

1:2), who is his incarnate Word. As for creation, the world was created good (see *Gn 1:1*), and therefore is a means of our communication with God. However, this world needs the human person as it eagerly awaits the revelation of the children of God (see *Rom 8:19, 22*), through whom all creation is able to fulfil completely its purpose.

342 Christ himself shows that the created world is a means through which God acts: he cures the man born blind by applying a mud paste to his eyes; he heals the hemorrhaging woman who touched the fringe of his cloak, and in the Transfiguration his clothes shine with divine light (see *Mt 17:2*). All that Christ did during his lifetime he continues to do through the Divine Services of his Church and through the Holy Mysteries.²⁸⁶ Therefore, the Church, through her Divine Services during the Mysteries and on holy days, blesses and sanctifies various material objects through which she witnesses to Christ's presence and salvific action.

II. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

A. The Divine Liturgy—the Foundation and Summit of the Christian Community's Life

343 "Do this in memory of me; for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim my death and confess my Resurrection."²⁸⁷ In Christ, human nature partakes of the divine nature (see *2 Pt 1:4*). Christ grants to everyone who believes in him communion in divine life. Christ accomplished this mystery of Communion at the Mystical Supper, manifested it in his Paschal Mystery, and continues to actualize it in the Divine Services of the Church "now and for ever and ever."

344 the summit of the Church's liturgical life is the Divine Liturgy (from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning a *common work*). It is the service of God to his people and of God's people to him. In the Divine Liturgy the Father leads us into the fullness of his life by giving us his Son. The Son then gives himself to us as nourishment, in the banquet of the Word, and in the banquet of the Body and Blood. He does so in order that we might become one body and blood with him²⁸⁸ and partake of his Divinity. Receiving Christ's gift in the Holy Spirit, the Church responds to him by offering herself. She does so in order that he might live and act

²⁸⁶ See LEO THE GREAT, Homily 74, 2: PL 54, 398.

²⁸⁷ Liturgicon, The Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father Basil the Great, The Anaphora.

²⁸⁸ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, The Mystagogical Lectures, 4, 1; 4, 3: PG 33, 1097-1100.

in her as in his Body. And so, Christ, the head of the Church, together with the Church, which is his Body, brings to the Father in the Holy Spirit praise and thanksgiving for the salvation that has already been accomplished.

345 The Divine Liturgy consists of (a) the *Proskomide* (from the Greek, meaning *offering*) or Prothesis (from the Greek, meaning setting forth), that is, the preparation of the gifts; (b) the Liturgy of the Word; and (c) the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Divine Liturgy the mystery of salvation is accomplished. This salvation is the bringing together of God and humankind in Christ (*see Eph 1:10*), the "building up of the body of Christ" (*Eph 4:12*). Just as at the Mystical Supper [Last Supper] Christ first taught the apostles by his word and then led them into the mystery of his Body and Blood, so in the Divine Liturgy Christ teaches the community of the faithful, nourishes it by his Word, and then makes its members partakers of the Eucharistic banquet. The Christian enters into this mystery through listening to the Word of God and partaking of the Lord's Body and Blood.

1. Preparation for the Divine Liturgy

346 Before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, the clergy recite the entrance prayers and put on the liturgical vestments. In the prayers before the iconostasis, they pray for the forgiveness of their faults. Aware of their human frailty, they beseech the Lord, by the prayers of the Mother of God, to strengthen them for this service.

347 The meaning and symbolism of all the liturgical vestments are well illustrated by the prayer for putting on the *sticharion*: "He has placed on me, as a bridegroom, a crown; he has adorned me, as a bride, with jewels." At the Liturgy, the priest represents Christ the Bridegroom before the community and also the Church as the Bride before God.

a. *The Proskomide (Prothesis)*

348 Vested in the liturgical vestments, the priest begins the celebration of the Proskomide. The Proskomide leads the faithful into the Divine Liturgy. The *Proskomide* takes its name from the ancient custom of the faithful bringing various gifts for the Liturgy. Bread and wine were used for the Eucharist, while other gifts were applied to the needs of those in want, and for the clergy. In this way, the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful also had a social dimension—the mutual exchange of gifts (*see*