

At the Mystical Supper, Christ gave the apostles a share in the kingdom—his divine life—through the Word and the Eucharist.

356 This joining of the Word and the Mystery is not a coincidence. As the Mother of God first received the Word into her heart and united herself to him, so also, we receive the Word into our hearts and put it into practice when we join ourselves to him in the mystery of Communion: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (*Lk 8:21; see Mt 12:50 and Mk 3:35*). This is why in the Divine Liturgy Christ feeds us first with his Word (in the *Epistle*, the *Gospel*, and the *homily*), and then with his Body and Blood (*Communion*).

357 We approach the Liturgy of the Word not as a simple recollection of Christ's preaching long ago, but rather as the living Word. Christ continues to preach today, and we not only read this Word but also receive it as nourishment (see *Lk 24:13-34*). Through the proclaimed and preached Word in the liturgical assembly, Christ himself addresses the whole Church community and every member individually.

***a. The Exclamation "Blessed be the Kingdom"
and the Litany of Peace***

358 As the public activity of Christ began with the proclamation that God's kingdom was at hand, so the Liturgy begins with the announcement that the kingdom is present. Signing the Holy Table with the Gospel Book cross-wise, the priest exclaims: "Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever." To this the participants at the Liturgy respond: "Amen" (from the Hebrew, meaning let it be so). By this response they assert that the kingdom is truly among us and that they long for it to thrive and grow.

359 In the Litany of Peace we bring before the Lord the Church's prayer for the whole world. This is the way the liturgical assembly affirms the manifestation of God's kingdom. The Church's prayer for the world is an expression of faith that all is in the hands of the Lord. It also expresses our readiness to accept from the Lord whatever answer he might wish to give. The name of the Litany of Peace indicates the need for inner peace and reconciliation with all. The first petition of the Litany indicates that Christ himself is our peace (see *Eph 2:14*) and that it is in him that we pray. The petitions of the Litany of Peace express concern for the good of the Church, of the country in which we live, and of all creation. The Litany of Peace teaches the faithful to place common needs before private ones. The prayer "Lord, have mercy," repeated by the faithful as the community's response to the petitions, includes both

the request for God's merciful love and the community's faith that unfailingly proffers that love.

b. The Antiphons of the Liturgy

360 The kingdom of God is the fulfilment of all the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament. In order to understand more fully and to accept more intensely the kingdom, we recall these prophecies and promises. We sing psalm verses that express them and a refrain that conveys their fulfilment in Christ. In the solemn hymn, "Only-begotten Son," we profess that the fulfilment of all that God promised is to be found in the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of Christ. By singing the refrains "through the prayers of the Mother of God..." and "Through the prayers of your saints..." we unite ourselves to those in whom this salvation has already been accomplished. this type of singing of the psalms with a refrain is called antiphonal because two alternating choir (*krylosy* or *scholae*) sing them. In the Divine Liturgy there are three antiphons ending with the Little Entrance. In the prayers between the antiphons we profess God's "love for mankind which is beyond expression and Christ's promise to "grant the request of two or three who join the voices in [his] name."

c. The Little Entrance, the Troparia, and the Thrice-Holy Hymn

361 While in the singing of the antiphons we experience anticipation of the kingdom and our drawing near to it, the Little Entrance shows that by following Christ we already enter the kingdom; we enter heaven, the fullness of God's life. thus, we pray: "Grant that as we make one entrance, the holy angels may enter too, serving with us and joining in the praise of Your goodness." By the words "Wisdom! Stand aright!" the deacon calls us to direct our attention to the Word of God. The faithful respond by venerating his Wisdom, which is manifested in the Gospel Book. They prepare their hearts to receive the Word during its proclamation. Thus, bowing their heads, the faithful sing: "Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ."

362 The priest enters the sanctuary with the Gospel Book. This is a sign that it is Jesus Christ, the only High Priest, who celebrates the Divine Liturgy. Christ is invisibly among us, and it is he who leads us to the altar (just as the Gospel Book carried by the deacon precedes everyone). The bishop or priest represents the eternal High Priest who offered the perfect sacrifice once and for all, ascended to heaven, and, having