

January 21, 2023

## The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom



Ascension and Pentecost. Altar Apse, Church of Saint Marina, Thisseio, Athens

We are already in the middle of the reality to which we are called by the Lord. The Incarnation, the Ascension, and the promise of return is meant to reorient our minds and hearts. Christ directs us to think from the perspective of the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than from the perspective of history or the future in time.

Divine worship is both the response which is built into the tradition of Scripture and also a directive given by Christ. This activity of the body of Christ, those who have put on Christ and as such have moved into the space of His glory, is meant to help us set out own priorities as individuals, as families, as parishes, and as societies.

This seems to be a big ask from God. The witness of the Church reveals that being Christian can both inspire people and also make people really frustrated. Those who have been steadfast in their defense of the life of the Church, and often specifically their defense of and confirmation of the developed language of the Church regarding the person of Christ, are often met internally and externally with looks of confusion.

His deified body is what He presented to the disciples and His deified body is what the disciples presented to the early Church. When we understand that this is the Christ, then we can understand why He instructs us to partake of Him in the formalized context of the Divine Liturgy. We participate in the mystery of His Person through baptism and through the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Saint John of Damascus summarizes the substance of this mystery by saying, “Further, by the word “Christ” we understand the name of the subsistence, not in the sense of one kind, but as signifying the existence of two natures.” This matters for us because His two natures were unified through conception in the womb of Mary, and because of this ineffable union, human nature is sanctified by the Divine Son. Saint John, in order to make the point that something significant and salvific occurred in this union, that through this new and unprecedented relationship of Divinity with human nature, continues, “For in His own person He anointed Himself; as God anointing His body with His own divinity, and as Man being anointed.” Saint John is presenting again, in time, both the work of salvation that occurs

at the Incarnation, and that this work in His Person is what constitutes the message of the Gospel.

Salvation is participatory and hence the call for the body of Christ to come together for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, the central act of which is the reception of the Eucharist. Our own participation in The Divine Liturgy confirms our existence in Christ, by Divine grace, and places us in the stream of Divine glory which will be fully revealed upon the return of Christ. Therefore, from now, we can begin to experience the glory of the God, and thus have our lives blessed by God.

This is the main idea on which the meaning of the life of Christ turns, and this is the main idea which we face, and of which we partake, during the celebration of The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. This is also why we continue to make available The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, through the translation of the Very Rev. Leonidas Contos.

May we all continue to heed the call of the Shepherd and understand how to do this through our participation in the life of the Church and a continued study of the Fathers.

In Christ,

Rev. Peter Salmas  
Church of the Holy Cross