



61st Year

April 7, 2013

Pamphlet #14 (3123)

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Christ, as High Priest of the New Testament, with His presence, abolishes the ancient priesthood of the Mosaic law and by extension the other priesthood, of the idols or of other religions. The apostle Paul mentions those points which reveal this truth.

The comparison of the Priesthood of Christ with the ancient priesthood

The Apostle, referring to the priesthood of Christ, puts for the psalm verse: "You are a priest unto the ages in the order of Melchizedek" (109:4). He compares the priesthood of Jesus with that of Melchizedek, an important biblical personality, who did not belong to the priestly tribes of Israel.

About Melchizedek we know that: 1) he was not anointed with oil like Aaron and later priests of the law and he himself blessed Abraham as his superior. 2) No one knew his descent, that is his father and his mother. He was without genealogy. 3) His name is interpreted, king of righteousness. His age was not mentioned, it was undefined. 4) He did not have relatives or descendents. 5) He offered as a sacrifice only bread and wine. 6) It was not declared in the Old Testament that he died.

These points comprise a foreshadowing of the priesthood of Christ. Because Jesus was also anointed high priest by His Father himself: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt.3: 17). In other words, he did not receive the priesthood on his own, but as the Psalm mentions: "You are my son, today I have begotten you" (109:4). He is fatherless of a mother, in other words, as a human he was born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary. But also he was motherless of a Father, in other words as the Son of God he is born in the ages, unendingly only of His Father. He is the God of righteousness, as he himself said to St. John the Baptist: "it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). The Lord is as eternal God, "the one who was, who is and who is coming" and he trampled upon death and resurrected as a man. And to his disciples he handed down the bloodless sacrifice with the consecration and changing of the bread and the wine into His Body and Blood.

With these comments it is proven how great, different and unrepeatable is the priesthood of the Godman in relationship to the ancient priesthood. Only Melchizedek is a foreshadowing of the priesthood of Christ.

The reasons of the uniqueness of the High Priesthood of Christ

Why though is Christ the unique mediator of God and man, the unique worthy high priest for all nations? From where is this exclusiveness drawn?

The first reason is the fact that God showed his love to man practically, sacrificing His own Son. He did not seek other sacrifices, but he sacrificed His Only Begotten One. Such love does not have a corresponding one in the world.

The second reason is that no man was without sin. As the apostle Paul writes, whichever people are selected to serve God, as priests, they all have the weakness of sin: "every high priest taken from men... contains weakness" (Heb. 5: 1,2). Consequently they cannot reach perfection.

Christ however, as perfect God of the Father and perfect man from His conception, suffered for us. And he constantly puts forth his passions as a man to Himself as Son of God but also to His Father. And he asks that whichever people worship His passions, commune in the Holy Spirit of His Body and Blood. And with His grace that they be perfected in Christ, by the power of His perfect sacrifice. He, perfect of the perfect one, grants us to become partakers of his perfection by grace, as a gift, as an offering of His mercy. So for this reason we also have those saints and righteous people of our Church perfected in faith, who also in their turn intercede to the Lord for us.

As a conclusion of all these things every Christian, every conscientious member of the Church has the right to feel the uniqueness of the Orthodox faith and salvation for every person upon the earth. The theological axiom is not excessive that without Christ, without the Church, salvation does not exist.

Archim. Ch. N.