

male and female he created them" (Gn 1:26-27). In accordance with the eternal plan of God, the creation of humankind as male and female, initiates the revelation of the Church: "Just as God's will is action and is called the creation of the world, so too his plan is the salvation of humankind and is called the Church."<sup>227</sup>

274 God reveals his plan about the Church, as the fullness of creation, in the account of the life of Adam and Eve in Paradise. It was a life in unity with God and in harmony with all creation. The Holy Fathers describe the bond between Christ and the Church in the vision of God's creation of Eve from the rib of Adam: "Just as Eve came into being from the rib of Adam, so did [the Church] from the rib of Christ."<sup>228</sup> The relationship between Adam and Eve is a prefigurement of the relationship between Christ and the Church:

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:25-27).

275 Through sin humankind forfeits Paradise (see Gn 3:23-24), and weakens its bond with God. Human wickedness and violence upon earth lead to a worldwide flood (see Gn 6:5,11). The ark by which God saves the righteous Noah and his family is a prefigurement of Christ's Church (see Gn 6:13-16; Heb 11:7). Entering into a covenant with Abraham, God promises that he will bring forth from him a great nation (see Gn 12:2). Abraham accepts this promise with faith and becomes "the father of all who believe" (see Rom 4:11).

276 From the descendants of Abraham, God creates his People, Israel. Under the leadership of Moses, he leads them out of Egyptian slavery; he guides them across the Red Sea; he leads them through the wilderness. He then establishes a covenant with them on Mount Sinai. Faith in the promise and the observance of the commandments of the Sinai Covenant become the signs of belonging to the People of God—the Old Testament Church.

### **b. The Church in the New Testament**

277 The Father realizes his eternal plan for the Church, the salvific community of people, through the incarnation of the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. In his teaching about the Church, the incarnate Son

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<sup>227</sup> CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *The Instructor*, 1, 6: PG 8, 280.

<sup>228</sup> JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *In Praise of Maximus*, 3: PG 51, 229.

of God, Jesus Christ, would often make use of images that were familiar to his listeners. He compared the Church to a flock, for which he is the Good Shepherd (see Jn 10:1-18). The Church is also a vineyard (see Mt 21:33-43), where Christ is the vine (see Jn 15:1-5) and his disciples are the branches. Christ in the Church is also the cornerstone of the building (see Mt 21:42-44). The Church is the immaculate "Bride of the Lamb," being prepared for the arrival of her Bridegroom (see Rev 19:6-8).

278 The Church is the dawning of the kingdom of God, which Christ announces in all his preaching, especially in parables. We hear the parables about the mustard seed, which grows into a tree (see Lk 13:18-19); about the field, where both wheat and tares grow together until the time of the harvest (see Mt 13:24-30); about the treasure hidden in a field; about the pearl of great price; and about the fishing net (see Mt 13:44-47).

279 Christ builds his Church through the words of his preaching and by the witness of his life, which culminates in his death upon the Cross and his Resurrection. "You stretched out your hands upon the Cross, and gathered all the nations to yourself. You showed them to be one Church that praises you, those on earth singing in harmony with those in heaven."<sup>229</sup> Christ called the twelve apostles for ministry in the Church; this number corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel. Christ entrusts the Church to the apostles of this new People of God: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). Fulfilling the word of the divine Saviour, the apostles went forth into the world, "like arrows shot from a divine bow into the entire world."<sup>230</sup>

280 God's plan with respect to the Church is to unite all humankind into one: "When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he parted the nations. When he divided the tongues of fire, he called all to unity; thus with one voice we glorify the all-Holy Spirit."<sup>231</sup> What was scattered and alienated (the tower of Babel), is brought together and united by Christ when he bestows the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). Patriarch Josyf Slipyj understood this unity as a communion of self-governing (in Latin, *sui iuris*; in Ukrainian, *pomisni*) Churches: "By his coming Christ fashioned from humankind a family of God, a People of

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<sup>229</sup> Octoechos, Tone 4, Sunday, Matins, Canon, Ode 8.

<sup>230</sup> See Octoechos, Tone 3, Thursday, Matins, Sessional Hymn after the Third Stasis.

<sup>231</sup> Floral Triodion, Pentecost, Kontakion.