The Liturgy

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. AD 500)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

The Liturgy

LITURGY OF ST. DIONYSIUS, BISHOP OF THE ATHENIANS .
1st. The Prayer before the Pax .

Pr. ”O Lord God, Who art simplex, not compound, and hidden in essence sublime! God the Father, from Whom all paternity which is in heaven and earth is named , Source of Divinity, of those who participate in the Divine Nature, and Perfector of those who attain perfection; Good above all good, and Beautiful above all beautiful; Peaceful repose, Peace, Concord and Union of all souls; compose the dissensions which divide us from one another, and lead them back to an union with charity, which has a kind of similitude to Thy sublime essence: and as Thou art One above all, and we, one, through the unanimity of a good mind; that we may be found before Thee simplex and not divided, whilst celebrating this mystery; and that through the embraces of Charity and bonds of Love, we may be spiritually one, both with ourselves and with one another, through that Thy Peace pacifying all; through the Grace and Compassion and Love towards man of Thine Only-begotten Son; through Whom, and with Whom is due to Thee, glory, honour and dominion, with Thy most holy Spirit. P. ”Amen. Pr. ”Pax” (to all). P. ”And with thy spirit. D. ”Let each one give the Peace. P. ”All. D. ”Post. P. ”Before Thee, O Lord. Pr. ”Giver of Holiness, and distributor of every good, O Lord, Who sanctifiest every rational creature with sanctification, which is from Thee; sanctify, through Thy Holy Spirit, us Thy servants, who bow before Thee;

free us from all servile passions of sin, from envy, treachery, deceit, hatred, enmities, and from him, who works the same, that we may be worthy, holily to complete the ministry of these life-giving Sacraments, through the heavenly Pontiff, Jesus Christ, Thine Only-begotten Son, through Whom, and with Whom, is due to Thee, glory and honour. P. ”Amen. Pr. ”Essentially existing, and from all ages; Whose nature is incomprehensible, Who art near and present to all, without any change of Thy sublimity; Whose goodness every existing thing longs for and desires; the intelligible indeed, and creatures endowed with intelligence, through intelligence; those endowed with sense, through their senses; Who, although Thou art One essentially, nevertheless art present with us, and amongst us, in this hour, in which Thou hast called and led us to these Thy holy mysteries; and hast made us worthy to stand before the sublime throne of Thy majesty, and to handle the sacred vessels of Thy ministry with our impure hands: take away from us, O Lord, the cloke of iniquity in which we are

enfolded, as from Jesus, the son of Josedec the High Priest, Thou didst take away the filthy garments, and adorn us with piety and justice, as Thou didst adorn him with a vestment of glory; that clothed with Thee alone, as it were with a garment, and being like temples crowned with glory, we may see Thee unveiled with a mind divinely illuminated, and may feast, whilst we, by communicating therein, enjoy this sacrifice set before us;

and render to Thee glory and praise. P. "Amen. D. "Let us stand becomingly. P. "The Mercies of God. Pr. "Charity. P. "And with thy spirit. Pr. "Lift up your hearts. P. "We lift them to the Lord. Pr. "Let us give thanks to the Lord. P. "It is meet and right. Priest (bending low), "For truly the celebration of Thy benefits, O Lord, surpasses, the powers of mind, of speech, and of thought; neither is sufficient every mouth, mind and tongue, to glorify Thee worthily. For, by Thy word the heavens were made, and by the breath of Thy mouth all the celestial powers; all the lights in the firmament, sun and moon, sea and dry land, and whatever is in them. The voiceless, by their silence, the vocal, by their voices, words and hymns, perpetually bless Thee; because Thou art essentially good and beyond all praise, existing in Thy essence incomprehensibly. This visible and sensible creature praises Thee, and also that intellectual, placed above sensible perception. Heaven and earth glorify Thee. Sea and air proclaim Thee. The sun, in his course, praises Thee; the Moon, in her changes, venerates Thee. Troops of Archangels, and hosts of Angels; those virtues, more sublime than the world and mental faculty, send benedictions to Thine abode. Rays of light, eminent and hidden, send their sanctus to Thy glory. Principalities and Orders praise Thee, with their Jubilate. Powers and dominions venerate Thee. Virtues, Thrones and Seats inaccessible exalt Thee.

Splendours of light eternal----mirrors without flaw----holy essences----recipients of wisdom sublime----beyond all, investigators of the will hidden from all, in clearest modulations of inimitable tones, and by voices becoming a rational creature; many eyed Cherubim of most subtle movement, bless Thee. Séraphin, furnished with six wings intertwined, cry Sanctus unto Thee. Those very ones, who veil their faces with their wings, and cover their feet with wings, and flying on every side, and clapping with their wings, (that they may not be devoured by Thy devouring fire) sing one to another with equal harmony of all, sweet chants, pure from every thing material, rendering to Thee, eternal glory; crying with one hymn, worthy of God, and saying," P. "Holy, holy, holy. Priest (bending)----"Holy art Thou, O God the Father, Omnipotent, Maker and Creator of every creature----Invisible and visible, and sensible; Holy art Thou, O God, the Only-begotten Son, Power and Wisdom of the Father, Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Holy art Thou, O God, the Holy Spirit, Perfector and Sanctifier of Saints. Triad, Holy and undivided:----co-essential and of equal glory, Whose compassion towards our race is most effusive. Thou art holy, and making all things holy. Who didst not leave that, our very race, in exile from Paradise, although in the meantime involved in every kind of sin, but wast manifested to it by the Word, Who, in the presence of the" world, suffered extreme poverty;

it in very truth, He, the Word, took, being made like to it in all things, sin excepted, that it might make Him prepared beforehand unto holiness, and disposed for this life-giving feast.

(Raising his voice) Who being conceived, formed and configured by the Holy Spirit, and from virgin blood of the Virgin Mary, holy genitrix of God, was born indeed Man, and from the pure and most holy body of the same, and receiving Deity in Flesh, whilst the law and properties of nature were preserved, but in a manner beyond nature, and was acknowledged God in the Spirit, and Man in the flesh; and inasmuch as the Word existed before the ages, from Thee, as was worthy of God, was born, and by power and miracles, such as became the Maker of all, was testified that He was such, from the very fact that He has freely imparted a complete healing and a perfect salvation to the whole human race. Likewise, in the end and consummation of His dispensation on our behalf, and before His saving Cross, He took bread into His pure and holy hands, and looked to Thee, O God the Father; giving thanks, He blessed, sanctified, brake and gave to His disciples, the holy Apostles, saying, "Take and eat from it and believe that it is my body, that same, which for you and for many is broken and given, for the expiation of faults, the remission of sins, and eternal life. P. "Amen. Pr.

"Likewise, in the same manner, over the cup also, which He mingled with wine and water, He gave thanks, blessed, sanctified, and gave to the same disciples and holy apostles, saying, ' Take, drink from it, all of you, and believe that this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed and given for you and for many, for the expiation of faults, remission of sins, and eternal life.' "P. "Amen."

Pr. "Himself also, through the same holy Apostles, gave a precept to the whole company and congregation of the faithful, saying, 'This do to the memory of Me, and as oft as ye shall eat this bread and drink the commixture which is in this cup, and shall celebrate this feast, ye shall perform a commemoration of My death until I come.'" P. "Of Thy death, O Lord, we perform a memorial." Pr. "Obeying, then, Thy sovereign precept, and celebrating a commemoration of Thy death and resurrection, through this sacrifice in perpetual mystery, we await also Thy second coming, the renovation of our race, and the vivification of our mortality. For, not simply, but with glory worthy of God, in Spirit ineffable, Thou wilt terribly come, and seated upon the lofty throne of Thy majesty, Thou wilt exact the acknowledgment of Thy royal power, from all things created and made: and justly, Thou wilt take vengeance for Thy image upon those who have corrupted it through evil passions. This sacrifice, here celebrated, we commemorate to Thee, O Lord, and the sufferings which Thou didst endure on the Cross for us. Be propitious, O Good, and Lover of men, in that hour full, of fear and trembling, to this congregation of those adoring Thee, and to all sons of the holy Church, bought by Thy precious blood. May coals of fire be kept from those who are tinged with Thy blood, and sealed by Thy sacraments in Thy holy Name, as formerly the Babylonian flame from the youths of the house of Hanania; for neither do we know others beside Thee, O God, nor in other have we hope of attaining salvation, since indeed Thou art the Helper and Saviour of our race; and on this account, our wise Church, through all our lips and tongues, implores Thee, and through Thee, and with Thee, Thy Father, saying"----

P. "Have mercy. Pr. "We also. D. "How tremendous is this hour. (The Priest bending, says the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Pr. "I invoke Thee, O God the Father,

have mercy upon us, and wash away, through Thy grace, the uncleanness of my evil deeds; destroy, through Thy mercy, what I have done, worthy of wrath; for I do not extend my hands to Thee with presumption, for I am not able even to look to heaven on account of the multitude of my iniquities and the filth of my wickedness. But, strengthening my mind, in Thy loving-kindness, grace and long-suffering, I crave Thy holy Spirit, that Thou wouldst send Him upon me, and upon these oblations, here set forth, and upon Thy faithful people. Pr. ”Hear me, O Lord. P. ”Kyrie eleison,” three times. Pr. ”Through His alighting upon them, and His overshadowing, may He make this bread indeed, living body, and procuring life to our souls; body salutary----body celestial----body saving our souls and bodies----body of our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ----for remission of sins, and eternal life, for those receiving it. P. ”Amen. Pr. ”And the commixture, which is in this cup, may He make living blood, and procuring life to all our souls; blood salutary----blood celestial----blood saving our souls and bodies----blood of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, for remission of sins to those receiving them. P. ”Amen. Pr.

”Further, according to the tradition, and Divine recommendation of those, who were eye witnesses of Thy mysteries, and interpreters of Thy wonderful acts, we offer this Eucharist before Thee, O Lord, and through it we commemorate Thy charity towards us,- and the universal dispensation of Thine Only-begotten One, in this world, that Thou wouldst also be reminded through it of Thy mercy, cognate and natural to Thee, which, at all hours, is shed upon Thy creatures, and wouldst snatch us from the wrath, reserved for the wicked; and from the punishments of those who work iniquity; and from the cruel attack of demons, who attack our souls, when we shall go hence; and wouldst make us worthy of Thy kingdom, and the habitations of those who have kept Thy precepts; and we will render to Thee, glory and the giving of thanks, &c. P. ”Amen. Pr. (bending) ”By Thy words, that cannot lie, and by Thy most true teachings, Thou hast said, O Lord, that great is the joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Rejoice then now, O Lord, in the conversion of Thy servants, who stand here before Thee; add also, exultation over us, to the souls of the pious and just Fathers ---- Patriarchs ---- Prophets ---- Apostles ----Preachers ---- Evangelists ---- Martyrs ---- Confessors ----Zealots” of Divine Worship----Benefactors----Givers of Alms----of those who minister to the necessities of the poor----and from all, may there be one act of praise to-day„ before Thee, at this holy Altar, and in the heavenly Jerusalem.

(Elevating his voice) ”And on account of these, and other things of the same kind, may Thy holy Church, which is from one end of the earth to the other, be established, and preserved in tranquillity and peace, in doctrines evangelical and apostolical, by Divine Hierarchs, rightly dispensing the word of truth, and instructing, by the dogmas of true religion: through holy Priests, who embrace the word of life, and carry themselves illustriously in dispensing Thy celestial mysteries: through Deacons, who are modest, and perform the pure and royal ministry without flaw, through true, faithful ones, who occupy themselves in words and acts worthy of a Christian; through choirs of virgins of each sex, bearing about in their members the life-giving mortification of Thy Only-begotten Son. And from hence, in one troop, may we all be sent to that Church, the Jerusalem of the firstborn, whose names are written in

the heavens, and there let us spiritually glorify Thee, O God the Father, and Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. P. ”Amen. Pr. ”Assist also, O Lord, all those who assist Thy Holy Church, by offerings----by tenths----by ministry----and by oblations; and those also, who ask the prayers of our littleness, give to them the object of those their prayers, O Lord, Lover of men. (Raising his voice) ”Send also perfect attention and full health to all those who have the charge of the poor, who provide food for orphans and widows, and visit the infirm and afflicted.

Restore to them, here indeed abundance and goods, there also delights incorruptible, because thou art Lord of each age, and distributor of immense reward. And to Thee beseems beneficence, both here and there, and to Thine Only-begotten Son. P. ”Amen. Pr. (bending) ”Restrain, O King of Kings, the wrath of kings, mitigate the fury of soldiers, take away wars and seditions, cast down the pride of heretics, and the sentences pronounced against us by Justice, may Thy love for mankind overcome, and turn into the gentleness of benignity”; (raising his voice) ”Tranquillity and Peace from Thee, concede to the earth and all its inhabitants, visit it with Thy benefits and the care of Thy mercy, with a good and temperate condition of atmosphere, copiousness of fruits, and abundance of crops, and variety of flowers; preserve it from all pests of fury, and all unjust attacks of enemies, both spiritual and sensible, that without any injury of passion, we may sing perpetual hymns of praise, to Thee and to Thine Only-begotten Son. P. ”Amen. Pr. (bending} ”At this altar, and at that more exalted one in heaven, may there be a good remembrance of all those, who, out of the world, have pleased Thee----chiefly indeed of the Holy genitrix of God, of John the Messenger, Baptist and Forerunner, of Peter and Paul, and of the holy company of the Apostles, of Stephen also, and of the whole multitude of Martyrs, and of all those, who, before them, with them and after them, have pleased, and do please Thee.

(Raising his voice) ”And since indeed Thou art Omnipotent, to the company of those beloved ones and to Thy family, join our weakness, O Lord, to that blessed congregation, to this Divine part, that, through them may be received our oblations and prayers, before the lofty throne of Thy Majesty, inasmuch as we are weak and infirm, and wanting in confidence before Thee. Forsooth, our sin and our righteousness are as nothing in comparison with the ocean, broad and immense, of Thy mercy. Looking then, into the hearts of each, send to each one good returns for their petitions, that in all and in each may be adored and praised, Thy Majesty, and that of Thine Only-begotten Son. P. ”Amen. Pr. (bending) ”Remember, O Lord, all Bishops, Doctors and Prelates of Thy holy Church, those, who from James, Apostle, Bishop and Martyr, to this present day, have pleased, and do please Thee. (Raising his voice) ”Engraft in us, O Lord, their true faith, and their zeal for the true religion; their sincere chanty without defect; their morals without stain; in order that, adhering to their footsteps, we may be partakers of their reward, and of the crowns of victory which are prepared for them in Thy heavenly kingdom, and there, together with them, we may sing to Thee, Glory unceasing, and to Thy Only-begotten Son. P. ”Amen. Pr. (bending) ”Remember, O Lord, all those who are fallen asleep, who have laid themselves down in Thy hope, in the true faith.

More especially, and by name, our Fathers, Brothers and Masters, and those, on behalf of whom, and by favour of whom, this holy oblation is offered," (raising his voice) "join, O Lord, their names, with the names of Thy Saints in the blessed habitation of those, who feast and rejoice in Thee; not recalling against them the memory of their sins, nor bringing to their memory the things which they have foolishly done. For no one is tied to the flesh, and at the same time, innocent in Thy sight. For One alone has been seen on earth without sin, Jesus Christ, Thine Only-begotten Son; Simplex , who came to composition, through whom we also have hope of obtaining mercy. P. "Keep quiet. Pr. (bending) "Remitting our and their voluntary sins, knowingly or ignorantly committed. Be propitious, O Lord, Lover of men. (Raising his voice) "And grant to us a peaceful end, departure with mercy, that we may stand without fault on the right hand; and, with open face, and confidence, run to meet the arising of Thine Only-begotten Son, and His second and glorious manifestation from heaven; and may hear from Him, that blessed voice, which He shall pronounce at the last day to the Blessed. "Blessed of my Father receive the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom," "that in this, as in all, may be glorified and praised, Thy most venerated Name. P. "That, &c. Pr. "Peace. P. "And with thy spirit. The Priest breaks the Host, and says the prayer, before "Our Father.

Pr, "Father of all, and Beginning, Which is above all things-----Light eternal, and Fountain of Light, Which illuminates all natures endowed with reason; Who callest the poor from the dust, and raisest the beggar from the dunghill; and hast called us, lost, rejected, and infirm, to the liberty and household dignity of Thy sons, through Thy beloved Son, grant to us, that we may appear in Thy sight, holy sons, and not unworthy of the name; and may also perform all our ministry after a blameless manner; and with purity of soul, and cleanness of intellect, and with a godly mind, whenever we invoke Thee, God the Father Omnipotent, holy and heavenly, we pray and say, Our Father, which art in heaven. P. "Hallowed be Thy Name, &c. Pr. "Free us, Thy servants and sons, from all temptations, most difficult, and surpassing our forces; and from all griefs, which can bring loss to our body or soul. Guard us, at the same time from the evil one, and from his universal power, and from his most pernicious devices. For Thou art King of all, and to Thee we render glory. P. "Amen. Pr. "Peace," P. "And with thy spirit. D. "Before" (Ante). P. "Before Thee, O Lord. (Coram. Pr. "Look, O Lord, upon Thy faithful people, who bend before Thee, and await Thy gift, and contemplate the deposit of the Sacraments of Thy Only-begotten, O God the Father.

Take not away Thy grace from us, and cast us not away from Thy ministry, and from participation in Thy sacraments, but prepare us, that we may be pure and without flaw, and worthy of this feast; and that, with a conscience unblamable, we may ever enjoy His precious body and blood; and in a life, glorious and endless, may recline in a spiritual habitation, and may feast at the table of Thy kingdom, and may render to Thee glory and praise. P. "Amen. Pr. "Peace. P. "And with thy spirit. D. "With fear. Pr. "Holy things to holy persons. P. "One holy Father. D. "Let us stand becomingly. P. "Before Thee. Pr. "We give thanks to Thee, O Lord, and with grateful mind we acknowledge Thy loving-kindness; because, from nothing, Thou hast led us forth to that which we are, and hast made us members of Thy

household, and sons of Thy sacraments; and hast entrusted this religious ministry to us, and hast made us worthy of this spiritual table. Preserve in us, O Lord, the deposit of Thy Divine Mysteries, that we may frame and complete our life in Thy sight, after the fashion of the angels; that we may be secured and inseparable through the reception of Thy holy (mysteries);

performing Thy great and perfect will, and may be found ready for that last consummation, and to stand before Thy Majesty, and may be made worthy of the pleasure of Thy kingdom, through the grace, mercy and love towards man, of Thy Only-begotten Son, through Whom, and with Whom, is due to Thee, glory, honour, &c. P. ”Amen. Pr. ”Peace. P. ”And with thy spirit. D. ”After” (Post), P. ”Before Thee, O Lord. Pr. ”O Christ, the King of Glory, and Father of the Age to come; Holy Sacrifice; heavenly Hierarch; Lamb of God, Who takest away the sin of the world, spare the sins of Thy people, and dismiss the foolishness of Thy flock. Preserve us, through, the communication of Thy Sacraments, from every sin, whether it be committed by word, or thought, or deed; and from whatever makes us far from the familiarity of Thy household, that our bodies may be guarded by Thy body, and our souls renewed through Thy sacraments. And may Thy benediction, O Lord, be in our whole man, within and without; and may Thou be glorified in us, and by us, and may Thy right hand rest upon us, and that of Thy blessed Father, and of Thy most holy Spirit. P. ”Amen. D. ”Bless, O Lord.”

CANNES, Christmas, 1896. [Footnotes moved to end and numbered]

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator’s own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.