

The Master's Hospitality

The Master's Hospitality is the banquet of our Lord, the Divine Liturgy, where we receive the Eucharist and connect our lives with one another and the Lord. This act of communion is given to us by our Savior on the very night that he died. Once again, we connect this event from Holy Week to the feast of our Lord's Birth. During the pre-feast, December 22, at the evening service of compline we sing the same canon songs that we do on Holy Thursday. We understand that the Nativity is the beginning of our journey with Christ. We share in the hospitality of the Holy Family this season of the birth, but we see the shadow of the hospitality to come. We know that intimate communion with one another and our Lord is on the horizon.

The incarnation is an icon of communion, or rather, communion is the continuation of the incarnation. In Mary, Christ becomes flesh, He is both fully God and fully man. The two natures are in one person. In the Eucharist we have the continuation of this marvelous mystery. The bread and wine are real bread and wine. In the consecration they remain fully bread and wine, but they also become the Divine Body and Blood of our Lord. Every Divine Liturgy we participate in an aspect of the incarnation. The human elements fuse with the Divine by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

When we partake the Eucharist we partake of the Divine nature. We unite ourselves to all Christians, past and present, and with the Lord himself. Christ became man so that we might become God. He demonstrates that human and divine natures can co-exist in a single person. We are called to share in that same Divine Nature and become Deified. We can accomplish this through living the example of Christ and joining that example to the Eucharist. The Eucharist allows us to experience the connection to all the community of faith. The Eucharist connects this community in the same manner that the community of the Trinity remains a single God.

“He who is the Fashioner of all, begotten of the Father before all ages, comes to be born of the Virgin. He is the Wisdom, Word, and Power of God. We magnify Him as God and Man, the Lord, Brought forth in two natures yet being one Person. I am revealed as a man in essence and not imagination, says the Lord; by this communion human nature is united to Me and made godlike. Know that I am Your Savior, who proceeds from the Virgin's womb, whom blessing in faith we magnify in song.”

Compline December 22

Steve Puluka

Phillipian Fast

The Winter Pascha

Week Three



“When the Creator saw the one whom He had created with his own hands perishing, He lowered the heavens and came down; He took upon himself human nature from the most holy and pure Virgin, truly becoming flesh; for this reason, we glorify Him.”

Salvation History

On the two Sundays prior to the Nativity of Christ we remember all of salvation history. On the first Sunday, we recall all the faithful ones who God called and promised salvation. Next we remember the specific family line where Jesus takes his place in humanity. God created humanity as a reflection of the Divine nature. By disobedience in the Fall Adam and Eve rejected God's plan and followed their own way. But even as they were expelled from paradise God began reached out to restore our fallen nature.

Little by little over the centuries God touched individuals and called them to witness the

“Be fully reassured, my husband, by the words of your wife; for you will not find me again giving you bitter advice. The ancient things have passed away, and Christ, the son of Mary, brings to light all things new. Catch the scent of this fresh smell, and at once burst into new life. Stand erect like an ear of corn, for spring has overtaken you. Escaping from the burning heat where you were, come, follow me to Mary and with me cling to her immaculate feet, and she will at once be moved to pity, Mary, full of grace”

Eve in Romanos’

greatness of God’s plan. God witnessed the great faith of Abraham and the patriarchs. They experienced the power of God and obeyed his instructions. Moses gave the people the law, a concrete expression of God’s will. Living as a nation the people had difficulty trusting in the Lord rather than the trappings of earthly power.

But all the while, God continued to teach the people by chastising and rewarding them. Finally, in the fullness of time, God brought us back to paradise. God became flesh, born of a woman, born under the law to free us from the law and return us to paradise. Adam and Eve led us out of paradise, Christ and Mary lead us back. Christ is the new Adam and Mary the new Eve. Together they show us how to return to paradise.

Eve dispenses the words of transgression, inviting Adam to the forbidden tree. Mary points to the way of life, “Do whatever he tells you.” Eve accepts Satan’s invitation while Mary accepts the annunciation of Gabriel. Eve moves from paradise to toil. Mary comes from death to life.

Adam succumbs to temptation while Christ rejects the devil and all his ways. Adam leads us to toil and strife while Christ gives us peace and life. Adam makes a new law for himself. Christ embodies and fulfills the very law of God himself.

The second Nativity Kontakia of Romanos has Adam and Eve expounding on the role of Mary in salvation. They acknowledge their error and rejoice in the new life that Christ brings to the human race through Mary. Even at this moment of Christ’s birth in winter, they have an eye on the springtime Pascha that is to come. Christ restores the tree of life by his incarnation and resurrection.

“You are truly most blessed, O virgin Mother of God. Through the One who was incarnate of you, Hades was chained, Adam revived, the curse wiped out, Eve set free, Death put to death, and we ourselves were brought back to life. That is why we cry out in praise: blessed are You, O Christ our God, who finds in this your good pleasure. Glory to You!”

Sunday of the Holy Fathers Matins at the Praises

“Bethlehem, make ready, for Eden has been opened for all. Ephratha, be alert, for the Tree of Life has blossomed forth from the Virgin in a cave. Her womb has become a spiritual paradise wherein the Divine Fruit was planted, and if we eat of it we shall live and not die like Adam. Christ is coming forth to bring back life the likeness that had been lost in the beginning.”

Troparion of Preparation

Tree Of Life

Mary’s womb is the mystical garden in which the tree of life is planted. At the feast of the Nativity we plant the seed that will grow into the cross. The cross that will bring us from death to life. Adam and Eve separate us from the tree of life in the garden. Mary brings the new tree of life, Christ, to us.

The patristic authors equated the tree of life, guarded by the angels, with the cross of Christ, open to us all. By eating the fruit of a tree we were expelled from paradise, by partaking of the tree of the cross we regain what was lost. At the Nativity of Christ we begin the long road back to paradise. The tree is planted in Bethlehem, which will mature and bear fruit some thirty years later in Jerusalem.

In contemplating the mystery of the cross, patristic literature saw the hints of the new tree of life in scripture. Moses held a wooden staff during the Exodus that gave life to the people. The staff healed those sick with snake bites. The staff parted the Red Sea for the people to cross. The staff gave victory to the people over their enemies. As long as Moses held the staff aloft with his arms outstretched, Israel won the day. But if his arms lowered their enemies would start to win. Note the position of the arms forms the cross.

Here we see another strong connection between the Nativity and the great feast of Pascha. The incarnation and the resurrection are intertwined at all levels by these images. The birth and the death of Christ are one and the same mystery, in a sense. As Mary brings a new life into the world, we contemplate the NEW LIFE that God bestows on us by this miracle of the incarnation. By a tree sin comes into the world, by the incarnation a tree of life is planted.

“I recognize, wife, the spring, and I sense the luxury which we enjoyed in the past; for indeed I see a new, another paradise, the virgin, bearing in her arms the tree of life itself, which once the Cherubim kept sacred, kept me from touching. And I, watching the untouched tree grow, am aware, wife, of a new breath-bringing life to me, who was formerly dust and lifeless clay, making me come alive. And now, strengthened by this fragrance, I advance to her who causes the fruit of our life to grow, Mary, full of grace.”

Adam Romanos’ Kontakia