

## The Ancient Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts

During our progress through Great and Holy Lent, we need our spiritual sustenance to make it through the long and arduous journey. We have our Lenten Lectures on Wednesdays for instruction and edification, Salutations Services to the Holy *Theotokos* on Friday evenings for her fervent prayers and intercessions, and we have many charitable ministries, and thus, we live our Faith in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, a holy trident given to us by our Church to enter the arena and fight the good, spiritual fight. However, we cannot do all these good things without God's Grace, His Help, and His Strength.

For this reason, in its wisdom, our Orthodox Church offers us Holy Communion on Wednesdays and Fridays throughout Great Lent. Wednesdays and Fridays are very solemn and penitential, commemorating respectively our Lord's Betrayal and Crucifixion for our eternal salvation. Of course, to celebrate a Divine Liturgy on weekdays would not be commensurate with the solemn and penitential spirit and tenor of Great and Holy Lent, but the Church, in its wisdom and compassion, recognizes that we need His Heavenly Manna during these wilderness days of penitence, and we cannot wait until Saturday or Sunday for Holy Communion.

The Wednesday nourishment helps to get us over the hump of the midway point of the week, and the Friday sustenance prepares us for the eminent joy of the Lord's Day, the Day of His Glorious and Triumphant Resurrection accomplished of our eternal salvation.

Thus, the Church offers us the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. This is an ancient service that goes back to the time of Saint Gregory the Great in the late sixth century (†604 A.D.). The lights are dim, the church is decorated in deep purple and black colors, and the hymns and prayers are solemn, thereby reminding us of this period of penitence, preparation, and anticipation for the Great Feast of Pascha and the Resurrectional Light of Christ.

Sacred Scripture is read, and we walk through the Old Testament to see the Church prefigured in the Old Israel and Christ veiled in the Psalms and Prophecies. Our Byzantine Orthodox Hymns explain the theology of our Faith in captivating metaphor and profound symbolism, and most of all, we are offered the Body and Blood of Christ to taste and see that He is Good and experience that He is the Light that illumines all, even in this dark and fallen world.

Even though this Liturgy is not celebratory, and there is no consecration of the Gifts, we are still able to partake of Holy Communion because the Lamb was consecrated at the Divine Liturgy on the previous Sunday where all Hosts were elevated and consecrated together as one, and the one or two Lambs for the week's Pre-Sanctified Liturgies were thus "Pre-Sanctified" and reverently preserved--hence, the term "Pre-Sanctified."

The central moment of this ancient Liturgy is when the Priest, fully covered so you can not see his face, translates the Gifts from the Oblation table to the Altar Table, utilizing the shortest and simplest route, unaccompanied by hymn our prayer. As the Priest enters, he holds the Lamb on the disk up highest, covering his face from the congregation, and the Faithful in Christ kneel, for unlike the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, the Lamb is Consecrated, and so Christ is Present, making His Entrance at that sacred and solemn moment.

Ancient, replete with ritual, solemn and inspiring, this is yet another among many of our great Traditions that we as Orthodox Christians uniquely have among all other denominations.

Join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. for the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy and Lenten Lectures in prayer, worship, and fellowship.

We offer the Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy on Wednesday evenings for sustenance and spiritual momentum in solemn prayer and proper preparation for our celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Praying for your continued spiritual progress and growth in the transforming Knowledge and Power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I humbly, and asking for your forgiveness, remain,

†*Father Jim*

**OUR PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY WILL BE HELD IN OUR SAINTS  
CONSTANTINE AND HELEN CHAPEL AT 6:00 PM FOLLOWED BY A  
LENTEN MEAL AND LENTEN TOPIC IN OUR MATHEOS HALL.  
March 16<sup>th</sup> – April 20<sup>th</sup> 2016**

PLEASE PRAY FOR US AS WE CONTINUE TO LEARN AND MAKE OUR  
ADJUSTMENTS DUE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FIRE.

**THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU**

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