

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

‘TO THE SINNER, everything is a difficulty.’

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS, + 368 A.D.

‘WHERE GOD HAS PLACED YOU, there remain. It is not by change of place that you will impose quietness on your heart, but by watching incessantly over its movements.’

VENERABLE EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN, + 379 A.D.

‘HE WHO REJOICES in another’s fall, rejoices in the devil’s victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear that a man perishes, for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice.’

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

‘GOD NEVER DESERTS a man, unless first He is deserted by that man.’

SAINT CÆSARIUS OF ARLES, + 542 A.D.

‘YOU MUST KNOW that sin can be committed in three ways. It is done either in ignorance, in weakness, or of set purpose. And certainly the sin committed in weakness is more grave than that done in ignorance; but that done of set purpose is much more grave than that done in weakness.’

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, POPE OF ROME, + 604 A.D.

THE LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

Introduction

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is only served on weekdays of Great Lent. The term 'Presanctified' refers to the fact that bread and wine are not consecrated in this Liturgy; Holy Communion is distributed from a Lamb consecrated at the Liturgy on the preceding Sunday. Thus, on a typical Sunday in Great Lent, three Lambs are consecrated in the Sunday Liturgy: one for the Sunday, and one for each of the Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesday and Friday.

The Lamb that is to be consecrated for the Presanctified Liturgy is cut out during the Service of Preparation on the preceding Sunday, and placed on the diskos in the normal manner. After the clergy have taken Holy Communion, the Lamb is prepared for the Presanctified Liturgy by either dipping the underside of the consecrated Lamb into the chalice or by carefully spooning the Blood of Christ onto the Lamb; the Lamb is then placed upside down in the artophorion so that the Blood of Christ does not come into contact with it.

The Liturgies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil are not used on weekdays during Great Lent because the Church regards these as too festive for this fasting period. Unlike these two Liturgies, which as we have seen, are almost indistinguishable to a casual observer, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is very different in structure.

The Presanctified Liturgy is commonly attributed to St. Gregory the Great, the Pope of Rome, but this attribution is probably honorific due to St. Gregory's support for the principle of a special lenten weekday Liturgy in Rome during his tenure.

The Presanctified Liturgy is served on Wednesdays and Fridays, and on other weekdays of Great Lent when there is a

special commemorated saint; in larger monasteries, the Liturgy is served on every weekday of Great Lent and on the first three days of Great Week.

STRUCTURE OF THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is integrated into Vespers, so ideally it should be held in the afternoon and not in the morning. Regardless of the timing of the Liturgy, those wishing to take Holy Communion should have fasted from midnight and read the prayers of preparation.

Ninth Hour, Typica, Psalm 103

The service begins with the Ninth Hour and Typica read according to the Lenten order. During the Typica, at the beginning of the Beatitudes, the curtain is opened; at this point, the clergy leave the altar through the north door and begin the prayers said by the clergy before the Liturgy.

In the Presanctified Liturgy, the normal prayers for vesting are not read, but the priest simply makes the sign of the Cross over each vestment and says ‘Let us pray to the Lord’ as he puts it on.

The priest, now fully vested in sticharion and phelonion, ends the Typica with the usual dismissal. He then re-enters the altar to begin the Presanctified Liturgy with the blessing: ‘Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.’ As he says this, the priest make the sign of the Cross with the Gospel Book.

The choir answers ‘Amen’ and then begins Vespers with ‘O Come let us worship...’ and Psalm 103.

Kathisma Reading

After the Psalm, the deacon intones the Litany of Peace and then the appointed kathisma is read with a Little Litany between each stasis. During Great Lent, with the exception of the fifth week, the eighteenth kathisma is read on every weekday Vespers.

