

2024-03-30 - Let us Attend

Copy and Shadow of the Heavenly Things

- "There are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:4-5)
- "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." (Isaiah 6:1-7)
- Isaiah said "For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" - who is he referring to? He is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we know this because St John in his gospel quotes from Isaiah chapter 6 and then he says: "These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him" (John 12:41)
- What does this scene remind us of? The Divine Liturgy! But really, it is the opposite - when we stand in the Divine Liturgy, we should be reminded of this scene. When we stand in the Divine Liturgy, we should recognize and realize that we are standing in the throneroom of God
- "Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven" - Agpeya Part 6
 - We are surrounded by the cloud of saints in the iconography
 - We see incense
 - We see the vestments of the priest and deacons
 - We see the Body of the Lord Christ and His Blood in the Chalice
 - We see candles
 - All of these things are there to help us realize our presence in the throne room of God
- The chorus of the deacons should represent the angels that are in heaven
 - God is calling us to synchronize with the angels in heaven and to join their choir
 - So what is it that these angels are doing? What is it that we are expected to do? We have a hint!
 - "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3) - when do we say this in the liturgy? (The Sanctus)

- Now going from the Sanctus let's move backwards a little... the Sanctus is the last part of the Preface of the Liturgy. The beginning of the Anaphora.
- Anaphora
 - "O You, THE BEING, Master, Lord, God of Truth, being before the ages and reigning forever; who dwells in the highest and looks upon the lowly; who has created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is therein; the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, by whom You have created all things, visible and invisible; who is seated upon the throne of His glory; and who is worshipped by all the holy powers."
 - You who are seated stand
 - "Before whom stand the angels, the archangels, the principalities, the thrones, the dominions, and the powers."
 - Look toward the East
 - "You are He around whom stand the cherubim full of eyes, and the seraphim with six wings, praising continuously, without ceasing, saying -"
 - Let us attend
 - "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory."
- The Liturgy is preparing us for this moment when we chant "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Your holy glory." - this is the praise of the Seraphim. This is what they say when they are around the throne of God. The Church is telling us to be prepared to enter the Throne Room of God with three commands: You who are seated stand, Look towards the East, Let us attend.
- Before we talk about them, one more point: they are actually said TWICE!
 - At the end of "Greet one another... Offer in order. Stand with trembling. Look toward the East. Let us attend."

You who are seated stand

- In Isaiah 6, we read that the Seraphim were standing
- The concept of standing to pray is very important
 - "And whenever you stand praying..." (Mark 11:25)
 - "Forasmuch as there are certain persons who kneel on the Lord's Day and in the days of Pentecost, therefore, to the intent that all things may be uniformly observed everywhere, it seems good to the holy Synod that prayer be made to God standing" (Council of Nicaea Canon 20)
 - "We pray standing, on the first day of the week, but we do not all know the reason. On the day of *anastasin* we remind ourselves of the grace given to us by standing at prayer, not only because we rose with Christ, and are bound to "seek those things which are above," but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age which we expect, wherefore, though it is the beginning of days, it is not called by Moses first, but one. For he says: "There was evening, and there was morning, one day," as though the same day often recurred. Now "one" and "eighth" are the same, in itself distinctly indicating that really "one" and "eight" of which the Psalmist makes mention in certain titles of the Psalms, the state which follows after this present time, the day which knows no waning or eventide, and no successor, that age which ends not or grows old. Of necessity, then, the church teaches her own foster children to offer their prayers on that day standing, to the end that through

continual reminder of the endless life we may not neglect to make provision for our removal from there." (St Basil - On the Holy Spirit Ch. 27)

- How do we stand?
- In the Liturgy of St Gregory:
 - Let us stand well
 - Let us stand reverently
 - Let us stand earnestly
 - Let us stand in peace
 - Let us stand in the fear of God, trembling and stunned
- So the purpose is not simply to be standing, but to stand well, reverently, earnestly, in peace, in the fear of God. The message is to put away laziness and focus on prayer - physical laziness and spiritual laziness.
- Sometimes when you see one of the elders sitting simply because the flesh is weak. But yet when he sits, it is well, with reverence, with earnest, in peace, and in the fear of God.
 - Compare it with how we sit sometimes, we are sitting as if to relax. Coming to the liturgy, in the presence of God, and just lounging on the pew. It is completely inappropriate!

Look towards the East

- Why do we look towards the East?
 - St Basil (On the Holy Spirit Ch. 27) says: "We all look to the East at our prayers, but few of us know that we are seeking our own old country, Paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East."
 - "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." (Genesis 2:8)
 - "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matthew 24:27)
 - "Our holy place is the paradise - our original place. And since it was in the East, we are told to face the East when we pray." (St Ephrem the Syrian)
- Liturgically, the East is wherever the altar is. In a church that is being built, it is always built with the altar facing the East. But sometimes, when a church is bought or temporary or something, it might not work to make it in the East... so in that case, the East is wherever the altar is.
- In the long "Greet one another"
 - O clergy and all the people, with prayer and thanksgiving, with dignity and silence, raise your eyes toward the East: to see the Altar, and the Body and Blood of Immanuel our God placed upon it.
- Again, we see that looking in a specific direction by itself is NOT the main point. But to focus our eyes on the Altar, and on the Body and Blood of Christ. To look with dignity and silence. To look with prayer and thanksgiving.
- Looking towards the East helps deacons avoid distractions
 - Sometimes we are distracted by the deacons on the other side
 - Sometimes we are distracted by the deacons next to us
 - Sometimes we are distracted by the people in the congregation

- Sometimes we distract the deacons on the other side, or next to us, or we distract the people in the congregation

Let us attend

- The command of "Let us attend" means let us be attentive. Let us focus. Let us put our phone away and be attentive to the Liturgy.
- It is a preparation for singing the heavenly hymn of the Seraphim and attending with them around the Throne of God.

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