(Friday night)
“My Lord and my God, Personal Faith in Christ the Savior”

Christ is born for you and in you at the present moment. Christ died for you. Christ is risen for you and in you NOW.


Who is Christ?
Christians worship Christ as God
Christ was the son of David, born of the Virgin Mary, ate, drank, was truly crucified and truly rose from the dead. Everything is real- he is God and man.

Christ, though he is God, is also totally committed to us as a human (in solidarity).

Christ is theanthropos/Immanuel (God man and God in us). He is our creator and our brother.
He is beyond and in our midst. He expresses the nearness and the otherness of life eternal.

He is totally one with God the Father and totally one with us. He is 100% God and 100% man. This is the paradox of Christ.
God is great enough to humble himself.

How can a single person be both God and man simultaneously?
Christ incarnate is a mystery. He is God who loves us so much that he makes himself vulnerable; he puts on insecurity.

Why did he become human?
See the Creed: for us and for our salvation, he became man.

He became one of us to save us.

5 models of salvation:

1. Jesus presented as teacher
   Salvation = illumination
   (Christ as giver of light, dispersing ignorance)
   This view was popular in the 2nd century
   This view leaves out the dimension of sin

2. Sacrifice as Christ’s work
   Christ as Passover lamb
   The question is how to make this image come alive in the 21st century?
   Emphasizes the fact that Christ died for us (gave his life)

3. Christ as substitute
   The one who gives his life for our life
   He suffers; dies on our behalf
   In this case, salvation is the paying of ransom
   2 Cor. 5:21
Danger that this language used in isolation could make salvation seem too external (outside of us, over our heads)
We need to not just say Christ instead/for us, but Christ in us.
We are called to be associated with what he has done.
Language of substitution focuses too narrowly on the cross, while the resurrection and cross are an undivided action.

4. Christ as victor
   Orthodox paschal celebration (image that unites cross and resurrection)
   Cross = victory; resurrection = manifestation of that victory
   Victory of suffering love
   Shows that light is stronger than darkness; love is more powerful than hate

5. Salvation as sharing and exchange
   John 1:51
   Christ = bridge/mediator between God and man
   Image = sharing and exchange

These different images of salvation are to be used in unison; they are not mutually exclusive. They are not alternatives.

2 Cor. 8:9
The riches of Christ = divine glory
Poverty = our broken human condition

He returns to us the ability to share in divine nature.

Why?
2 Principles:
1. Only God can save (if Christ is to be our savior, he must be true God)
2. Divine salvation must reach the point of human need. (Only if Christ is fully human can we share in what Christ has done for us).

The unassumed is unhealed. Christ saves and heals us by taking up into himself our human nature. He saves us by becoming what we are.

If we make Christ less than God and less than human, we undermine the pattern and concept of salvation.

He became man that we might become God.

The most important element is love. Love without limits; without end.
1. God became man because He is a God of love.
2. Love is the reason for Christ’s sacrifice.
3. Love is the motive for the act of substitution
4. Christ’s victory over suffering is the victory of love
5. Love allows us to partake of divine glory.

Answer to the question, are you saved?
I trust that by God’s grace I am being saved. I have experienced the grace of Christ, my savior, but I have not reached my journey’s end. I pray that through God’s mercy, my feet may be directed on the right path. 

Answers to questions (questions are not included)/Thoughts:

(on God’s Wrath)
The wrath of God is experienced only by those who refuse to love God in return. We make ourselves suffer. The wrath of God is merely the love of God shut out from our hearts.

God’s love is inexhaustible and even people in Hell are loved by God. Those who suffer in Hell suffer because they reject and turn away from God’s love.

When we refuse to love others or if we reject the love of another, we suffer.

St. Isaac says that those who will not love God are those who suffer. The saints embrace God’s love. Hell is a place where people enclose themselves.

(on Ransom)
We are slaves. When we experience salvation, we are free.

No where is the question- to whom is the ransom paid?- asked. That is not the point. The point is the act of liberation through salvation. If one says that the ransom was paid to God, one separates the Father from the Son. Saying that it is paid to the devil, unsatisfactory answers regarding the devil’s rights arise.

(on Prayer)
For lay people, no better pattern than the traditional morning and evening prayer. We should not begin or end our day without prayer.

Paul also says, “pray without ceasing…” Prayer should punctuate our day. Many moments of recollection of the presence of Christ with us.

Say the Jesus prayer when you get up/as you go to sleep; when you walk from one place to another; waiting for the bus, etc. This prayer is helpful in stressful or painful situations.

The desert fathers speak of short “arrow” prayers to the Father throughout the day.

(Salvation vs. Justification)
Understand justification as expressed in latter portion of the book of Romans. Christ is for us, not in us. Putting on Christ means Christ dwells in us. Salvation is something going on throughout our lives. It is not one moment. Salvation is a moment embracing all of our life.

Salvation and sanctification are one and the same. Fathers talk about salvation as a process of becoming divine (sharing divine life = salvation expressed in organic terms).

(Saturday morning)
“Giver of Life: The Holy Spirit in our daily experience”/ “Eternity in the Present: Baptism and Eucharist”
3 Themes in St. Symeon’s invocation of the Holy Spirit:
1. Symeon speaks of the spirit as light, joy, glory, endless delight
2. Hope; expectation
   - Spirit = unfailing expectation
   - Bears witness to our future hope
3. Nearness and otherness of the Spirit
   - He is uniquely close to us, yet anonymous, enigmatic
   - He is a hidden mystery beyond all words and understanding

We feel his presence, know his power, but we do not see his face.

The Holy Spirit (HS) is like the air. He shows us Christ, but He does not draw attention to Himself. He is a free spirit, uncontrolled and uncontrollable; not tame. (John 3:8)

The HS establishes relationship; makes Christ close to us. The HS puts us in touch with God and in touch with one another. The “go-between” God (a spirit of relationship).

Patriarch of Antioch (?)- Ignatiou says:
Without the spirit, Christ is a historical figure, but in the spirit, he is present.
Without the spirit, the gospel is a defunct letter, in the spirit, it is the living word
Without the spirit, the church would be a mere organization
Without the spirit, worship is mere recollection; in the spirit, then becomes now
Etc.

In the spirit, time disappears. Clock and calendar time are transformed into sacred time. Today is one of the key words throughout Holy Week. The devil says yesterday (he wants you to worry about the past, which is now gone) and tomorrow (he wants you to be anxious about the future). But the Holy Spirit says TODAY.

Christian action without the spirit is slavery to rules; in the spirit, it becomes a sharing in the divine life and light (theosis = becoming divine)

HS is life-giver; He makes everything come alive for us.

2 Fundamental points about the Spirit:
1. in scripture and tradition, HS = a person
   - (the Spirit is as personal as the Father and the Son are)
   - Eph. 4:13
   - Paul tells the HS not to grieve
   - The HS is a Spirit of love and feels in a personal way
   - (The spirit grieves our sin, our lack of love)

2. HS is equal to the Father and the Son
   - Creed says that he is worshipped and glorified together with Father and Son
   - (all three are at the same level)

St. Gregory of Nyssa
Says never think of Christ without the Spirit (and the Spirit without Christ)
The Son and the Spirit are the two hands of God the Father and He is always using both his hands together

How do these 2 hands of God cooperate together in all great moments salvation history?

1. Incarnation
   Christ was incarnate by the HS and the Virgin Mary
2. Annunciation
   HS descends upon the Holy Virgin
3. Baptism
   HS descends upon Christ in the form of a dove (confirming God’s words to be true)
4. Transfiguration
   Spirit rests upon the Son in the form of a cloud of light (from 2nd and 3rd century, the cloud of light is understood to be the HS)
5. Resurrection
   By the power of the HS, Christ is raised from the dead
6. Pentecost
   Relationship between Christ and the Spirit is reversed. Christ sends the HS upon his disciples

John 14-16
Christ at the Last Supper (This is the 1st of the 12 gospels read during the service on Holy Thursday)

HS will bear witness to Christ and will glorify Him. HS brings no separate message of His own, but brings the message of Christ. (The Pentecostal Spirit makes Christ ever present in our midst). Christology and Pneumatology are inseparable.

This is the reason for the Holy Spirit’s anonymous/transparent nature. He speaks not of Himself, but of Christ- He is clear and translucent and we see Christ).

The Holy Spirit in Baptism (Baptismal Spirit)

Our baptismal initiation is all-to-easily forgotten (thought of as in the past). But, it has a living significance at the present moment.

There is a baptismal dimension to our relationship to HS and Christ. Prayer is the revelation of baptism. We receive the grace that we received through our baptismal initiation.

The aim of the Christian life is to return to relation with the HS and Christ that we experienced through baptism. Our aim is to return to the source (our baptism). Our beginning is our end. Baptismal grace is the foundation of all Christian life.

Baptism is 3-fold immersion in the waters. It means forgiveness of sins. Signifies death and resurrection with Christ. It is the Passover from the end of one life and the beginning of a new life.

Rom. 6
In the early church, baptism took place on Easter (midnight).
Gal. 3:27
HS is involved baptismal immersion. HS is invoked on the waters of baptism. The HS sanctifies the water. HS is asked to descent upon the water (makes the water holy).

The HS brings the past to the present. As he descended upon the waters of Jordan so now does he descend on waters of baptism).

Clock and calendar time are transformed to sacred time.

Oil (chrismation)
- A Pentecostal event (personal Pentecost)
- The seal of the gift of the HS
- Renders each of us personally responsible for our faith (we have knowledge)
- All senses are involved in this knowledge and responsibility of faith (all that we do is to be Spirit-filled)

Baptism
- We put on Christ through the water
- We are sealed in the HS by Chrismation

Through baptism, we are each Christ- and Spirit-bearers. Both dwell in our hearts. We cannot add to it later, but we can only gradually discover their existence in our hearts.

St. Mark says that Christ, being perfect God, bestows on us the perfect grace of the Spirit. And as we progress in our faith, this grace is revealed to us. **Become what you are.**

You are already a Christ- and Spirit-bearer; become that in reality.

Christ and the Holy Spirit’s presence is mystical and our journey through life is towards conscious realization of baptismal grace.

**Answers to Questions/Thoughts**

*(Agape and Eros in the context of Christian faith)*

Greek Church fathers do not distinguish agape and eros. Eros = love of God in particularly intense form.

Our feelings for God should be as intense as sexual, erotic love, according the Church fathers.

Spirit also referred to as bond of love between the Father and the Son. Spirit = a spirit of communion. HS = love that passes between Father and Son. This is an Augustinian approach. It is rejected by many Orthodox. But there are Eastern fathers who use similar imagery.

St. Gregory of Palamas talks about HS as eros also. St. Symeon (New Theologian) speaks of HS as desire/eros.

*(Unconscious presence of spirit linked to man’s creation?)*
All human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Holy Trinity). We all have a link to Christ and the HS by virtue of our creation. The light of Christ shines upon all.

What baptism does is renew the image through cleansing (it is restoration of the creation according to the image). Gradually, the unconscious becomes conscious.

Baptism = re-creation according to the image granted us in creation.

(Baptism as a foundational event)

In early Christianity, baptism is palpable liberation from evil forces. It was a decisive turning point; a conscious experience of liberation. This image has faded slightly over time.

(HIS inspiring mission as Pentecost)

In the early Church, there were no organized missionary societies. It was felt to the responsibility of all Christians. Faith spread through personal contact.

Early Christians were seen as possessing a secret for the joy of life, which others often sought to discover.

The baptismal spirit is fire and fire spreads. Never be afraid to say to others, come and see.

(on wealth and helping others)
Distinction should be made between what we want and what we need.

There will be no solution to ecological problems until we make this distinction. The mission of the HS includes sharing. All things shared in common is and should be a model for us.

How are we to take social action and share is decided upon on an individual basis.

(What to do if someone is baptized more than once)

Strong conviction among early Christians that baptism should not be repeated. But the question of valid baptism came to the fore beginning in the 3rd century. Should schismatics be re-received into the Church?

St. Basil lays down 3 categories of schismatics:

1. Those who do not believe in the Holy Trinity. Receive them by baptism- their first baptism was untrue.
2. Those who believe correctly in the Trinity. Chrismation
3. Schismatics divided from the Church, but believe correctly. Receive through confession of faith.

Agreeing on how to apply the distinction is a recent challenge.

When it comes to feeling the Spirit…
Avoid false enthusiasm and illusion. The Holy Spirit is a spirit of joy, but also a spirit of sobriety.

(Saturday afternoon)

“Eternity in the Present: Baptism and Eucharist,” continued

(Answer to a question asked on Friday night about the divine plan)

1 Tim.
God desires everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The opportunity for salvation is offered to all without question. Orthodoxy teaches that God invites everyone to salvation, but we are free. In our creation, God allowed us to choose.

God, desiring it to be a world of love, created human beings, who could choose to love Him. (One cannot be forced to love). God is inexhaustible love and we are free.

To say yes to loving God is heaven. To say no to God is Hell.

Some Church fathers have believed that in the end we will all, including the devil, would be saved. It is false to say all must saved because that is a denial of human freedom. But it’s legitimate to hope that all be saved.

Love cannot bear the torment of others. We must pray for all.

(The Eucharist)
How do the Son and the Spirit work together in the divine liturgy?

The Eucharist is a continual miracle.

Liturgy
A shared act (done only by many persons)
There are no spectators at the Eucharist, only active participants. The characteristic liturgical word is not “I,” but “we”. The Lord’s prayer contains no me, my, I, but we, our, us.

To be a human being is to be in the likeness of the Holy Trinity, which means sharing and loving.

Without the 3-fold mutual pardon during liturgy, Eucharist is incomplete. To go to communion, we must ask forgiveness of God and of each other.

Priest and people are doing something together. (A dialogue ensues before communion). People give priest permission. Everything in the Eucharist is shared.

How do the 2 hands (HS and Christ) work together?

Equal involvement of HS in the Eucharist celebration. There are 2 upper rooms: the upper room of the Last Supper and the upper room of Pentecost.
Real presence of Christ and the HS in the Eucharist. The presence of the Holy Spirit is different than Christ’s presence, but no less real.

Communion in Christ is also communion of/in the HS.

5 Christological moments in the Liturgy

1. Before opening blessing, only when there is a deacon
   The deacon says “It is time for the Lord to act” (Psalm 118/119: 126)
   The liturgy is not just words, but action (the action of the Lord)

2. Cherubic Hymn
   Priest says “You are the one who authors and is authored, who sees and is distributed.”
   Christ is priest and victim- the true celebrant of every liturgy

3. Kiss of peace
   “Christ is in our midst…”
   True celebrant, active with us

4. Prayer of consecration
   Narrative of the Last Supper (repetition of “Take, eat, this is my body…”)

5. Communion itself
   “Servant of God…is granted….”

Participation of the HS

5 Moments of the HS in the Liturgy

1. After Great Entrance, when there is a deacon.
   Dialogue between priest and deacon: The priest asks the deacon, “Remember me my brother and concelebrant.” And the deacon asks priest to pray for him. The priest says that the HS will come upon him. And the deacon affirms that the HS will concelebrate with us all of our lives. (The Spirit is our fellow minister).

2. Mention of the HS, asking to bless us (come upon us)

3. Descent of the HS upon the gifts (We pray for this; we offer the gifts)
   The Spirit makes the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ. Consecration is performed not by the priest, but by the HS).
   This is different from baptism. When the HS sanctifies the water, he does not change its form. It is still water.

4. Before communion, priest pours hot water into chalice, saying, “the fullness of the [cup] of the HS.”
   Hot water signifies the HS. The steam resembles the smoke of the fire of the HS
   Spirit in bread, fire in wine

5. “We have seen the light…”
After communion
We have not only received Christ, but the Holy Spirit

“Let us go forth in peace.”

This is not an end, but a beginning. The liturgy after the liturgy is now about to begin. Let us bring the peace we find in liturgy to the world.

Communion is our inspiration and the source of our hopes to build a better world.

St. John Chrysostom says that there are two altars:
1. altar in the church
2. altar we see everyday (it surrounds us)

At any time, we can offer sacrifice on the 2nd altar. We often ignore this altar, even treat it with scorn. It is the poor, homeless, marginalized, sick, suffering (the oppressed, the vulnerable). This 2nd altar, forgotten leaves the liturgy grievously incomplete.

St. John of Kronstat

“Take, eat…”
These words contain God’s love of human kind.
What shall we give to God in gratitude for this love?

Answers to questions/thoughts

(What is God’s role in liturgy?)

Many liturgical prayers contain Trinitarian structure (addressing each of the 3 persons). Father is also mentioned, but it is difficult to talk about the Father without talking about Christ. (No one comes to the Father, but through Christ).

Very little is said about the Father alone. We must come to the Father through the 2 hands-son and spirit)

(Separation of Different forms of Christianity)

Filioque and position of the Pope

Filioque = an unauthorized addition to the Creed. Orthodox ask Western brethren to restore the Creed to its original form.

The Capadocian fathers say that the Father is distinct (as the source of the Trinity). But St. Augustine, in the West, is careful to say that the HS does proceed from the Son in the way that He proceeds from the Father.

He proceeds from the Father primarily and proceeds from the Son as a gift from the Father. Must preserve God the Father as the fountainhead. Faith in the HS is not fundamentally different in the West.
(on frequency of communion)

The Greek saints could receive communion infrequently and yet they were close to Christ, because they received it with such intensity that it would last them many years.

We are weak, so we need frequent communion. If we say that you can do without communion for a long time, we are saying that we are great saints.

We are NEVER worthy to partake of communion. It is a gift. And there are many things in the lives of the saints that are to be admired, but not imitated.

Frequent communion, not casual or careless communion.