

Notes on the Epiclesis in the Anaphora of St. Basil and on the Chalice at the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

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I

The phrase “Making the change by thy Holy Spirit,” though integral to the Anaphora of St. John, is not a genuine part of the St. Basil text. It was imported into late mediaeval redactions of St. Basil’s Liturgy, but is not known in Greek manuscripts prior to the fifteenth century, nor in Russian printed texts (Moscow, 1602, 1633, 1640, 1651) that predate the Nikonian Reform in the mid-seventeenth century. And it was subsequently deleted from Greek service books beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, having been sharply criticized by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1749–1809).

In the epiclesis in St. John Chrysostom’s Anaphora, it is God the Father whom the priest supplicates to effect the change in the Gifts, though He is asked to do so through the operation of the Holy Spirit: “Send down thy Holy Spirit ... and make this bread ... making the change by thy Holy Spirit.” In that context, then, “making the change...” constitutes a dependent clause that amplifies and is consistent with the sense of the preceding prayer. In St. Basil, however, the priest petitions God the Father that the Holy Spirit Himself may come in order to “bless, hallow, and show” the Gifts to be Christ’s Body and Blood. Here it is the Holy Spirit who is spoken of as effecting the consecration (according to the Father’s good will), and the verbs used to express the act of consecration (bless, hallow, and show) differ from those in St. John (make, change), though the theological substance of both anaphoras is identical. Thus with respect both to noun and verb, “making the change by thy Holy Spirit” is inconsistent with the rhetorical sense of the prayer to which it had been appended. It is a *non sequitur*.

II

Greek service books have never prescribed a unique form of the Communion of the clergy at the Presanctified Liturgy, and neither did the Russian tradition prior to the mid-seventeenth century: the pre-Nikonian *sluzhebny* simply

instruct the clergy to receive Communion “according to the order of the Liturgy of St John”—“по послѣдованію службы Иоанновы” (*Sluzhebnik*, Moscow, 1651).

In 1646, however, Metropolitan Peter Mogila of Kiev published a *trebnik* with a revised order, and beginning in 1699 Russian *sluzhebники* were printed with an article entitled “On Some Corrections in the Celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy.” According to this article, since the words of consecration had not been pronounced over the chalice, the chalice remained unconsecrated or, as it was put, “sanctified but not transubstantiated.”

This understanding, however, introduces into Orthodox sacramental theology a scholastic approach at variance with the clear tradition of the Church evident throughout the first millennium and beyond. Even after the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when the practice of intincting the Lamb that would be reserved for later use at the Presanctified Liturgy was gradually introduced in Byzantium, it was still understood that “the Presanctified [Liturgy] is celebrated for the consecration of the holy chalice” (Patriarch Michael III, 1174). St. Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429) noted that at the Presanctified Liturgy “that which is in the chalice is consecrated not by the epiclesis of the Holy Spirit and the signing [over the chalice], but by participation and union with the life-giving Bread,” that is, by coming into contact with the sanctified Lamb (intincted with the holy Blood). If this were not so, it would be difficult to interpret the meaning and purpose of using the chalice at the Presanctified Liturgy at all.