My Beloved Ones,

In the Epistle for this Sunday of the Holy Cross, St. Paul writes to the Hebrews reminding them that the High Priest was chosen from among men to make offerings to God on behalf of the people, and that “He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness…” (Hebrews 5) We also know that the first High Priest was Aaron, and that the responsibility was forever given to his descendants from his Tribe, Levi. However, as an imperfect human, Aaron was not the “type” who prefigured Christ, but instead, it was another Priest, known as Melchizedek.

Melchizedek is mentioned only once in the Old Testament, when he offers a blessing to Abraham: “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth and blessed be God Most High...’” (Genesis 14:18-20). We can see from these three verses alone that He offers us many examples of Christ. Like our Lord, Melchizedek’s offerings of bread and wine, are a type of the Holy Eucharist; but on a deeper level, Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness”, and the city of his Kingdom means “Peace”. Are words like King of Righteousness and King of Peace not perfect ways to describe Christ?

Though the Law of Moses (and so, the office of the High Priest) would not be given for many generations, Melchizedek is said to be a Priest of God without explanation, just as, “…Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest but was appointed…” by God (Hebrews 5:5). It is for this reason that St. Paul quotes the Psalms, which say that that Messiah was thought to be “…a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:6)

Christ was able to sympathize with our weaknesses, like a High Priest, because He “…in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 5:15) Christ is the perfection of the Royal Priesthood, because He did not continue the old Priesthood of animal sacrifices, but instead reunited God and Man by offering Himself up through the instrument of His Precious and Life-Giving Cross. Therefore, this Sunday of the Holy Cross is a reminder of why we as Christians are filled with joy, rather than fear at the sign of the Cross, because it is by the Cross that we are able to “…approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

And so, my beloved ones, may this Sunday offer you a spirit of hope and renewal. During this first half of Holy and Great Lent, we have struggled to grow through fasting and prayer, but this Epistle is a reminder of the strength that we may find in our Kingly Priest, who seeks to uplift & to serve, and to bring us all into His merciful & loving embrace.

+ALEXIOS
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