



Excerpt from *Christ Our Pascha*

### **The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts accentuates two elements: the preparation of catechumens for Baptism, and the repentance of the faithful. During this Liturgy, the community prays for and instructs the catechumens. In the second half of Great Lent it adds petitions for “those about to illumined.” These are the catechumens who will be baptized at that year’s celebration of Pascha. The first part of the Liturgy, Vespers with Old Testament readings, has a distinctly didactic character. The readings from the books of Genesis and Exodus present to the catechumens, as well as to the baptized, God’s providence and care for his Chosen People. The book of Proverbs, in turn, offers the teachings of Divine Wisdom for daily living. Through these readings of the Old Testament and the prayers of the Liturgy, the catechumens prepare for enlightenment in Baptism. A symbol of this preparation and reception of the light of God’s Word is the blessing with the candle and incense, accompanied by the words “The light of Christ enlightens all.” This is a sign of Christ who triumphs over darkness, a symbol of the coming light of Pascha, and the baptism of the catechumens into the Death and Resurrection of Christ. (#401)