

Touching The Future Now - 8th Day

We Americans love the future. When I was a kid, Disney's Tomorrowland was all the rage. The 1964 World's Fair was chock full of futuristic technology for the "Space Age." We were sure that we would conquer all of the world's problems through technology and as the song says, "our future was so bright, we had to wear shades." Way back then, everything we did was "Mod" (short for modern), and we called ourselves "The Decade of Change" (hmm...sound familiar??). Through the years we've seen the bright hope of technology in Star Trek necessarily mutate along the way, eventually into the depressingly dark world of Deep Space Nine. We've seen information technology go from its promises of making our lives so much easier, to literally taking over our lives. While I was a child of 11, my family's visit to Disney's Tomorrowland was a thing of awe. However, just a few short years later, when I took my own 11-year-old daughter to the same attraction, she looked up at me and said, "Dad, this is pretty cheesy!" I couldn't help but concur and be amazed at my daughter's shrewd powers of observation. Tomorrowland had already LONG become yesterland and although our "mod" technology had achieved some pretty marvelous feats along the way, indeed all of the world's problems had not been solved by it. In fact, some of the world's problems had become much worse because of it. Remarkably, what our world still hasn't discovered is that EVERY attempt to secure the future through technology, politics, art, relationships, the best education, a great career (or anything else you can think of) without Christ at our very center and as our ultimate end, always ends up like the folks at the "Tower of Babel" (Genesis 11), fragmented, alienated, and ultimately in darkness.

This human fascination with the future, however, is a very natural and good thing. At creation, God put into each of us the innate desire to draw-near toward our ultimate end, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, fulfilled in Christ. It isn't fulfilled through manipulating the future with our technology or our politics, or especially in carrying Christ around, as though in a bottle, to be applied only when He suits our own tastes. That fulfillment of future is only experienced through a very present, moment-by-moment participation in the heavenly-end-of-time, through Him who transcends all time. Thus, while the world has only seven days...through Christ's Resurrection His Church is given an Eighth. In Pascha, God gives us a great gift, a taste of the mystery of the Eighth Day, a portal through which we may enter the Heavenly future.

The Eighth Day is the Lord's Day, (in Greek "kyriaki"), and although we encounter this day most profoundly on the day of Christ's resurrection, Kyriaki is not only about Sunday, nor merely about the Easter celebration once a year. While the seventh day of creation was God's day of rest, the Eighth Day (as we'll see below) is our entry into the peacefully resolute work of the heavenly, of a living worship, with a life of loving deeds that are formed in participation with the mind of Christ. The Eighth Day is our sampling, in this age, of the new and unending day of the Kingdom of God. At Assumption, our outdoor adult baptismal font is eight sided, whereby we enter into the Eighth Day through our watery participation in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Jesus gave us

eight Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10, eight blessings whereby we may further enter the Kingdom of Heaven's Eighth Day. In our Orthodox liturgy, our music has eight tones, through which we become earthly participants in Heaven's Eighth Day worship.

What is the Eighth Day? It is love so strong, that our attitude of hope always foresees the other person's fulfillment in Christ, no matter what. The Eighth Day is seeing Christ's face revealed in the face of every human person we encounter, and through each, imagining new ways to love Him. It is our peaceful rejection of the world's deathly culture of self-serving, because Christ conquered death by death. The Eighth Day is our joyful participation in the creativity of the Kingdom of Heaven's Economy—of God's self-offering way of reigning, even to those who hate us. Thus, the Eighth Day is also our being "in the world, but not of the world." It is our very present way of experiencing the new creation of the world through Christ—tasting of the new and unending day of the Kingdom of God.

The Eighth Day is our abiding in the WAY of the Kingdom of Heaven—where the whole cosmos finds its sum and its fulfillment in the glorified Person of Jesus Christ—who was glorified because He went to a cross, even out of love for those who hated Him. The Eighth Day is found in the liturgy of devotion found after the Divine Liturgy—our continual co-operation with Jesus in His heavenly ministry of love to those who suffer, who are oppressed, who are estranged and lonely, who are sick or injured, or who are poverty stricken and hungry. In our Divine Liturgy, as we look into our dome at the icon of heavenly worship, with whom we participate in the whole life of worship described in the sentence just above, we see that our Divine Liturgy and the whole Eucharistic life of our Church has this Eighth Day at its heart—to fulfill Christ's desire that ALL would be saved. As He taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven," ultimately, Christ intended for all Christians to live in ways that anticipate this endless Eighth Day, touching the future in the now.

Christ is risen!

"O Christ, great and most holy Pascha. O Wisdom, Word and Power of God, grant that we may more perfectly partake of You in the never-ending day of Your Kingdom" (Ninth Ode in the Paschal Canon).

Truly He has risen!

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