

Mystagogical Catechesis (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



1 COR. xi. 23. *I received from the Lord that which also I handed on to you, how that the Lord Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread, etc.*



1. The teaching of the Blessed Paul is in itself sufficient to give you full assurance concerning those Divine Mysteries, having been deemed worthy of which you become of the same body and blood as Christ. For you have just heard him say distinctly, that, on the night when He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread, and when He had given thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat, this is My Body"; and having taken the cup and given thanks, He said: "Take, drink, this is My Blood". Since He Himself declared and said of the Bread, "This is My Body", who then will dare to doubt any longer? And since He Himself affirmed and said, "This is My Blood", who will ever have reservations, saying, that

it is not His blood?

2. At Cana in Galilee, He once turned the water into wine, somewhat akin to blood, so is it hard to believe that He should have turned wine into blood? Having been invited to a corporeal marriage, He miraculously performed that wonder; and, shall He not even more be acknowledged to have bestowed the enjoyment of His Body and Blood on the children of the bride-chamber?

3. So let us partake [of them] with full assurance as being the Body and Blood of Christ: for His Body is given to you in the form of Bread, and His Blood is given in the form of Wine; so that by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, you may be made of the same body and the same blood as Him. Because it is in this way that we come to bear Christ in us, because His Body and Blood are distributed throughout our entirety; thus it is that, according to the blessed Peter, we become partakers of the divine nature.

4. Once, when talking with the Jews, Christ said: "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no life in you". Not having taken His saying in a spiritual sense, they were offended, and left, supposing that He was inviting them to eat [human] flesh.

5. In the Old Testament, too, there was special bread, which was called the show-bread, but this, as it belonged to the Old Testament, has come to an end. In the New Testament, however, there is the Bread of heaven, and the Cup of salvation, sanctifying both soul and body; for as the Bread corresponds to our body, so the Word is appropriate to our soul.

6. Do not therefore regard the Bread and the Wine as mere elements, because, according to the Lord's own declaration, they are the Body and Blood of Christ. Even if your senses suggest the former, let faith confirm it for you. Do not judge simply by the taste, but, without misgivings, be fully assured by faith that you have been granted the Body and Blood of Christ.

7. The meaning of this is also explained for you by the blessed David when he says, "You have prepared a table before me in the presence of those who afflict me". What he is saying is in effect: "Before Your coming, the evil spirits prepared a table for men, polluted and defiled and full of devilish influence; but since Your coming, Lord, You yourself have prepared a table for me". When David says to God, "You have prepared a table before me", what else is he referring to but that mystical and spiritual Table which God has prepared for us in the teeth of the evil spirits, that is to say, in opposition and contrary to the evil spirits? And indeed this

is so true; because that table, which had in earlier times been prepared by the evil spirits, had communion with devils, but this Table has communion with God. "You have anointed my head with oil". He anointed your head with oil upon your forehead, for the seal which you have from God; that you may be made the engraving of the signet, Holiness toward God. "And your cup cheers me, like the strongest wine". Here you see that cup spoken of, the one which Jesus took in His hands, giving thanks, and saying: "This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins".

8. And Solomon also, hinting at this grace, says in Ecclesiastes: "Come, eat your bread with joy" (that is, the spiritual bread; Come here, he calls out with the invitation to salvation and blessing), "and drink your wine with a merry heart" (that is, the spiritual wine); "and let oil be poured out upon your head" (you see he alludes even to the sacrament of Chrismation); "and let your clothing be always white, for the Lord is well pleased with your works" (because before you came to Baptism, your works were vanity of vanities. But now, having discarded your old garments, and put on those which are spiritually white, you need to be continually robed in white. Of course we do not mean this literally, that you are always to wear white clothes, but that you must be dressed in that which is truly white and shining and spiritual, so that you may say, as does the blessed Isaiah, "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with a garment of salvation, and put a robe of gladness around me").

9. Having learned these things, and been fully assured that what appears to be bread is not bread- however it seems to the taste- but is actually the Body of Christ; and that the apparent wine is not wine even though it seems so to the taste, but is indeed the Blood of Christ; and that it was of this that David sang of old, saying: "And bread strengthens man's heart, to make his face shine with oil". Strengthen your heart, by partaking of the bread as something spiritual, and "make the face of your soul shine". And so, uncovered, that is with a pure conscience, may you reflect the glory of the Lord like a mirror, and proceed from glory to glory, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be honour, and might, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.