

The Divine Banquet: Communing with God

Theme

At the heart of the Divine Liturgy is the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, a meal with our God. Jesus is both the priest and the offering. Our participation is in Christ's Body and Blood, in the very life of Christ, and thus our whole lives should be an offering.

Outline

Structure of the Divine Liturgy

Sacrifice as Meal

Biblical Concept

Passover and Exile

New Covenant

Scripture References

Exodus 12.12

Psalms 95.2-6 (96.2-6)¹

1st Ezra 1

2nd Ezra (Ezra) 6.19-21

2nd Ezra 19 (Nehemiah 9)

Isaiah 40-66

Jeremiah 38.31-34 (31.31-34)

Mark 14:25

Luke 22:19-20

1st Corinthians 5:7-8

1st Corinthians 10.14-22

Hebrews 10.3-4 & 12

Glossary

Anaphora: The lifting up of the offering.

Epiclesis: Invoking the Holy Spirit to change the Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Eucharist: Holy Communion, a thanksgiving offering.

Lamb: The portion of the prosphora used for Holy Communion

Solea: The raised area before the icon screen.

Pascha: Greek for Passover or Easter.

Paten/Diskos: Plate which the Lamb rests on.

Prosphora: The loaf of bread prepared by people to be used in the Eucharist.

Quote

O Christ, great and most holy Pascha, O Wisdom, Word and Power of God: Grant that we may more perfectly partake of thee in the never-ending day of thy Kingdom.

— from the prayer appointed for the Deacon after he communes

Resource

Welcoming Gifts: Sacrifice in the Bible and Christian Life; Fr Jeremy Davis

¹ References from the Greek Bible; differing Hebrew Bible references are noted in parentheses.

Structure of the Divine Liturgy

1. The Liturgy of the Word
 - 1.1. The Opening
 - 1.1.1. Opening Conversation
 - 1.1.2. Exclamation
 - 1.1.3. Litany of Peace
 - 1.2. The Antiphons
 - 1.3. The Little Entrance with the Gospel Book
 - 1.4. Variable Hymns
 - 1.5. Trisagion (The Thrice-Holy Hymn)
 - 1.6. The Readings and Homily
 - 1.6.1. The Epistle
 - 1.6.2. The Gospel
 - 1.6.3. The Homily
 - 1.6.4. [Litany for the Catechumens]
2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist
 - 2.1. Preparation
 - 2.1.1. Litanies for Faithful
 - 2.1.2. The Cherubic Hymn
 - 2.1.3. The Great Entrance with the Gifts
 - 2.1.4. The Litany of Supplication
 - 2.1.5. The Kiss of Peace
 - 2.1.6. The Symbol of Faith (the Nicene Creed)
 - 2.2. The Anaphora
 - 2.3. The Consecration
 - 2.3.1. The Words of Institution
 - 2.3.2. The Epiclesis
 - 2.3.3. The Our Father
 - 2.3.4. The Elevation and Fraction
 - 2.4. The Holy Communion
 - 2.4.1. The Clergy in the Altar
 - 2.4.2. The Faithful in the Nave
 - 2.5. The Dismissals

Extended Edition E-mail

Scriptures References

Exodus 12.12 NETS²

And I will pass through in the land, Egypt, on this night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land, Egypt, from human being to animal, and on all the gods of the Egyptians I will execute vengeance [or 'justice' (ESV)]. I am the Lord.

4 Reigns (2 Kings) 6.8-20 (NETS) (from the Question and Answer section)

And the king of Syria was at war with Israel, and he took counsel with his servants, saying, "I will encamp at this certain place, Elmoni³." And Elisha sent to the king of Israel, saying, "Take care not to pass by this place, because Syria is hidden there." And the king of Israel sent to the place which Elisha told him. And he avoided it not once or twice.

And the mind of the king of Syria was perturbed about this matter, and he called his servants and said to them, "Will you not tell me who is betraying me to the king of Israel?" And one of his servants said, "No one, my lord O king, for Elisha the prophet in Israel tells the king of Israel all the words that you might speak in the chamber of your bedroom." And he said, "Go, see where this man is, and after I send, I will seize him." And they reported to him, saying, "Behold, he is in Dothan." And he sent there horse and chariot and a heavy force, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

And the attendant of Elisha rose early in the morning and went out, and behold, a force was all around the city with horse and chariot. And the lad said to him, "O master! What shall we do?" And Elisha said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, open the eyes of the lad, and let him see." And the Lord opened his eyes, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and there was a chariot of fire all around Elisha. And they came down against him. And Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, "Do strike this nation with blindness." And he struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said to them, "This is

² New English Translation of the Septuagint (I've standardized personal names throughout.)

³ Hebrew word left untranslated in Greek. Meaning something like 'such and such' or a placeholder name. The full phrase in Hebrew is פֶּלֹנִי אֱלֹמֹנִי (peloni almoni) which is delightfully playful.

not the city, and this is not the way; come after me, and I will lead you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria.

And it happened, as they entered into Samaria, that Elisha said, "O Lord, do open their eyes, and let them see." And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, they were in the middle of Samaria. And the king of Israel said, when he saw them, "Father, striking shall I strike?" And he said, "You shall not strike; if you did not capture them with your sword and your bow, would you strike them? Serve up food and water before them, and let them eat and drink, and let them go to their master." And he served up before them a great serving, and they ate and drank, and he sent them, and they went to their master. And lightly armed men of Syria no longer continued to come into the land of Israel.

In class, I referred to the servant of Elisha as Gehazi; he is not actually named as such in the text. Note the repetition of the phrase "open the eyes" for the servant and the Syrian army. Also note the repetition of 'strike'.

1 Ezra⁴ [Greek Ezra] 1

Notice how the author ties the return from the exile in with the Passover celebrated by King Josiah.

2 Ezra (Hebrew Ezra) 6.19-21 NETS

19 And on the fourteenth of the first month the sons of the exile kept the pascha [i.e., Passover]. Because the priests were purified and the Levites pure, one and all, they also slaughtered the pascha for all the sons of the exile and for their brothers the priests and for themselves. And sons of Israel—those from the exile and every one who was separating himself from the impurity of the nations of the land, joining them, in order to seek after the Lord, God of Israel—ate the pascha.

2 Ezra 19 (Nehemiah 9)

Notice how Ezra's (LXX) or the Levites' (MT) prayer emphasizes the Passover

Psalms 95.2-6 (96.2-6) NETS

Sing to the Lord; bless his name;
tell of his deliverance from day to day.

⁴ Naming the books Ezra is a difficult matter,
it isn't just one of your casual games;
You may think I'm mad as a hatter
when I tell you, an Ezra must have five different names.
—Apologies to TS Eliot

Declare his glory among the nations,
among all the peoples his marvelous works,
because great is the Lord and very much praiseworthy;
he is terrible to all the gods,
because all the gods of the nations are demons,
but the Lord made the heavens.
Acknowledgment and beauty are before him;
holiness and magnificence comprise his sanctity.

Jeremiah 38.31-34 (31.31-34) NETS

Behold, days are coming, quoth the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not abide in my covenant, and I was unconcerned for them, quoth the Lord, because this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, quoth the Lord. Giving I will give my laws in their mind, and I will write them on their hearts, and I will become a god to them, and they shall become a people to me. And they shall not teach, each his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they shall all know me, from their small even to their great, because I will be gracious regarding their injustices, and remember their sins no more.

Mark 14:25 ESV⁵

Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Luke 22:19–20 ESV

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

1 Corinthians 5:7–8 ESV

Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁵ English Standard Version

1 Corinthians 10:14–22 ESV

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Hebrews 10:3–4 ESV

But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:12-13 ESV

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Quote

“Anaphora” is a Greek word (ἀναφορά) meaning a “carrying up”, thus an “offering”In the sacrificial language of the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, προσφέρειν (prospherein) is used of the offerer's bringing the victim to the altar, and ἀναφέρειν (anapherein) is used of the priest's offering up the selected portion upon the altar (see, for instance, Leviticus 2:14, 2:16, 3:1, 3:5).

— Wikipedia entry on [Anaphora \(liturgy\)](#)

More Resources

Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple, and the Early Church;

Benjamin D Williams, Harold B Anstall

Commentary on the Divine Liturgy; St Nicholas Cabasilas

The Heavenly Banquet: Understanding the Divine Liturgy; Fr Emmanuel Hatzidakis