



## HOLY THURSDAY

### The Sinless One Willingly Accepts It All

April 21

#### THE HYMN

##### Matins Service on Holy Thursday

*“He, whom Isaiah proclaimed to be the Lamb, comes to His voluntary slaughter. He gives His back to whips and His cheeks to blows. He turns not away His face from the shame of spitting. He is sentenced to a shameful death. The sinless One willingly accepts it all, so that He might grant to all the resurrection from the dead.”*

#### THE SERMON

##### The Sacrifice for Love

On Holy Thursday morning, our Church celebrates the foundation of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist by the Son and Word of God during the Mystical Supper with His disciples. Christ takes bread and wine in His hands. He blesses and distributes them to His disciples. He says to them: take, eat, this is My Body; drink of this, this is My Blood. Join yourselves with me and have eternal life. Those who eat of My Body and drink of My Blood remain united with Me, and I remain united to them. As often as you eat My Body and drink of My Blood, you are confessing My Sacrifice on the Cross and are proclaiming My Resurrection. The Divine Liturgy that we celebrate in our parishes today is the *genuine* extension and continuation of the Mystical Supper. Christ is calling us *today* and at every Divine Liturgy to sit at His table and enter into communion with Him.

Beloved in the Lord, we make offerings of bread and wine at every Divine Liturgy.

† Ὁ Ἀγιότιμος Ἐπίσκοπος Ἀμερῆς

†ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America



GREEK ORTHODOX  
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Christ comes and sacrifices Himself. He offers Himself for the forgiveness of *our* sins. For us to have eternal life. He offers us the opportunity to participate in this heavenly and awesome mystery because His love knows no bounds. Christ wants *all* of us to be saved. He desires for *all* of us to be united with Him. Christ longs for *all* of us to enter the Kingdom of God. And what is the Kingdom of God? It is His very embrace.

Just like a mother closely cuddles her child in her arms to communicate her love and affection, in the same way, God, who *is* love, wants to embrace us and be united with Him. Just like a child seeks out their mother's arms to feel love and security, let our hearts long for uniting ourselves with Him. When we come to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, let us completely surrender ourselves to His mercy, to His love. In the Holy Chalice, we live and confess the Cross and the Resurrection. Overwhelmed by the magnitude of His love for us and with sacred longing for Him, let us approach today to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion: "O Son of God, receive me today as a partaker of Your mystical supper."

On the evening of Holy Thursday, we experience the timeline of astonishing events of our Lord's arrest, condemnation, and Crucifixion. In the twelve Gospel passages we read today, we see and hear Christ agonizing, betrayed, arrested, abandoned by His disciples, imprisoned, mocked. He is hit, He is whipped, He is put on trial, He is made to carry a heavy cross, He is crucified and dies on the Cross. The lamb of God humbly bends to the will of God. The Son, in *complete* obedience to the Father, willingly sheds His blood in order to grant life to the world. He stretches out his hands on the Cross and embraces *all* of us. We are *all* received by the One who is without sin. Christ, as the new Adam, takes upon Himself the sin of the old Adam. He delivers us from the devastation of death, the curse of the law, and the reign of the evil one. The gates of Paradise are unlocked and are wide open. Christ grants us His Resurrection. For our part, He only asks that, every day of our life, we try to offer Him our sincere repentance, that we try to place our trust in His will, and that we try to show Him and each other our unwavering love.

As the choir chants in the service of Matins for Holy Thursday, "*Lord, You were struck on behalf of the human race and were not enraged. Free our life from corruption and save us.*"