

THURSDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

May 21, 2020 • *Thirty-third day of Paschaltide*



CHRIST IS RISEN!

Canticle

David, the ancestor of God, danced and leaped before the symbolic ark. Let us as the holy people of God, having beheld the fulfillment of the symbols, rejoice with divine inspiration for Christ is risen, the all-powerful One.

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death,
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*

AT MORNING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Orthros

Thou Who wast crucified for us of Thine own will and wast accounted with the dead, O Lifegiver, and didst arise the third day, Thou, O Christ our God, by Thy power smotest Death and didst break his dominion, by Thy rising, giving life unto all held in hades. And giving thanks, O great Immortal Lord, we all revere Thine Arising with hymns of praise.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Without parting from the bosom of Thy Father, O only-begotten Word of God, Thou camest upon the earth, changelessly becoming man, out of love for man. And Thou didst endure the Cross and death in the flesh, Thou Who art impassible in Thy Godhead. And having risen from the dead, Thou didst grant immortality unto the race of man, since Thou alone art omnipotent.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Even as Thou didst open the well-spring of Thy Divinity unto the believing Samaritan woman, O Lord, and didst pour divine knowledge upon her, watering her with a divinely inspired drink, do Thou also now send down upon us all the forgiveness of failings, O Thou Who art more than good.

AT EVENING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Vespers

Lord, when Thou didst ascend upon the Cross, Thou didst utterly obliterate our ancestral curse. And going down into hades, Thou didst set free those in fetters from all ages past, granting unto the race of man incorruption forever; hence, for this cause with hymns do we glorify Thy life-creating and saving Rising from the dead.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Ye living sacrifices, rational whole-burnt offerings, O Martyrs of the Lord, ye perfect sacrificial victims of God, who know God and are known by God, ye lambs whose fold is inaccessible to wolves: Intercede that, together with you, we too may be shepherded beside the water of rest.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

The Mystery which was hidden from everlasting and was unknown of the Angels, O Theotokos, was revealed through thee, to those who dwell upon earth. In that God, having become incarnate—in unconfused union—of His own good will accepted the Cross for our sake. Whereby He raised again the first created, and hath saved our souls from death.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Archbishop

†386

~ from his twenty-second catechetical lecture: on the Eucharist ~

EVEN OF ITSELF the teaching of the Blessed Paul is sufficient to give you a full assurance concerning the Divine Mysteries. Having been deemed worthy to receive them, you have become one with Christ in His Body and Blood. For you have heard the Apostle's distinct saying, *Our Lord Jesus Christ on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)* Since, then, He Himself declared and said of the Bread, *This is My Body*, who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since He has Himself affirmed and said, *This is My Blood*, who shall ever hesitate, saying that it is not His blood?

In Cana of Galilee, He turned water into wine, akin to blood; thus, is it beyond belief that He should have turned wine into blood? When called to a bodily marriage, He miraculously wrought that wonderful work; thus, shall He not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the realization of His Body and Blood upon the children of the bridal chamber?

Therefore, with full assurance, let us partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. For, in the figure of Bread, His Body is given to you, and in the figure of Wine, His Blood; that you, by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, may be made of the same body and the same blood with Him. For in this way, we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed through our members; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, we *become partakers of the divine Nature. (2 Peter 1:4)*

Christ, on one occasion, discoursing with the Jews, said, *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (John 6:53)* They, not having heard His saying in a spiritual sense, were offended and went back, supposing that He was inviting them to eat flesh. Under the Old Covenant there was showbread, but this, as it belonged to the Old Covenant, has come to an end. But in the New Covenant, there is the Bread of heaven, and the Cup of salvation, sanctifying soul and body; for as the Bread sanctifies the body, the Word sanctifies the soul.

Therefore, do not consider the Bread and the Wine to be bare elements, for, according to the Lord's declaration, they are the Body and Blood of Christ. Even though your senses suggest to you that they are mere bread and wine, yet let faith establish you. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured, without misgiving, that the Body and Blood of Christ have been granted to you.

Blessed David advises you in the meaning of this, saying, *Thou hast prepared a table before me in the presence of them that afflict me.* What he is saying is this: 'Before Thy coming, the evil spirits prepared a table for men, polluted and defiled and full of devilish influence; but since Thy coming, O Lord, Thou hast prepared a table for me.' When he says to God, *Thou hast prepared a table before me*, what else does he mean but that God has prepared a mystical and spiritual Table for us contrary to and in opposition to the evil spirits? And this is very true, for that former table was a communion of devils, but this present Table is communion with God. *You have anointed my head with oil.* With oil, you have been anointed by God upon your forehead, as the seal which you have from God, that you may be made an engraving of the signet: Holiness unto God. *And Thy cup which filleth me, how excellent it is!* The cup that he speaks of is that Cup which Jesus took in His hands and for which He gave thanks, and said, *This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)*

Solomon also, hinting at this grace, says in Ecclesiastes, *Come hither, eat your bread with joy* (that is, the spiritual bread; 'Come hither': he calls with the call to salvation and blessing), *and drink your wine with a merry heart* (that is, the spiritual wine); *and let oil be poured out upon your head* (you see he alludes even to the mystic Chrism); *and let your garments be always white, for the Lord is well pleased with your works. (Ecclesiastes 9:7-8)* Before you came to Baptism, your works were vanity of vanities. But now, having put off your old garments and put on those which are spiritually white, you must be continually robed in white: you must be clad in the garments that are truly white and shining and spiritual, that you may say with the blessed Isaiah: *Let my soul rejoice in the Lord; for He has clothed me with the robe of salvation, and the garment of joy. (Isaiah 61:10)*

Having learned these things and been fully assured that what seems to be bread is not bread—though sensible to taste—but rather the Body of Christ, and that what seems to be wine is not wine—though the taste will have it so—but rather the Blood of Christ, and that David sung of this of old, saying, *And bread strengthens man's heart, to make his face to shine*

with oil, therefore, strengthen your heart, by partaking of it spiritually, and make the face of your soul to shine. And so, having it unveiled with a pure conscience, may you reflect *as in a mirror the glory of the Lord*, (2 Corinthians 3:18) and proceed from glory to glory, in Christ Jesus our Lord; to Whom be honor, and might, and glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.



JOHN OF DAMASCUS

Presbyter & Monk

†c.776

[Note: On the six Sundays before Great Lent, I presented excerpts from St. John of Damascus' first and third Apologies in Defense of the Divine Images. I will be adding these six excerpts as second readings for the next few days, for those who did not have an opportunity to read them at that time—DDO]

Excerpt 1 from the first Apology: The invisible God became visible in the Incarnation. Thus, He can, and must, be imaged.

WITH THE EVER-PRESENT CONVICTION of my own unworthiness, I ought to have kept silence and confessed my shortcomings before God, but all things are good at the right time. I see the Church which God founded on the Apostles and Prophets, its cornerstone being Christ His Son, tossed on an angry sea, beaten by rushing waves, shaken and troubled by the assaults of evil spirits. I see rents in the seamless robe of Christ, which impious men have sought to part asunder, and His body cut into pieces, that is, the word of God and the ancient tradition of the Church. Therefore, I have judged it unreasonable to keep silence and to hold my tongue.

First of all, I grasp the teaching of the Church—through which salvation is planted in us—as both pillar and foundation. It is disastrous to suppose that the Church does not know God as He really is, that she degenerates into idolatry: for if she declines one iota from perfection, it will be as a blot on her unblemished face, destroying by its unsightliness the beauty of the whole. A small thing is not small when it leads to something great; and it is no small matter to forsake the ancient tradition of the Church held by our forefathers, whose conduct we should observe, and whose faith we should imitate.

God spoke in past times to the Fathers through the Prophets, and lastly, through His only-begotten Son, by Whom He made the ages. He says: *This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent.* (John 17:3) I believe in one God, the source of all things, without beginning, uncreated, immortal, everlasting, incomprehensible, bodiless, invisible, uncircumscribed, without form. I believe in one supersubstantial Being, one divine Godhead in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and I adore Him alone. I worship one God, but I adore three Persons: God the Father, God the Son made flesh, and God the Holy Spirit—one God. I do not adore the creation rather than the Creator, but I adore the One Who became a creature—formed as I was—Who clothed Himself in creation without weakening or departing from His divinity, that He might raise our nature in glory and make us partakers of His divine Nature. I worship Him clothed in the flesh, not as if it were a garment that passes away, or as if the Lord Incarnate constituted a fourth person of the Trinity—God forbid! The flesh assumed by Him is made divine and endures after its assumption. Fleshly nature was not lost when it became part of the Godhead, but just as the Word made flesh remained the Word, so flesh became the Word, yet remaining flesh, being united to the Person of the Word. Therefore, I boldly draw an image of the invisible God, not as invisible, but as having become visible for our sakes by partaking of flesh and blood. I do not draw an image of the immortal Godhead. Rather, I paint the image of God Who became visible in the flesh; for if it is impossible to make a representation of a spirit, how much more impossible is it to depict the God Who gives life to that spirit?

Now, our adversaries say: God's commands to Moses were: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and adore Him alone, and thou shalt not make thyself a graven image.* These adversaries are in error, brethren, for they do not know the Scriptures: that *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* (II Corinthians 3:6) God forbids the making of images on account of idolatry; and because it is impossible to make an image of the immeasurable, uncircumscribed, invisible God. These injunctions were given to the Jews on account of their proneness to idolatry. Now, on the other hand, it is given to us—as Gregory the Theologian says—to avoid superstitious error and to come to God in the knowledge of the truth, to worship God alone, to enjoy the fulness of His knowledge, and to attain to mature manhood, that we may no longer be children,

tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Scripture says, *You cannot see My form.* (Exodus 33:20) What wisdom the Lawgiver has! How can the invisible be depicted? How does one picture the inconceivable? How can one give expression to the limitless, the immeasurable, the invisible? How can one give a form to immensity? How can one paint immortality? How can one describe what is a mystery? But, it is obvious that when you contemplate God becoming man, you will be able to depict Him clothed in human form. When the Invisible One becomes visible to flesh, you may then draw a likeness of His form. When He Who is bodiless and without form or limit, immeasurable in the boundlessness of His own Nature, existing as God, empties Himself and takes on the form of a servant in substance and in stature, and a body of flesh, then you may draw His likeness, and show it to anyone willing to contemplate it. Depict His ineffable condescension, His birth from the Virgin, His baptism in the Jordan, His transfiguration on Tabor, His sufferings which have freed us from passion, His death and miracles, the proofs of His divine Nature, the deeds which He worked in the flesh through divine Power, His saving Cross, the Tomb, and Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven. Give to it all the endurance of engraving and color. Have no fear or anxiety; discern between the different kinds of worship: adoration is one thing, and that which is offered in order to honor something of great excellence is another. *Amen.*

The Iconoclastic Movement of the Eighth Century, begun under the emperor Leo III, sought to abolish the use of iconography in the Church. St. John of Damascus, writing from his monastery of St. Sabbas in Palestine—at that time ruled by the Muslim caliph—was protected from the persecutions raging in the Byzantine Roman Empire against those who defended the images. In his 'Apologies', St. John dismantles the arguments of the iconoclasts and defends the Church's use of iconography with biblical and theological assertions. His teachings formed the enduring doctrine of the use of divine imagery in the Church.

