

Words about the Greeting : “Glory be to Jesus Christ”

– « **Слава Ісусу Христу** » –

There are certain Orthodox Christian persons for whom this greeting is or has been completely unfamiliar, and who therefore begin to wonder whether this sort of greeting is truly acceptable for Orthodox Christians to be using.

To begin with, it is necessary to recall that in the Holy Scriptures, statements related to this one were common, and they were even considered to be necessary. The following are examples of this :

- “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Hebrews 13:20-21).
- “Grow in the Grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18).
- “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Apocalypse 1:5-6).

The Holy Apostle Paul and all the other Holy Apostles indicated in one way or another that for us Orthodox Christians, everything must be in the context of loving God and doing His will. Their perception flows from the words of the Saviour in answer to the question about what is the greatest of the commandments. He replied : “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind’. This is the first and great and commandment. And the second is like it : ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). As it is commented about the second portion, it is important to understand that this means that we love our neighbour as being of the same nature as ourselves, created in God’s image. Saint Herman of Alaska is known for having said : “From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all, and do His holy will”.

Let us also keep in mind, along with Saint Herman, that from the moment when God created us human beings, it has been our highest purpose in everything to glorify God with our whole being, with our words, and with our deeds.

When someone says to us “Glory be to Jesus Christ” (« Слава Ісусу Христу »), we correctly respond, “Glory be to Him forever”, or “Glory be to Him unto the ages” (« Слава навіки »). In responding thus, we are showing that we, too, praise God in this way, and that we wish to do so in the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is important to keep in mind that no-one can refer to one Person of the Most Holy Trinity without referring to or invoking all three together, because the Three Persons are One God (without any separation, confusion or division). There is no possibility that we could in any way dissect the Holy Trinity, in whom the Three Persons comprise one indivisible being. Referring to, speaking about, or glorifying any one of the Persons extends to all at the same time. For example :

- “Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).
- “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever” (Romans 16:25-27).
- “All the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” (2 Corinthians 1:20).
- “[...] that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation ; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12-14).
- “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Jesus Christ to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).
- “[...] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).
- “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).
- “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18).

There is more than one reason why “Glory be to Jesus Christ” has been a widespread greeting, particularly in Western Ukraine. It is known that this greeting has been used in the Kyiv Metropolia since the 1200s, and especially in the Latvian, Belarus, Kholm and Volynian dioceses.

The Mongols invaded Kyivan (Kievan) Rus’ first in 1233 at the Battle of the Kalka River. This invasion was merely a test by the Mongols of the strength of the Kyivan princes. The Kyiv Kingdom, divided by battles between the sons of King Yaroslav, was defeated. Then, the major invasion of 1237-1242 by Batu Khan caused the whole of the region to be subjected to the Golden Horde, and this gave rise to the requirement of an annual payment to the Khan by the princes.

The Mongol territory then covered all of modern Ukraine and Poland, and much of modern Russia and Belarus. With them came Islam and pressure against the Orthodox Christian Faith. The mutual greeting “Glory be to Jesus Christ” and “Glory be unto the ages” became a clear statement that those who said it believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity. Without such a greeting, there would be doubt. To say this before the Muslim, however, could mean risking death (although the Mongols were mostly tolerant of Christians, as long as they paid their dues). The Mongol presence remained in the northerly regions until 1480. However, the Crimean Khanate remained.

Meanwhile, the Lithuanian Kingdom developed in the northwest under King Daniel Romanovich of Halych (†1264), and it was for a time the largest kingdom in Europe. It was at first by no means a fully Christian state, and in some ways, the continuation of this greeting kept Orthodox Christians together.

During the Zbarazh War of 1675, the Holy Dormition Lavra of Pochaiv was threatened by an Ottoman onslaught. The Holy Monastery was visibly saved by the Mother of God, and many of the invading soldiers became Christians. However, it was not until after another war that the Ottomans were driven south in 1699. There were frequent political events which encouraged the use of this greeting. Even though other Christians began to use this greeting, its foundation is and was Orthodox Christian.

There is a monastic reason for using this greeting as well. In the context of spiritual struggle, the powers of darkness often try to deceive monks (especially hermits) by pretending to be an angel of light. The Holy Apostle Paul warned about this manner of deception in 2 Corinthians 11:14, where he said : “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light”. The same Holy Apostle Paul also says : “No one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3-4). Therefore, monks will not answer a knock or greeting at their door unless the person will first confess Christ. This greeting is one of the alternative possible greetings.

This greeting is a good, and spiritually healthy greeting. It has a long history amongst Orthodox Christians. It confirms our faith in the Most Holy Trinity, and in the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Even though all Orthodox Christians do not use this specific greeting, there are many similar ones, such as “Glory be to You, O Lord” (« Слава Тебе, Господи »). A Russian man in Vancouver, who, as a young child saw Tsar Nicholas II, said this particular phrase (« Слава Тебе, Господи ») very often. There was no doubt about his being a Christ-loving man, nor about his being an Orthodox Christian.

Another related greeting is one which is exchanged amongst the clergy before the Symbol of Faith during the Divine Liturgy and on other occasions (and not

necessarily confined to clergy). This greeting is "Christ is in our midst". Saint John of Valamo frequently used this greeting in letters. This affirmation is itself a reflection of the words of the Saviour that "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). This statement is repeated by Saint John Chrysostom in the prayer of the third antiphon of the Divine Liturgy, and it is referred to in many prayers.