

THE SACRED FIRE

In short, the miracle of the Holy Fire has been taking place for more than fifteen hundred years in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem on the Saturday before Easter Sunday according to the Julian calendar, when the Orthodox Church celebrates Holy Week.

After some rites and the singing of some hymns, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch enters alone, with thirty-three candles together and tied, the aedicule where the tomb in which Our Lord Jesus Christ died and from where he rose again is located, and after a few minutes, he leaves with the candles miraculously lit, passing the flames to all the people who are in the church.

During the first thirty-three minutes the flames do not burn, nor the body, nor the hair, nor the clothes of the people.

It has been happening since the 4th century, up to the present day, and like everything that refers to the things of God, such as, for example, the resurrection of Our Lord, it also receives criticism; there are those who do not believe and seek to justify their disbelief by all means.

The fact is that even though it has been exhaustively investigated, to this day, no fraud has ever been proven in relation to the Sacred Fire.

I confess that I have a little difficulty in believing that Christian people, especially religious leaders, would have the courage to use deceitful means to deceive, or even play around in the tomb where the body of Our Lord Jesus was placed when he was dead.

For those who want to do a more in-depth study on this subject, on the internet we can find several articles and videos dedicated to the miracle of the Sacred Fire, as well as criticisms related to it.

Considering that the miracle actually happens in this worship of the Orthodox in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; that is, considering that God, by His grace and mercy, makes this wonderful sign among them, we will make some comments about the Great Schism that separated them from the communion of the Roman Church and, also, about some points of divergence between them.

About the Great Schism, very briefly, it occurred between Roman Catholics and Orthodox Catholics around the year 1053, 1054, as a result of the accumulation of several divergences, which gave rise to smaller schisms, which had been accumulating over the years in the political, cultural and even theological fields.

Among the theological differences, the most important are related to the non-acceptance of the Bishop of Rome as Pope, leader of the entire church, and also, Orthodox Catholics disagree with the understanding of Roman Catholics that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; for the Orthodox the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father.

The Orthodox, having been separated since the year 1054, do not follow the dogmas of Papal infallibility – Pastor Aeternus – 07/18/1870, nor the Marian dogmas (Immaculate Conception - Ineffabilis Deus - 12/08/1854, and Assumption of Mary - Munificentissimus Deus – 11/1/1950), instituted by the Roman church.

Therefore, from the time of Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, until the year 1053/1054, that is, approximately one millennium, the church of Christ was only one.

During these thousand years, some groups arose defending different theses, contrary to the teachings of the church, such as, for example, denying the Holy Trinity, defending Gnosticism, Arianism which affirmed that the Lord Jesus had no divinity, but none of them came to prosper.

During this period, the confession of faith or Creed also developed, moving away from the initial "Jesus is Lord," which was based on the letters of the Apostle Paul; more specifically, the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 12:3, where we are taught: "Therefore I make you understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Accursed be Jesus!' And no one can say, 'Lord Jesus!' except by the Holy Spirit." Several Bible translations read "Jesus is Lord!"

Thus, the church added affirmations to the Creed with the aim of refuting the heresies that were emerging, and also to demarcate the essential pillars of the Christian faith.

Next, we will transcribe the Apostolic Creed, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Roman Catholic Creed, and the Orthodox Catholic Creed.

Follow the Apostles' Creed: I

believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; rose from the dead on the third day; ascended into heaven; and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Universal Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and life everlasting. Amen.

<https://www.monergismo.com/textos/credos/credoapostolico.htm>

The Holy Universal Church was the name given to the church of Christ, composed of us, who are still in this world, in the process of sanctification, perfecting ourselves, and of the spirits of the perfected righteous, or spirits of the saints (Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 12: 23), who are already in the Lord, in heaven. In other words, the Holy Universal Church (of heaven and earth).

The Apostles' Creed is attributed to the 12 Apostles.

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Catholic Creed: I believe in

one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father. By him all things were made. And for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For us also he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered, and was buried.

He rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father. And he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets. I believe in the one, holy, catholic and

apostolic. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. - Amen.

<https://www.catolicoorante.com.br/oracao.php?id=16>

The word "catholic" comes from the Greek kata (together) and holos (whole), and was first applied to the Church of Christ in the second century by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, one of its founders, and has the meaning of universal, total. Later, the word "catholic" replaced the word "universal," of Latin origin, in the Creed.

The Roman Catholic Church professes both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Orthodox Catholic Creed:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnated by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

And for us he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

And He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-Giver, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, and who spoke through the prophets.

And in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen.

<https://www.ortodoxia.pt/simbolo-da-fe-credo/>

As can be seen, both the Roman and Orthodox Creeds do not specify that the one, holy, Catholic Church is Roman rather than Orthodox.

Thus, with regard to the Creeds, the divergence, practically, is only in relation to the Holy Spirit, which, for the Romans, proceeds from the Father and the Son, while for the Orthodox, proceeds only from the Father.

The Apostle John in his Gospel, or rather, describing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in chapter 14: 16 and 17, reports Our Master preparing his disciples for his departure, his sacrifice, as follows: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you always, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him, nor knows him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Verse 26, still from chapter 14, continues: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Note that the Father said "let us make" in the plural; that is, the Holy Trinity was in unity and in action at the moment of creation; however, the initiative, the will, the project to create man was from God the Father.

We conclude this because the Holy Scriptures, at no point, state that all things were created by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As it is written in the Book of Revelation, in chapter 4, the vision that the Apostle John had of the throne of God, and in verses 10 and 11, it is reported: "the twenty-four elders will fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever, and they will cast their crowns before the throne, proclaiming:

You are worthy,
Our Lord and God, to receive
glory, honor and power,
because you created all
things, yes, because of your
will they
came into being

and were created."

In the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Colossians, in chapter 1:15 and 16, we are taught concerning the excellence of the person and work of Christ, as follows: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ...
All things were created through him and for him."

Also the Apostle John in his Gospel, in chapter 1: 1 and 2, declares: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made."

So all things were made through him, or through him and for him, but the creator is the Father.

Everything was made for him; which is why, as we have seen previously, the Lord affirms that the Spirit will receive of what is his; and that everything that is the Father's is his.

The Lord Jesus also made the following statement, as described by the Apostle John in his Gospel, in chapter 14:28:
"You heard that I said to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."

In the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew there is a text where the Lord Jesus teaches about his coming, which is in chapter 24: 34 to 36, as follows: "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

In these last two texts, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that even though he is God, God the Son, he is lesser than God the Father; and he speaks about something that the Father reserved for his exclusive authority (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1: 6 and 7).

Let us return to the text of the Gospel of the Apostle John, in chapter 16: 7, where the Lord Jesus says: "... It is to your advantage that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I go, I will send him unto you."

Here, Our Lord teaches that His going to the Father was an essential, indispensable condition for the Holy Spirit to be sent as Comforter to the church in this world.

And what would be the reason?

It was necessary for the Lord Jesus, son of David, Lion of the tribe of Judah, Root of David, son of man, descendant of Adam (1st Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, chapter 2: 5), to enter the heavens and sit right on the throne of God; and, with all the authority received after his death on the cross, to send, in his name, from the Father, the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, who is also God and is Christ here on earth comforting his church (Apostle John, chapter 14: 23); would it also be on this occasion that he begged the Father to give us the Comforter?

So, a Holy Man, Glorified, in heaven, and the Holy Spirit of God in the church, here on earth.

Thus, the work and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is what provides us with, makes possible for us salvation, the resurrection of the dead, access to the spirits of the perfected righteous who are already in the Lord, access to the throne and presence of God in heaven through the glorified body of Christ (Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 10: 19 and 20), and also provides us with the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

In the Book of Revelation, chapter 22: 1, it is written: "Then he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Some translations read: "which proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

The HOLY BIBLE translation of APARECIDA says: "that sprang from the throne of God and of the Lamb".

The fact is that the text shows us that the river of living water, which is the Holy Spirit, comes out, proceeds or sprang forth, not from God and the Lamb, but from the throne of God and the Lamb.

Thus, we can affirm that if we understand the word "procede", as it means in Latin, "to go forward", "to advance", "to march", a language used by the religious people of the time, it would be possible to interpret with reasonableness, as long as our interpretation does not encounter obstacles in any biblical statement, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; however, if we understand its meaning as "origin", "derivation", "creation" (indirect transitive verb in our Portuguese), the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father.

It is also worth remembering that at no time, according to what is stated in the Bible, did the Lord Jesus Christ say that the Spirit proceeds from Him, properly speaking, or from Him and the Father.

In conclusion, regardless of the understanding of the word "proceeds", I believe that it is not wrong to trust in the Holy Scriptures, in the sword of the Spirit, in the double-edged sword, where

the MASTER's statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father is clearly and indisputably recorded.

Regarding the Pope being the successor of the Apostle Peter, let us reflect on a text from the Gospel of the Apostle John, which is in chapter 21: 15 to 18: "When they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'"

He asked him a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Jesus asked him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he had said to him the third time, "Do you love me?"

And he answered him: Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.

Jesus said to him: Feed my sheep.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wanted; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you and carry you where you do not want to go."

In verses 21 and 22, a little further on, there is a question that the Apostle Peter asked the Lord Jesus, after seeing the Apostle John: "When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'What about this man?'"

Jesus answered him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? As for you, follow me."

This question from the Apostle Peter demonstrates, unequivocally, that he understood that he had received a special mission from the Lord Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus Christ asked, exclusively, the Apostle Peter: "Feed my lambs", "shepherd my sheep" and "tend my sheep"; activities proper to a shepherd.

The Apostle Peter was the one who led, shortly after the ascension of the Lord Jesus to Heaven, the meeting which decided, by lot, after prayer, the choice of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1: 15 to 26).

It was also the Apostle Peter who gave the first sermon, in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, which led three thousand people to baptism (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2: 14 to 41).

And yet, it was the Apostle Peter who confronted Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who, separately, lied to the Holy Spirit in the person of the Apostle, and were punished by God, after words spoken by Saint Peter, with death (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5: 1 to 11).

Furthermore, it was the Apostle Peter who preached to Cornelius the Gentile, his relatives and close friends, when, for the first time, the Holy Spirit descended upon those who were not Jews (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 10: 1 to 48).

These are some examples of the Holy Spirit working through the Apostle Peter.

In the 1st Epistle of the Apostle Peter, in chapter 5: 13, at the end, he says goodbye saying: "She who is in Babylon, also chosen, greets you, and so does my son Mark."

Historians and church tradition say that the name Babylon would be the symbol of the city of sin, the city of evil, given to Rome; in this text it is also very clear that the Apostle

Peter speaks, not on behalf of some people, but on behalf of the church, representing the church that was there.

Today, it has been settled, that is, practically all Christians agree that the Apostle Peter lived for a period in Rome, and was martyred there.

It is recorded in the Bible that the Apostle Peter was the first to enter the empty tomb of Our Lord, after the resurrection (Gospel of the Apostle John, chapter 20: 3 to 6).

The Apostle Paul also tells us in his Epistle to the Galatians, in chapter 2: 7 and 8, the following: "but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision (for he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision worked effectively in me also toward the Gentiles)."

Therefore, Saint Peter was the Apostle who preached to those who, being Jews, believed in the Lord Jesus and maintained the fulfillment of the law, circumcision.

In the Book of Acts of the Apostles, in chapter 15: 6 to 21, there is a report of a meeting of the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem, which had the objective of examining and deciding on the question of whether or not to circumcise the Gentiles, presented by the Apostle Paul and Barnabas.

In this meeting, or council, after the Apostle Peter spoke, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas also spoke; then James presented the conclusive opinion.

In his Epistle to the Galatians, speaking about this same meeting, in chapter 2:9, the Apostle Paul describes: "And when James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision."

Thus, the Apostle Peter was also considered a pillar, a leader among the Apostles and Elders in the Church of Jerusalem.

The following is the text from the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew, chapter 16: 17 to 19, which reports a statement by Jesus regarding the Apostle Peter: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Thus, the Lord Jesus affirmed that the Apostle understood that he was the Christ not by human reason, but by revelation from the Father; and then, he changes the Apostle's name from Simon to Peter, which means stone, rock, in the Greek language. The Apostle Peter is stone, and not the stone; that is, he is the foundation, but not the foundation. It is evident that the cornerstone, the foundation, is Christ.

And continuing: "and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; here, literally, the Lord Jesus speaks about his Church.

Verse 19 in the Greek language reads as follows:

