while the mournful atmosphere of the crucifixion prevails.

As for Holy Saturday, this has also essentially vanished from the liturgical life of the Church and her mystagogical process of worship. For the ancient Church, the principal theme of Holy Saturday was the recollection of and the meditation on the sojourn of the Lord in the tomb! It was a day of deep mourning and absolute silence. It was certainly a day of expectation and hope as well. But the element of grief and repentance was pre-eminent. For the ancient Church, Holy Saturday was the only day without the celebration of the holy eucharist, as also the only Saturday of the year on which a strict fast was kept! On Holy Saturday, as Christ, the source of life, is in the tomb, people ponder the unforeseen possibilities of evil in history, the dreadful consequences of the ultimate pursuit of our own selfish will, the horrifying proportions of our fall. I would dare to make a comparison: The silence of Holy Saturday could resemble the silence of those who would survive the day after a nuclear catastrophe. This character of Holy Saturday has been lost today with the celebration of a divine liturgy in the morning, with the conviction of many of the faithful that with this service the "first resurrection of Christ" is celebrated (what in the world is this "first resurrection"?) and the hurried breaking of the fast that follows on behalf of many of the faithful immediately after this lit-

urgy, "since they have taken Holy Communion" and thus fulfilled their "duty" for this year.

Finally, we come to the question: when and how do the majority of the faithful celebrate the resurrection? Or, finally what do the Orthodox celebrate on the *Sunday* of the Pascha? For the majority of Orthodox Christians, the Sunday of the Pascha is not a liturgical day! For them, the day of the resurrection is Holy Saturday, following the order of events created by the aforementioned dislocation of the services. Perhaps some vigil is celebrated at midnight of Holy Saturday in the holy parishes, but the majority of Christians do not wait for the resurrection vigil, nor indeed do they participate in the eucharist which seals what is being celebrated throughout that vigil. Holy Saturday became the chief day of the resurrection, and the Sunday of Pascha became a day of the year without a liturgy!

The relocation of the festival of the resurrection to Holy Saturday, and the hurried participation of a small number of faithful in the vigil of the resurrection, has provoked still another unpleasant consequence: the loss of the exceedingly beautiful canon of orthros for the Sunday of Pascha. The principal element of orthros for the Sunday of Pascha is the canon of the resurrection written by John of Damascus. A beautiful poem, which unfolds the theology of the resurrection of Christ in a joyful way and a lively character which is combined in excellent harmony with the hopeful theological message of the canon. The feeling of this canon literally changes the mournful character of the preceding period of both, Holy Week together with Lent, and forecasts the joyous character of the days of the following joyful period of Pentecost. But in very many churches, for reasons of brevity, the canon of the resurrection is omitted! It is not, then, only the faithful, who hurriedly depart at the beginning of the vigil, who do not hear this canon, but also the faithful who remain are deprived of this delight, because the canon is omitted!

### *Other Problems*

Beside these problems which are connected with the relocation of the divine services, there are other equally significant problems.

The first concerns the celebration of the sacrament of anointing (*euchelaio*) on the evening of Holy Wednesday. From the liturgical and historical perspective, it suffices to say that there is no testimony for the *euchelaion* in any source, not even in the last edition of the Typikon of the Great Church (the *Typikon* of Violakes, nineteenth century). From a purely liturgical side, we can say simply that the celebration of the *euchelaion* has excluded every other service of the evening of Holy Wednesday. From a pastoral viewpoint, the question is: Why is the *euchelaion* celebrated on this day anyway? *Euchelaion* is a sacrament of the Church related to the presence of some organic disease. Its purpose is the spiritual and bodily strengthening of one of the faithful as his/her patience and faith is tested through the concrete circumstances of sickness. It usually has a personal character: It is celebrated upon request. Therefore, what is the reason and the need of celebrating *euchelaion* on Holy Wednesday evening for the whole congregation?<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, though, in the consciousness of a great number of the faithful, the understanding prevails that the *euchelaion* can be a substitute for the sacrament of confession. Thus many people participate in this, in order to avoid the trial of confession. Here, it is clear that a mechanical automatic remission of sins is preferable to a "person to person" recognition of, repentance for, and forgiveness of our sins. It is obvious that a mechanical automatic remission of sins is preferable to the direct attempt at cure of our will.

Along the same line as the automatic and easy remission of sins, there is another invention: receiving communion hurriedly before the divine liturgy from presanctified gifts. Personally, I think that it is a matter of a very serious problem. We do not have time to refer to all the dimensions of this issue. It is clear, though, that it expresses a purely magical understanding of the holy communion, as if the holy communion is not a relationship between persons, but a utilitarian relationship with an object of supernatural properties. The idea has been basically lost that communion with God

14 Unless there is a possibility of a pending epidemic disease, so a service against it is necessary for everybody!

through the sacrament of the holy eucharist is not accomplished magically through the swallowing of the holy communion, but through all the liturgical actions which constitute parts of the holy eucharist (especially the oblation—anaphora of the holy gifts to God), and that the holy communion is the crowning or completion of these actions.

Related to a mistaken understanding of the holy communion is still another irregularity which has been established in the order of Holy Week. It is the place of the reading of the catechetical sermon of St John Chrysostom. Today, it is read at the end of the eucharistic celebration at the end of the short vigil of resurrection, as an extension of those liturgical actions which have to do with the dismissal of that liturgy. The emphasis is given to the last sentences of the sermon where the phrase, "Hades has been embittered," is repeated festively by the people. However, the central idea of the sermon has to do with approaching the holy communion! This sermon, of course, as has been shown, is not by John Chrysostom; it is obvious that at the time of Chrysostom such a sermon would have been entirely superfluous! This sermon is later and applies to a time when the regular reception of holy communion had ceased and the mentality of penance had overcome every other form of devotion in relationship with the worthy reception of holy communion. By means of this climate, the sermon exhorts the faithful to approach the holy chalice without hesitation, trusting and honoring God's love for humankind, the infinity of which was revealed by the events of Holy Week. Therefore, the place of the sermon in the manuscripts and the early printed liturgical books, was before the beginning of the whole eucharistic liturgy, or in any case, before the holy communion!

A final problem, to which we could refer, is *the length of the divine services*. Though this has never worried me personally, I refer to it because in discussions this issue has been put forward as a problem. I am very deeply persuaded that the problem is not in itself the *length* of the divine services, but their *disorganization*: the lack of continuity and transposition of the liturgical actions in the

internal structure of a service. This is what makes for a tedious service, precisely because the service ceases to be what the original word for service says: an *akolouthia*, in Greek this means sequence of acts, i.e. order, or *leitourgia* which among others has also the meaning of "function."

Finally, if we want to cast a critical eye over the whole of Holy Week generally, taking into consideration and appreciating both today's situation and the historical development, and if we want to make a comprehensive definition of the problem, we would have to say in a few words:

"What has happened in the liturgical development of Holy Week? What has predominated?"

"Theater!"

Spectacle and emotional satisfaction have prevailed, at the expense of the theology and the sacramental and ascetic participation! Customs, such as the moving procession of the icon of the suffering Bridegroom, the procession of the Crucified, the deposition from the cross, etc. prevailed, whereas the vigils have been abolished; the sacramental activity has been de-emphasized; the "fast food" form of holy communion before the divine liturgy has been introduced; the combination of baptism and the celebration of the resurrection has been considered superfluous, and so on.

### *Proposals*

A re-organization of Holy Week is a pastoral necessary, so that the events celebrated be in the right place and right order, and the services of the day and night in their places as well. It is, furthermore, necessary to return the last supper to the themes of the events of Holy Week that are being recalled, and the character of Holy Saturday to be restored as a day of expectation, and the Sunday of the Pascha as a day of liturgical participation. More generally, emphasis on sacramental participation with a parallel moderation of the theatrical elements would be a necessary pastoral direction as well.

In no way would we propose the elimination of customs such as the procession of the Crucified, the procession of the epitaphios

and the passing of the light of the resurrection. However, it is necessary that these customs not overshadow more essential elements of the worship, but to the contrary lead to them. It has no meaning to celebrate the resurrection by lighting candles, while the "illumination" of the Catechumens by their baptism has not been celebrated, or while we the faithful are not enlightened by the true light of participation in the sacrament of the holy eucharist. It has no meaning to weep before the Crucified when we have not crucified our will by ascesis.

All that we have said gives birth to a series of questions in need of answers. In practice, how are all these necessary arrangements to be reconciled? To what specific arrangement of the liturgical actions must we proceed? How rash or daring do we want or can we be? How ripe are the people to accept changes, without them feeling that these are impious novelties? How ready are the pastors, who are the ones chiefly responsible for the disorganization of Holy Week, to admit the errors and try to correct them? Finally, the most crucial question is, can we correct without destroying?

Very briefly, we would propose the following solutions. First, all the services that belong to the "Liturgy of the Hours" (matins, hours, vespers, compline), should go back to the place where they belong. Thus, on the first three days of Holy Week, from Holy Monday until Holy Wednesday, orthros should be celebrated in the morning, vespers and the presanctified liturgy should be celebrated in the evening; on Holy Thursday too orthros in the morning and in the evening vespers and the holy eucharist. The question, of course, is, what will we do with those rich hymns and canons of orthros? Who will come to hear them early in the morning? For this problem, we could simply propose that these hymns be placed in vespers as their aposticha and stichera. Thus the application of this arrangement does not encounter serious pastoral problems up to Holy Thursday!

It is not so easy, though, to apply the same rule for the services of Holy Friday, especially because of the popular processions which occur in these services. Can we imagine orthros of Holy Friday

with the twelve Gospels and the procession of the Crucified, which now take place in the evening of Holy Thursday, taking place in the morning of Holy Friday? Can we imagine orthros of Holy Saturday with the Lamentations (*Engomia*) and the procession of the Epitaphios, which now take place on the evening of Holy Friday, taking place on the morning of Holy Saturday? How many people will be there to attend these services? Furthermore, how many people would be ready to agree with this change?

A proposal, which does not, however, solve both problems is, as we have said in the preceding case, for the *Engomia* and the procession of the epitaphios around the church (the most popular elements of Holy Friday services) to take place on the evening of Holy Friday not with orthros, but rather being inserted in the service of vespers. Vespers of the deposition from the cross would occur regularly on the *evening* of Holy Friday, and the lamentations and procession of the epitaphios around the church would follow the representation of the descent after the Gospel. And so, vespers would be celebrated at its time and the actions of the descent and the procession the people love so much would not be lost. Likewise, the solution avoids the superfluous repetitions of the representation of the burial of the Lord, which is today celebrated in various ways four times!

But the question remains, when will the twelve Gospels be read and the procession of the Crucified take place. By their nature, these liturgical elements constitute a part of *orthros* of Holy Friday and would need to be celebrated on the morning of Holy Friday, or as a *vigil* during the night as Holy Friday is dawning. The idea of the *vigil* theoretically solves the problem, because everything is in its place. However, in practice, would the people participate? If there is not a vigil and the service is celebrated in the *early hours* of Holy Friday, again what amount of participation would there be in as much as the service would be celebrated at hours when most of the faithful are at their work?

As regards Holy Saturday, beyond a plain celebration of orthros, there cannot be any other service in the morning hours (in any case,

not the eucharist). Pascha should be celebrated with the *vigil* as today, beginning, though, with *vespers* on the *evening* of Holy Saturday. The vigil can follow the original pattern of Constantinople: vespers and eucharist, when the very beautiful canon of the resurrection could again take on the character of the *aposticha* of vespers. It could also have the monastic pattern: vespers—orthros—liturgy. If the pattern of Constantinople is followed, then the morning orthros of the resurrection with the eucharistic liturgy could be celebrated, a solution which is certainly tiring for the clergy, but pastorally more effective, since those who could not go to the *vigil* would be able to attend the liturgy in the *morning*.

Likewise, we would dare a utopian proposal, which, we think would, in fact, give an entirely different tone to the worshipping life of the faithful, if it were ever put into practice: the restoration of the *collective baptism* before the holy liturgy of the resurrection. This movement would reconstitute the resurrection character of the sacrament of baptism, and the ecclesiological character as opposed to the individualistic which has prevailed, and likewise would remind the faithful the baptismal derivation of their life in Christ.

Finally, there is the question when the service of the holy light would be celebrated in one or the other case? Here, we must note the following: the source of the service of light is in the lighting of the candles and the lamps of the church when "Hail, gladsome light" is sung during vespers. In so far, then, as the vigil of the resurrection begins with vespers, the rite of the light can be in its natural place at the entrance procession of vespers. Here again, we can add the following: when vespers is celebrated with the eucharistic liturgy, the entrance of vespers is at the same time the entrance of the eucharistic liturgy. If, then, we suppose that baptism returns as a part of the paschal vigil, then, at that moment would occur the entrance of the *newly enlightened* as well. In this way, three liturgical actions coincide: the entrance of the eucharistic liturgy, the reception of the newly enlightened, and the singing of "Come, receive light!" Can we imagine a more inspiring experience?



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