

of Damascus explains the union of the earthly and the heavenly in the Eucharist by the example of fiery coal:

[Burning] coal is not plain wood but wood united with fire; in like manner also, the bread of the Communion is not plain bread, but bread united with divinity. But a body which is united with divinity is not one nature but has one nature belonging to the body and another belonging to the divinity that is united to it, so that the compound is not one nature but two.³³⁴

Christ offers his Body and Blood in a way accessible to human beings: "Since it is man's custom to eat [bread] and to drink water and wine he [Christ] connected his divinity with these and made them his Body and Blood in order that we may rise to what is supernatural through what is familiar and natural."³³⁵

3) *Consecration of the Gifts*

439 Christ institutes the Eucharist, making bread and wine to be his Body and Blood, in order to transfigure—by the Holy Spirit—those who communicate. They become `of one body and blood with Him."³³⁶ Saint John Chrysostom comments on the following words of the apostle Paul: "Because there is one bread [of which we partake], we who are many are one body" (1 Cor 10:17). He juxtaposes the consecration of the Gifts with the transformation of those who communicate in them: "For what is the bread? —the Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body."³³⁷

440 The teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Church concerning the Eucharist is rooted in the Incarnation of the Son of God:

If God the Word of his own will became man, and the pure and undefiled blood of the holy and ever-virginal one made his flesh without the aid of seed, can he not then make the bread his Body and the wine and water his Blood? ... But if you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it was through the Holy Spirit, just as the Lord took on himself flesh that subsisted in him and was born of the holy Mother of God through the Spirit. And we know nothing further, save that the Word of God is true and energizes and is omnipotent, but the manner of this cannot be searched out.³³⁸

³³⁴ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4, 13: PG 94, 1148.

³³⁵ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4, 13: PG 94, 1144.

³³⁶ CYRIL OF JERUSALEM, *The Mystagogical Lectures*, 4, 3: PG 33, 1099.

³³⁷ JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 24, 4: PG 61, 205.

³³⁸ JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 4, 13: PG 94, 1145.

441 While not investigating the manner of the consecration of the Eucharistic Gifts, the Holy Fathers emphasize how the earthly and the heavenly are united in these Gifts, as in Christ are united his divine and human nature. Due to this union, when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, we truly become one Body with him.

4) *The Eucharistic Offering*

442 In the Eucharist, Christ offers us participation in his life, a life both divine and human (*i.e., theandric*). He does this out of merciful love, not because of our merits. "The highest expression of this love is Christ's sacrifice in blood on Golgotha, the memorial of which is the bloodless sacrifice—the Eucharist. "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish" (*1 Pt 1:18-19*).

443 Christ offers himself to us so that we in turn would offer ourselves to him. Christ offers himself as Gift: "Take, eat ... Drink of it, all of you" To these words we respond, offering the gifts and ourselves: "We offer to you, yours of your own" We do this because of all that he has done for us. At the Divine Liturgy we perform the memorial of Christ's offering of himself as gift, in order to respond with our gift-offering. Christ's offering is eternal and ever-present, while we need to ever renew and deepen our gift-offering.

444 At the Divine Liturgy we pray: "Enable us to offer you gifts and spiritual sacrifices ... so that our sacrifice may be acceptable to you."³³⁹ Saint Paul speaks of this sacrifice when he teaches us: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [rational] worship" (*Rom 12:1; see 1 Pt 2:5*). Our sacrifice consists in this total offering. In the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, we declare this verbally; in Communion we fulfil it by consuming the Gifts; and after the Liturgy we actualize it in our daily lives.

5) *Holy Communion*

445 Holy Communion crowns the participation of the Christian in the Divine Liturgy. Our Lord said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (*Jn 6:53*). The Holy Fathers emphasized the need to receive Communion at the Liturgy: "Tell me, suppose anyone were invited to a feast, and were to wash his

³³⁹ Liturgicon, the Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father John Chrysostom, Prayer of the Litany for the Gifts.