

entered the heavenly sanctuary, sits at the right hand of the Father (see *Heb 9:11-14, 23-28*).

363 Then follow the *troparia* and *kontakia*. These are hymns in honour of a feast or saint, with invocations to Christ, the Mother of God, or saints, and they frequently reveal the theological substance of a feast or commemoration. Thus, the Church celebrates and manifests the unfathomable paths by which the Lord led, and continues to lead, each of the faithful into his kingdom.

364 We express our entrance into the kingdom, our being raised to heaven, and our contemplation of the Most Holy Trinity in the words of the Thrice-Holy Hymn: "Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us." "Thus, we join the heavenly choirs in their singing. In the Prayer of the Thrice-Holy Hymn "standing before the glory of [the] *holy altar*," we entreat the Lord to "accept from the lips of us sinners the Thrice-Holy Hymn and visit us in [his] kindness."

365 During the singing of the Thrice-Holy Hymn, the hierarch ascends the "throne on high." As the Epistle is read, the bishop is seated on his throne (in Greek, *cathedra*), along with the priests to his right and to his left. They thus represent Jesus Christ among the apostles, and symbolize the authoritative teaching ministry of the Church.

d. Hearing the Word of God, Responding to It, and Prayer

366 By his Word the Lord created the world; by his Word at Sinai he called to ministry his Chosen People; in the incarnate Word he gave his people salvation. We are called to receive the Word of God and to answer to it in faith: "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do!" (*Ex 24:3*). To truly hear the Word of God means to act on it: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!" (*Lk 11:28*). Those who listened to John in the desert and those who listened to Peter on the day of Pentecost asked: "What then shall we do?" (*Lk 3:10; Acts 2:37*). When we respond to the Word, we receive its life-giving power and, as did the Mother of God, we preserve it in our hearts and *enflesh* it in our lives.

367 The Word of God shines in our hearts "the pure light of ... Divine knowledge," as the Prayer before the Gospel teaches us. To hear the Word of God means "to understand the message of [the] Gospel" in order to accept it as "blessed commandments that we may subdue all carnal desires and follow a spiritual way of life, thinking and doing all that pleases" God. We incline our heads during the reading of the Gos-

pel as a sign of reverent listening and acceptance of the Word of God. In the homily, the priest proclaims the Good News about the mighty deeds of God, calls us to embody the Word we hear: "[He] instructs and exhorts [us] to the imitation of these good things."²⁹⁰ The faithful listen to the Word of God, which the Lord addresses to them through reading of the Epistle and Gospel, and through the homily. They receive the Word of God into their hearts as a seed that should bring forth good fruit in their lives. Receiving in this way communion in Christ the Word, they become its bearers and heralds.

368 In the Insistent Litany, the Church prays "that we may be accounted worthy, having learned the truth, by our deeds also to be found good citizens and guardians of what is commanded, so that we maybe saved with eternal salvation."²⁹¹ Whereas in the Litany of Peace at the beginning of the Liturgy we prayed for the whole world, in the Insistent Litany we mention the faithful by name, we add the special petitions of the assembly in response to the received Word of God, and we entreat God's help for the different circumstances in the lives of the faithful.

369 In the Litany for the Catechumens, the faithful pray for those preparing for Baptism. They pray that the Lord would "teach them by the word of truth" and (during the second half of Lent) that the Lord "number them among [his] chosen flock." The catechumens were admitted to the *Banquet of the Word* in order to help them achieve spiritual maturity and heal spiritual illnesses. Before the beginning of the Banquet of Eucharist, however, they were dismissed. "Only the faithful" (the baptized) remained, those who had gathered to be nourished by the food of eternal life—the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Liturgy of the Eucharist (Liturgy of the Faithful)

370 In the Prayers of the Faithful at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the priest briefly expresses the meaning and purpose of the Eucharistic assembly: "To stand now at your holy altar ... to offer you petitions, supplications, and unbloody sacrifices for all your people ... to partake of your Holy Mysteries without blame and condemnation, and be made worthy of your heavenly kingdom."²⁹²

²⁹⁰ JUSTIN MARTYR, Apology, I, 67: PG 6, 429.

²⁹¹ JUSTIN MARTYR, Apology, I, 65: PG 6, 428.

²⁹² *Liturgicon*, The Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father John Chrysostom, First and Second Prayers of the Faithful.