



Homily on Holy Cross Sunday



And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

Marc VIII,34-IX,1

The evangelist of Mark's Gospel places these words, '... whosoever will save his life shall lose it ...' (Mk 8,35) after a passage where Jesus rebukes Peter, saying: 'Get thee behind me, Satan ...' (Mk 8,33). Peter cannot accept that Jesus will be rejected by the elders, killed and rise again; and there is a tradition that Mark's Gospel is based on the preaching of Peter.

It is the experience of the cross and resurrection of Jesus – and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – that leads the Apostles to reflect on what Jesus had been telling them, and they realized that they were being called to be witnesses – martyrs – who through their own lives, and deaths, would testify to the new life that is in Jesus.

In the Jewish scriptures the 'soul' is the body alive, and the words 'soul' and 'life' are virtually interchangeable. When the evangelist writes, '... what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ...' (Mk 8,37) he is making use of an allegory that pictures a man trading himself – but, for what? Any human life is unique and precious, but Jesus is asking us to trade with our lives - to give our old lives in exchange for a new life in him.

The new life that is in Jesus is the new life of the kingdom of God, and it is already amongst us, and is in us. The kingdom of God has come with power: it has come through the life, death,

resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and has been sealed to the Church in the gift of the Holy Spirit. As baptized believers, we are amongst those, '... who shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God ...' (Mk 9,1).

Mark's Gospel begins with John the Baptist, and the baptism of Jesus, after which, '... the Spirit drives him into the wilderness ...' (Mk 1,12) and then Jesus comes into Galilee saying, '... the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel ...' (Mk 1,15). We are being called to repent: to refocus our hearts on the Living Word of God - that is, Jesus. Every Liturgy is an act of remembrance – anamnesis – of that Living Word of God: this is not simply an act of historical memory, but rather an encounter with a spiritual reality, by means of historical elements, such as the scriptures, the chant, the ikons et al.

The Church is the community of faith that has been called to partake of the new life that is in Jesus, and that has entered the world through him. Every Liturgy is an immersion into the Spirit, and as baptized believers we are called to eat and drink with the risen and glorified Jesus in his kingdom.

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write and venerate the icon, then the incarnation does not exist.” Father John reminded us that the “true faith » is based primarily on the divine-humanity of Christ, an assertion which, throughout the first millennium, led to tensions, violence and convictions for heresy, which required precisely the holding of the Council of Nicaea, which remains fragile in our current social environment. After observing that it is our responsibility as Orthodox to be attentive to the question of Nathanael in the Gospel of the day (“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”), Father John was very pleased that the celebration was held at the very moment that the Primates of the Orthodox Churches were gathered in synaxis at tPhanar. To conclude, he suggested that it was our responsibility to be witnesses that can say, as Philip said to Nathanael, “Come and see.”

At the end of the liturgy the traditional Procession of Holy Icons was held according to the rite of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Indeed, the Orthodox church was celebrating a very important feast, that of March 11, 843, when the “restoration of icons” was established, after more than a century of theological discussions dominated by the iconoclast heresy.

The solemn procession of the clergy and the faithful, bearing icons, takes place within the church, with stops at the four arms of the cross, during which time sentences are pronounced against heresy and the fundamental dogma of the two natures of Christ, which makes the icon possible, is affirmed. The whole is crowned by the proclamation of the Creed, which manifests the unity of all Orthodox faith.

Veneration of the Holy Crown of Thorns

Mentioned as early as the 5th century by the pilgrims of Jerusalem, the Holy Crown of Thorns was transferred to Constantinople at the end of the 10th century where it was conserved with the relics of the Passion, at the Imperial Palace. King Louis IX of France, later to be Saint Louis, acquired it in 1239, constructing in its honour the Holy Chapel where it was kept in 1248. After the French Revolution, it was preserved at the National Library (la Bibliothèque nationale) until 1804, when Napoleon I gave it to the Archdiocese of Paris that assigned it to the treasury of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. On Friday, March 21, 2014, Bishop Job of Telmessos attended the Mass of Christ the Redeemer celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal André Vint-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, at the Holy Chapel in the presence of the Crown of Thorns and the holy relics of the Passion, for the 800th anniversary of the birth and baptism of St. Louis.



On Friday, March 28th, he participated in the veneration of the Holy Crown of Thorns in the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, attended by many clerics and faithful of the Exarchate. Songs during the veneration were interpreted by the choir of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral.

ECUMENICAL MOMENT

Duly invited at archbishop's Job of Telmessos first visit at Liège parish (ss Alexander Nevsky and Seraphim of Sarov), it truly was a particularly strong ecumenical moment we experienced as members of the « Concertation des Eglises chrétiennes de la Province de Liège » that very morning. (Consultation of Christian churches of the Province of Liege)

Strange, hold it ... I have written « ecumenical » though it had been a « divine liturgy » fully experienced according to the orthodox rite. Look for the error ! Usually I feel much more « chilly » using the word « ecumenical » as, for instance, we are asked to attend a service celebrated according to the rite of the welcoming church. And though ...

How to render the intensity of this moment experienced in brotherhood ? Actually thanks to a translation of the liturgy from Slavonic to French - and the judicious explanations refined by our brother father deacon Luc Mahiels (roman catholic)- the other members of the consultation and myself were invited to the whole depth and richness of this cultus event. How can I also restate that heart-rending feeling at the very instant of the holy communion, which generally is felt as an experience of exclusion (due to the aspects that separate us still inside the body of Christ), we got associated in spite of all through the sharing of blessed bread and wine (by the archbishop, though not consecrated).

For the (presbyterian) protestant I am I duly shared a true moment of the Lord's supper where, partaking the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual way, I at the same time bound and in spiritually in communion with my orthodox brothers and sisters who took communion at the same body and blood through the means of the consecrated species. This way, with lots of delicacy, this time being which could have revealed itself as being an instant of exclusion transfigured itself into an inclusive one. A great ecumenical event thus ! Although at the same time so many liturgical aspects did not miss to trouble or even hurt my protestant sensitivity, as for instance the decorum, the many kissing of the bishop's hands or the crosses and other instruments of ceremony, the -important- place of « holy icons », of incense ... It clearly is an understatement these are rather foreign and strange aspects in regard of my spiritual universe as my liturgical one ... But is not it precisely by discovering with full respect due to a « different » way of worshipping the same Lord and Saviour of the world that our entire ecumenical consistency and sincerity this way duly are challenged ? This why thinking back to this liturgical office as to the following « agape » meal, I do not hesitate to maintain : that morning we truly were 'united by the same spirit and in oneness of thought (I Co 1 : 10b)' for God's sole glory !

And for this nice moment praised and glorified be the Church's Master, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pasteur Vincent Tonnon



THE SKETE OF OUR LADY OF KAZAN in Moisenay (France)

ON MARCH 8TH ARCHBISHOP JOB VISITED THE SKETE OF OUR LADY OF KAZAN. DURING HIS VISIT HE INSISTED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING ALIVE THE MONASTIC LIFE THERE.

“Thanks to the presence of Fr. Ambrose, who settled here a few years ago, this place has come back to its primary calling. Today, you are many here in the orthodox church of Moisenay, and I hope that your community will go on growing. I am happy to be here with you on this first week of the Lent. It is my first visit, but not my last one. I came here several years ago, when Hieromonk Ambrose took over his duty here. The place looked miserable. Seeing all that has been done, I can but congratulate you. The monastery is coming back to life, and I hope that soon we may greet here other monks” Archbishop Job declared.



The church with the tomb of Father Euthyme, who built it with this own hands in the 40's, and the frescoes painted by Monk Gregory (Krug), is both simple and magnificent.

TODAY

Hieromonk Ambrose (Nicoviotis) has been living in the hermitage of Our Lady of Kazan since 2005, celebrating Liturgy. He has a farming education; he also graduated from the Orthodox Theology Saint-Serge Institute in Paris and the Orthodox Saint-Vladimir Seminary in New-York. Thanks to his efforts, the hermitage has now a community, small but close-knit.

A farm has also been created inside the hermitage. It perfectly fits with the traditional monastic life. Not only does Fr. Ambrose live on the products of his work, but also the parishioners are happy to take back home eggs and honey. There is even a she-ass, named Jerusalem, the favourite one young and grown-ups alike.



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Liturgy :
Sunday 10 am

A SHORT STORY OF MOISENAY

The wish of Metropolitan Eulogius, from the very start of the Diocese, was to establish a monastic community for women. Twice the project did not succeed. Metropolitan Eulogius looked for a place where the community, already including 4 nuns, could settle: Eudokia, who lived in the parish of rue Lourmel, her sister Dorothea, Theodosia who was living in Rozay-en-Brie, and Blandine. Metropolitan Eulogius wanted them to settle somewhere in Paris, and to live under the spiritual guidance of Fr Cyprian (Kern) who was teaching in the Saint-Serge Institute. But it appeared impossible to find a place in Paris and the hunt was extended around Paris. A farm was found in Moisenay-le-Grand. On September 17th, 1938, Mother Eudokia was named Superior of the community. Fr Euthymus, the priest of the old

people's home of the Asnières parish in Rozay-en-Brie, was assigned to Moisenay on October 17th, 1938. At the beginning things were materially very difficult. After the war, as Mother Eudokia and Mother Dorothea did not get on well together, and the Eliachevich family was offering their house in Bussy-en-Othe, Mothers Eudokia, Theodosia and Blandine left for Bussy; Mother Dorothea stayed in Moisenay which became a retirement home. After the war Fr. Euthymus built the church according to his own plans and his own iconographic composition. Fr Euthymus was an engineer; in the Saint-Serge Institute he was one of the few genuine disciples of Fr. Serge Boulgakov (together with Fr. Leonid Khrol). Mother Dorothea became a hegumen on March 24th, 1973. Fr. Euthymus

died on April 18th, 1976, Mother Dorothea – on November 24th, 1987. After Fr. Euthymus, Fr Nicholas Obolensky took over Moisenay, but he came only from time to time on holidays, or to take a rest. On site, from 1973 to 1983, there was Fr. Alexander Trofimov. He also served in the retirement home of Chelles (where he died on January 15th, 1998, after having been tonsured as Hieromonk Alexis). Following him, Fr. Peter Alderson (later Bishop Paul) came from time to time to celebrate in Moisenay. After Mother Dorothea died, Bishop Paul continued to celebrate in Moisenay occasionally, because he had promised her.

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