

Summary of August 5

In our last class we covered the remainder of Chapter 15 of St. John's Gospel. We planned on also covering Chapter 16 but we went off on a long and enjoyable discussion of the Eastern Catholic Churches and the difference between "Churches" and "Rites." A summary of this is included below but first a summary of our last ECBS session.

We began under the heading: "The World's Hatred" in our Orthodox Study Bible text (15:18-19). We considered our Lord's words there and asked everyone's reaction to these. Based on these words of Jesus, should we be surprised if the world hates the Church? In reality we should be more surprised if the world loves the Church. Verse 15:20 relates to the Apostles and all Christians. Because Christianity is not esoteric (having secret teachings), our faith is meant to be lived and preached to the world (the world meaning those who reject God's truth) -even to those who may hate us.

Many of the gods of the pre-Christian pagan religions were just like the people who worshiped them: These gods murdered, committed fornication and adultery, etc. Only with the true God of Judaism & Christianity do we encounter a God Who is All-Holy. This has implications for those who follow and worship Him. God calls His people to: "be holy for I am holy." -Lev. 11:44-45, 1 Pt 1:16. Jesus Christ has chosen us and calls us out of the world to be His special people, His Church. If this often puts us at odds with the world, we should not be surprised because our Lord foretold this would happen.

When our Lord states: "If they kept My word, they will keep yours also," this reminds us that faithfulness to Christ means being faithful to His Church which preserves His word.

Verses 15:26-27 are another reference to the Monarchy of the Father -which means He is the "mone-arche" or the single source of the Holy Trinity. This relates to our Orthodox / Eastern Christian doctrine of the Economic & Immanent Trinity. The doctrine of the Economic Trinity helps explain how the All Holy Trinity comes to us in the world. The doctrine of the Immanent Trinity relates to how God is essentially.

Economically God sends His only-begotten Son into the world to save the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Son, in turn, sends the Holy Spirit into the world to be our Paraclete (Comforter, Counselor, Helper and Advocate). Jesus sent the Holy Spirit from the Father down upon the Church at Pentecost (He continues to send the Holy Spirit upon us at our reception of Holy Chrismation). Following Pentecost the Apostles would indeed bear witness to the entire world as our Lord said.

Essentially God the Father is the source of the Holy Trinity. The Son and Word of God is eternally begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father. Our Byzantine Tradition of reciting the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol of Faith (the so-called "Nicene Creed") in its original form (without the "and from the Son") is one of the important doctrines Eastern Christianity maintains within the universal Church. It underlines the fact that the Father is the "mone-arche," single-source or fountain-head of the Holy Trinity. This is taught by our Holy Church Fathers and reflected in our Lord's words in 15:26.

Next our discussion turned to the wonderful topic of the Eastern Catholic Churches. It was brought up that we as Catholics belong to Churches rather than to Rites. As our pastor, Fr. Joseph Repko, pointed out, this is stated in very clear language in the Church's contemporary documents and in the canons of both East and West.

A Church is a hierarchical grouping of faithful which forms a separate jurisdiction in communion with the other Catholic Churches. Rites are simply what we celebrate (i.e., our ritual). Sometimes many Churches can share the same Rite. For example Melkite Catholics, Romanian Catholics and Byzantine Catholics in America all share the Byzantine Rite but they belong to different Churches, each with its own distinct culture and even laws. In such a case of a shared Rite, the theological and canonical tradition would usually be very similar if not identical. In other cases where there is a significant difference in Liturgical Rite (e.g. between the Roman and the Byzantine), there typically is also a significant difference of emphases and expression of theological truths and canonical tradition.

While there are only 6 Rites identified in the Roman Canon Law and the Eastern Code of Canons, there are approximately 23 Churches which use these 6 Rites. Here is a list of the six Rites and an approximate list of the various Catholic Churches which use these rites.

- 1. The Antiochian Rite (West Syriac): The Syro-Antiochian, Maronite and Malankar Churches.**
- 2. The Chaldean Rite (East Syriac): The Chaldean and Malabar Churches.**
- 3. The Alexandrian Rite: The Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Churches.**
- 4. The Armenian Rite: The Armenian Church.**
- 5. The Constantinopolitan Rite (Byzantine): Greek, Melkite, Romanian, Macedonian, Croatian, Albanian, Italo-Albanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Belorussian, Bulgarian, Slovak, Hungarian, Ruthenian and American Byzantine Catholic Churches.**
- 6. The Roman Rite (Latin): The Roman Church**

***Note: Nicholas P. Nagrant has an excellent chart of the Catholic Church posted in the narthex of St. Nicholas Byzantine Catholic Church (and possibly available on-line).**

**Your brother,
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