

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Sacrament of Anaphora

"Lord, it is good that we are here . . ."

MATTHEW 17:4

I

"LET US STAND ARIGHT! LET US STAND WITH FEAR! LET US attend, that we may offer the Holy Oblation in peace." When, after the confession of faith, we hear this summons, something happens in the liturgy that is difficult to express in words, occurring only from within, perceptible only spiritually—a "passing over into another level." Something has been completed, and now something is obviously beginning.

What? The generally accepted answer to this question goes something like this: we now begin the *eucharistic canon*, that chief part of the liturgy, during which the sacrament, i.e., the change or the transubstantiation of the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, is accomplished. But, although formally correct, this very answer gives rise to further questions, demands refinement, for, as I shall try to demonstrate, one can understand it in different ways, and on these various understandings depends in turn one's entire conception of the liturgy, of its place not only in our life, and not only even in the life of the Church, but in the mystery of the salvation of the world, as the return and the ascent of the creation to the Creator.

So, first of all, what do we mean by defining this part of the liturgy as the "chief part," or, more precisely, what can and what

must we mean? This word presupposes a certain correlation, a certain link between the "chief" and the "non-chief," and outside of this link it makes no sense. But "scholastic," school theology, from whose example this definition arose and became generally accepted and as it were self-evident, was itself never really occupied and is not concerned with any other part of the liturgy. On the contrary, at first in the West and then, by imitation, also in the East, it was precisely scholastic theology that reduced the entire sacrament of the eucharist to one of its parts (the "eucharistic canon"), and as if that were not enough, to one single moment within it (the transubstantiation). And it is precisely because of this "reduction" that all the remaining parts of the liturgy, which we have been discussing in the preceding chapters, proved to be, in relation to this no-longer-chief but one-and-only part, of a different nature and therefore *unnecessary* for the theological definition and comprehension of the sacrament of the eucharist. Finally, it is precisely their "superfluity" for theology that has destined them only for, on the one hand, the "liturgists" and "rubricists" and, on the other, "religious feeling" and the unrestrained efforts peculiar to it to find everywhere in worship "illustrative symbolism," which usually has no relation whatsoever to the sacrament.

To anyone who has paid the slightest attention to the preceding chapters it should be clear that if such is the meaning of the word "chief" in this definition of what is nevertheless in fact the chief part of the liturgy, the elucidation of which we are now approaching, then I categorically reject this meaning. I reject it because in it I see the most glaring example and evidence not only of the onesidedness or insufficiency but, speaking to the point, the depravity of our still-born, western school theology—a depravity that nowhere reveals itself so obviously as in its approach to the holy of holies of the Church: the eucharist and the sacraments. Therefore it was not to sound more solemn but perfectly consciously and responsibly that I have entitled each of the chapters devoted to the first parts of the liturgy—entrance and assembly, reading and proclamation of the word of God, offering, kiss of peace and confession of faith—with the word *sacrament*. For I see the entire task at hand in demonstrating as fully as possible that the divine liturgy is a single, though also "multifaceted," sacred

rite, a single sacrament, in which all its "parts," their entire sequence and structure, their coordination with each other, the necessity of each for all and all for each, manifests to us the inexhaustible, eternal, universal and truly divine meaning of what has been and what is being accomplished.

Such in any case is the tradition of the Church, such is her living experience, in which the sacrament of the eucharist is inseparable from the divine liturgy. For its setting, its entire sequence, order and structure consist in manifesting to us the meaning and the content of the sacrament, in bringing us into it, in converting us into its participants and communicants. Meanwhile, it is precisely this unity, this integrity of the eucharist, the indissoluble link of the sacrament with the liturgy, that school theology destroys through its arbitrary isolation of one "moment" (act, formula) in the liturgy and the identification of it alone with the sacrament. We are speaking here not of discrepancies in abstract definitions, not of theological "niceties," but of something very profound and essential: of how and where to seek the answer to the question, *what is accomplished in the eucharist?* If for the Church not only the answer to this question but also the question itself, i.e., its correct "context," is rooted in the liturgy, it is because for her the eucharist is the crowning and fulfilment of the liturgy, just as the liturgy is the crowning and fulfilment of the entire faith, the entire life and the entire experience of the Church. School theology, however, does not "inquire" of the liturgy about the meaning of the sacrament. Its fallaciousness, its tragedy lies in this: that it creates in fact a *substitute* for the question itself, it replaces it with another question, rooted not in the experience of the Church, but in the "seekings of this age"—in the questions, categories of thought, one can almost say in the curiosity of our fallen reason, which has not been reborn and enlightened by faith. Thus, having created its own particular, a priori and "self-sufficient" definition of the sacrament, it directs and attaches to it the questions and "problematics" that in reality should be referred to the experience of the Church and evaluated in the light of that experience.

2

OVER THE COURSE OF THE CENTURIES THIS "PROBLEMATICS" has come to be reduced to two questions: *when* and *how*. When—i.e., at what moment are the bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ? How—i.e., what is the causality by which this is accomplished? Literally hundreds of books have been written in answer to these questions, and even to this day they constitute the subject of intense disputes—between Catholics and Protestants, between East and West. But one need only to attempt to *refer* all these conjectures and theories to the immediate experience of the liturgy, to that *service* that is performed in church, and it becomes obvious to what degree these explanations turn out to be external to this experience, falling outside it and thus not only not really explaining anything but in the end simply *unnecessary*.

What in fact does the distinction of *essence* and *accidents*, which goes back to Aristotle and which the scholastics made use of to answer the question of how the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is accomplished, mean—not philosophically, not abstractly, but really—for our faith, our communion in the divine, our spiritual life, our salvation? Does transubstantiation consist, according to this experience, in the change of the "substance" (essence) of the bread into the essence of the body of Christ, while the "accidents" of the body remain the accidents of the bread? To faith, which confesses every Sunday, in the fear of God and with love, that "this is truly Thine own most pure Body... this is truly Thine own precious Blood," this explanation is unnecessary, and for the mind itself it remains an equally incomprehensible violence to those very "laws" on whose foundations the explanation is supposedly constructed.

It is the same with the question *when*, that is, at what moment, by the force of what "causality" is the transubstantiation accomplished. The western scholastics' answer is at the moment when the priest pronounces the *words of institution*: "this is my body... this is my blood"—words that thus constitute the "consecratory formula," the formal, "necessary and sufficient" cause of

the transubstantiation. In rejecting—and rightly, as we shall see later—this Latin doctrine, Orthodox theology in turn affirms that the transformation is accomplished not through the words of institution but through the *epiklesis*, the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Spirit, which in our order of the liturgy immediately follows these words. But since it is in fact constrained by the same method and the same “problematics,” this theology does not reveal what ultimately is the meaning and importance of this dispute. One “consecratory formula” is replaced with another, one “moment” is replaced by another “moment,” but without disclosing the very essence of the *epiklesis*, its true significance in the liturgy.

The point of all that has been said—and I shall emphasize this over and over—is not that, having become convinced of the uselessness or the impossibility of theological comprehension, we should simply dismiss these questions and as a result explain the eucharist with that hackneyed but fundamentally blasphemous formula: “it is impossible to understand; it is only necessary to believe.” I believe and I confess that for the Church, for the world, for mankind there is no more important, more urgent question than *what is accomplished in the eucharist*. In reality this question is most natural to faith, which lives by the thirst for entry into the wisdom of truth, by the thirst for the logical (λογική), i.e., reasonable, service of God that manifests and is rooted in the divine wisdom. It is truly the question of the ultimate meaning and purpose of all that is real, of the sacramental ascent to where “God will be all in all,” and thus it is the question that, through faith, was constantly radiating as a mysterious burning in the hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. But that is exactly why it is so important to liberate this urgent question, to cleanse it of everything that obscures, diminishes and distorts it, and this means, first of all, those “questions” and “answers” whose depravity lies in the fact that instead of explaining the earthly through the heavenly, they reduce the heavenly and the otherworldly to the earthly, to their own “human, only human,” impoverished and feeble “categories.”

Indeed, with the summons “let us stand aright” we actually do enter into the “chief” part of the divine liturgy. But it is chief in relation to its other parts, and not in isolation and separation

from them. It is chief because in it the entire liturgy finds its *fulfilment*, everything that it witnesses to, that it manifests, to which it leads and ascends. It begins that sacrament of anaphora that would be *impossible* without the sacrament of the gathering, the sacrament of offering and the sacrament of unity, but in which—and precisely because it is the fulfilment of the entire liturgy—we are given the understanding of the sacrament that surpasses all comprehension but nevertheless manifests all and explains all. It is precisely this “relation,” the wholeness and unity of the eucharistic celebration, that we are reminded of, that we turn our spiritual attention to when the deacon summons us to “stand aright,” to “stand straight” or even to “be good.”¹

3

“RIGHT,” “WELL,” “GOOD” . . . SUCH WORDS, LIKE ALL WORDS, like fallen human language itself, have been effaced, watered down, weakened. “Good,” for example, has come to mean more or less “anything you like”: pleasing to us, pleasing to “this world,” pleasing to the devil. Only sometimes, and then only partly—in poetry, in the language of art—does it flare up in its primordial purity and power, in its original, divine meaning. For “good,” like any real word, is from God, and to hear it in its liturgical resonance and sense, to understand what it means, what it manifests at the beginning of the eucharistic anaphora, it must be raised to God. It must be heard there, where it resounded for the first time as a certain primordial revelation.

“And God saw that it was good” (Gn 1:10). Here is this word in its initial resonance, here it is as beginning itself. But how do we hear it, how do we understand and receive it? How do we explain it with the use of other words, if they are all secondary in relation to this primary word, themselves only receiving their meaning and power from it? Of course, “culture,” “science,” “philosophy” are all sufficiently literate, all *know* enough to formally define it: something is good or right when it conforms to its nature, purpose, conception, when its “form” or fulfilment corre-

¹The Greek Στῶμεν καλῶς or the Slavonic *Stanem dobre* suggests a range of meanings that cannot be rendered succinctly in English.

sponds to its "content" or plan. Applied to the biblical text, consequently, it appears as such: and God saw that what he had created corresponded to his conception and therefore was right and good. All true enough, all correct according to the correctness of the words used, but what impoverished words these are, as they are powerless to convey the main thing: the very *goodness of the good*, the revelation about the world, about life, about us ourselves, that this divine *good* bears and manifests in itself—the fullness of joy, the *rapture*, through which it radiates and gives life. But where then are we to find, not the explanation, not the definition, but above all the very experience, the firsthand knowledge of this primordial, imperishable good?

We find it, we hear and we receive this word where it resounded anew in all its power and fullness, where it rang out as the human answer to the divine *good*. "Lord, it is good that we are here" (Mt 17:4). Through this answer, on the mount of the transfiguration, was witnessed forever, for all time, man's reception of the divine *good* as his life, as his calling. There, in that "cloud of light" that overshadowed him, man saw "that it is good," and accepted and confessed. And it is by this vision, this knowledge, this experience that the Church, in her deepest depths, lives. In this *experience* is her beginning and fulfilment, as well as the beginning and fulfilment of everything within her. One can actually "discuss" the Church *ad infinitum*, one can endeavor to "explain" her, one can "study" ecclesiology, one can argue over "apostolic succession," the canons and the principles of church structure, but without this experience, without this secret joy, without the orientation of everything to this "it is good that we are here," all remains simply words about words.

The divine liturgy—the continual ascent, the lifting up of the Church to *heaven*, to the throne of glory, to the unfading light and joy of the kingdom of God—is the focus of this experience, simultaneously its source and presence, gift and fulfilment. "Standing in the temple of thy glory we think we are in heaven." These words are not pious rhetoric, for they express the very essence, the very purpose both of the Church and of her worship as above all precisely a *liturgy*, an action (ἔργον), in which the essence of what is taking place is simultaneously revealed and fulfilled. But in what is this essence, in what is the ultimate meaning of the divine

liturgy if not in the manifestation and the granting to us of this divine good? From where, if not from our "Lord, it is good for us to be here," comes its simultaneously otherworldly, heavenly and cosmic beauty, that *wholeness*, in which *all*—words, sounds, colors, time, space, movement, and the *growth* of all of them—is revealed, realized as the renewal of creation, as ours, as the ascent of the entire world on high, to where Christ has raised and is eternally raising us? And therefore, if it is at all appropriate to speak here of *causality*, of "when" and "how," then this causality, binding together the liturgy, making each of its parts precisely a part, a stage, and thus a condition and "cause" of further ascent, is contained in this *good*, through the knowledge and experience and partaking of which the Church *lives*. This divine good *assembles* the Church as the new creation, renewed by God; it transforms this gathering into *entrance* and *ascent*; it opens the mind to the hearing and reception of the *word of God*; it *includes* our sacrifice, our *offering* in the one, unrepeatable and universal sacrifice of Christ; it fulfils the Church as the *unity of faith and love*; and, finally, it brings us to that threshold we have now approached, to that truly *chief* part, in which all this movement and growth will find its completion and fulfilment at Christ's table in his kingdom. And therefore, unless we see the entire liturgy as the gift and fulfilment of this divine *good*, we will never know what is fulfilled in this *chief* part, we will not know *what is accomplished in the eucharist* and in its summit: the transformation of the bread and wine, with us, with the Church, with the world, with *all and through all*.

The words of the deacon also witness to this "good" and call us to stand in it, as they now begin the chief—for everything is about to be fulfilled in it—part of the liturgy.

4

THREE EXCLAMATIONS OF THE CELEBRANT AND THREE SHORT replies from the gathering comprise an introductory dialogue by which the sacrament of the anaphora begins.

The first is the solemn blessing. It exists in every eucharistic prayer, without exception, that has come down to us, although it comes in various formulas—from the simple "the Lord be with

you" of the Roman and Alexandrian liturgies to our trinitarian formula, which is almost identical with the one we find in the apostle Paul: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you," (2 Co 13:13). The meaning of this blessing is always and everywhere the same: the triumphant affirmation and confession that the Church is gathered in *Christ* and in him offers the eucharist. And this means that we are in such unity with him that everything done by us is accomplished by him, and everything accomplished by him has been granted to us.

It is precisely this that is emphasized by the irregularity of this blessing's trinitarian formula. Its irregularity lies of course in its contrast to the formula that is always otherwise used: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The eucharistic blessing begins with Christ, with the bestowal of his grace, because in this moment of the liturgy the essence of the blessing lies not in the confession of the Most Holy Trinity in its eternal essence but in the revelation, the testimony, one can even say the *experience* of it as knowledge of God, which is life eternal (Jn 17:3), as the reconciliation, union and communion with him that has been granted and is eternally being granted to us as our salvation. This salvation is granted to us in Christ, the Son of God, who became the Son of man, in whom "we have peace with God... we have obtained access to this grace" (Rm 5:1-2), "we have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18). For we have "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tm 2:5), who has said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). Christian faith begins with the encounter with Christ, with the reception of him as the Son of God, who manifests the Father and his love to us. This acceptance of the Son, this union in him with the Father, is fulfilled as salvation, as the new life, as the kingdom of God in the communion of the Holy Spirit, which is the divine life itself, divine love itself, communion with God. And thus, the eucharist is also the sacrament of our *access* to God and knowledge of him and union with him. Being offered in the Son, it is offered to the Father. Being offered to the Father, it is fulfilled in the partaking of the Holy Spirit. And therefore the eucharist is the eternally living and lifecreating source of the Church's knowledge of the Most Holy Trinity. This is not the

abstract knowledge (of dogmas, doctrine) that it unfortunately remains for so many of the faithful, but knowledge as a genuine *recognition*, as meeting, as experience, and thus as partaking of life eternal.

5

THE NEXT EXCLAMATION OF THE CELEBRANT, "LET US LIFT UP our hearts," we find in no other service—it belongs entirely and exclusively to the divine liturgy. For this exclamation is not simply a call to a certain lofty disposition. In the light of all that has been said above, it is an affirmation that the eucharist is accomplished not on earth but in heaven. "But even when we were dead through our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:5-6). We already know that this ascent to heaven began with the very beginning of the liturgy, with our very entrance and "assembly as the Church," when our true life was "hid with Christ in God." And need we demonstrate and explain that this heaven has nothing in common with that "heaven" that Bultmann and his followers, with their condescending scientificity, debunk for the sake of "demythologization" and an explanation of it to "contemporary" man that would supposedly save Christianity, and of which St John Chrysostom already said over 1500 years ago: "what is heaven to me, when I contemplate the Master of heaven, *when I myself become heaven?*"²

We can lift our hearts "on high" because this "on high," this heaven is within us and among us, because it has been returned, restored to us as our real homeland of the heart's desire, to which we returned after an agonizing exile, for which we have always groaned with homesickness, and through the memory of which all creation lives. If we speak of the earthly, of ourselves, of the Church in categories of *ascent*, then we speak of the heavenly, of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit in categories of *descent*. But we are saying the same thing: we speak of heaven on earth, of heaven as having transfigured the earth, and of the earth as having ac-

²Unidentified quotation.

cepted heaven as the ultimate truth about itself. "Heaven and earth will pass away" (Mk 13:31)—they will pass away in their opposition, in their rift from each other; they will pass away because they shall be transformed into "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rv 21:1), into the kingdom of God in which "God will be all in all." For "this world" it is as yet in the future, but in Christ it is already revealed and in the Church it is already "anticipated," and the eucharist raises and elevates us to this heavenly kingdom of God from on high, and in it the eucharist is accomplished.

But that is why the call "let us lift up our hearts" also sounds like a solemn and ultimate warning. "Let us beware that we do not remain on the earth," says St John Chrysostom. We are able, we are free to remain down below, and not hear, not see and not receive this truly *difficult* ascent. But if we remain on earth we have no place in this heavenly eucharist, and in that case our presence at its celebration becomes our condemnation. And when each of us, through the lips of the choir, answers "we lift them up unto the Lord," i.e., when we have turned our hearts on high, to the Lord, a judgment is made on us. For one who, albeit fallen and sinful, has not turned his whole life to heaven, who does not always measure the earth next to heaven, cannot turn his heart on high for just this moment alone. Thus, when we hear this *ultimate* summons let us ask ourselves: are our hearts turned to the Lord, is the ultimate treasure of our heart in God, in heaven? If so, then in spite of all our weakness, all our fallenness, we have been received into heaven, we behold now the light and the glory of the kingdom. If not, the sacrament of the coming of the Lord to those who love him shall be for us the sacrament of the coming judgment.

6

"LET US GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD... IT IS MEET AND right..." These words are the beginning of the traditional Hebrew prayer of thanksgiving, and the Lord doubtlessly uttered them when he began, with this prayer, his own *new* thanksgiving, which was necessary to bring man to God and save the world. And likewise the apostles no doubt answered with the prescribed "it is meet and right." And each time the Church celebrates the

remembrance of this thanksgiving she repeats after them and with them: it is meet and right.

Salvation is complete. After the darkness of sin, the fall and death, a man once again offers to God the pure, sinless, free and perfect thanksgiving. A man is returned to that place that God had prepared for him when he created the world. He stands at the heights, before the throne of God; he stands in heaven, before the face of God himself, and freely, in the fulness of love and knowledge, uniting in himself the whole world, all creation, he offers thanksgiving, and in him the whole world affirms and acknowledges this thanksgiving to be "meet and right." This man is Christ. He alone is without sin, he alone is Man in all the fulness of his purpose, calling and glory. He alone in himself restores the "fallen image" and raises it to God, and thus we now offer the thanksgiving of Christ, hear it and take part in it, when the celebrant begins the eucharistic prayer commanded to us by Christ, who has united us for all ages with God.

CHAPTER NINE

The Sacrament of Thanksgiving

"Give thanks for all things."

I THESSALONIANS 5:18

I

IN THE LITURGICS TEXTBOOKS THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING, to which the eucharistic celebration leads as its summit and fulfilment, is usually considered according to its parts, which have long been designated by Latin or Greek titles: *praefatio*, *sanctus*, *anamnesis*, etc. This division, moreover, does correspond to the structure and order of the eucharistic prayer and could be useful for its comprehension precisely as the *fulfilment* of the liturgy. One must suppose that it did arise in liturgical studies with this aim in mind. In fact, however, it has led, strange as it may seem, literally to the opposite result. In the consciousness of liturgists and theologians, and after them the faithful themselves, this phenomenon indeed divided the eucharistic prayer, shattered it as it were into several prayers, which, although following one after another, were no longer perceived as a whole, as one, single prayer. Moreover, if all of these parts, their historical "genesis," the similarities and distinctions between them in the many eucharistic texts that have come down to us from antiquity, remain a subject of study for liturgists, then theologians have long ago concentrated their entire interest on the part they have identified with the "consecratory formula," i.e., the moment and the mode of the transformation of the eucharistic gifts.

The fragmentation of the eucharistic prayer led of course to the predominant practice of the priest reading it *secretly*, i.e., "to himself." I intend to speak of the origins of this practice, which was absolutely unknown to the early Church, in a special excursus, inasmuch as it is a complex question and its discussion in the present context would take up too much space.¹ For now I will say only that already for several centuries now, the laity, the people of God, whom the apostle Peter called "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pt 2:9), have simply *not heard* and thus *do not know* this veritable prayer of prayers, through which the mystery is completed and the essence and calling of the Church herself are fulfilled. All the faithful hear are individual exclamations and fragmented phrases, whose interconnection—and sometimes even simple meaning—remain unintelligible, as in: "...singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming and saying..." If we add to this the fact that in many Orthodox churches these prayers, being "secret," are moreover read behind closed royal doors, and sometimes even behind a drawn altar curtain, then it would be no exaggeration to say that the prayer of thanksgiving has for all practical purposes been dropped from the church service. I repeat, the laymen simply do not know it, theologians are not interested in it, and the priest, who is forced to glance over it while the choir is singing—and frequently even giving a "concert"—is hardly capable of perceiving it in its fulness, unity and integrity. And, finally, in the service books themselves it has long been printed in broken fragments, separated by ellipses that have no reason at all for being where they are, and likewise with various insertions that crept into it from purely accidental sources.

Considering this situation, in which I honestly cannot but see a deep decadence, we need to begin any discussion of the eucharistic prayer with the revelation of its unity, i.e., how all of those parts into which it was dismembered by both liturgical studies and, alas, liturgical practice are mutually joined in an indivisible whole. For, I repeat, only in this whole is its meaning and power revealed as precisely the act *completing the sacrament*, as the fulfilment of the sacrament of the eucharist.

¹Fr Schmemmann was unable to write this excursus before his death.

Let us note right away that the multiplicity of eucharistic prayers that have come down to us in no way contradicts this unity. In antiquity almost every ecclesiastical province had its own *anaphora*, i.e., its own form and text of the prayer of thanksgiving. The early Church, being free from the obsession with uniformity that later developed, in no way identified such uniformity with unity. Even today there exist in the Orthodox Church two liturgies—of St John Chrysostom and of St Basil the Great—and the chief difference between them lies in the text of the prayer of thanksgiving. Thus, when we speak of the unity of this prayer, we do not mean an outward, linguistic unity, which never existed in the Church, but of something immeasurably deeper. We are speaking of the unity of the faith and experience of the Church, from which all these prayers were born. For, whatever the semantic differences between them, they all manifest and incarnate one and the same integral experience, one and the same knowledge, one and the same witness. It is an experience of which one can say for identical reasons that all human words fail to suffice for its definition and that, for those who have it, it lives, grows and bears fruit in the briefest, fewest and simplest words.

2

WHAT, THEN, GIVES THIS CHIEF, TRULY “CONSUMMATE” prayer of the liturgy its unity, transforms it into that *whole*, in and through which we affirm that this sacrament of sacraments is accomplished? The Church has answered this first and fundamental question literally from the first day of her existence by naming not only this prayer itself but also the entire liturgy with one word. This word is *eucharist*, *thanksgiving*. Thus, with the word *eucharist* the Church has named and still calls the offering of the gifts, the prayer, their consecration, and the partaking of them by the faithful. In communing of the holy mysteries, we pray that they may be for us “thanksgiving, health and happiness.” Hence it follows that both the call of the celebrant—“let us give thanks unto the Lord”—and the response of the gathering—“it is meet and right”—obviously relate not just to a single “introductory” section of the eucharistic prayer, the “*praefatio*” in the language

of liturgists, but are essentially the beginning, the foundation and the key to its entire contents, outside of which the most holy mystery of the eucharist remains hidden from us. The entire *oblation*, *anaphora*, which this part of the liturgy was long ago named, is from beginning to end a thanksgiving. However, in order to understand *today*, after centuries of forgetting, the meaning of this affirmation, to understand what for the early Church was joyfully self-evident, in no need of explanation, we must first make our way through the piles of interpretations in which this self-evidency became lost and only then go on to the original Christian meaning and experience of *thanksgiving*.

It would be better to simply say: thanksgiving is the experience of paradise. But the word "paradise" has also become weakened and stale in contemporary Christian consciousness—the learned interpreters of Christianity shun it as "naïve" and "primitive"—and needs to be, in a way, exhumed. Perhaps, however, it has become weakened because it came to be torn away from its churchly "ring," from that experience of paradise in the gift and anticipation of which consists the first and deepest meaning of church worship. "Standing in the temple of thy glory, we think we are in heaven." And thus, on the day of the Nativity of Christ, when we celebrate the advent of God into the world, the Church sings: "and the Cherubim withdraw from the tree of life, and I partake of the delights of paradise" (vespers, first stichera on "Lord, I Call"). Thus, from the radiant depths of the paschal night we address the risen Christ with the exultant affirmation: "You have opened to us the gates of paradise" (matins canon, ode 6, 1). And again we come to know that paradise is the primordial state of man and all creation, our state before the fall, before our "banishment from paradise," and our state upon our salvation by Christ, the eternal life that was promised by God and in Christ is already granted, already opened to man. Paradise is, in other words, the *beginning* and the *end*, to which is oriented and through which is defined and determined the entire life of man and in him of all creation. It is in relation to it that we comprehend the divine source of our life and of our fall from God, our enslavement to sin and death, our salvation by Christ, and our eternal destiny. We were created in paradise and for paradise, we were exiled from paradise, and Christ "leads us again into paradise."

If with our spiritual vision and with our spiritual ear we contemplate and hearken to the Church's experience of paradise, to the harmonious witness of the word of God and the worship and sanctity that never runs low in the Church, then the essence of this experience, the content of eternal life, of eternal joy, of eternal bliss, for which we were created, is revealed to us as the *trinity of knowledge, freedom and thanksgiving*. It is not, I emphasize, knowledge and freedom and then in addition thanksgiving as something separate from them, but knowledge and freedom themselves fulfilled in thanksgiving, thanksgiving as the fulness of knowledge and freedom, and thus communion, and thus possession.

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3

"THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, THAT THEY KNOW THEE THE ONLY true God" (Jn 17:3). All Christianity lies in these words of Christ. Man was created for knowledge of God, and in the knowledge of God is his true and thus eternal life. But this knowledge is not the knowledge through which our reason puffs itself up, convinced that it can know everything, including God, and all the while remaining ignorant of the fact that the entire depth and irretrievability of our fall lies precisely in the darkening of our mind and in the decay of genuine knowledge. Thus, the *knowledge of God* that Christ speaks of as eternal life, as paradise, is not the rational *knowledge about God* that, however "formally" and "objectively" correct, remains nevertheless within the limits and a part of that knowledge that is fallen and shattered, made feeble by sin, deprived of access to the essence of what is known and thus ceasing to be encounter, communion, unity. In his alienation from God, in his literally *senseless* choice of life not in God, but in itself and by itself, Adam did not cease to "know about God," which means to believe through that faith about which it is said that "even the demons believe and tremble." But he ceased to *know God*, and his life ceased to be that meeting with God, that communion with him—and in him with all of God's creation—all of which the book of Genesis depicts as the essence of paradise. And it is only for this meeting—with the living God, with God as the

life of life—that the soul thirsts and cannot but thirst, for in its deepest depths it itself is this thirst: “my soul thirsts for the living God,” says the psalmist.

Thanksgiving is the “sign,” or better still, the presence, joy, fulness, of knowledge of God, i.e., knowledge as meeting, knowledge as communion, knowledge as unity. Just as it is impossible to know God and not give him thanks, so it is impossible to give him thanks without knowing him. Knowing God transforms our life into thanksgiving, and thanksgiving transforms eternity into life everlasting. “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” (Ps 103:1) If the entire life of the Church is above all one continuous burst of praise, blessing and thanksgiving, if this thanksgiving is raised up both out of joy and out of sorrow, out of the depths of both happiness and misfortune, out of both life and death, if the most bitter graveside lamentation is transformed by it into a song of praise, “Alleluia,” then it is because the Church is the meeting with God, which has been accomplished in Christ. It is his—Christ’s—knowledge of God that has been granted to us as the gift of pure thanksgiving and heavenly praise. Christ has “opened to us the gates of paradise.” For, after all had been accomplished, when forgiveness of sins and victory over death had shone forth, when the “Cherubim withdrew from the tree of life,” then there remained only praise, only thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, which before it became thanksgiving *for something*, for “all things of which we know and of which we know not, whether manifest or unseen,” is granted to us as precisely a pure thanksgiving, as the blessed, heavenly fulness of the soul, “beholding the ineffable goodness [i.e., beauty] of the face of God,” and in this knowledge finding the total joy of that little child of the gospels, about whom Christ said that if he does not arise in us, we cannot enter into the paradise of the kingdom of God.

IT IS THROUGH THIS PURE THANKSGIVING—AND PRECISELY because it is true knowledge, the fulness of the soul that has come to know God—that the integral *knowledge of the world*, which had

disintegrated in the sinful fall of man from God and become nothing more than only *knowledge about the world*, is restored. As Kant has demonstrated once and for all, this "objective," *external* knowledge is hopelessly closed off from access to "things in themselves," to the very essence of the world and life, and thus to genuine possession of them.

And yet man was created for this possession, he was called to it when in paradise God appointed him king of creation, invested him with authority to *give names* to "every living creature," i.e., to know them *from within*, in their deepest essence. And thus the knowledge that is restored by this thanksgiving is not knowledge about the world, but of the world, for this thanksgiving is knowledge of God, and by the same token apprehension of the world as God's world. It is knowing not only that everything in the world has its cause in God—which, in the end, "knowledge about the world" is also capable of—but also that everything in the world and the world itself is a gift of God's love, a revelation by God of his very self, summoning us in everything to know God, through everything to be in communion with him, to possess everything as life in him.

As the world was created by the word of God *by blessing*—in the deepest, ontological significance of this expression—so is it saved and restored by thanksgiving and blessing, granted to us in the temple of Christ. Through them we recognize and comprehend the world as an icon, as communion, as sanctification. Through them we transform it into what it was created for and granted to us by God. "And when He had given thanks and blessed it, and hallowed it..." Each time we pronounce these words of the prayer of thanksgiving we "accomplish" the remembrance of Christ, who "took bread"—and this means matter, the world, creation—"in His holy, pure, and blameless hands," and again we witness to the world as a new creation, recreated as the "paradise of delight," in which everything created by God is called to become our partaking of the divine love, of the divine life.

5

FINALLY, THANKSGIVING, BEING THE FULNESS OF KNOWLEDGE, is also the fulfilment of freedom, that genuine freedom of which Christ said: "you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32). This is the freedom that man lost in his fall from God, in his banishment from paradise. Just as the knowledge that man struts around with, considering it all-powerful, is not genuine knowledge, so the freedom that he continually bewails is not genuine freedom, but a certain mysterious reflection of it that cannot be explained with scientific "precision," an unexplainable thirst in the human heart. It is astonishing how easily Christians themselves forget this, and how thoughtlessly, as something that goes without saying, they adopt the cheap "liberation" rhetoric that is smothering contemporary civilization. It is astonishing because Christians should know better than others that indeed in "this world," enslaved by sin and death, no one can ever define the essence of this freedom, which has become an idol, no one can describe that "kingdom of freedom," the struggle for the achievement of which supposedly defines human history.

And this is because here again we *know about freedom* but we *do not know freedom*. Indeed, we know something about it only relatively, only "by comparison." Of course, those who lived under an Orthodox government were freer than those living under a "totalitarian" government. For someone sitting in jail freedom begins beyond the walls of his cell. For someone living "in freedom" it begins with the overcoming of whatever "unfreedom" comes next, and so on ad infinitum. However, no matter how many layers of "unfreedom" we remove, each time we remove one, we inevitably find beneath it another, which turns out to be not less but more impenetrable. It would seem that we would finally be forced to see the illusoriness of the daydreams that torment us. The ordinary man, whose attention is entirely focused on the next "unfreedom," could easily fail to know this "illusoriness." The crowds storming the next Bastille would not know it; and it would not be known to the Ortega y Gasset "man of the masses," whose "liberators" change every hue and cry into "*burrah* from the throat of the patriot, *down with* from the throat of the renegade,"

to use the words of one Russian poet. But those few who in their Promethean quest for freedom, freedom not only *from* someone and something but absolute "freedom in itself," smash themselves on the blank walls to which this search inevitably leads in "this world," according to its elements and logic, have come to know it and witness to it by their terrible fate. In Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* Kirillov commits suicide. And in "real life" Nietzsche, sinking into insanity, took his own life while hearing the "sinister laughter of the idiot," Arthur Rimbaud; "I'm staring at the walls," whispered the dying Valery; and the dark, Kafkaesque flame of absurdity and despair all the more clearly bursts through the cracks of a world supposedly constructed on freedom and reason and promising freedom.

But it is time we acknowledged that Christians themselves bear a large share of the responsibility for this tragedy of freedom, that it is not accidental that the roots of this tragedy stretch out into that world and that culture that not very long ago at all called itself Christian. On the one hand, the unheard of, impossible good news of freedom—the call, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore" (Ga 5:1)—came into the world with and only with Christianity. It is precisely Christianity, and only it, which has forever spoiled human consciousness with this unquenchable thirst. But on the other hand, who, if not Christians themselves, have substituted, or one can even say, handed down this good news while reducing it—for the world, for "those outside"—to facile, "scientific" and "objective" *knowledge about God*, to a knowledge *from without* that cannot define God other than in categories of power, authority, necessity and law. Precisely from here stems the terrible pathos of theomachy, inherent to all ideologies that promise freedom to mankind. And here there is no misunderstanding, for if God is what "knowledge about God" self-assuredly affirms about him, then man is a slave, in spite of all the stipulations and elucidations suggested in smooth apologetics and theodicy. And then, for the sake of freedom, it is necessary that God not exist, that he be killed, and through this murder of God contemporary man, deifying himself, advances to his lowest depths.

Hence, neither "this world" nor the "knowledge about God" constructed upon its logic and categories has the power to define

the essence of freedom at its heart, not only in its negative but in its positive and absolute content. This is because freedom is not at all an "essence," something existing and consequently definable "in itself." God created us not for some kind of abstract "freedom" but for himself, for our communion, having been "brought" out of nonbeing into life and life in abundance, which is only from him, in him, *is* him. Man seeks and thirsts only for this life. It is only this life that man calls by that most incomprehensible—for it corresponds to nothing in the nature of "this world" and thus is always hardened—word *freedom*. It is only toward it that he strives, even when he is blindly and mindlessly struggling with God.

Thus we shall leave the "dead to bury the dead." We shall leave this joyless quest for squaring a circle, which any attempt to pose and resolve the "problem of freedom" inevitably becomes. We shall leave it and attend to the *thanksgiving* that we just spoke of, in which is fulfilled the genuine knowledge of God, in which is accomplished our meeting with him, and not with ideas about him. The Church lives in thanksgiving; it is the air she breathes. Let us listen and, to the measure of our acceptance of this thanksgiving, we shall grasp, and not by reason alone but with our entire being, that here and only here, only in this knowledge/thanksgiving, occurs our entrance into the sole true—for it is of God—freedom. It is the freedom that the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who "blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8), grants both as our breath, our royal nobility, and as power and perfection, fulness and beauty of life, or better still, *life in abundance*.

The one born of God, knowing him, gives thanks, and in giving thanks he is free, and the power and miracle of thanksgiving, as freedom and liberation, lies in the fact that it *makes the unequal equal*: God and man, creature and Creator, servant and Master. And it is not the "equality" inspired in man by the devil, whose secret impulse is in envy, in hatred for everything that is *above*, holy and lofty, in a plebeian repudiation of thanksgiving and worship, and therefore in a striving to make everything equal at the *lowest* point. Rather, it makes equal in that it *knows* man's dependence on God, objectively indisputable and ontologically abso-

lute, *to be freedom*. It knows this inwardly, through the knowledge of God, from the meeting with God, from which thanksgiving itself was freely born. And if the itch for equality is, out of ignorance, the itch of the slave, then thanksgiving and worship come out of knowledge and vision, out of meeting with the holy and exalted one, out of entry into the freedom of being sons of God.

The Church manifests and grants this freedom to us each time that we ascend to the very summit of the divine liturgy and hear the call, directed to us and to all of God's creation, embracing everything in itself: "Let us give thanks unto the Lord!" And in the fulness of knowledge we answer: "It is meet and right!"

6

"IT IS MEET AND RIGHT TO HYMN THEE, TO BLESS THEE, TO praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee, and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion."

Here again this pure, free, blessed thanksgiving, restored and granted to man by Christ, is raised up over the world. It is his thanksgiving, his knowledge, his filial freedom, which has become and eternally becomes ours. Because it is of Christ and *from above*, this thanksgiving raises us up to paradise, as anticipation of it, as partaking while still on earth of the kingdom which is to come. And thus, each time it is raised up the *salvation of the world is complete*. All is fulfilled, all is granted. Man again stands where God placed him, restored to his vocation: to offer to God a "reasonable service," to know God, to thank and to worship him "in spirit and in truth," and through this knowledge and thanksgiving to transform the world itself into communion in the life that "was in the beginning with God" (Jn 1:2), with God the Father, and was manifested to us.

This Life was with the Father. It is infinitely important for understanding not only the liturgy but the very essence of the Christian faith to know and remember that *the eucharist is communion with the Father*. The daring *Thou* of the prayer of thanksgiving is directed to the Father, and the *knowledge of God*, in which, as we endeavored to show, the thanksgiving of the Church fulfils itself, is *knowledge of the Father*. But we have become so accustomed to

applying this word *Father* to God that we no longer feel how completely unheard of this is, how impossible it is for human lips, for the mouth of a creature, to direct it toward the Creator. Therefore we do not realize that this possibility "with boldness and without condemnation" to call God Father, *to have access to the Father* (Eph 2:18), is not only the greatest of all Christ's gifts to us but is the very essence of salvation—of ourselves and of the whole world—by Christ.

"No one has seen God" (Jn 1:19). This is known to any genuine religious experience, which is always above all an experience of the *holy*, in the original, primordial meaning of this word—"holy" as *absolutely other*, incomprehensible, unknowable, unfathomable and ultimately even frightful. Religion was born and is born simultaneously from attraction to the *holy*, from knowledge that the absolutely other *is*, and from incomprehension as to *what* it is. And thus there is nothing on earth more ambiguous and in its ambiguity tragic than religion. It is only our contemporary, fizzled-out and sentimental "religiosity" that is convinced that "religion" is always something good, positive and useful, and that in essence people have always believed in the same "good" and condescending God, in a "Father," who in fact was created "according to the image and likeness" of our own little goodness, easy morality, commonplace pity, cheap complacency and shoddy magnanimity. We have forgotten how close to "religion," in a certain sense connatural to it, are the dark abysses of fear, insanity, hatred, fanaticism—all the sinister *superstition* that early Christianity, seeing in it a devilish delusion, took such pains to expose. In other words, we have forgotten that religion, as much as it is from God, from the ineradicable thirst and seeking for him in man, can also be from the "prince of this world," separating man from God and submerging him in the horrible darkness of ignorance. We have forgotten, finally that the most horrible of all words that ever resounded on earth were spoken not to lukewarm "agnostics" but to "religious" people: "your father is the devil" (Jn 8:44).

Only in relation to this darkness, to the "valley of the shadow of death" in which "this" fallen world abides, is the light of knowledge that shines in Christ revealed to our spiritual consciousness as knowledge of the one true God and *knowledge of him*

as Father. For the fatherhood of God manifested to us by Christ is not the natural, anthropomorphic fatherhood, the knowledge of which, in relation to God, religion infers *from below*, and which God thus shares with various earthly "fatherhoods." This fatherhood is possessed only by God, and manifested and granted only by the only-begotten Son of God. "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27). Christianity did not begin with an "ecumenical," universal message of a Father-God common to all religions—in which the word "father," to cap it all off, is ambiguous, for God did not give birth to the world and man, but created them, and thus they are in no way an "emanation" from God. Christianity began with faith in the coming into the world, in the incarnation, of the only-begotten Son of God and in our *becoming sons*—in him and only in him—of his Father. Christianity is the gift of a double revelation: the revelation by the Father of the Son, whom "no one knows except the Father," and the revelation by the Son of the Father, whom "no one knows except the Son," but in whose manifestation to us, in our being brought to him, consists the matter of the salvation of man and the world, accomplished by Christ. "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God ... Beloved, we are God's children now!" (1 Jn 3:1-2) Consequently, to believe in Christ means above all to *believe him*, that he is the only-begotten Son of God and hence the manifestation in the world of *knowledge of God*, of love for the Father, of life through him and in him; and likewise the manifestation of the love of the Father, with which he "eternally loves the Son and has given all things to him." It is to believe further that the Son grants his unique, only-begotten sonship to us, making us sons of God the Father: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17). And finally, it is to believe and to know that in his beloved Son the Father, whom "the world has not known" (Jn 17:25), manifests and grants to us his Fatherhood, he loves us with the same love with which he loves his Son. And because all knowledge of the Father, all love for him, all unity with him, resides in the sonship of the Son, because the Son and the Father are *one* (Jn 10:30), he who knows the Son knows the Father, he has access to him and to eternal life.

The Church lives through this filial knowledge of the Father, through access to him in the Son, and she proclaims them as salvation and life eternal. And thus the sacrament of the eucharist, in which the Church fulfils herself as the new creation, as the body of Christ and as communion in the kingdom which is to come, is in its deepest depths the *sacrament of the knowledge of the Father*, of access, of ascent to him in his only-begotten Son. The apostle Philip asked him: "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied" (Jn 14:8). And now, in the Son of God the Father is shown and manifested to us: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)—and not only seen, but has access to him, knows him as the Father.

7

"THOU IT WAS WHO BROUGHT US FROM NONEXISTENCE INTO being..." Since it is knowledge of the Father, thanksgiving is every time *apprehension of the world*—apprehension of it as it was given to us by God and discovery about our very selves, as having been called by God "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9) and as receiving "his precious and very great promises, that through these [we] may... become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 2:4). Only when we are presented to the Father, in Christ, the Son of God, do we become cognizant both of ourselves and of the world with the knowledge that was impossible in the darkness of "this world" but is restored, returned to us through our sonship of the Father.

Actually, nowhere is the darkness of ignorance into which we were immersed with our fall from God more obvious than in man's staggering *ignorance of himself*, and this in spite of the insatiable interest with which, having lost God, man studies himself and endeavors in his "sciences humaines" to penetrate the mystery of man's being. We live in an era of unrestrained *narcissism*, universal "turning into one's self." But, as strange and even terrible as this may seem, the more elemental is this interest, the more obvious it is that it is nourished by some dark desire to *dehumanize* man. Levi-Strauss, one of the leaders of anthropological structuralism, declares himself convinced that the ultimate goal of the

"science of men" is not the affirmation of man, but his dissolution. And, be it in different ways, contemporary linguistics, psychology and sociology all echo him. "The entire archeology of our thought," says Michel Foucault, another mental giant, demonstrates without difficulty that man is of recent invention, and it announces his end, possibly soon. The solution to the mystery of man is already turned into a negation not only of the mystery but of man himself, his dissolution into that monotonously gray and meaningless world that, in the words of the Nobel laureate Jacques Monod, is undividedly ruled by the frigid law of "chance and necessity."

The thanksgiving offered by the Church each time answers and destroys precisely this not only contemporary but age-old lie about the world and man. Each time it is a manifestation of man to himself, a manifestation of his essence, his place and calling in the light of the divine countenance, and therefore an act that renews and recreates man. In thanksgiving we recognize and confess above all the divine source and the divine calling of our life. The prayer of thanksgiving affirms that God brought us from *nonexistence* into *being*, which means that he created us as partakers of *Being*, i.e., not just something that comes from him, but something permeated by his presence, light, wisdom, love—by what Orthodox theology, following St Gregory Palamas, calls the divine *energies* and which makes the world called to and capable of transfiguration into a "new heaven and a new earth," and the ruler of creation, man, called to and capable of theosis, "partaking of the divine nature."

8

"AND WHEN WE HAD FALLEN AWAY [THOU] DIDST RAISE US UP again..." Only now, only from the heights of the knowledge of God, man and the world to which thanksgiving has brought us, can we hear these two expressions—this double revelation given to us at each eucharist of the mystery of sin and salvation—in their full depth and power.

Why "only now"? Because for the *anthropological maximalism* inherent in Christianity, of which we were just speaking—the af-

firmation of the divine height of man, of his essence and calling—an ostensibly pious but in essence truly heretical *anthropological minimalism* is always being substituted in the consciousness even of faithful and devout people. It is heretical because in its false humility it constitutes nothing other than a deeply unchristian *normalization* of sin and evil. In point of fact, in our usual, everyday, lukewarm “religiosity” do we not perceive sin as something precisely normal, which arises self-evidently out of the weakness and imperfection supposedly inherent to our nature, while perfection and holiness, conversely, we see as something “supernatural”? And every word, every action of the eucharist exposes precisely this normalization of sin, this lowering of man to the level of the weakest—and in his weakness, most irresponsible—creature, this, speaking directly, defamation of God’s creation. It exposes it in that it reveals sin as man’s *falling away* not only from God *but also from himself*, from his true nature, from the “honor of the high calling” to which God has summoned him.

Even the very expression “when we had fallen away” presupposes and contains the experience of the heights from which the fall occurred. The fall is so horrible because it is not something naturally inherent to God’s creation. It could never have been natural for one whom God “has chosen for glory and honor” when he placed him “over his handiwork.” Because the Church knows these heights, because her whole life is the grace-filled experience of *restoration*, of return to these heights, of ascent to them, *the Church knows sin* in its full depth and power. But this knowledge is radically different from those facile, rational, discursive explanations whose fatal insufficiency consists in the fact that they all, in one way or another, give sin a “legal basis,” making it, in philosophical terminology, a *phaenomenon bene fundatum*. In such explanations sin ceases to be precisely a *fall*. Considered in an “objective,” cause-and-effect relationship, it turns out to be “legitimized,” “normal,” and it is no longer sin itself but the overcoming of it that is perceived as something that exceeds the “norm.” But for the Church, in her experience and in her faith, sin and evil are essentially and above all a *mystery*, because evil does not and cannot have its own *existence* (for everything that exists is from God, and hence is “very good”), something that man could freely choose in preference to his own free essence as

"good." Evil, according to one of the church fathers, is "unsown grass." But while it is not sown, not created by God, it *is*: it possesses a terrible destructive power, so that it can be said about the world itself that it "lies in evil" (1 Jn 5:19).

There is no explanation of this mystery in the Christian faith, because in the categories of our fallen and cunning reason explanation inevitably becomes justification, as one of the most false but, then, perhaps one of the most popular of sayings affirms: "to understand is to forgive." But it is not possible either to understand or justify sin. And the Church, while not explaining it, *convicts* sin, in the original, seminal meaning of the word "to convict": the Church, and only the Church, exposes sin *as* sin, evil *as* evil, to the full boundlessness of their inexplicability, *impossibility*, and thus, terror, nonexistence, irreparability.

How, when is this conviction accomplished? To this in essence singularly important question, fully aware that the learned interpreters of the "problem of evil" will hardly listen, we answer: above all, first of all, the Church convicts sin through her *thanksgiving*. Through it she recognizes the "vital essence" of evil, the source of sin as *unthankfulness*, as man's falling away from the "hymning, blessing, praising, giving thanks and worshiping" through which he lives—for man, and in him all creation, knows God and has communion with him. Not giving thanks is the root and the driving force of that *pride* in which all teachers of the spiritual life, that "art of arts," without exception see the sin that tore man away from God. For the subtlest spiritual essence of pride, properly distinguishable only in the spiritual effort of "discernment of spirits," lies precisely in the fact that, as opposed to all other causes ascribed to the fall, it alone is *not from below* but *from above*: it is not from imperfection but from completion, not from deficiency but from an overabundance of gifts, and not from weakness but from power. In other words, it comes not from some unexplainable "evil" of an unknown origin, but from the enticement and temptation of the divine "very good" of creation and man. Pride is opposed to thanksgiving precisely as unthanksgiving because it arose from the same causes as thanksgiving. It is another, opposite answer to the same gift; it is temptation by the same gift.

We know that, according to the testimony of all who follow

the path of struggle with sin, temptation is not yet sin. Christ himself was tempted, and precisely by the gifts he possessed: power, authority, miracle-working. In fact, every gift of God to man, his divine image and perfection itself, is a *temptation*—and above all the gift to man of his *I*, the miracle of his absolutely unique, eternal, unrepeatable and indivisible *personality*, which renders each man “like a king of creation.” Temptation is *inherent* to the personality because out of all creation only man is called by God to love himself, i.e., to be conscious of his divine gift and the miracle of his *I*. It is actually only through this love for himself that man comprehends God as the Life of his life, as the absolutely desired *Thou*, in which he finds himself, his fulness, his happiness, his human *I*, created in the image and likeness of God, who is love. The human personality is love for oneself and *thus* love for God, love for God and *thus* love for oneself, the apprehension of oneself as a bearer of the divine gift of knowledge and ascent into the fulness of life. And here it is innate to convert this *love for himself* that is implicit in man into *love of oneself*, into *self-love*, which constitutes the essence of *pride*. No, man is not enticed by “evil” but by himself, by his own divine image, by the divine miracle of his *I*. He heard the serpent’s whisper “you will be like gods” not from outside, but from within, in the blessed fulness of paradise, and wanted to have life in himself and for himself. He wanted all of God’s gifts as his own and for himself: “I looked upon the beauty of the garden and my mind was deceived...” (Canon of St Andrew of Crete, ode 2, 1)

The fall of man occurred here, at these heights and from these heights: “you will be like gods.” But these words were in fact stolen from God. God created us and called us into “his wonderful light” so that we would become “like gods” and have abundant life. What then transformed these words into a lie, into the beginning of the fall, into the source of sin, decay and death? The answer to this question is given precisely by the eucharist, by the thanksgiving that returns us to the throne of the kingdom, grants us to see the face of God and his creation, heaven and earth, the fulfilment of his glory. The eucharist answers not with definitions, with words about words, but with its own light and power. For thanksgiving is the power that transforms desire and satisfaction, love and possession, into life, that fulfils everything in the

world, given to us by God, into knowledge of God and communion with him. And thus only thanksgiving *convicts*, i.e., exposes, sin as the falling away of love from thanksgiving, as *unthankfulness*. Created in the image and likeness of God, who is love, man cannot cease to be love. Even in "unthankfulness" he nevertheless remains that same love, he "admires" all the same gifts. But it is a love that has ceased to be thanksgiving, i.e., the knowledge of the gift of life and everything in life as not only God's, from God, but as the revelation of God's love to man, as a call to man to transform all gifts and life itself into partaking of the divine life, *into knowledge of God*.

Life in oneself... But only the Father "has life in himself" (Jn 5:26), only God is Life and therefore the life of any life. The horror and finality of the fall lies in this: wanting life in himself and for himself, man fell away from life. Through sin *death entered the world* (Rm 5:12) and the world itself became "darkness and the shadow of death." Not transformed by thanksgiving into the "food of immortality," into communion unto life, it became communion unto death, and love for the world. Not transformed by thanksgiving into knowledge of God, it became a dim and self-devouring "lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16). "Man is a passion, but a useless passion." In saying this Jean-Paul Sartre did not of course know what happened in the *falling away* of man, in that "original sin," in which, ceasing to be a sacrament of thanksgiving, the world died, and life became dying.

9

WE KNOW THAT ALL OF THIS, THE TERRIBLE LAWLESSNESS AND untruth of sin, the bottomless sorrow and death-dealing power of our fall from God, the power of evil, had once reigned in the world each time that, from the heavenly heights to which Christ's thanksgiving has raised us, these two expressions come forth: "when we had fallen away [Thou] didst raise us up again..." But we know it because *we have been restored*, because we have access to the Father and have been made partakers of the kingdom which is to come: "and [Thou] didst not cease to do all things until Thou

hadst brought us up to heaven, and hadst endowed us with Thy Kingdom which is to come."

✓ In Christ human nature is lifted up to heaven, sanctified, deified. "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:9).

✓ Paradise was on earth, but we have ascended to heaven, and even now our life "is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). The revelation of this last and highest gift, its *endowment*, is precisely the Church. And this endowment is accomplished in the sacrament of thanksgiving, in which the Church fulfils herself as *heaven on earth*.

This fulfilment is also witnessed to by the *sanctus*, that angelic praise *holy, holy, holy*, which in almost every eucharistic text that has come down to us concludes the *praefatio* and through which, as we shall later see, the sacrament of thanksgiving introduces us into the sacrament of remembrance.

For all these things we give thanks to Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son, and to Thy Holy Spirit; for all things of which we know and of which we know not, whether manifest or unseen; and we thank Thee for this Liturgy which Thou hast deigned to accept at our hands, though there stand by Thee thousands of archangels and hosts of angels, the Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their pinions, singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming and saying: Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosannah in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosannah in the highest!

✓ To what do these ancient angelic praises witness if not to *heaven*, which we are *seeing* and *hearing*, for we ourselves are lifted up to it? What are these words of the royal greeting if not an *icon*: the gift, vision, revelation of the kingdom of glory; if not meeting with God, fulfilled through thanksgiving, at his table, in his kingdom?

CHAPTER TEN

The Sacrament of Remembrance

"...as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint one for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

LUKE 22:29-30

I

WITH THE PROCLAMATION OF THE ANGELIC GLORIFICATION "holy, holy, holy" the prayer of thanksgiving finds its fulfilment as the ascent of the Church to *heaven*, to the throne of God, to the glory of the heavenly kingdom. But here, at this height, from this fulness of divine communion, knowledge and joy, the prayer of thanksgiving, while embracing all creation, the entire world visible and invisible, while manifesting the Church as heaven on earth, realizes itself as it were in the remembrance of one event: the *last supper*, which Christ performed with his disciples on the night in which he gave himself up to suffering and death.

Here is this part of the eucharistic prayer, the so-called *remembrance* (ἀνάμνησις) in liturgical science, in the liturgy of St John Chrysostom:

With these blessed powers, O Master who lovest mankind, we also cry aloud and say: Holy art Thou and all-holy, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy

Spirit! Holy art Thou and all-holy, and magnificent is Thy glory! Who hast so loved Thy world as to give Thine only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; who when He had come and had fulfilled all the dispensation for us, in the night in which He was given up—or rather, gave Himself up for the life of the world—took bread into His holy, pure, and blameless hands; and when He had given thanks and blessed it, and hallowed it, and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles, saying: Take! Eat! This is My Body, which is broken for you, for the remission of sins. And likewise, after supper, He took the cup, saying: Drink of it, all of you! This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins! Remembering this saving commandment and all those things which have come to pass for us: the Cross, the tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into heaven, the Sitting at the right hand, and the second and glorious Coming, Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all.

What is the meaning of this *remembrance*, its place not only in the prayer of thanksgiving but also in the totality of the divine liturgy, which is accomplished and fulfilled through this prayer?

2

DESPITE HUNDREDS OF TREATISES WRITTEN IN RESPONSE TO this question, neither academic theology nor liturgical studies has given, alas, a satisfactory answer. Here we see yet again the insufficiency of the method that I have already spoken of many times, which consists in the *dismemberment* of the eucharistic prayer, and essentially even the whole liturgy, into parts, which are then studied and explained outside of their connection with the other parts, without relating them to the whole. And this insufficiency is particularly obvious precisely in explanations of the eucharist as *remembrance*, for here it becomes clear to what degree the “reductionism” inherent to this method narrows and then ultimately

distorts the understanding not only of this “moment” itself but of the entire sacrament of the eucharist as well. We need to dwell on these “reductions,” which for hundreds of years now have been perceived as seemingly self-evident, for, in the first place, without overcoming them, we cannot “break through” to the genuine meaning, embedded in the very experience of the Church, of the eucharist as the *sacrament of remembrance*.

The first of these reductions consists in the understanding and definition of *remembrance* as a “consecratory” reference to Christ’s establishment, at the last supper, of the sacrament of the eucharist, i.e., the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The power of this transformation, the “actuality” of the sacrament, is attributed here to the remembrance. The remembrance is the “cause” of the actuality of the sacrament, just as the *institution* of the eucharist at the last supper is the cause of the actuality of the commemoration itself.

We find such a reduction in its “pure” form in the Latin doctrine of the transubstantiation of the eucharistic gifts through the *words of institution* of Christ, i.e., the words he pronounced at the last supper and which the priest repeats while performing the sacrament: “this is my body,” “this is my blood.” But inasmuch as these words are defined as “consecratory” and, consequently, both necessary and sufficient for the sacrament, the eucharistic commemoration of the last supper is essentially reduced to them.

This reduction, in such an extreme form, is rejected both by Orthodox and Protestant theologians. But it is rejected, however, precisely and only as an *extreme*. For its main point, the reduction of the commemoration to the institution, remains the singular and, I repeat, seemingly self-evident context for the explanation of this part of the eucharistic prayer. In the Orthodox East, for example, in spite of the fact that our theologians unanimously affirm that it is not the “words of institution” but the *epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, that accomplishes the transformation of the gifts, a special *isolation* precisely of the words of institution long ago was introduced and practiced everywhere. So, during the celebrant’s generally accepted *secret*, i.e., “to himself,” reading of the prayer of thanksgiving, only these words, and not the words of the epiklesis, are pronounced aloud. So, during their pronouncement, the celebrant (or the deacon) points his hand first

at the bread and then at the cup, as if to emphasize the particularity, the exclusivity of precisely this moment. And, finally, at the pronouncement of each of the two formulas of "institution"—over the bread and over the cup—the assembly answers with a solemn *amen*, a word that in worship always has precisely a "consecratory" meaning.

As far as Protestant theology is concerned, although it generally dismisses any objective change of the eucharistic gifts as needless and somewhat "magical" and places the reality of the change in dependence not on liturgical formulas and rites but on the personal faith of the communicant, this very "dismissal" takes place *within* entirely the same reduction, for it applies the question not to the link between the last supper and the eucharist as such, but to the "actualization," the "reality" of this link in the Church.

In what does the insufficiency, the harmfulness of this approach consist? For what reason do we define it as a reduction? Because, of course, the endlessly important—for our faith, for our life—question of the eucharistic commemoration of the last supper, and hence of the connection of the eucharist with the last supper, is brought down in this approach to a question of *how*, not *what*: of *how* the institution at the last supper "operates" in the eucharist, but not of *what* Christ accomplished through this last act of his earthly ministry before his betrayal, cross and death.

In other words, the reduction here consists in the substitution of the chief question with a derivative one. This substitution was derived, without any doubt, in connection with another, far more profound reduction, which, although it issues from the same "dismembering" method, concerns the theological source no longer of just the eucharist but of the entire saving work of Christ. It is the identification, inherent to scholastic theology in all its varieties, of the *sacrifice* that Christ offered for us and for our salvation with Golgotha: with the cross, suffering and death. To be sure, according to the Church's teaching, in the eucharist the Church "proclaims the Lord's death, confesses his resurrection." To be sure, the connection of Golgotha with the last supper, accomplished by Christ "before [he] suffer[s]" (Lk 22:15), and thus of the sacrifice of Golgotha with the eucharist, is indisputable. School theology, however, reduces its interpretation of the eucha-

rist almost exclusively to it. According to this interpretation, Christ established the eucharist at the last supper as a sacramental commemoration of his sacrificial immolation on the cross, the taking on himself of the sin of the world, which is redeemed by him through his suffering and death. Offered once on Golgotha, this sacrifice is eternally "actualized" in the eucharist, on our altars, since on our behalf and for us it has been offered and is offered.

As is well known, such a sacramental identification of the last supper and the eucharist with the sacrifice of Golgotha led the Protestants to the general repudiation of the sacrificial character of the eucharist as incompatible with the doctrine of the singularity, unrepeatability and "sufficiency" of the sacrifice offered by Christ ἄναξ, i.e., once and for all. Among us Orthodox, it became entrenched in our school theology—albeit without the extremes inherent to the Latin "prototype" of this interpretation—and in part affected the very rites and prayers of the liturgy. But above all, to a significant degree it colored the *symbolical* interpretations of the liturgy, of which I have spoken repeatedly in the first chapters of this investigation.

What we ultimately need to say of these "reductions" is that they have led, both in theology and in the very liturgical life of the Church, to an almost total rupture between the teaching on the eucharist as *sacrifice* and the doctrine of it as being the sacrament of *partaking of communion*. In our school theology these two doctrines have simply coexisted, as it were, but without any inner connection. As far as our liturgical practice, which undoubtedly reflects the theology, is concerned, we perceive the eucharist-sacrifice and the eucharist-communion in two completely different "keys." Thus, for example, as both theologians and pastors and even directors of the "spiritual life" have taught the faithful, one can—and it appears even that one must—take part in the eucharist-sacrifice while not partaking of communion: by being present, by prayer, by offering prosphora, by receiving the antidoron, or even by simply "requesting" one or several liturgies. This is possible because in the consciousness and piety of church people, communion has for a long time not been linked to the eucharist as sacrifice, but has been subordinated entirely to another "law": the law of individual "spiritual needs"—sanctification, help, consola-

tion, etc.—and correspondingly to the question of personal “preparedness” or “unpreparedness.”

All these reductions, I repeat, have their origin and are rooted in a theology, in a liturgical science, which takes as its basis for the study and interpretation of the eucharist not the *lex orandi*, not the rule of the Church’s prayer in all its integrity, where all the parts that comprise the eucharistic celebration are subordinated one to another, but, on the contrary, its dismemberment in the name of a priori criteria, i.e., criteria located outside the eucharist itself, outside its “self-witness.”

3

TO BE FAIR, ONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT OVER THE PAST decades there has occurred a significant and in general positive thrust in the study of the eucharist. This was furthered, on the one hand, by the so-called *liturgical movement*, with its intense focus on the early, prescholastic understanding of the place of the eucharist in the Church, and, on the other, by the new, deepened study of the link between the Christian liturgical tradition and its Jewish roots. The works of such scholars as Dom Gregory Dix, Oscar Cullmann, Joachim Jeremias, Jean Daniélou and many others has broadened our knowledge of the religious forms of later Judaism (*Spätjudentum*), within which Christianity and the Church were born and the preaching of the gospel—the good news of the coming into the world for its salvation of the messiah promised by God and the fulfilment in him of all the prophets, all that was promised—began to be proclaimed.

Thus, we now know that, along with its absolute singularity, the last supper was *in its form* a traditional religious meal with prescribed rites and prayers, and that Christ fulfilled all these prescriptions. And we likewise know that these prescriptions, this “form”—precisely because Christ fulfilled them, referred them to himself, to his saving work—became the original, fundamental “form” of the Church, her self-witness, her fulfilment in the world.

This knowledge itself, however, no matter how useful and necessary, cannot give us the *complete* answer to the question we

posed at the beginning of this chapter: of the meaning of the *commemoration* of the last supper, which from the beginning constituted an inalienable part of the prayer of thanksgiving. Moreover, now that historical investigation has helped free us from the *scholastic* reduction, we are now threatened with a new, this time *historical* reduction. This latter consists in the conscious or unconscious conviction that the historical method is capable by itself of revealing the meaning and content of the eucharist—and also that it alone can realize this. In contemporary “historicism,” inasmuch as it pretends to fulness of knowledge (but, alas, only pretends to it), we are thus dealing with the same rationalism as in the case of the scholastics—i.e., with the certainty that human reason in itself possesses a guarantee of its infallibility. But need we once again demonstrate that no kind of history, even the most scientific, is ever in the end free of “presuppositions,” but always, both in its questions and in its answers, depends on the convictions, even if they are often unconscious, of the “questioner,” i.e., the historian? As far as Christianity is concerned, the best demonstration of this is the conglomeration of “scientific-historical” interpretations of the early Church, her faith and her life, which marked the era of the triumph of “historicism,” its triumph precisely as a “reduction.” For it is precisely seeing it as such a “reduction” that explains the fact that each of these theories, self-assuredly proclaiming itself as the last word of science, was soon debunked by its successor, which was just as self-assured and just as doomed.

Therefore, unreservedly acknowledging the full indisputable use and, moreover, absolute necessity of historical research into liturgical theology, which I wrote of with—I hope—sufficient clarity in my *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, I consider the lowering of the liturgy to a *history* of the worship services, which replaced the earlier imprisonment of theological scholasticism, to be wrong and harmful. I am convinced, for example, that this historical reduction explains, in the first place, the helplessness, confusion and discordance of the “liturgists” in the face of the profound liturgical crisis that has erupted within Christianity in our day. It is as if they have nothing to say to the liturgical experiments of every description that are carried out with the aim of bringing the services “closer” to the “needs,” “ideas” and even

"demands" of the contemporary world, or, simply put, dissolving them into contemporary life. They have nothing to say precisely because, by "dissolving" worship into history in the first place, they supplied the means for its dissolution in contemporary life today. They have stripped of meaning the very question of the eternal and unchanging essence of the liturgy, of its significance for the Church, for man, for the world. And at the same time they have prompted a sterile, liturgically illiterate "integrist" in reaction against all these experiments.

4

ALL THIS NEEDED TO BE SAID IN ORDER TO AGAIN JUSTIFY, THIS time in relation to the eucharistic *remembrance*, the method that lies at the basis of this entire investigation and which, in my deepest conviction, is the only one that corresponds to and answers both the essence and the goal of liturgical theology. We must seek the complete answer to the question of the meaning of this commemoration, of the meaning of the liturgy as the *sacrament of remembrance*, in the eucharist itself—and this means in the continuity, in the identity of that *experience*, not personal, not subjective, but precisely *ecclesial*, which is incarnated in the eucharistic celebration and is fulfilled each time the eucharist is celebrated.

We must most strongly stipulate that the *integral* answer does not stand for the whole answer, all the knowledge that it reveals. It is not given us to know the *whole* answer to any genuine question, and this is so not only because of our limitations but also because of the inexhaustibility of the depths of the divine mystery, of the divine economy concerning the world and man, and thus the inexhaustibility of our seekings, our questionings, both here on earth and in eternity as well. Indeed, here and now, in this earthly life, we are called to participation in the heavenly mystery, to communion with heaven. But all the more our knowledge is still only *partial*: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. . . . For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand

fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Co 13:9-10, 12).

But here the entire depth, the entire joy of the Christian faith and of the whole experience of the Church lies in the fact that this *partly* stems from the *whole*. It is referred to it, it witnesses to it, it shines with its light and functions through its power. If we are not given in "this world" to know the *entire* answer, then in the Church, which is "in this world" but not "of this world," we have been granted the way of the full approach to it, of growth into it. This way is in the entrance into the experience of the Church and in partaking of it above all in the *sacrament of sacraments*, in which each time the Church performs it, even if no one is ever able to wholly perceive it, the fulness of this experience is granted. And it is precisely this contact with it that gives birth in us to the desire to always more truly, more fully, more integrally, more perfectly partake of it and comprehend it.

5

THE FIRST THING THAT IS REVEALED TO US ABOUT THE LITURGICAL remembrance of the last supper in the light of the eucharistic experience is precisely that, being a part of the thanksgiving, it not only is inseparable from the thanksgiving, not "isolated" from it, but only in reference to it, within it, is its true meaning disclosed to us.

We already know that through thanksgiving the meaning of the eucharist as the ascent of the Church to the heavenly altar, as the sacrament of the kingdom of God, is fulfilled. We likewise know that the entire liturgy, through its successive self-realization as the sacrament of assembly, sacrament of entrance, sacrament of the word, sacrament of offering and, finally, sacrament of thanksgiving, is oriented toward this ascent. We know, finally, that in this sense the whole liturgy is a *remembrance* of Christ. It is all a sacrament and experience of his presence: of the Son of God, who came down from heaven and was incarnate that he might in himself lead us up to heaven. He "gathers us as the Church," he transforms our gathering into an entrance and ascent, he "opens our mind" to the hearing of his word, he, as "the offerer and the offered," makes his offering ours and ours his, he fulfils our unity

as unity in his love, and, finally, through his thanksgiving, which has been granted to us, he leads us up to heaven, he opens to us access to his Father.

What can all this mean except that the *remembrance*, into which thanksgiving now converts itself, having attained this goal, having through itself fulfilled the ascent of the Church to heaven, *is* the very *reality* of the kingdom—which we are precisely able to *remember*, and thus comprehend as *real*, as present “in our midst,” because Christ manifested it and appointed it then, on that night, at that table.

“As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint one for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom” (Lk 22:29-30). In the night of the fallen world, enslaved to sin and death, the last supper manifested the otherworldly, divine light of the kingdom of God. Here is the eternal meaning and the eternal reality of this singular event, which can be compared with and reduced to no other. The eucharistic experience of the Church discloses precisely this meaning of the last supper. The Church apprehends it as her own ascent to the heavenly reality, which Christ has manifested and granted, once and for all time, on earth at the last supper. And when, approaching for communion, we pray, “Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me *today* as a communicant,” this identification of what is accomplished *today* with what was accomplished *then* is *real*, and precisely in the full meaning of the word, for *today* we are gathered in the same kingdom, at the same table, where *then*, on that festal night, Christ was present among those whom “he loved to the end.”

“He loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1). In the eucharistic experience and in the gospels the last supper is the *end* (τέλος), i.e., the completion, the crowning, the fulfilment of Christ’s love, which constitutes the essence of all of his ministry, preaching, miracles, and through which he now gives himself up, as love itself. From the opening words, “I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you” (Lk 22:15), to the exit to the garden of Gethsemane, everything at the last supper—the washing of the feet, the distribution to the disciples of the bread and the cup, the last discourse—is not only concerned with love, but is *Love itself*. And thus the last supper is the τέλος, the completion, the fulfilment of the *end*, for it is the manifestation of that kingdom of

love, for the sake of which the world was created and in which it has its τέλος, its fulfilment. Through love God created the world. Through love he did not abandon it when it fell into sin and death. Through love he sent his only-begotten Son, his Love, into the world. And now, at this table, he manifests and grants this love as his kingdom, and his kingdom as "abiding" in love: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; *abide in my love*" (Jn 15:9).

6

SUCH IS THE ANSWER OF THE LITURGY ITSELF, OF THE EUCHARISTIC experience of the Church, to the first of the "reductions" that we pointed out, which explains the eucharistic commemoration of the last supper as a reference to the institution of the sacrament and by the same token reduces this very institution to the granting to the Church of the authority and power to transform the bread and wine of the eucharistic offering into the body and blood of Christ.

It is precisely in the light of what has been said that this interpretation's entire insufficiency, its entire incompatibility with the experience of the Church is revealed. The insufficiency is not that this interpretation affirms the *reality* of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharistic gifts but that it excludes what, by its being cut off from the integral experience of the Church, it does not see, it does not hear, and thus it *does not know*. And it excludes what is precisely the main thing: the eucharistic *knowledge* in the last supper of the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom of God, and thus of the *beginning* of the Church, her beginning as the new life, as the sacrament of the kingdom.

At the same time, it is precisely in Christ's transformation at the last supper of *the end into the beginning*, the Old Testament into the New, that we find the essence of what we denote with the poor and feeble term "institution," a word that by its sound alone draws us downward to a juridical, purely institutionalized reduction. At the last supper Christ did not *institute* any "authority" or "right" to transform bread and wine—he instituted the Church. He instituted his kingdom, appointed for his disciples and all

“who believe through their words,” as *abiding in his love*. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.” This commandment is new, eternally new, because it is Christ himself, the very love of God, who is granted to us in order that we may love one another through it: “even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn 13:34). And this new covenant in Christ, the love of God, is the Church.

Yes, the institution of the eucharist did occur at the last supper—but not as “another” institution separate from the institution of the Church, for it is the establishment of the eucharist as the sacrament of the Church, of her ascent to heaven, of her self-fulfilment at the table of Christ in his kingdom. The last supper, the Church and the eucharist are “linked” not through an earthly cause-and-effect connection, to which an “institution” is so often lowered, but through their common and single *referral* to the kingdom of God—which is *manifested* at the last supper, *granted* to the Church and *remembered*, in its presence and actuality, in the eucharist.

Therefore, finally, only in relation to this link, to its fulfilment, its actuality, is the genuine meaning of the most profound and joyous mystery of our faith—the transformation in the eucharist of our gifts into the body and blood of Christ—revealed to us. And this mystery we shall be presently speaking of in the following chapter as the *sacrament of the Holy Spirit*.

7

BEFORE THIS, HOWEVER, WE MUST DWELL ON THE ANSWER given by the eucharist itself, by the eucharistic experience of the Church, to the second “reduction”: the identification of the commemoration of the last supper with the commemoration of Christ’s suffering and death on the cross, and hence, the interpretation of the eucharist as the sacrament above all of the sacrifice on Golgotha.

Let us say immediately that the link between the last supper and Christ’s voluntary suffering, which lies at the foundation of this “reduction,” was never doubted by the Church and is attested to not only by her entire liturgical tradition but first of all by the

gospel itself. According to the gospels, Christ purposefully accomplished the last supper before he suffered (Lk 22:15) and knowing that his hour had come (Jn 13:1). He continued and completed his farewell discourse with his disciples, in which he gave them his new commandment and which began while still at the supper, on the road to the garden of Gethsemane ("Rise, let us go hence," Jn 14:31), so that this very parting, the ascent to the cross, was manifested to us as the completion of the last supper. And the eucharistic prayer itself, I repeat, which invariably links the commemoration of the last supper with the commemoration of the cross, witnesses to this connection.

Thus, we speak not of this link in and of itself but of its theological interpretation. Does all that was said about it justify the approach to the eucharist that sees and interprets the eucharistic remembrance as a *means* to the sacramental actualization of the sacrifice on Golgotha? And is the understanding that ensues from this approach—of the last supper as an act by which Christ, before his passion, in prevision of his sacrifice on Golgotha, made a prototype of it, establishing its sacramental "form," in order that the saving fruits of this sacrifice could always be fed to the faithful in the sacrament—correct?

In the light of all that has been said above about the eucharistic experience and "knowledge" of the last supper, we not only can but must answer "no" to these two questions. This approach is wrong—wrong in that it is determined precisely by the isolation of the eucharistic commemoration and its severance from the wholeness of the liturgical celebration, which as we have seen is entirely oriented to the commemoration, entirely leading to it as its consummation.

Actually, the whole meaning, the entire endless joy of this commemoration is precisely that it remembers the last supper not as a "means" but as a manifestation, and even more than a manifestation, as the presence and gift of the very *goal*: the kingdom for which God created the world, to which he called and foreordained mankind and in which, "in these latter days," he manifested in his only-begotten Son, the kingdom of the Father's love for the Son, the Son's love for the Father and the Holy Spirit's gift of this love to the faithful. "I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one . . . that the love with which thou hast

✓ loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn 17:23, 26).

We call the last supper an ultimate event because, being the manifestation of the goal, it is the manifestation of the *end*. This end, the kingdom of God, is "not of this world" and thus is *other-worldly*, although its manifestation is accomplished in "this world." "I am no more in the world," Christ said at the last supper (Jn 17:11). And because he is no longer in the world, the glory he manifested and gave to his disciples on that night, at that table ("the glory which thou hast given me I have given to them," Jn 17:22), is also "not of the world." With the last supper Christ's earthly ministry was completed, and Christ himself witnesses to this in his farewell discourse and high-priestly prayer: "Now is the Son of man glorified and in him God is glorified" (Jn 13:31); "I *glorified* thee on earth, *having accomplished* the work which thou gavest me to do" (Jn 17:4).

But then, everything that Christ accomplished *after* the last supper, and that the eucharistic prayer commemorates after it, is revealed in this prayer and in the faith and experience of the Church as a *consequence* of this manifestation of the kingdom, as its first, decisive and saving *victory* in the world and over the world.

8

✓ CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED BY "THIS WORLD," BY ITS SIN, ITS EVIL, its struggle against God. In earthly history, in our earthly time, the *initiative* of the cross belongs to sin, just as it belongs to it even today, in each of us, when through our sins we "crucify the Son of God on [our] own account and hold him up to contempt" (Heb 6:6).

✓ If the cross—an instrument of a shameful execution—has become the most holy *symbol* of our faith, hope and love, if the Church never tires of glorifying its unfathomable and unconquerable power, of seeing in it the "beauty of the universe" and the "healing of creation," of witnessing that "through the cross joy has come into all the world," it is because, of course, through that same cross, which incarnated the very essence of sin as *theomachy*, this sin was overcome; because through the death on the cross, death, which had reigned in the world and would appear to have

achieved its ultimate victory, was itself destroyed; and finally because from the depths of this victory of the cross radiated the joy of the resurrection.

But what transformed the cross and eternally transforms the cross into victory if not the love of Christ, the same divine love that, as the very essence and glory of the kingdom of God, Christ manifested and granted at the last supper? And where, if not at the last supper, do we find the consummation of the full, complete self-sacrifice of this love, which in "this world" made the cross—betrayal, crucifixion, suffering and death—*unavoidable*?

The gospels and the church services, particularly the wonderfully profound services of passion week, witness precisely to this link between the last supper and the cross, to their connection as the manifestation and victory of the kingdom of God. In these services, the last supper is always *referred* to that night that surrounds it on all sides and in which particularly clearly shines the light of the festival of love that Christ accomplished with his disciples in the "large upper room, furnished," as if prepared in advance from all ages. This was the night of sin, night as the very essence of "this world." And here it thickens to the limit, it prepares to devour the last light shining in it. Already the "princes of the people are assembled together against the Lord and his Christ." Already the thirty silver pieces—the price of betrayal—are paid. Already the crowd, incited by their leaders, armed with swords and spears, are heading out on the road leading to the garden of Gethsemane.

But—and this is infinitely important for the Church's understanding of the cross—the last supper itself took place under the shadow of this darkness. Christ knew "the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table" (Lk 22:21). And it was precisely from the last supper, from its light, that Judas, *after taking the morsel* (Jn 13:27), went out into that dreadful night, and soon after him, Christ. And if in the services of Holy Thursday, the day of the express commemoration of the last supper, joy is all the time interlaced with sadness, if the Church again and again recalls not only the light but also the darkness overshadowing it, it is because, in the double *exits* of Judas and of Christ from that light into that darkness, she sees and knows the beginning of the cross as the mystery of sin and the mystery of victory over it.

The mystery of sin: Judas' exit is the limit and completion of that sin whose origin is in paradise and whose essence lies in the falling away of human love from God, in choosing, through this love, oneself, and not God. All of the life, all of the history of the world, as the *fallen* world, as "this world," which lies in evil, as the kingdom of "the prince of this world," begins with this falling away and is inwardly determined by it. And now, in the exit of Judas, apostle and betrayer, this history of sin—blind, twisted, devoid of love, which had become *thievery*, for it had stolen life, which was given for communion with God, "for itself"—approaches its end. For the mystically terrible meaning of this exit is that Judas *also left paradise*, he took flight from paradise, he cast himself from it. He was at the last supper, Christ washed his feet, he took into his hands the bread of Christ's love, Christ gave himself to him in this bread. He saw, he heard, he felt the kingdom of God with his own hands. And here, like Adam, fulfilling Adam's primordial sin, taking the entire horrible "logic" of sin to its limit, he *did not want* this kingdom. In Judas the theomachistic desire, the ~~fallen love of "this world," proved the more powerful.~~ And this desire, on the strength of all its horrible logic, could not but be—consequently, inevitably—for the *murder of God*. After the last supper Judas had *nowhere to go* but into the darkness of decide. When it was done and this desire, and through it his "living" life, was exhausted, Judas would have *nowhere* to go but into self-annihilation and death.

The mystery of victory: In Christ, who through his self-sacrifice manifested his kingdom and its glory at the last supper, *this very kingdom* appeared in the night of "this world." After the last supper Christ also had *nowhere greater to go* than to this encounter, to the deadly duel with sin and death—because these two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the "prince of this world," could not simply "coexist," because it was in order to destroy the dominion of sin and death, to return his creation, stolen from him by the devil, to himself, to save the world, that God gave his only-begotten Son. Thus, Christ *condemned* himself to the cross with the last supper, with the manifestation in it of the kingdom of love. Through the cross the kingdom of God, which was *secretly* manifested at the supper, *enters* into "this world" and through this entrance becomes struggle and victory.

9

SUCH IS THE KNOWLEDGE, SUCH IS THE ORIGINAL EXPERIENCE of the cross in the Church, as witnessed by her entire liturgical tradition, and above all by the eucharistic *remembrance*. As the prayer of thanksgiving continues:

Remembering this saving commandment and all those things which have come to pass for us: the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into heaven, the Sitting at the right hand, and the second and glorious Coming...

This enumeration—in which, let us emphasize, the cross is not isolated from or contraposed to the other events but constitutes together with them as it were one ascending series—is a commemoration of a single victory, gained in Christ by the kingdom of God over “this world.” The victory, which is realized, however, in a succession of victories, each finding its fulfilment in the next, is the action of the victorious progress toward that *end*, when Christ “delivers the kingdom to God the Father ... then God shall be all in all” (1 Co 15:24, 28). The sacrificial love of Christ, the single *sacrifice*, integrally offered by Christ through all these victories, unites them together, transforms them into a single victory.

Here, in relation to this single and all-encompassing sacrifice of Christ, is disclosed the “harmfulness” of the identification, inherent in the “dismembering” school theology, of the sacrifice that Christ offers for us *only* with the suffering and death on the cross. This harmfulness is rooted, of course, in the first place in the onesided “juridical” understanding of the very idea of sacrifice as an *atoning* act, correlative to evil and sin as their expiation, and thus an act that according to its very essence “demands” suffering and ultimately death. This understanding, however—and we have already spoken of this in the chapter devoted to the eucharist as the *sacrament of offering*—is precisely onesided and in its onesidedness, false. In its essence sacrifice is linked not with sin and evil but with *love*: it is the self-revelation and self-realization of

✓ love. There is no love without sacrifice, for love, being the giving of oneself to another, the placing of one's life in another, the perfect obedience to another, is sacrifice. If in "this world" sacrifice is actually and inevitably linked with suffering, it is not in accordance with its own essence but in accordance with the essence of "this world," which lies in evil, whose essence lies in the falling away from love.

We spoke of all this earlier, and there is no need for us to repeat it here. What is important for us now is that in the eucharistic experience of the Church, in the experience of *the eucharist as sacrifice*, this sacrifice embraces Christ's entire life, his entire ministry, or, better still, it is Christ himself. For Christ is perfect ✓ love and therefore perfect sacrifice. He is sacrifice not only in his saving ministry but above all in his eternal *Sonship*, his giving of himself in love and in perfect obedience to the Father. Indeed we can, without fear of falling into contradiction with the classic doctrine of the complete beatitude of God, trace sacrifice to the very life of the Trinity, and even moreso, we can contemplate the very beatitude of God in the perfection of the all-holy Trinity as ✓ the perfect self-giving of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to each other, as perfect love and, hence, perfect sacrifice.

The Son offers this eternal sacrifice to the Father, transforming it through obedience to the Father into giving himself *for the life of the world*. He offers it through his being made man, taking on human nature, and becoming for all eternity the Son of man. He offers it in receiving baptism from John and in it taking on himself all the sin of the world. He offers it through his preaching and miracle-working. And he fulfils this offering by manifesting and granting to his disciples at the last supper the kingdom of ✓ God, the kingdom of perfect self-renunciation, perfect love, perfect sacrifice.

But because this offering is accomplished in "this world," because it encounters from the very beginning the opposition of *sin* in all its manifestations—from the blood of the children slaughtered by Herod, from the unbelief and the skepticism of the world to the frenzied hatred of the scribes and pharisees—this whole offering from the very beginning is the *cross*—the passion and its ✓ acceptance, the moral struggling and overcoming—it is *crucifixion* in the deepest sense of the word. "And he began to be greatly

distressed and troubled"—this was said about the final struggle, the final exhaustion on the night of betrayal at Gethsemane. But this very distress is the distress over the sin that surrounded Christ, and the troubling is over the loss of faith of "his own," to whom he had come, been present for his entire life and his entire ministry. And it is not for nothing that, on the Feast of the Nativity, while preparing for the joyful celebration of the incarnation, the Church performs a certain prefiguration of passion week, contemplating in this very joy the cross, inevitably inscribed in it from time immemorial.

As the entire earthly ministry of Christ is the offering—in "this world," "for the sake of us men and for our salvation"—of the eternal sacrifice of love, so it is all—in "this world"—the cross. Completed as joy, as the gift of the kingdom of God, at the last supper, his ministry is completed as struggle and victory on the cross. It is the same offering, the same sacrifice, the same victory. And, finally, through the cross and as the cross, this offering, this sacrifice and victory is handed over and granted to us who live in "this world." Because in "this world," and above all in our very selves, it is only through the cross that the ascension into the joy and fulness of the kingdom appointed for us is accomplished.

IO

ONLY THROUGH THE CROSS... IN REALITY, EVERYTHING THAT I am endeavoring to say in this chapter—and not in it alone, but throughout this entire work—I deliberately say in feeble and insufficient words: about the essence of the Church as ascension to heaven, into the joy of the kingdom of God, and of the eucharist as the sacrament of this ascension. These very words about joy and fulness would be truly *irresponsible* words were they not referred—through the Church herself, in the eucharist itself—to the cross, to the singular path of this ascent, to the means of our participation in it.

"... the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Ga 6:14). Need we point out that in these words the apostle Paul expresses the entire essence of the Christian life as a following after Christ? *The world*

✓ *is crucified to me*: if following after Christ is the reciprocal love to his love, the reciprocal sacrifice to his sacrifice, then in "this world" it cannot but be a spiritual feat of genuine renunciation of the world in its selfishness and pride, in its "desire" as "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16). *I am crucified to the world*: but this sacrifice cannot but be my crucifixion, for "this world" is not only outside of me but above all in my very self, in the old Adam in me. Its mortal struggle with the new life granted to us by Christ never ceases in our earthly sojourn.

✓ "In the world you have tribulation" (Jn 16:33). Anyone who would in the smallest degree follow the path of Christ, love him and give himself to him, has this tribulation, recognizes this suffering. The cross is suffering. But through love and self-sacrifice this same tribulation is transformed into joy. It is experienced as being crucified with Christ, as accepting his cross and hence taking part in his victory. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). The cross is joy, "and no one will take your joy from you" (Jn 16:22).

✓ The eucharistic *remembrance* is the remembrance of the kingdom of God, which was manifested and appointed at the last supper. But the remembrance of the cross, the body of Christ broken for us, the blood of Christ poured out for us, is inseparable from it. This is why it is *only through the cross* that the gift of the kingdom of God is transformed into its reception, its manifestation at the eucharist—in our ascent to heaven, in our partaking at the table of Christ in his kingdom.

II

✓ THE SACRAMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY, THE SACRAMENT OF offering, the sacrament of anaphora and thanksgiving and, finally, remembrance, are a single sacrament of the kingdom of God, of a single sacrifice of Christ's love, and therefore they are the sacrament of the manifestation, the gift to us of our life as sacrifice. For Christ took our life in himself and gave it to God. Man was created for the sacrificial life, life as love. He lost it—for there is no other life—in the falling away of his love from God. And

Christ manifested this sacrifice as life and life as sacrifice in the self-giving of his love; he granted it as ascent to and partaking of the kingdom of God.

We have a witness to and expression of this sacrifice, which in Christ becomes *ours*, and of its all-embracing fulness, in the words that conclude the eucharistic *remembrance*: "Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all." Through these concluding words the *end* is transformed into the *beginning*, into an eternal beginning, for it is the eternal renewal of everything, which the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, manifests and fulfils through his coming.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Sacrament of the Holy Spirit

“And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

LITURGY OF ST BASIL THE GREAT

I

WE HAVE NOW REACHED THE SUMMIT OF THE EUCHARISTIC celebration. Everything has been said, everything has been remembered before the altar of God, thanksgiving has been offered for everything, and now the prayer, through which the oblation, this sacrifice of praise, is accomplished, turns to the Father in supplication for the sending down of the Holy Spirit “upon us and upon these Gifts here offered”:

Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable and bloodless worship, and ask Thee, and pray Thee, and supplicate Thee: Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here offered, and make this Bread the precious Body of Thy Christ, and that which is in this Cup, the precious Blood of Thy Christ, making the change by Thy Holy Spirit, that they may be for those who partake for the purification of soul, for the remission of sins, for the communion of the Holy Spirit . . . and not for judgment or condemnation.

But precisely because we have reached this summit we need to gather together everything that has led us to it, that we spoke of in the preceding chapters. For the very text of the liturgy cited above links the *epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, with the changing of the eucharistic gifts into the body and blood of Christ.

This link, however, as we already know, is variously interpreted: in the western scholastic tradition as the prayer that contains the "consecratory formula," and in the Orthodox East as the prayer that completes the entire eucharistic ceremony—offering, thanksgiving, remembrance—as the fulfilment of the entire divine liturgy in the eucharistic changing of the holy gifts.

The western doctrine gradually crept into the East and was partly accepted by it. I say "partly" because, on the one hand, the Orthodox East as a whole undoubtedly rejects the western teaching on the "words of institution" as the *cause* of the change. On the other hand, it "underrejects" it, and the prayer of the *epiklesis* has come to be interpreted in the Orthodox East as well as a "consecratory formula."

The centuries-old dispute over the *epiklesis* and its place in the liturgy was essentially transformed into a dispute over two "moments" of the change, separated from each other in the liturgy not even by minutes but by seconds. In all probability, this explains why, in contrast to the passions and emotions attendant to the great dogmatic disputes of the patristic era, the question of the *epiklesis*, of the transformation of the holy gifts, and of the theology of the sacraments in general did not arouse particular interest in the East. For, inasmuch as the *reality* of the change of the gifts was never questioned in the East or the West and the western approach to the sacraments inculcated itself into the life of the eastern Church only *gradually*, the people of the Church somehow never took notice of it. Outwardly, both the rites and the prayers remained the same—the usual, *their own*. Thus, when the *de facto* western perception of the sacraments—and in the first place of the eucharist—became dominant in our textbooks and crept into the "catechism," the overwhelming majority of the faithful, including theologians and hierarchy, simply failed to perceive the change that had occurred.

2

I AM CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO *recognize* this change and to understand that we are speaking here not of secondary details but of something infinitely essential for the Church and for our Christian life. For the Orthodox, the basis for the interpretation of the eucharist forever remains the words of St Irenaeus of Lyons: "our teaching is in accordance with the eucharist, and the eucharist, in turn, confirms our teaching."¹ Everything pertaining to the eucharist pertains to the Church, and everything pertaining to the Church pertains to the eucharist and is *tested* by this interdependence.

Meanwhile, precisely this original interdependence proved to be somewhat *ruptured* by the diffusion of the new understanding of the sacraments that came into the Church after the break with the patristic tradition. In this doctrine the eucharist, which had been perceived in the ancient Church as the sacrament of *unity*, the sacrament of the ascension of the Church and her fulfilment at the table of the Lord in his kingdom, came to be perceived and defined as one of the means for the sanctification of the faithful. This is seen most clearly of all in the transmutation of *partaking of communion* from an act of the Church, of the assembly—from the fulfilment of our membership in the Church, the body of Christ—into a personal act of piety, and for the laity an exceptional act at that, regulated not by the Church but by the personal piety and "option" of the communicant himself.

We continue to pray in the liturgy: "And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit." But what constitutes this unity in our liturgies without communicants? At both the beginning and the end of the liturgy we pray: "Preserve the fulness of Thy Church"—but what fulness are we talking about? And in this approach, what can be the meaning of the words that the apostle Peter directs to us: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt 2:9)?

¹Against Heresies 4:18:5.

I will not repeat here everything said above about the other consequences for the Church of this metamorphosis in the perception of the eucharist. I think that enough has been said to understand that we are dealing here with great damage to and, hence, distortion of the liturgical tradition of the Church, her *lex orandi*. Consequently, it requires us more than ever to return to this tradition, to restore its genuine perspective and essence.

3

THIS LEADS US YET AGAIN TO THE MULTIFACETED NATURE OF the divine liturgy, for, as we have repeatedly affirmed, it is precisely in it, by and through its having *many parts*, that the eucharist is accomplished.

The liturgy, as a sacrament, begins with the preparation of the holy gifts and the *assembly as the Church*. After the gathering follows the *entrance* and the proclamation of the word of God, and after that the *offering*, the placing of the eucharistic gifts on the altar. After the *kiss of peace* and the confession of faith we begin the *anaphora*: the lifting up of the gifts in the prayer of thanksgiving and remembrance. The anaphora concludes with the *epiklesis*, i.e., the prayer that God will manifest the Holy Spirit, will show the bread and wine of our offering to be the body and blood of Christ and make us worthy to partake of it.

✝ But western scholasticism denies this multifaceted nature of the liturgy, the interdependence of all its elements, of all its rites. It does not enter into the theological interpretation of the eucharist. It is *not needed*, for, in the words of Dom Vonier, which we quoted earlier, the sacraments comprise a *sui generis* reality, fulfilled only by their institution by Christ and dependent on nothing else in the Church.² What is the meaning of this dispute, this divergence? In order to answer this question we must bear in mind that right up to its "western captivity" the Orthodox East never isolated the sacraments as a separate "object" of study and definition, confining them to their own distinct theological treatise. We find such an isolation neither in the early "baptismal" nor in the "mystagogical" works (of pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus

²See chapter 2, notes 1 and 4.

the Confessor, etc.) that took their place. The word *sacrament* was never restricted by its identification with our current seven sacraments. This word embraced the entire mystery of the salvation of the world and mankind by Christ and in essence the entire content of the Christian faith. The fathers of the Church perceived the eucharist both as the revelation and the fulfilment of this universal mystery—"hidden from the angels," but to us, the new people of God, manifested in all its abundant fulness. I am not dwelling on the explanations of the great "mystagogues," because they flourished when the order and structure of the liturgical services had already reached their fundamentally finished form. Their influence, or rather the influence of their epigones (Germanus of Constantinople, Symeon the New Theologian)—an influence not always happy or "healthy"—began to run wild into complex allegories, accessory symbolics, etc. Therefore the witness we find in the very piety of the Church, in the perception and experience of the eucharist among the people of the Church, is more important for us. And, according to this witness, each member of the Church knew that from the very beginning, from the deacon's exclamation "καὶρός!" ("It is time to begin the service to the Lord") to the concluding "Let us depart in peace," he was taking part in a single *common task*, in one sacred reality, wholly identified with what the Church is revealing, manifesting and granting in the given moment, in her ascent to the heavenly table of the kingdom.

The ceremony itself, I repeat, testifies to this. Thus, while completing the preparation of the gifts, the *proskomidē*, the priest censes the gifts that have been prepared and bows before them. At the entrance the celebrant *affirms* that God has vouchsafed to us, his humble and unworthy servants, "even in this hour to stand before the glory of Thy holy altar," and then he blesses the *high place*: "Blessed art Thou on the throne of the glory of Thy Kingdom." Finally, during the kiss of peace, before he completes the words "Christ is in our midst . . . He is and shall be," the priest again bows before the gifts lying on the altar. All this is *really* experienced by all who take part in the liturgy—and precisely as something *real*.

A theological purist might ask: why do people kneel during the Great Entrance? After all, the gifts are still only bread and

wine, they have not yet "become" the body and blood of Christ. But the simple worshiper would not be concerned with this question, for he knows, if not by reason then with his whole heart, that at the Great Entrance the offering itself, and not its allegorical representation, is accomplished, and that it is accomplished by Christ, for he is "the Offerer and the Offered, the Receiver and the Received." One can say that the liturgy is entirely in Christ; throughout the liturgy Christ is with us and we are in Christ.

4

BUT ONE MAY ASK: DOES WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT THE MULTIFACETED nature of the liturgy not mean that the change of the gifts into the body and blood of Christ happens *gradually*, step by step, so that it is ultimately unclear precisely when it is accomplished? This question itself, consciously or unconsciously, determines the doctrine of *consecration*, i.e., of a consecratory formula, of how and when the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. But this question could arise only in an era of the expiration in scholastic theology of its eschatological dimension and the essence of the Christian faith. And this places us before the *question of time*.

The liturgy is served on earth, and this means in the time and space of "this world." But if it is served on earth, *it is accomplished in heaven, in the new time of the new creation*, in the time of the Holy Spirit. The question of time has immense significance for the Church. For, in contrast to the *spiritualism* widespread throughout the world, which is founded on the rejection of time, on the striving to *leave* it, on its identification with evil, for Christians time, like everything in creation, is of God and belongs to God. From the first words of the book of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," to the words of the apostle Paul, "when the fulness of time had come," and, finally, the affirmation of St John the Theologian, "the hour is coming, and now is" (Jn 5:25), it is not *outside* of time, but in it and in relation to it that the divine certification "and God saw that it was good" resounded and eternally resounds.

The "spiritualists" are opposed in our "religious world" by the "activists," whose spiritual horizon is limited to time, histo-

ry, the solution of social problems. If the "spiritualists" reject time, then the "activists" seemingly fail to sense its ontological fallenness. They do not sense that it not only reflects the fall of the world but is itself the "reality" of this fall, the triumph of "death and time," which reign on earth. "The image of this world is passing away," and the "old time" is precisely an image of the passing of everything earthly down the road to an inevitable death. Meanwhile, it is precisely into this fallen time—and here both spiritualists and activists become bankrupt—into this fallen world that Christ condescended in his becoming man. In it he proclaimed that the kingdom of God which is to come, salvation from sin and death, "the beginning of another life, new and eternal," had drawn near. And he not only proclaimed it, but through his voluntary suffering, crucifixion and resurrection he realized this victory in himself and granted it to us.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit—and with him and in him the *new time*—descended onto the Church. The old time did not disappear, and outside in the world nothing changed. But to the Church of Christ, which lives in the Spirit and by the Spirit, the commandment and the power to convert it into the *new time* was given. "Behold, I make all things new" (Rv 21:5). This is not the *replacement* of the old with the new, not an exit into some "other" world. It is the same world, created through the love of God, which in the Holy Spirit we see and receive as God created it: heaven and earth, full of the glory of God.

To abide in the new time means to abide in the Holy Spirit. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rv 1:10). These words of John the Theologian apply, of course, to all believers who live even to a small degree for the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, of which St Serafim of Sarov spoke as the essence and goal of life. But in the first place they apply to the source of this acquisition—to the liturgical life of the Church, and in it to the divine liturgy. For the essence of the liturgy consists in raising us up in the Holy Spirit and in him transfiguring the old time into the new time.

It is wrong to interpret Christian worship and particularly its summit, the sacrament of the eucharist, in categories of the *cult*. For the cult is constructed not on the distinction of *old* and *new*, but "sacred" and "profane." The cult "sacralizes" and is itself the fruit of sacralization. It distinguishes "sacred days" and "periods"

in time, "sacred places" in space, "sacred pieces" in matter, but it does all this in the "old" time, for the cult is *static*, not *dynamic*, and does not know the other, new time.

A striking example of this is the first Christians' opposition to the *temple*. From time immemorial the temple was the "focus" of sacralization. And thus one of the chief accusations against Christians in the era of persecution was the accusation of *atheism*, of the absence of a *sacred center*. In the Acts of the Apostles the first martyr, St Stephen, answers this accusation. To the infuriated crowd that was stoning him he declared, "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?'" At the moment of his death Stephen cried out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Ac 7:48-50, 56). St John Chrysostom, in turn, in his second homily on *The Cross and the Thief*, says: "when Christ came and suffered outside the city, he cleansed the entire earth, he made every place suitable for prayer... Would you want to know how the entire earth, finally, *was made a temple* and how every place became suitable for prayer?"³

Not a temple made by hands, but the opening of the heavens, the world transfigured into a temple, all life into the liturgy—such is the foundation of the Christian *lex orandi*. And if to this day we call a temple a *church*, i.e., an assembly or gathering, it is because it arose not from a thirst for "sacralization" but from the eucharistic experience of the Church, the experience of *heaven on earth*.

5

IF IN THE LIGHT OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID WE TRY TO understand the meaning and "liturgical necessity" of the multifaceted nature of the liturgy, we must bear in mind that it is rooted in the eucharist as the sacrament of *remembrance*: "do this in remembrance of me." Tradition rightly sees the establishment of the eucharist at the last supper in these words. But the error, the

³Second Homily on the Cross and the Thief, PG 49:409.

harmfulness of scholastic interpretations is that they relate the word *this* exclusively and only to the changing of the eucharistic gifts into the body and blood of Christ, and by the same token isolate this establishment from the liturgy as a whole. Meanwhile, the essence of the liturgy and its multifaceted nature consists in the fact that it is all, from beginning to end, a *remembrance*, manifestation, "epiphany," the salvation of the world accomplished by Christ.

In the eucharist, the *commemoration* is the gathering together of the entire experience of salvation, the entire fulness of that *reality* that is given us in the Church and that constitutes our life. It is the reality of the world as God's creation, the reality of the world as saved by Christ, the reality of the new heaven and the new earth, to which we ascend in the sacrament of the ascension to the kingdom of God. To commemorate means to *remember* and to live in what is *commemorated*, to receive and to preserve it. But how can one remember if it is "not done"? How can one live by what is unseen, how can one perceive it, preserve it and, above all, preserve this experience in its fulness? Christianity is always *confession, acceptance, experience*. But in the fallen and shattered time of "this world" this integral remembrance is impossible other than in the succession of the parts that comprise it. For this old time is horizontal, not vertical. And thus each liturgy is a *gathering*, a restoration and an "identification" of the fulness of our remembrance. I have just said that while the liturgy is served on earth, it is accomplished in heaven. But most important is the fact that what is accomplished in heaven is already accomplished, already *is*, already *has been accomplished*, already *given*. Christ has become man, died on the cross, descended into hades, arisen from the dead, ascended into heaven, sent down the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, which we have been commanded to celebrate "until he comes," we do not *repeat* and we do not *represent*—we *ascend* into the mystery of salvation and new life, which has been accomplished once, but is granted to us "always, now and forever and unto ages of ages." And in this heavenly, eternal and otherworldly eucharist Christ does not come down to us, rather we ascend to him.

The liturgy can be likened to a man going through a building—which, though familiar and beautiful, is hid in darkness—

with a flashlight, part by part, and in these parts identifying the entire building in its wholeness, unity and beauty. So it is with our liturgy, which, while being accomplished on earth is accomplished in heaven. In it the mystery of the salvation of the world by Christ is revealed and granted to us, in it the Church fulfils herself, in it the "beginning of another life, new and eternal" triumphs.

6

AND SO, THE LITURGY IS ACCOMPLISHED IN THE *NEW TIME* through the Holy Spirit. It is entirely, from beginning to end, an *epiklesis*, an invocation of the Holy Spirit, who transfigures everything done in it, each solemn rite, into that which it manifests and reveals to us. In other words, in its outward appearance, in the time of "this world," the liturgy is a *symbol* and is expressed in *symbols*—but "symbol" in the meaning of which we spoke in the beginning of this book, where we termed a symbol a reality that cannot be expressed or manifested in the categories of "this world," i.e., to the senses, empirically, visibly. It is the reality that elsewhere we termed the *sacramentality* inherent in everything created by God, but which man has ceased to sense and recognize in "this" fallen world.

Thus it is impossible to explain and define the symbol. It is realized or "actualized" in its *own* reality through its transformation into that to which it points and witnesses, of which it is a *symbol*. But this conversion remains invisible, for it is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, in the new time, and is certified only by *faith*. So also the conversion of the bread and wine into the holy body and blood of Christ is accomplished invisibly. Nothing perceptible *happens*—the bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine. For if it occurred "palpably," then Christianity would be a magical cult and not a religion of faith, hope and love.

Thus, any attempt to *explain* the conversion, to locate it in formulas and causes, is not only unnecessary but truly harmful. "I believe that this is truly Thine own most pure Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood..." It is as if the original faith and experience of the Church, expressed in the words of this pray-

er, are insufficient. I believe, but do not know, for in "this world" no knowledge, other than that disclosed in faith, and no "science" can explain what is accomplished in the new time, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of life into the new life of the kingdom of God, which is "in our midst."

In like manner, when I say that the entire liturgy is a *transformation*, I have in mind something very simple: that in the liturgy each of its parts, each solemn ceremony, each rite is transformed by the Holy Spirit into *that which it is*, a "real symbol" of what it manifests. So, for example, the repeated veneration of the *altar*—the censuring, the kissing, the prostrations, etc.—are a confession of our presence around the throne of God's glory, in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus, in the liturgy the "assembly as the Church" is transformed into the fulness of the Church of Christ, while the entrance with the gifts is transformed into the Church's offering of the saving sacrifice, "on behalf of all and for all."

And so; everything in the liturgy is *real*, but it is a reality not of "this world" and not in its fallen and splintered time, but in the assembled new time. When attempts at a "rational" explanation of the eucharist arose in the West in the beginning of the eleventh century, Berengar of Tours proposed a distinction of what is "mystical," i.e., symbolic, on the one hand, and what is "real," on the other. In his teaching the sacrament is *mystice non realiter*. The council that condemned this doctrine (Lateran 1059) answered that it is *realiter non mystice*, i.e., real and therefore not mystical, not symbolic. This is the dead end into which scholasticism inevitably falls. Its essence lies in the gradual departure from the original understanding and perception of *time*, and together with that the gradual "expiration" of the eschatological essence of the Church and the sacraments. Beginning with the thirteenth century, writes Louis Bouyer, the eucharist in the West came to be "buried under untraditional formularies and interpretations."⁴ As far as the Orthodox are concerned, although they never accepted all of the western explanations and formulas, for want of their own doctrine on the sacraments they made the western problematics, the western questions, "their own," which in turn affected their own interpretations and definitions of the eucharist.

⁴*The Eucharist* (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame, 1968) 381.

7

NOW WE CAN ASK, WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC FUNCTION OF THE epiklesis, the prayer for the sending down of the Holy Spirit, which we find to be the concluding part of the anamnesis in the Orthodox liturgy?

Above all it is what the very text of the epiklesis, which begins in both the liturgies of St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great with the words "remembering therefore," testifies to: the organic connection of this prayer with the remembrance.

I cited Chrysostom's text in the very beginning of this chapter, and therefore I will limit myself here to citing the parallel prayer, the epiklesis in the liturgy of St Basil the Great:

Therefore, we also, O Master, remembering His [i.e., Christ's] saving Passion and life-creating Cross, His three-day Burial and Resurrection from the dead, His Ascension into heaven and Sitting at Thy right hand of the God and Father, and His Glorious and awesome Second Coming, Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee, in behalf of all, and for all. . . . we now dare to approach Thy holy altar and, offering to Thee the antitypes [ἀντίτυπα] of the holy Body and Blood of Thy Christ, we pray Thee and call upon Thee, O Holy of Holies, that by the favor of Thy goodness Thy Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon the gifts now offered. . .

As we see, the prayer of the epiklesis constitutes the conclusion of the *remembrance*. In the categories of the *new time* in which the eucharist is accomplished, it unites "all those things which have come to pass for us," the entire mystery of salvation accomplished by Christ, the mystery of Christ's love, which embraces the whole world and has been granted to us. The remembrance is the confession of the *knowledge* of this mystery, its reality, and likewise faith in it as the salvation of the world and man. Like the entire eucharist, the remembrance is not a *repetition*. It is the manifestation, gift and experience, in "this world" and therefore again and again, of the eucharist offered by Christ once and for all, and of our ascension to it.

The eucharist is accomplished from beginning to end over the bread and wine. Bread and wine are the *food* that God created from the beginning as *life*: "you shall have them for food" (Gn 1:29). But the meaning, essence and joy of life is not in food, but in God, in communion with him. Man, and in him "this world," fell away from this food, "in paradise the food of immortality" (Liturgy of St Basil the Great). Food came to reign in him, but this reign is not unto life, but unto death, disintegration and separation. And that is why Christ, when he had come into the world, called himself "the bread of God... which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33). "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (Jn 6:35).

Christ is the "bread of heaven," for this definition contains the entire content, the entire reality of our faith in him as Savior and Lord. He is life, and therefore food. He offered this life in sacrifice "on behalf of all and for all," in order that we might become communicants of his own life, the new life of the new creation, and that we might manifest him as his body.

To all this the Church answers *amen*, she receives all this through faith, she fulfils all this in the eucharist through the Holy Spirit. All the *rites* of the liturgy are a manifestation, one after the other, of the *realities* of which the saving work of Christ is comprised. But, I shall repeat once more, the *progression* here is not in the accomplishment but in the manifestation. For what is manifested is not something *new*, that did not exist before the manifestation. No—in Christ all is already *accomplished*, all is *real*, all is granted. In him we have obtained access to the Father and communion in the Holy Spirit and anticipation of the new life in his kingdom.

And here the epiklesis, which we find at the end of the eucharistic prayer, is also this manifestation and this gift, and likewise the *Church's acceptance of them*. "Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these Gifts here offered." For the invocation of the Holy Spirit is not a separate act whose one and only object is the bread and wine. Immediately after the invocation of the Holy Spirit the celebrant prays: "And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit" (St Basil the Great). "That they may be to those

who partake for the purification of soul, for the remission of sins, for the communion of Thy Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven..." Furthermore, again without interruption, the prayer goes on to the *intercession*, of which we shall speak later. The purpose of the eucharist lies not in the change of the bread and wine, but in our partaking of Christ, who has become our food, our life, the manifestation of the Church as the body of Christ.

This is why the holy gifts themselves never became in the Orthodox East an object of special reverence, contemplation and adoration, and likewise an object of special theological "problematics": how, when, in what manner their change is accomplished. The eucharist—and this means the changing of the holy gifts—is a mystery that cannot be revealed and explained in the categories of "this world"—time, essence, causality, etc. It is revealed only to faith: "I believe also that this is truly Thine own most pure Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood." Nothing is explained, nothing is defined, nothing has changed in "this world." But then whence comes this light, this joy that overflows the heart, this feeling of fulness and of touching the "other world"?

We find the answer to these questions in the epiklesis. But the answer is not "rational," built upon the laws of our "one-storied" logic; it is disclosed to us by the Holy Spirit. In almost every ordo of the eucharist that has reached us, the Church prays in the text of the epiklesis that the eucharist will be for those who partake "*for the communion of the Holy Spirit*": "And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit" (εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ ἁγίου Σου Πνεύματος), and, further, "for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven" (εἰς βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν πλήρωμα). These two definitions of the purpose of the eucharist are in essence synonyms, for both manifest the eschatological essence of the sacrament, its orientation to the kingdom of God, which is to come but in the Church is already manifested and granted.

Thus the epiklesis concludes the *anaphora*, the part of the liturgy that encompasses the "assembly as the Church," the entrance, the proclamation of the good news of the word of God, the offering, the oblation, the thanksgiving and the remembrance.

But with the epiklesis begins the consummation of the liturgy, whose essence lies in *communion*, in the distribution to the faithful of the holy gifts, the body and blood of Christ.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Sacrament of Communion

"The mystery of Thy dispensation, O Christ our God, has been accomplished and perfected as far as it was in our power; for we have had the memorial of Thy death; we have seen the type of Thy Resurrection; we have been filled with Thine unending life; we have enjoyed Thine inexhaustible food; which in the world to come be well-pleased to vouchsafe to us all, through the grace of Thine eternal Father, and Thine holy and good and life-creating Spirit. . ."

LITURGY OF ST BASIL THE GREAT

I

THE LITURGY UNDERWENT MANY CHANGES OVER THE centuries of its prolonged development, but no change was more profound and more significant than that registered in the last part of the eucharistic ceremony—the order of partaking of the holy gifts of the body and blood of Christ. Inasmuch as this part truly concludes and fulfils the most holy sacrament of the eucharist, and thus the entire liturgy, we must dwell on it, or rather on the changes that distorted it, in the beginning of this last chapter.

From the very beginning the Church perceived the partaking of all the faithful at the liturgy as the obvious goal of the eucharist and as the realization of the words of the Savior: "that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Lk 22:30). Therefore the table was the "form" of the eucharist and common partaking its fulfilment. All this is self-evident and requires no demonstration in the Orthodox perspective.

What does demand explanation is the fact of the gradual falling away over history of great numbers of members of the Church from this perception of the eucharist, its reduction to an *individualistic* perception. The contemporary faithful, churchly person sees no necessity of approaching communion at every liturgy. He has learned from the catechism that "with a maternal voice, the Church commands us to confess before a spiritual father, and to partake of the body and blood of Christ, with most ardent reverence, four times a year, or once a month, but without fail once a year."¹ One who desires to receive communion is obliged to go to the sacrament of confession. And, finally, we need to emphasize, if anyone among the laity wishes to partake "beyond the usual norm," then this desire, for want of and in the full absence of references to the assembly, to the ecclesial perception of the sacrament, is usually characterized as a quest for "more frequent communion" and not as a church member's fulfilment of his Christian vocation, the fulfilment of his membership in the body of Christ. All of this became so firmly entrenched in church life that the *Catechism* contains special questions on "how can those who only hear the divine liturgy, but do not approach for holy communion, participate in it?" The answer is: "they can and must take part through prayer, through faith and through unceasing remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, who precisely commanded us to do this in remembrance of him." Let us note that Christ commanded us *precisely* to taste the gifts: "take, eat . . . drink of it all of you . . ." And let us also note that both these questions and answers concerning noncommunicants relate in fact to the huge majority of the Church, and not to certain exceptional cases. Alas, in this doctrine the exceptions are the communicants.

What has happened? How was this metamorphosis in the per-

¹Filaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow, *Longer Catechism* (Paris, 1926; rep. Jordanville, N.Y., 1961), "Confession," part 1, question 90.

ception—not only on the part of the people of the Church but also on the part of the episcopate, the clergy and, finally, the theologians—of the very essence of the eucharist, its reduction to “one of the sacraments,” one “means of sanctification,” accomplished, and why has it been maintained for centuries? Strange as it may seem, we find almost no attempt to answer these questions in our official academic theology. Meanwhile, as I noted above, we are dealing here not simply with the evolution of church discipline, a decline in piety, western influences, etc., but with a spiritual turning point in the self-consciousness and self-perception of the Church as a whole. We are dealing, in other words, with an *ecclesiological crisis*, on which we shall focus our attention.

2

THE MOST PREVALENT, CUSTOMARY EXPLANATION FOR THE gradual disappearance of *communion* as participation in the fulfilment of the Church consists of references to the *unworthiness* of the overwhelming majority of the laity to approach the cup frequently and therefore their need, as it were, to bear supplementary requirements and guarantees. The laity live in the world, in continual contact with its impurity, untruth, sinfulness, lies, and thus they need special cleansing, special preparation—a special effort of repentance.

I will call this explanation pious, for in fact, in its best expressions and explanations it stems from a consciousness of sinfulness, from “respect” for the holy, from fear of one’s own unworthiness. In one form or another, fear is inherent to all religions. In medieval Christianity it permeated all of life: “We have sinned, we have transgressed and done wrongly before Thee . . .” (Canon of St Andrew of Crete, ode 7, *heirmos*). Asceticism, often in its extreme form, constituted the moral ideal of Christian society, and while not always observed, it proved to have an enormous influence. And the decline of the secular or “white” clergy—as witnessed, for example, in the canons of the Council in *Trullo* (691)—led to the leadership of church life passing over to monasticism. It is impossible for us to dwell here on the causes and forms of this many-sided process. What is important is that it gradually led to

the *clericalization* of the Church, to a great distancing of clergy and laity from each other. The whole “atmosphere” of the Church changed. At the end of the fourth century St John Chrysostom wrote: “but there are cases where the priest does not differ from those under him, for instance, *when he must partake of the Holy Mysteries*. We are all equally honored with them, not as in the Old Testament, when one food was for the priests and another for the people and when it was not permitted to the people to partake of that which was for the priests. Now it is not so, for the same body and the same cup is offered to all...and all of us equally embrace each other...”²

But in the end “sacralization” and “clericalization” triumphed. This is also seen in the development of the temple and its structure, which more and more emphasized the separation of the laity from the clergy. Again Chrysostom wrote: “when Christ came and suffered outside the city, he cleansed the entire earth, he made every place suitable for prayer... Would you want to know how the entire earth, finally, was made a temple and how every place became suitable for prayer?”³ But the interpretation of both the temple and the liturgy in this “key” disappeared early enough from the Church. Entry to the altar, approach to the sanctuary came to be forbidden to the laity, and their presence at the eucharist became *passive*. It is accomplished on behalf of them, for them, but they do not take part in its accomplishment. If earlier the line separating the Church from “this world” embraced the laity, it now excluded them, a perfect witness to this being their very definition as *miriane* or “worldly ones” (κοσμικοί), instead of the former *laikós*, members of the people of God (λαός), “God’s own people” (1 Pt 2:9).

3

IN OUR DAY PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION—AND THIS IS CLEAR in the light of what was said above about the perception of communion as a private, personal act—has likewise become a *private* preparation. Our prayerbooks contain prayers before communion,

²Homily on II Corinthians 18, PG 61:527.

³Second Homily on the Cross and the Thief, PG 49:409.

but, with the exception of two or three read before the communion itself, they are not a part of the actual text and rite of the liturgy. The prayerbooks also include prayers of thanksgiving after communion, also private and not included in the liturgy itself. This is understandable inasmuch as far from everyone present at the liturgy comes to the chalice and, consequently, for them these prayers would be "nominal." The composition, practice and time of the reading of these prayers vary from book to book, as do their instructions on fasting. Taken by themselves, the majority of these prayers are beautiful, inspiring and very beneficial. Hence we are speaking not about them, but about their place in the liturgy, in the sacrament.

The point is that nowhere in the liturgy, from the beginning of the anaphora, the liturgy of the faithful, to its very end, do we find a single reference to the roles of two "categories" of worshippers: the communicants of the holy mysteries and the noncommunicants. On the contrary, even the most vaguely attentive reading of the preanaphora, anaphora, and postanaphora prayers cannot but convince us that after the dismissal of the catechumens (and, in the early Church, the "penitents"), "the doors being shut," we all celebrate the eucharist, which is simultaneously the offering of the bloodless sacrifice and the preparation of the faithful for partaking of the holy body and blood of the Lord:

Again and oftentimes we fall down before Thee, O God who lovest mankind, that looking down upon our petition Thou wouldst cleanse our souls and bodies from all defilement of flesh and spirit; and grant us to stand blameless and without condemnation before Thy holy altar. Grant also to those who pray with us, O God, growth in life and faith and spiritual understanding. Grant them to worship Thee blamelessly with fear and love, and to partake without condemnation of Thy Holy Mysteries, and to be accounted worthy of Thy heavenly Kingdom.

{Second Prayer of the Faithful,
Liturgy of St John Chrysostom}

Unto Thee we commend our whole life and our hope, O Master who lovest mankind. We ask Thee, and pray

Thee, and supplicate Thee: Make us worthy to partake of the heavenly and awesome mysteries of this sacred and spiritual table with a pure conscience: for remission of sins, for forgiveness of transgressions, for the communion of the Holy Spirit, for the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, for boldness towards Thee, but not for judgment or condemnation.

[Prayer before "Our Father,"
Liturgy of St John Chrysostom]

O Lord, our God, who hast created us and brought us into this life; who hast shown us the ways to salvation, and bestowed on us the revelation of heavenly mysteries: Thou art the One who hast appointed us to this service in the power of Thy Holy Spirit. Therefore, O Lord, enable us to be ministers of Thy new Testament and servants of Thy holy Mysteries. Through the greatness of Thy mercy, accept us as we draw near to Thy holy altar, so that we may be worthy to offer to Thee this reasonable and bloodless sacrifice for our sins and for the errors of Thy people. Having received it upon Thy holy, heavenly and ideal altar as a sweet spiritual fragrance, send down upon us in return the grace of Thy Holy Spirit.

[Prayer of the Offering, on the Placing of the Divine Gifts
on the Holy Altar, Liturgy of St Basil the Great]

And finally,

And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

[Anaphora, Liturgy of St Basil the Great]

It is hardly possible to reveal more clearly the organic link of the anaphora—the offering of the gifts, the bloodless sacrifice of praise—with preparation and communion. In the holy gifts we recognize the holy body and blood of Christ, the sacrifice offered by Christ "on behalf of all and for all"; in communion we receive it with faith, hope and love in unity with Christ, with his life,

with his kingdom. And, however frightening this is to say, in their separation the genuine meaning of the eucharistic sacrament is damaged. It begins to be perceived no longer as the fulfilment of the Church, the manifestation of the kingdom of God and the new life, but as the tasting of "sacred matter," which converts the sacrament, in the words of Khomiakov, into a certain "anatomical miracle." It is precisely here that all the dead ends of the explanation of the eucharist come to light. "What both sides [i.e., Protestant and Catholic] only do," Khomiakov continues, "is either deny or affirm the miraculous change of known earthly elements, without understanding at all that the essential element of each sacrament *is the Church*, and that properly it is for her alone that the sacraments are accomplished, without any relation to the laws of earthly nature. He who has disdained the duty of love also loses the memory of its power, loses together with it the memory of what reality is in the world of faith."⁴

4

LET US RECALL, ABOVE ALL, THE ORDER OR SEQUENCE OF THE *preparation*, as it has come down to us in the Byzantine liturgical tradition. I do not mean the *proskomidē*, of which we already spoke. We shall restrict ourselves to the liturgy of the faithful.

Immediately after the *epiklesis* the celebrant begins the reading of the *prayer of intercession*. It would be more precise to define this prayer as the prayer of *the gathering of the Church, the body of Christ*, her manifestation in all fulness:

And unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Grant that none of us may partake of the holy Body and Blood of Thy Christ for judgment or condemnation.

Instead, may we find mercy and grace with all the saints who through the ages have been well-pleasing to Thee:

⁴O *Tserkvi* (On the Church), in *Complete Works* II (Moscow, 1900) 129, or in the edition of L. Karsavin (Berlin, 1926) 75.

ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, teachers, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith.

Especially with our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary. With the holy Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John; the holy, glorious, and all-laudable apostles; and with all Thy saints. By their prayers, visit us, O God. Remember all those who have fallen asleep before us in hope of resurrection to eternal life, grant them rest in forgiveness of soul, O our God, where the light of Thy countenance shines on them.

Again we entreat Thee: Remember, O Lord, Thy Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, which is from end to end of the universe; give peace to Her whom Thou hast obtained with the precious Blood of Thy Christ; also preserve this holy house until the end of the world.

Remember, O Lord, those who offered Thee these gifts, and those for whom and through whom they offered them. Remember, O Lord, those who bring offerings and do good in Thy holy churches, and those who remember the poor; reward them with Thy rich and heavenly gifts; for their earthly, temporal, and corruptible gifts, do Thou grant them Thy heavenly ones, eternal and incorruptible.

Remember, O Lord, those who are in the deserts, mountains, caverns and pits of the earth.

Remember, O Lord, those who live in chastity and godliness, in austerity and holiness of life.

[Prayer for the civil authorities]

Remember, O Lord, the people here present and also those who are absent for honorable reasons. Have mercy

on them and on us according to the multitude of Thy mercies. Fill their treasuries with every good thing; preserve their marriages in peace and harmony; raise the infants; guide the young; support the aged; encourage the faint-hearted; lead back those who are in error and join them to Thy Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; free those who are held captive by unclean spirits; sail with those who sail, travel with those who travel; defend the widows; protect the orphans; free the captives; heal the sick. Remember, O Lord, those who are in courts, in mines, in exile, in harsh labor, and those in any kind of affliction, necessity, or distress.

Remember, O Lord our God, all those who entreat Thy great loving-kindness; those who love us and those who hate us; those who have asked us to pray for them, unworthy though we be; and remember all Thy people O Lord, our God. Pour out Thy rich mercy upon all of them, granting them all the petitions which are for their salvation.

And remember, Thyself, O God, all those whom we have not remembered, through ignorance, forgetfulness or the multitude of names; since Thou knowest the name and age of each, even from his mother's womb. For Thou, O Lord, art the Helper of the helpless, the Hope of the hopeless, the Savior of the bestormented, the Haven of the voyager, the Physician of the sick. Be all things to all men, O Thou who knowest each man and his request, his home and his need.

Deliver this city, O Lord, and every city and country, from famine, plague, earthquake, flood, fire, sword, invasion by enemies, and civil war.

{For the episcopate:}

Among the first, remember, O Lord, {names}. Grant them for Thy holy churches in peace, safety, honor,

health and length of days, to rightly define the word of Thy truth.

Remember, O Lord, my unworthiness also, by the multitude of Thy compassions; forgive my every transgression, both voluntary and involuntary. Because of my sins, do not withhold the grace of Thy Holy Spirit from these Gifts here set forth.

Remember, O Lord, the priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, and every order of the clergy. Let none of us who stand about Thy holy altar be put to confusion. Visit us with Thy loving-kindness, O Lord; manifest Thyself to us through Thy rich compassions. Grant us seasonable and healthful weather; send gentle showers upon the earth so that it may bear fruit; bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness.

Prevent schisms among the churches; pacify the ragings of the pagans; quickly destroy the uprisings of heresies by the power of Thy Holy Spirit.

Receive us all into Thy Kingdom, showing us to be sons of the light and sons of the day. Grant us Thy peace and Thy love, O Lord our God, for Thou hast given all things to us.

And grant that with one mouth and one heart we may praise Thine all-honorable and majestic name: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Amen. And the mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ shall be with you all.

And with your spirit.

[Liturgy of St Basil the Great]

5

I HAVE QUOTED THE TEXT OF THIS PRAYER IN FULL BECAUSE IT most clearly and best of all reveals the meaning of the "preparation for communion," with which it begins in the structure of the eucharistic rite. As I have already said above, this prayer gathers and unites the entire cosmic, ecclesiological and eschatological content of the eucharist, and thus also manifests and grants to us the very essence of communion, the essence of the body of Christ and the new life in Christ. Yet it is not accidental, not from a love of repetition, that we are not immediately summoned to approach the chalice, that we delay it by this wonderful prayer, which seemingly slows down the rhythm of the eucharist. The reason for this delay is not that we once again confess our sins and prepare ourselves for receiving the holy things, but rather that the Church may fulfil herself in all fulness as the sacrament of the kingdom, as the *reality* of the new time and the new life.

I have called the prayer of intercession *cosmic*: "Visit us with Thy loving-kindness, O Lord; manifest Thyself to us through Thy rich compassions. Grant us seasonable and healthful weather; send gentle showers upon the earth so that it may bear fruit; bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness." I have called it *ecclesiological*: "Prevent schisms among the churches; pacify the ragings of the pagans; quickly destroy the uprisings of heresies by the power of Thy Holy Spirit." And, finally, I have called it *eschatological*: "Receive us all into Thy Kingdom, showing us to be sons of the light and sons of the day. Grant us Thy peace and Thy love, O Lord our God, for Thou hast given all things to us."

And thus: *the world, the Church, the kingdom*. All of God's creation, all salvation, all fulfilment. Heaven on earth. One voice and one heart, one glorification and singing of the all-honorable name: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Here is the essence of this great, crowning prayer; here is the ultimate supplication of the eucharist, united around the Lamb of God, in Christ—the entire spiritual world, beginning with the Theotokos and the saints and ending with *all—be all things to all men*.

This is what we are summoned to behold, to recognize, to

perceive each time the eucharist is celebrated. In this we must immerse our whole consciousness, all our love, all our *desire*, before approaching "our immortal King and God."

6

IT IS INDEED ONLY AFTER CONCLUDING THE PRAYER OF INTER-cession that we enter into what we earlier termed the *private* preparation for communion, i.e., preparation not by the whole gathering, not by the whole Church, but our individual prayer for personal cleansing:

...so that receiving a portion of Thy holy things with a pure conscience we may be united with the holy Body and Blood of Thy Christ. Having received them worthily, may we have Christ dwelling in our hearts, and may we become the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Yes, O our God, let none of us be guilty of these, Thy awesome and heavenly Mysteries, nor be infirm in soul and body by partaking of them unworthily. But, enable us, even to our last breath, to receive a portion of Thy holy things worthily, as a support on the road to eternal life and an acceptable defense at the dread judgment seat of Thy Christ. That we also, together with all the saints who through the ages have been well-pleasing to Thee, may become partakers of Thy eternal good things, which Thou hast prepared for those who love Thee, O Lord.

As we see, the emphasis here shifts from the general and as it were exultant self-preparation of the entire Church to the personal preparation of each member of the Church. As St Paul writes to the Corinthians:

...as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so

eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Co 11:26-32)

There can be no doubt that in the "spirituality" of early Christianity the "communal" reinforced the "personal," and the "personal" was impossible without the "communal." There is, however, a big difference between that perception of both personal and communal and our own. The apostle Paul convicted the believers who partook unworthily; he threatened them with condemnation by it. He summoned them to examine themselves. But never at any time did he present them with a *choice*: "you, the worthy, partake; and you, the unworthy, abstain." It is this choice that little by little led to the abstention of roughly the majority of the members of the Church and to the loss of the feeling and perception of the eucharist as a "common task," as a *liturgy*. And this very feeling of abstention, as it were, lost its power, expired and turned into a form of disciplinary prescription ("four times a year"!), with confession obligatory as almost a ticket to communion.

The early Church knew that, in all creation, there is no one who is *worthy* through his own spiritual effort, through his own "worthiness," to partake of the body and blood of Christ, and that therefore preparation consists not in a calculation and analysis of one's "preparedness" or "unpreparedness," but in the answer of love to love: "That we also, together with all the saints who through the ages have been well-pleasing to Thee, may become partakers of Thy eternal good things, which Thou hast prepared for those who love Thee, O Lord." When the celebrant proclaims the words "Holy things are for the holy," the Church responds, "One is Holy. One is the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen." But in affirming and declaring this confession, she knows that the doors to the "homeland of the heart's desire" are open to all, and that "there will be no separation from each other, O friends."

Thus, this preparation is concluded in the unity of the common and the private: the *Lord's Prayer*, which was given to us by Christ himself. For, in the last analysis, everything depends on one thing: can we, do we "earnestly desire," with our whole being and in spite of all our insufficiency, fallenness, betrayal and laziness, to receive the words of this prayer as our own, desire them as *our own*? "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

7

IN RECENT TIMES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS WITNESSED A eucharistic revival of sorts, which has been expressed first of all in a desire on the part of a great number of the laity for more *frequent communion*. This revival occurs differently in different places and "cultures." But however joyful this revival is, I believe that a great number of dangers threaten it, chief of which consists in the deeper "sacralization" of the Church. Over the centuries of her coexistence with the government and the empire, the Church became transformed into an organization, into an institution for attending to the "spiritual needs" of the faithful, into an organization on the one hand subordinated to these "needs" and on the other defining them and governing them. The boundary separating the world from the Church but also joining the world to the Church—which was so obvious for the early Church—became simply a boundary separating the world from the Church.

I am convinced that the genuine revival of the Church begins with *eucharistic revival*, but in the fulness of this word. The tragic flaw in the history of Orthodoxy has proven to be not only the incompleteness but, I daresay, the absence of a theology of the sacraments, its reduction into western schemes and categories of thought. The Church is not an organization but the new people of God. The Church is not a religious cult but a *liturgy*, embracing the entire creation of God. The Church is not a doctrine about the world to come but the joyous encounter of the kingdom of God. It is the sacrament of peace, the sacrament of salvation and the sacrament of the reign of Christ.

It remains for us to conclude these far from complete thoughts with a few brief remarks about the order of receiving communion itself. These remarks are of a primarily "technical" order, "cultic" in the most obvious sense of the word. Their content has been sufficiently expounded by Archimandrite Kiprian Kern. Inasmuch as they reflect the defects that we were compelled to speak of above, I would like to summarize their main points.

The first defect, in my opinion, is the profusion of *symbolism*—not the symbolism that we spoke of above as the sacramentality of all God's creation, but that *allegorical* symbolism that confers on each part of the sacred rite a special meaning, making it a representation of something that it is not. For example, regarding the prayer at the "fractioning of the lamb," Fr Kiprian concludes: "while the choir sings 'amen' [and they have to sing it slowly—why?] the priest reads that secret prayer before the fractioning of the Lamb . . . While this prayer is read the deacon, standing before the royal doors, binds the orarion about himself crosswise. Usually he does this during the singing of 'Our Father' [who does what and when?]." But it turns out that, "according to Symeon the New Theologian, the deacon is adorned with the orarion as if it were a certain set of wings, and he covers himself with reverence and humility when he partakes of communion, thus imitating the seraphim, who, as it is said, have six wings, two of which cover the feet, two the face, and two flutter with the singing of 'holy, holy, holy.'"⁶

The second defect consists of the *secret prayers*, as a result of which the overwhelming majority of the laity do not know and never even hear the text of the eucharist itself and are thus deprived of this priceless treasure. No one has ever explained why the "chosen race, a royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own people, that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness" cannot listen to the prayers that they offer to God.

The third defect is the distinction between the clergy and the laity during communion, a distinction with tragic consequences for church consciousness, but of which we have already spoken repeatedly.

⁵*Eukharistia*, 301-2.

⁶*Ibid.*

Defects of this sort can add up to a great multitude, but this subject remains a kind of incomprehensible *taboo*, and neither the hierarchy nor the theologians seem to take notice of it. This needs to be done, but no one is permitted to discuss the matter. Yet I repeat what I have repeated many times already in this book: what concerns the eucharist concerns the Church, and what concerns the Church concerns the eucharist, so that any ailment in the liturgy reflects on our faith and on the whole life of the Church. "Ibi ecclesia, ubi Spiritus Sanctus et omnis gratia," and we, "who stand about Thy holy altar" (Liturgy of St Basil the Great), need to pray zealously to God that he will enlighten our inner vision with the illuminating simplicity of the most holy of the holy sacraments.

8

THE DIVINE LITURGY IS COMPLETED. BLESSING THE ALTAR WITH the chalice, the priest exclaims, "O God, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance." Then he censes the holy altar three times, saying, "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory over all the earth." Then the people answer:

We have seen the true light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true faith! Worshipping the undivided Trinity, who has saved us.

And he takes the chalice away from the altar.

Then comes the little litany, the short thanksgiving that:

Thou hast made us worthy this day of Thy heavenly mysteries. Make straight our path; strengthen us all in Thy fear; guard our life; make firm our steps...

And after that, "Let us depart in peace!"

⁷"Where the Church is, there is the Spirit and all grace." St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3:24:1.

All is clear. All is simple and bright. Such fulness fills everything. Such joy permeates everything. Such love radiates through everything. We are again in the *beginning*, where our ascent to the table of Christ, in his kingdom, began.

We depart into life, in order to witness and to fulfil our calling. Each has his own, but it is also our common ministry, common liturgy—"in the communion of the Holy Spirit."

"Lord, it is good that we are here!"