

Body, the Church, which embraces the faithful of all generations, living and deceased.

- 398 In the Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, the Church contemplates the glory of the Most Holy Trinity—the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: "Who can tell of all your acts of power, make all your praises heard, or recount all your wonders at every moment?" All creation, the nine choirs of angels and with them this liturgical community, ministers to the Lord and praises him for his gifts: for the creation of humanity, for paradise, for the promise of immortal life.
- 399 Further, the Anaphora of Saint Basil mentions that humankind, "led astray by the deception of the serpent," committed the sin of disobedience and thus lost paradise, becoming mortal. Yet the merciful God did not turn away from humankind but promised the coming salvation. He sent them the prophets, and "gave the law as a help ... appointed angels as guardians." In the fullness of time God spoke through his Son, who humbling himself, took on our human nature from the Virgin. In his flesh he condemned sin and granted new life. In our stead he offered himself unto death, "and rising on the third day and making a way for all flesh to the resurrection of the dead," he became "...the first-born of the dead ... ascended into heaven and took his seat at the right hand" of the Father. As a memorial of his passion he left us this offering of the gifts. He was the first who took bread and wine, named them his Body and Blood, and gave them to his disciples as food and drink. And he commanded us from that time onward to do the same. Today the liturgical community keeps this commandment, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies the gifts and shows them to be the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.
- 400 The Holy Spirit unites the living and the dead into a single Church. In the Church's prayer, expressed in this Anaphora, we ask the Lord to remember those who have brought offerings, those labouring in spiritual struggles, our earthly nation, the government and the military, couples and families, those in need, those who have strayed from the Church, those troubled by unclean spirits, those travelling, widows and orphans, the imprisoned and the sick, those condemned and those persecuted, friends and foes. The Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil culminates in joyous certitude. It concludes with the conviction that the Lord, who gives us his kind gifts and mercies—good weather, rain in due season, and the harvest—will restrain the discord of Churches, the pride of nations, the rise of heresies, and will show us to be "children of the light and children of the day."

2. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

- 401 The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts accentuates two elements: the preparation of catechumens for Baptism, and the repentance of the faithful. During this Liturgy, the community prays for and instructs the catechumens. In the second half of Great Lent it adds petitions for "those about to be illumined." These are the catechumens who will be baptized at that year's celebration of Pascha. The first part of the Liturgy, Vespers with Old Testament readings, has a distinctly didactic character. The readings from the books of Genesis and Exodus present to the catechumens, as well as to the baptized, God's providence and care for his Chosen People. The book of Proverbs, in turn, offers the teachings of Divine Wisdom for daily living. Through these readings of the Old Testament and the prayers of the Liturgy, the catechumens prepare for enlightenment in Baptism. A symbol of this preparation and reception of the light of God's Word is the blessing with a candle and incense, accompanied by the words "The light of Christ enlightens all." This is a sign of Christ who triumphs over darkness, a symbol of the coming light of Pascha, and the baptism of the catechumens into the Death and Resurrection of Christ.
- 402 The penitential character of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is seen in the singing of the verse "Let my prayer rise like incense before you," which culminates with great prostrations. We also kneel during the solemn transfer of the Gifts from the Preparation Table to the Holy Table—the Gifts that are already the very Body and Blood of Christ. The penitential and fasting character of this Liturgy expresses the expectation of the paschal fullness. The reception of Holy Communion also strengthens the faithful spiritually as they walk the way of repentance and fasting.

C. Holy Mysteries of Christian Life

a. The Mystery—Christ is in our Midst

- 403 In Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers, the meaning of the term mystery [which is the word for sacrament in various Eastern Christian languages] is particularly extensive. "The mystery of God's will" is what Saint Paul calls God's "plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (*Eph.* 1:910). For Christians, mystery ultimately means Christ in our midst (see *Col.* 1:27). Therefore, knowledge of the mystery of God's salvation is the knowledge of Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom