

UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVINE LITURGY  
IS NECESSARY (3/10/2021)

The greatest and most blessed event in the history of mankind was the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to earth for His salvific work. Many of us may envy the people who lived at that time in Galilee and Judea, because they were privileged to see our Lord Jesus Christ-God Himself, with their own eyes. They witnessed the sick being healed of incurable diseases, and men being freed from demonic forces. It truly would have been wonderful to be alive in those times, being able to see Christ ourselves!

Let us reflect more deeply on this question: Did the Son of God come down from Heaven only for the benefit of those who were alive in Palestine at the time, and were able to see Him? Was the joy of His Presence limited to those present during those three years of His public ministry? Christ came to redeem the world for all ages, “for us men and for our salvation” (as we confess in the Creed). How then is it possible to limit His Presence to three years in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine? Is it possible for God to unfairly favor those few? His infallible word answers this question: “*God does not show favoritism*” (Acts 10:34). People who believe in Christ, no matter where or when they live, enjoy the same blessings from God. As St. Paul says, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*” (See Hebrews 13:8).

Let us consider the following: Can we who live today, after two thousand years, meet Christ in the same way as those who lived during that time? Listen to Him, speak to Him, and receive His blessings? The Church officially answers with a firm “yes.” Those of us who believe in Christ as God, are baptized, and naturally remain united with Christ and His Church will have the same opportunity as those who lived back then. This is truly amazing! How can this be so?

It is impossible with our limited human reason to comprehend how such an event might take place. It is beyond reason, and enters the realm of Mystery. When something in our daily lives is inexplicable, we call it a mystery. There are many things human logic cannot explain, such as supernatural events related to Divine actions. These are the Mysteries of God, and in order for us to approach them and receive benefit, we must go beyond our five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch). Our senses can only relate to material things. To touch the Mysteries of God requires faith (another sense). However, this faith is not something from the human imagination, which is undefined, hypothetical and dark. The Christian faith is based on a real person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who revealed to us everything we need to know in order to reach our final destination. The 2000 year history of the Church confirming the truths of Christ are verified in our daily lives. Indeed, what the Lord said is true: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away*” (Matthew 24:35). And what did Christ tell us while he was still on earth? “*I am with you always, to the very end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).

But someone might wonder: “But Jesus, after pronouncing these words, ascended into heaven – how can this be true?” Yes, Christ did truly ascend, but as God, like the Father and Holy Spirit, is “everywhere present and fills all things,” as we know and pray every

day in the “Heavenly King...” prayer. Beyond that, our Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Supper established a special relationship of communion with all people for all time, in every nation on earth. It is of course enough for people to want to believe in the gospel of Christ, be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, and as members of His Church, to struggle to live according to His will with hearts burning for fellowship with Christ.

Upon hearing this, it would be easy to say that “this is all a mystery to me!” Yes, all of this comes from a Mystery. In Church language, it is called "The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist (also called “Communion”). It is the Mystery of the Eucharist/Communion where the union of every believer with Christ is achieved. This greatest and most profound Mystery was founded by the Lord Himself on the evening of Holy Thursday, just before He was arrested and crucified, to ensure His unbroken and continuous communion with all His disciples of all ages.

All Christians know from the Holy Gospels and the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (11:23-28) how Christ established this Mystery. This greatest Mystery, as we all know, comes during the Divine Liturgy.

But herein lies the great challenge of the faithful. Because it is a Mystery with very deep spiritual meaning (condensed within a relatively short time, around an hour), and expressed in a language that is often symbolic and not understood by all, it is necessary for the spiritual wealth of the Divine Liturgy to be revealed and interpreted in detail. This is so every believer participates with their whole heart and mind in the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist, which is offered in every Divine Liturgy.

For this reason, God willing, we will dedicate the sermons of the Sundays of this Ecclesiastical year to the interpretation and understanding of the Divine Liturgy.