

Comments on the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts



“Enable us O good One, to fight the good fight; to accomplish the course of the fast; to preserve inviolate the faith; to crush under foot the heads of invisible serpents; to be accounted victors over sin; and, uncondemned, to attain unto and adore Thy holy resurrection.”

This passage from the Prayer Behind the Amvon of the divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, gives voice to the most fervent longings of believers during the Great Lent, “The springtime of souls.” This holy season, during which we make our annual pilgrimage to the glorious Pascha, is a time of intense spiritual struggle which requires strength of body and soul from the pilgrim.

Because the Church, as a loving mother, wishes to feed her children so that they can valiantly fight the good fight, she has ordained that on certain non-liturgical days of the Great Lent (most notably Wednesday and Fridays) the “heavenly bread and the cup of life” be offered to the faithful. This is done in a service of Communion following Vespers, which is known as the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and which is attributed to our Father among the saints Gregory the Dialogist, a seventh century pope of Rome”.

In order to participate in the joy of the resurrection, we must first carry our cross to Golgotha. This is the definition of our Lenten struggle and the goal of our Lenten discipline of praying, fasting and almsgiving. Just as Jesus Christ Simon of Cyrene to help carry His cross when He became exhausted on the road to Golgotha, so too we need a Simon of Cyrene to help us bear our cross. Rejoice and be glad! For it is the Son of God Himself who comes as our Simon of Cyrene, offering not only to help us carry our cross but also to refresh and strengthen us with His very Body and Blood. Hence the great importance of celebrating and communicating in the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

~Priest (now Bishop) Basil Essey