

“Thine Own of Thine Own We Offer unto Thee”

A Practical Guide to the Divine Liturgy
for Orthodox Christian Laity

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with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH

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Preface

“The Church is the temple of God, the holy precinct, the house of prayer, the assembling together of the people, the body of Christ, His name, the bride of Christ, calling forth the peoples for repentance and prayer... The Church is an earthly heaven, in which the heavenly God dwells and moves about” (*St Germanos, Patriarch of Constantinople, 8th century*). The most profound act of prayer which takes place in the church is the Divine Liturgy. Through the Holy and Divine Liturgy, God the Lover and man the creature who is beloved enter into a communion of love which purifies and illumines man and glorifies God. Man raises his whole person, and through his shared nature with it, the creation itself, back to God in a movement of free return to the ancient Beauty by means of the Divine Liturgy. This is Giver and Gift; it is a movement of eternal life, of divine energy, revealing the Age to come, the Kingdom of God.

This booklet serves to promote a greater awareness among Orthodox Christians and others about the meaning of the Divine Liturgy insofar as human words are capable of portraying it. The author wishes to promote a more heart-felt, intelligent, very practical and even physical engagement with the praying of the Liturgy. Through one’s participating with knowledge in the act of liturgizing, the whole of one’s Orthodox Christian way of life takes on greater meaning and leads the believer to the acquisition of godliness and “holiness without which no one can see the Lord.”

Many years ago, a pious layman, Robert S. Andrews, wrote a guide to the Liturgy, “In Remembrance of Me,” from which this revision takes its inspiration. The title has been changed slightly to reflect the actual language from the eucharistic prayer of St John Chrysostom, which is the most commonly celebrated liturgy in the Orthodox Church. The booklet has been completely rewritten, to meet the specific demands of our new generation of worshippers, more and more of whom grew up outside of Orthodoxy and, in some cases, outside of any meaningful Christian formation. Many adult converts to Orthodoxy bring concepts inherited from previous experiences which are at odds with the Holy Tradition. So, the author has felt it necessary to revise the whole work. Since there are always many questions raised about this everywhere, and since oftentimes very firm and dogmatic assertions tend to be made on slender bases, special attention has been given to practical instructions as to what exactly to do at each part of the Liturgy. There is some wide variation of acceptable practice across the Church; hopefully, the directions given in this booklet from the “Mediterranean” practice will help all who read this book to be more intentional and involved in practicing their own accepted tradition, wherever it may differ. When in doubt, one should refer questions of specific devotional practices to his or her parish priest and spiritual father.

Biblical quotations are generally taken from the Orthodox Study Bible (OSB), Nashville, TN, 2008. However, the citations from the Psalms are taken from The Psalter of the Seventy, (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, MA, 1974) and the traditional enumeration of the Psalter is employed (LXX= Septuagint). If you use a non-Orthodox Bible to look up the references to the Psalms, you need to make a conversion, as follows:

- Psalms 1 through 8, and 148 through 150, bear the same enumeration for both LXX and Western Bibles.
- Psalm 9 (LXX) = Psalms 9 and 10 (Western)
- Psalms 10 through 112, and 116 through 145 (LXX) = same number, + 1 (Western). *E.g., Psalm 50 (LXX) = Psalm 51 (Western)*
- Psalm 113 (LXX) = Psalms 114 and 115 (*Western*)
- Psalms 114 and 115(LXX) = Psalm 116 (*Western*)
- Psalms 146 and 147 (LXX)= Psalm 147 (*Western*)

Heartfelt gratitude is expressed to the Rt Rev Bp Joseph, Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, for his blessing over,

and promotion of, the publication of this booklet. The author extends his earnest request that those who profit from reading this book will offer a prayer for his salvation.

Fr Patrick B. O'Grady, *Feast of the Transfiguration, 2010*

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Part One: Introductory Questions

What is the Divine Liturgy?

The Divine Liturgy is the highest form of prayer in which a sacred exchange takes place. Mankind offers to God “his temporal and limited life (in exchange) for the eternal and infinite life of God” (Elder Zacharias of Essex).

The Divine Liturgy is God’s offering to man, and man’s offering to God. (Hieromonk Grigorios of Koutloumousiou)

The Divine Liturgy is the sacred work of the entire Church, the clergy with the people... All (the ranks of the clergy, monastics, and lay persons) work together in the ritual action of divine worship and all reap the fruits of spiritual goods and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, all of which flow forth from this ritual. (Ioannis Fountoulis)

The Liturgy is the common prayer of Christians

Christians have gathered together on the first day of the week, and at other special times, to offer their prayers in common and to bring gifts of bread and wine, according to the commandment of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Liturgy is the holy tradition of worship, the “sacrifice of praise,” which accomplishes these things.

When an Orthodox Christian places his first priority on the remembrance of God, he begins the new week by attending the service of vespers on the eve before the first day of the week, keeps a holy silence in his heart until the Liturgy “on the morning of the Day of the Sun” and defers all other obligations in his life until after accomplishing the mystical sacrifice. By putting God first he finds meaning in all his labors in the new week now unfolding before him. As the Apostle James teaches us, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally...” (James 1: 5). Every one of us needs wisdom to face the myriad problems which present themselves to us every day: personal, familial, work- or school-related. If God comes first, then we can meet every problem with confidence, knowing that His merciful grace will guide us toward what is pleasing to Him and good for our salvation.

Why must one pray at church? Why not pray alone, in one’s home, or in the woodlands, or in any beautiful place indoors or out? Why must a person pray at a certain place? Does not the Bible say that “God does not live in houses made by man”? These questions are constantly posed by many in our times. And, to tell the truth, the answer is simply that one may pray to God in any place, at any time, and under any circumstances. However, God has always summoned man to pray to Him and to offer Him due worship at specific times and in specific places for specific purposes. Not all prayer is of the same depth—or height. That great liturgist and ecumenical father, St John Chrysostom, taught us, “If we pray alone, our prayer is weak and ineffectual. But when we pray in church with the community in the liturgy, our prayer becomes very powerful.” Our Lord Jesus taught us, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20). The priest cites these very words in the prayer of the 3rd antiphon said just before the Little Entrance, the first solemn act of the Divine Liturgy.

Under this heading, a comment can be made regarding timeliness in showing up for the Liturgy. It is best to be arrive for or during the service which precedes the Liturgy (Orthros, or in some traditions, the Hours). It is also fine to arrive during the enarxis of the Liturgy itself (the opening portion, up until the Entrance with the Gospel). If you arrive after the Entrance, you are late; and if you arrive after the reading of the Holy Gospel, you should refrain from receiving Holy Communion (unless you have a pastoral exception from your priest which explicitly allows for this, due to some personal exigency).

The Liturgy is better experienced than understood

Above all, the Liturgy is known through experience. Jesus said to His very first followers, in response to their inquiry, “Come, and see!” Our Lord did not engage them in a theological dispute or a long-winded talk; rather, He invited them to experience Him, the Author of Life. However, St Peter, one of Christ’s first disciples, admonished us to build upon our experience, “Add to your faith, virtue, to virtue, knowledge” (2 Peter 1: 5). So it helps a great deal if one participates in the Liturgy with some knowledge of what is going on. This little booklet gives the reader basic information about the Liturgy, as an aid in participating in it with deeper awareness.

Ask the Lord and your spiritual father to help you to put into practice the holy things taught here and to be obedient to these exhortations. Wherever things stated here differ in some small way from what you have learned from your priest, discuss it with him and out of respect for him always defer in love to his specific direction. If you do these things in humility and love, you will find “the peace which passeth understanding” in all that you do. Your active participation in the Liturgy will energize your faith!

The bodily movements of prayer in the Liturgy

Before we begin our commentary, we must say something about how to participate bodily in the Liturgy. Orthodox Christian faith is deeply incarnational; that is, the whole person is involved with prayer. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Many things can be said of this profound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, in this paragraph, we restrict ourselves to looking only at the truth that the whole person worships, not just the mind. In the commentary below, at the head of each section, the bodily posture and bodily action will be noted. These actions include the following:

- **Standing**

We stand erect, not leaning against anything, hands at the side or over the heart or very modestly upraised (any of these positions, without drawing others’ attention to ourselves). Standing is the “default” posture unless noted here or there otherwise. “Praise the Lord, ye who stand in the house of the Lord.”

- **Bowing, metania**

There are two kinds of metanias, a great metania to the ground (prostration) and a little metania (bow from the waist only). The first is not used in the Divine Liturgy, since it implies penitential reverence a spiritual ethos not appropriate to the festal and paschal character of any Divine Liturgy, whether held on Sunday or a weekday. However, the little metania (a bow from the waist, with right hand extended, palm facing outward, to the floor, and arising again to the upright position) is used several times in the Liturgy at the places so designated in this commentary.

- **The sign of the cross** (in Greek, “**making a cross**”)

The act of signing oneself with the Cross is a profound act of prayer, “the light of Thy countenance hath been signed upon us.” We use the thumb and first two fingers of the right hand to touch the forehead, the bottom of the chest where it meets the abdomen, right shoulder and then left shoulder. The other two fingers are cupped into the palm of the hand. It is always fitting to sign oneself with the cross as one is inspired through humble prayer, as long as one observes modesty and does not disturb those around him.

We sign ourselves with the cross in particular:

- whenever we pass the center-line (east-west axis) of the nave, thus passing the holy Table.
- before venerating an icon, the cross, or the Gospel
- At the opening exclamation of the Liturgy, “Blessed is the kingdom...”
- whenever the priest says “glory” in the exclamation at the end of any priestly prayer.
- at the beginning and end of the Gospel reading.

--during the Creed, upon hearing the words, “(the Holy Spirit)... Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified”

--in the Anaphora, at the words “Thine own of Thine own...”

--before approaching the Chalice to commune in the holy Mysteries.

--after the Liturgy, before taking antidoron (blessed bread).

However, we do not make the sign of the cross:

--when the priest blesses us with the Peace.

--when the priest or deacon honors us with incense.

--when we are directly in front of the Chalice to commune.

--when we take a personal blessing from the bishop or priest.

- **Inclining the head**

The inclination of the head is appropriate whenever the priest blesses the people with the Peace, whenever the priest or deacon censes toward the people, and at the Prayer of Inclination which follows the Lord’s Prayer at the diaconal prompt, “Bow your heads unto the Lord!”

- **Hands over the heart**

That is, the placement of the right hand over the heart and the left hand over the right hand. This posture can express intense humility and may be observed at several moments in the Liturgy, especially during the recitation of the 10th pre-Communion Prayer, “I believe, O Lord, and I confess...” We maintain this posture during our approach to and reception of Holy Communion (see Appendix A).

- **Lifting of the hands**

The lifting of the hands, with palms facing upward, is much mentioned in the Holy Scriptures as a posture for prayer; for example, “Lift up your hands unto the Lord, O ye servants of the Lord.” The Church has learned in Her long experience to teach the faithful to be modest in this posture, as it can easily cause disorder in the liturgical community. Indeed, the excessive raising of hands is a hallmark of heterodox enthusiastic and Pentecostal groups. Holy counsel teaches us not to raise the hands above the level of our eyes and ears, at the highest, and to maintain this posture only for brief periods of time in public prayer.

- **Veneration (kissing) of icons**

We venerate the icons by kissing them lightly with the lips. It is an ancient custom also to touch the icon with the forehead after kissing it. The public act of venerating the icon is a hallmark of Orthodoxy, mentioned expressly in the hymnody on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy (1st Sunday of Lent). Let us never be ashamed to perform this profound act of worship!

Be sure that your lips are free of any lipstick or make-up. It is always poor manners and even harmful to certain icons to leave lip marks. Approach the icon on the proskynetation (icon-stand). Make two metanias with signs of crosses in front of the icon. Then, kiss the right foot, or right hand (or, lacking them depicted, the right shoulder) of the central figure in the icon. Never venerate the face directly. Light your candle(s), as you wish, then make one more metania and cross and move aside to your place.

- **Lighting candles**

The act of lighting a candle is a beautiful form of embodied prayer which shows the light of Christ present for ours and others salvation. Christ is “the Light of the world”; lighting a candle expresses this truth in combination with our prayer for our family members and others, as we feel moved to pray. We usually light candles (also called “tapers”) when we enter the nave, not when leaving. Take your tapers as you enter the narthex and leave your monetary offering in support of the parish and pay for the tapers.

Approach to venerate the icon, then light and place your taper(s) in the place designated and then take

your place. Light a candle provided there is not some liturgical action taking place, so as not to cause a distraction.

- **Using the voice to sing or to recite**

We use our voice in singing the hymns (according to your local parish tradition) and prayerful responses, such as “Lord have mercy,” “To Thee, O Lord,” and others to be mentioned below, and in saying the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the (10th) Pre-Communion Prayer.

- **Sitting** (always attentively; never casually)

There is no place for sitting as a posture of prayer, strictly speaking. However, for practical reasons, many parish churches and even some monasteries now provide seating in the form of chairs, or even pews (a borrowing from non-Orthodox church communities). When sitting in church, we do not adopt a casual attitude. Rather, we avoid crossing of legs and other elements of a leisurely posture. Both feet should always be in contact with the floor, so that we are ready to stand at the diaconal prompt, “Let us attend!” or “Stand aright!” There are two places in the Liturgy when sitting is precisely indicated, although never required: during the reading of the Apostle and during the delivery of the homily. Out of respect for the presence of the Holy Things during the distribution of Holy Communion, standing through this period of the Liturgy is encouraged. Obviously, in cases of weakness, sickness, old-age, and the like, sitting may be necessary. If in doubt, discuss this with your priest or sponsor.

- **Kneeling** (*gonyklisia*, “bending of the knees”)

Kneeling is not indicated in the Divine Liturgy, due to the fact that the penitential nature of kneeling conflicts with the paschal nature of the Eucharist (not only on Sunday, but any day).

If the universal custom is to practice the given bodily action, it will be stated in CAPITAL letters.
If the action is generally accepted to be done, but is not required, it is stated in lower-case letters.
If the posture remains unchanged from one heading to the next (e.g., *we remain standing*, or the like), the action is noted in *italics*, after the head of the paragraph in question.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

I. Where does the Divine Liturgy come from?

A. *The Liturgy is the acme of the age-old tradition of worship.*

“Thy processions have been seen, O God, the processions of my God, of my King Who is in His sanctuary. Princes went before, and after them the chanters, in the midst of timbrel-playing maidens. In the congregations bless ye God, the Lord from the well-springs of Israel.” (Psalm 67: 25-27; 11th century B.C.)

Immediately after the exile of our common ancestors, Adam and Eve, from the Eden of delight, men built altars and prayed to God, accompanied by sacrifices of various kinds. Noah built an altar after the great Deluge, as did Abraham and the Patriarchs, our forefathers who received the first promises from God. Moses was instructed to build a specific tent of worship, the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Later, King David’s son, Solomon, received the command to build God a house of worship, the first Temple in Jerusalem. All this was to teach man that liturgical worship, under the direction of the ministers duly appointed by God, comprises the highest form of prayer—the acme of spiritual experience: *I was glad because of them that said unto me: Let us go into the house of the Lord* (Psalm 121: 1).

The Holy and Divine Liturgy is the product of two elements: first, the order of worship taught by God to Moses in the Old Testament, augmented by the practice of interpreting Holy Scripture, dating back to the ministry of Ezra the scribe (6th century B.C.); and second, the Mystical Supper itself, which is the direct instruction given by Our Lord Jesus Christ on the eve of His philanthropic Passion and Crucifixion. On that night, He “traditioned” Himself to us mystically in the offered bread, His Body, and in the wine, His Blood.

After Christ’s glorious Resurrection “on the third day” (Sunday), He appeared many times to His Apostles and taught them “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1: 3). The Church has always understood this to mean, among other things, direct instruction to them concerning the Liturgy. In the Book of the Acts, we learn about the sending forth of St Paul in his apostolic journeys. He went out from Antioch, where the Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, laid hands on him to commission him for that work. The text actually says “while they were *celebrating the Liturgy* [Greek, *leitourgountes*, “*liturgizing*”] unto the Lord, and praying and fasting” (Acts 13: 2, 3, my translation). So the Liturgy is the fundamental and most profound way in which the Church shows herself to be what she is: the New Israel, the Bride and Body of Christ.

B. *The Liturgy is the product of divine revelation as well as the greatest human cultural achievement*

The Divine Liturgy comes to us from the Lord Himself, and is celebrated by His Apostles and their successors, the Orthodox Catholic bishops, right down to our time, in an uninterrupted continuum of faith and love. This living process will continue, without a doubt, by God’s holy Providence, until the Lord Himself appears again to “judge the living and the dead.” St Paul informs us, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, that he “received from the Lord” (11: 23) that which he passed on to the Corinthians; namely, the Eucharist in which bread and wine are offered. The bread becomes the Body of Christ; and the wine, the Blood of Christ. This practice of liturgizing was spread by all of the Apostles, throughout the ancient world. After their passing from this transitory life to their reward, the Liturgy was celebrated in every place with both exacting uniformity and marvelous diversity. The uniformity is expressed in the central act of calling down the Holy Spirit, a little Pentecost, in which Christ becomes present to the

faithful. This is the divine nature of the liturgy: changeless, mystical, transcendent, surpassing the understanding, pure prayer. The diversity is expressed by the out-growth of localized liturgical families. For example, the liturgy was celebrated in a certain precise way in Jerusalem and in Antioch. This Antiochene way of liturgizing was carried by St John Chrysostom to New Rome (Constantinople), where it became the basis for the Constantinopolitan, or imperial, “Great Church,” liturgy. This was somewhat different from how the Liturgy was prayed in Alexandria; and yet different again in the West; in old Rome, Lyons (Gaul), and Milan. This expresses the human nature of the liturgy. Like Jesus our Lord Himself, Who possesses two natures “inseparable yet unconfused,” so the liturgy possesses both a divine, changeless aspect as well as a human, linguistic and cultural expression, which is subject to constant change over the centuries and from one place to another.

II. When the Divine Liturgy is celebrated and by Whom

The Liturgy may be served on any day, throughout the year, with an important exception: during the Forty-day Fast, Great Lent, no Liturgy with the Eucharist, or consecration of bread and wine, is served Monday through Friday. Instead, we serve a special form of the Liturgy, called the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. This special liturgy is celebrated without the Eucharist and is actually a very compunctionate service of Holy Communion. That is why it is called “Presanctified”: the bread and wine presented here were consecrated on the previous Sunday. Also, during Lent, the usual form of the liturgy, that of St John Chrysostom, is served on Saturday, but the older and longer form of the liturgy, that of St Basil, is served on Sundays. Although other forms of the liturgy are served periodically at certain times of the year, the most common form of the Divine Liturgy celebrated in the Orthodox Catholic Church throughout the world is that of St John Chrysostom, a pastorally beautiful liturgy in which Chrysostom abbreviated the longer prayers inherited from the ancient Jerusalemite Liturgy of St James and the profoundly theological Liturgy of St Basil.

We must first look at the place which the Liturgy has in the normal flow of time. Then, we can examine its basic shape and proceed from there to walk through the Liturgy from beginning to end in order to follow its detailed movement with understanding.

A. The Liturgy in time

The Liturgy is independent from the daily cycle of time. This temporal movement through the day is marked in the Church by special services of worship: Vespers at sunset (the beginning of the new day), Compline after the evening meal, the Midnight service, Orthros before sunrise and the canonical Hours (First, Third, Sixth, and Ninth) through the daylight hours. In parish churches, only Vespers and Orthros (also called Matins) are regularly celebrated, according to the parish needs, except during Great Lent when services become more frequent and complete. Each of these services of prayer mark time and sanctify it. But the Liturgy itself transcends time and therefore does not mark time in any way. Although the Liturgy can be served at any time of day or night, usually it is served in the morning, after Orthros. Therefore, faithful Orthodox Christians make it a habit to attend Vespers the night before the Liturgy and to keep a quiet evening with prayer and vigil, as strength enables. Early in the morning, the faithful return to the church temple for Orthros and remain for the Liturgy. This is the context in time, as usually celebrated in the parishes of many Orthodox Churches. The monastic pattern differs a bit (the Hours are said directly before Liturgy), thus showing that Orthros is not a service of preparation for the Liturgy, strictly speaking; but rather, it has its own theological and prayerful ethos.

The Liturgy is not one service among many; it is in a class by itself. The faithful pray in the other services; but in the Divine Liturgy, they share in the liturgical “work.” The services of the daily cycle (Vespers, Orthros, Hours) assist the faithful to ascend noetically (spiritually) the “holy mountain” of the heart to converse with God liturgically. Imagine when one is preparing a meal for his family and for his

guests. He offers something to prepare them for the main meal. The same is true of the Liturgy itself. We have seen that the Liturgy is, basically, a very sacred meal. This meal needs preparation. So, you can see how unprepared and ill-fitted each of us might be, if we showed up late merely to “get communion.” We are not really present with full attentiveness; our heart and mind are still distracted by worldly cares. So, try to observe Vespers on the eve of the Liturgy and come to church early to hear Orthros (or the Hours) before the Liturgy begins. Then, your heart is warmed and your mind is attentive to the presence of the Lord. You make yourself ready to share in the sacred “work of prayer.”

B. What “Liturgy” is and who the participants are

In the original Greek, the word “liturgy” is actually compounded of two elements (*leitōs*, “people” and *ergēia*, “working”) the oldest and primary meaning of which is “the work of the people,” or “a public service.” In pre-Christian antiquity, this word meant the “duty,” or “function,” one would fulfill for the public good at his own expense. Thus, the “liturgy” is not something one gets, but rather what he gives. At the same time, as suggested at the end of the last paragraph, liturgy means “the work of prayer,” this stemming from a play on the words, *leitōs* ~ *liti*, “prayer, entreaty” (the first syllable of both is pronounced identically). It is work: nothing good is ever achieved without effort. So, we must expend some effort in order to participate actively and meaningfully.

It is prayer: let us begin by listening carefully, in order to learn to pray properly. It is of the people, thus necessitating a community. At least one other Orthodox Christian must be actively present with the bishop or priest in the praying of the Liturgy in order for it to take place. There are no “private liturgies.” Thus, the Liturgy needs a community for its proper celebration. With the apostolic minister presiding at the Holy Table, at least one other person, and with an offering of bread and wine, the Liturgy may proceed.

The Liturgy is a mosaic of Holy Scripture and prayer, all interwoven into an organic whole. Many have attempted to enumerate how many scriptural quotations and allusions are contained in the Liturgy. Such exercises are profitable, yet it is very difficult to effect an exact accounting, since almost every word of the Liturgy is deeply scriptural in tone and content, one phrase running into and even overlapping another. By praying and, over time, memorizing the Divine Liturgy, one learns to pray and even memorize a great deal of the Bible. It has been said that while many Christians study the Bible, we Orthodox pray the Bible!

Many of the most basic words of the Bible are frequently used in the Liturgy, in their original biblical language, so filled with meaning that they cannot be translated easily: “amen,” “alleluia,” “kyrie eleison,” “eucharist,” “Theotokos,” “Christ,” “trisagion,” and many more. A glossary of special liturgical vocabulary is provided at the end of this book for your handy reference. The glossary explains these words in simple terms for an aid in reading this book and in understanding the richness of the Divine Liturgy.

I. The three basic parts of the Liturgy

A. The Proskomidia

The first of the three parts of the Divine Liturgy is called the *Proskomidia*, or Preparation. In the Preparation, from the five breads¹ (*prosphora*, “offerings”) offered by a member or members of the congregation, the “Lamb” (the main element, which will become itself the Body of Christ at the Eucharist) along with the wine, are carefully arranged on the *diskos* (*paten*, the liturgical plate). Wine and a small amount of water are poured into the *poterion* (*chalice*, the liturgical cup) in preparation for their being carried in a procession from the *Prothesis*, the Table of Preparation, to the Holy Table at the Great

¹ There is also a custom of providing a single loaf, on which all five cuttings are stamped in miniature.

Entrance, later. The bread must have no other ingredients than what the Church prescribes: water, flour, salt, and yeast. No oil or other additive may be used, not even on the baking pans. It must be well-baked, after careful preparation. Yeasted bread is always used, since the bread rises and “lives.” We never use unleavened bread. The wine must be pure red grape wine (not blush, but dark), naturally sweet, and not “fortified.” The Preparation is completed by the priest in the altar, usually during the course of the Service of Orthros. This is the only portion of the Divine Liturgy which is served by the priest without the participation of the laity.

After the priest says some introductory prayers (he himself having already said earlier the pre-communion prayers mentioned in the appendix, “How to prepare for Holy Communion”), he enters the holy altar and dons his vestments with the specific vesting prayers (mostly citations of select psalm verses) for each article and then washes his hands. The act of washing the hands is not mere “manners.” There is an inscription before the entrance of the ancient Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople, *nipsonanomemamonanopsin*, a Greek-language palindrome, “wash your sins, not just your face.” By this act of ceremonial washing, the priest demonstrates his rejection of all sin, any grudges, and all impurity. Let each of us faithful draw near to church with the same spirit! Once vested, the priest does nothing in his own name, but rather all “in the Name of the One Who sent him.” No bishop or priest possesses the ministry on his own merit, he provides the hands and voice for Christ Himself. The vestments are indicative of the divine, changeless and life-bestowing grace of the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, Who is “He Who offereth and He Who is offered.”

Now the priest is ready to begin the Proskomidia. At the Prothesis Table, which is like the Cave of Bethlehem, Christ is born for us. Each of the five small loaves mentioned above provides one element of cut bread to be placed on the diskos. Each portion is cut out with very exacting detail, all accompanied by specific prayers and exclamations. From one loaf is cut the “Lamb” marked with the monogram of Christ (IC XC), along with another Greek word (NI KA), in a four-fold pattern each quarter of which has two letters, all of which means “Jesus Christ overcomes.” The Lamb itself will become the Body of Christ for Holy Communion. The mingling of the wine and the water in the poterion (chalice) shows that Our Lord on the Cross shed both blood and water to accomplish our salvation: as the Gospel reports, “one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (John 19:34). A second loaf yields a triangular portion symbolizing the Mother of God: “the queen stood at Thy right hand.” Then from a third loaf are cut nine small particles symbolizing the ranks of angels and saints. The names of many great saints are read as these are cut and placed on the diskos. Finally, the fourth and fifth loaves yield particles for the Orthodox faithful living and dead, respectively. The priest keeps a book of commemorations in which he records the names of very many persons for whom he prays: his faithful parishioners, family members, other Orthodox Christians, names of many for whom prayer has been asked, including you, the reader! Note that the particles for both the living and the dead are assembled together on the diskos. We are in communion with our beloved departed; the Church does not forget those who have died in the faith.

The person who bakes the prosphora frequently will include a slip of paper on which is written the names of those living and departed for whom prayers are desired. It is a great honor and a holy work to bake bread and provide wine for the Divine Liturgy. Now that the diskos is populated with the various particles, we see in a microcosm the whole Church of the living and the departed in one body compact, with Our Lord, “the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world,” in the very center. The diskos with the Lamb and particles and the poterion with the wine and water within are now each covered with veils and over both a large cloth is placed, the *aer*. This is censed with the prayer of oblation. (In the manuscripts, this is the first prayer mentioned for the Liturgy). This preparatory portion of the Liturgy ends with a general censuring; usually at about the time the choirs are concluding Orthros. The altar servers

gather the remnants of the loaves and cut them up into bite-sized pieces to be served both to the communicants to provide for thorough consumption of the Precious Gifts, as well as again after the dismissal of the Liturgy to those who were not prepared to receive Holy Communion; these are called *antidoron*, “(a consolation) instead of the Holy Gifts.”

B. The Liturgy of the Word

With this second portion, really the first part of the Divine Liturgy proper, we now begin the common prayer, or the *synaxis*. St Paul admonishes all, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (*epi-synagoge*), as is the manner of some” (Hebrews 10: 25). From this point on, the community of the faithful joins with the presiding minister, the *bishop*, or his delegate, the *priest*, in celebrating the Liturgy as a whole. The chief assistant to the presiding minister is a clergyman as well, the *deacon*. One or more altar-servers usually assist in the altar as well, all of whom are vested for that service. The liturgy of the Word is made up of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph 5: 19) and has as its climax the reading of selections from the Apostle (the Book of the Acts or one of the apostolic epistles) and the Gospel. In the primitive Church, the Bible was the Sacred Scriptures of the Jews, the Old Testament. They would listen to the readings from the Scriptures, then circulate the apostolic letters, and read “the memoirs” which later became the Gospels. Now, we reserve Old Testament reading to festal and lenten Vespers and devote the Scripture readings of the Divine Liturgy to the two most important kinds of lessons from the Bible: the Apostle and, greatest of all, the Gospel itself. After the Gospel reading, the homily, or sermon, is delivered. The preacher bears the important task of interpreting to our own situation the sacred words we have just heard. This is not the time for the preacher to promote his opinions, but rather, to bring the holy Word of God to bear on our lives so that we become accountable to obey it, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1: 22). We can also style this portion of the Liturgy “of the catechumens” (an ancient nickname) because this was the portion of the Liturgy in which the Holy Scriptures were read and the homily preached. Those preparing for Holy Baptism, the catechumens were required to be present, so they could learn the teaching of Christ in preparation for their baptism. At the end of this portion of the Liturgy, they are dismissed. From this hinge event in the liturgy, the “dismissal of the catechumens” it takes its name (in Latin, *missa catechumenorum*, comes the common Western term for the liturgy, the “mass”).

Throughout the Liturgy of the Word, all of us, faithful, catechumens, and those inquiring into the Faith, (in ancient times, called *auditores*, “hearers”) are presented with holy teaching accessible to the ear. Consider that, of the five senses, the hearing is the one sense which cannot be turned off. One may close his eyes, shut his mouth, pinch his nose, and refuse to touch anything. But the ears remain always open. This is God’s way of ensuring that there is always a way to bring His holy message into the hearts of men, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God” (Romans 10: 17). Having said all this, and to give comfort to the hearing-impaired, we must also keep in mind that all the senses are employed in liturgical action, in order to raise the whole person to God: we see icons and processions, we smell incense burning and beeswax candles, we touch the ikons and make the Sign of the Cross, we taste Holy Communion. God “speaks” to us through all of our senses, and beyond—to the heart.

C. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

After the dismissal of the catechumens, the faithful continue in prayer toward the high point at which the mystical sacrifice will be accomplished. After a series of litanies in which petitions are offered “for all men...with uplifted hands” (I Timothy 2), the solemn offering is made. The bread and wine, prepared earlier, now are taken up and placed on the Holy Table. With very great compunction of heart, the faithful join with the celebrant in remembering the saving life, death and resurrection of the Lord, including His command to “Take, eat” and to “Drink.” The celebrant calls down the Holy Spirit upon the

synaxis and upon the gifts, remembering the saints and all the faithful. The faithful then join in saying the Lord’s Prayer together, and with other prayers all make ready the chamber of the heart and body to receive Holy Communion. After the Precious Gifts are distributed to all, with concluding prayers the dismissal is said and all “depart in peace.”

So, now that we have an overview of the Liturgy, we can move on to look at each part in more detail.

II. Entry into the Church

A. Preparation and Entry, inwardly (into the heart) and outwardly (into the church temple).

In general, prayerful participation in the Divine Liturgy calls for preparation well before coming to the church temple. It is important to find silence and inner composure before coming to church. Remember the long period of silence in which righteous Job immersed himself before speaking about God (see Job 2:13). Also, the Lord himself observed silence with His disciples before ascending Mount Tabor, when He was transfigured in glory. Practically speaking, in our busy world, we should at least keep the evening before the Liturgy in quietness and prayer. Holding our hearts in prayerfulness, and not speaking too much before time, we depart to church.

Some people have the custom of arriving at church and immediately going to an area to talk to others. Of course it is wonderful to greet one another, but we put the Lord last in this way. First, let us greet the Lord Himself! Then, after the Liturgy, we can and ought to greet one another. Therefore, refrain from socializing upon arrival at church. Immediately go to the church nave and greet the Lord in quiet prayer and veneration as described elsewhere in this booklet. If others greet you, politely smile and keep silence to send the subtle message, “I love you too, but the Lord comes first!”

B. The Orthodox church temple is divided into three sections.

First we must say something about the shape of the Orthodox church temple, so that we may enter it properly and know our place within it.

We enter the *narthex* from the noisy world outside and there prepare for prayer: putting off the coat, turning off the cell-phone, taking a breath and warming up or cooling down as needed.

Then, after leaving the offering of money in support of the parish and of the good causes sponsored by the parish, we take tapers (candles) and any printed aids available for the divine services. We stand before the doors (or colonnade) leading to the second area: the *nave*, or the holy place. The lighting of candle(s) as an act of prayer provides a concrete way in which one beseeches the Lord in behalf of others, both the living and those already departed this life. We do not reverence the icons or light tapers during certain more solemn moments in the Liturgy, if we are late. (See more about the lighting of candles, in the introduction). Opening the door (or passing through the colonnade), we make a metania (bow) and reverently enter, after ensuring that there will be no interruption of the sacred action being performed in the nave. Assuming we have arrived on time, at least as Orthros is concluding, we will notice the *Beautiful Gate* (sometimes called the Holy Doors, or the Royal Doors) being opened just prior to the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. (In some churches, the Doors had already been opened earlier). This Beautiful Gate both separates and conjoins the nave with the holy *altar* or the *bema*, the “high place,” where the Holy Table is centered. Here, only the clergy and their assistants enter, in order to fulfill their work. We all face east; we are properly oriented, both literally and metaphorically.

+ + +

Now let us take a closer look at the Liturgy... with a copy of the Divine Liturgy in our hands, let us walk through it, seeking to understand what we are doing. The emphasis here falls not on exhaustive liturgical commentary, something desirable for theological students and clerics, but rather on a practical

way of understanding which will yield more active and more attentive participation in the movement of the Liturgy as prayer. In the material which will be provided in further posts, we begin with the priest’s opening exclamation of the Divine Liturgy as a whole, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” So, let us attend!

III. The Divine Liturgy in Detail: A Guide to Attentive Participation

A. The Liturgy of the Word (enarxis and readings)

1. The enarxis, or beginning, of the Liturgy.

--ALL STAND AND MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS--

+ “*Blessed is the Kingdom...*”

The opening of the Beautiful Gate symbolizes the act of God drawing near to us in this world. God takes the initiative in coming into our darkened space. Remember, in the ancient Israelite temple, this curtain was permanently closed. No one could ever open it! The evangelist St Matthew reports, however, that when the Lord died on the Cross, “the veil in the Temple was torn into two from top to bottom” (Mt 27:51). So the first words of the common liturgy now sound forth with a great voice from the priest, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.” The Liturgy begins with the exclamation of God’s awesome Kingdom breaking into human affairs. “Blessed is...” not “Blessed be...” It is truly an exclamation, not a wish. Now He enters our world again, right now, through us!

We begin the Liturgy in a standing position. “Bless the Lord... ye that stand in the house of the Lord” (Polyeleos, Psalm 134:1-2) Standing is the basic bodily posture of prayer; “when you stand praying...” Unless there is a special need for doing so, worshippers stand for prayer and sit for listening (during the apostolic reading and sermon, but not for the Gospel reading). In this booklet, we note when sitting is permissible; however, it is understood that sitting is stated as a concession to need, since standing is the proper posture for prayer. (For more details, see the introduction.)

Frequently, we make the sign of the cross in worship and for various reasons. The making the sign of the cross is a very powerful bodily act of prayer. “This sign, according to oldest custom, we make in the following manner: the thumb, the index and the middle fingers of the right hand we join together, while we bend down the third and the little fingers till they touch the palm of the hand. Having disposed the fingers after this fashion, we touch with them first, the brow, then the breast, and after that, first the right shoulder and then the left, thus making on our persons the sign of the cross” (Fr Basil Kherbawi, 1931). Some make the cross from the forehead to the abdomen; this seems more correct as it symbolizes the sanctification of the depths of a person: Jesus said, “Out of his heart (Greek, “belly”) shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). There are many indications for the sign of the cross in the Liturgy; but in general, whenever one hears the word, “Glory” in the priestly prayers, he makes the sign of the cross. More details are provided in the introduction, above.

At the opening exclamation, all the people respond with the one-word prayer, “*Amen.*” This simple prayer is very powerful. The laity should learn to pray it with great intention. It basically means that the one saying the Amen takes up the prayer or exclamation which has just been uttered as if it were his or her very own. St Jerome of Bethlehem said that the Divine Liturgy as it was celebrated in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, right at the Empty Tomb itself, was so robust that the laity said “Amen” with the force of a thunderclap! Reach for this prayer and use it often. Consider it your responsibility as a layperson to say the *Amen* properly, in order to mark your active prayer in concert with the presiding minister and the rest of the community.

2. The Litany of Peace.

--One may be seated--

Now the deacon utters the *Litany of Peace*, also known as the *great ektenia*, a chain of biddings, in response to which all the people sing the simple and deep prayer, “Lord have mercy.” The deacon does this, standing on the *solea*, the area in front of the Beautiful Gate, raised up a bit from the rest of the nave. St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem in the 7th century, says that spiritually the *solea* represents “the river of fire separating the sinners from the righteous” (see Dan 7:10). Later, the faithful will approach the *solea* to receive Holy Communion, thus crossing this symbolic barrier.

Perhaps you have heard of the *Jesus Prayer*. When we pray, “Lord have mercy,” this is a very short version of it which is very often used in the Liturgy. Some people are confused in thinking that God is stingy and hesitant to give mercy; therefore, so they think, the prayer insists that He do so. This is a worldly and false way of viewing it. God grants mercy, “He sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5: 45). The place where the blockage occurs is on our part. When we pray this prayer with constancy and faith, we are purifying our own hearts which are crowded with the corrupt desires of this world. We do not know mercy, only because we ourselves are merciless to others. We are invited to discover the rich mercy of God which already abounds toward us: “the Lord passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, ‘The LORD God, compassionate, merciful, longsuffering, abounding in mercy and true’” (Exodus 34: 6).

The choir leads the singing of “Lord have mercy.” All of the people should take it up in concert and pray it with meaning. The choirs (properly two, one on the right and one on the left) exist in the churches in order to lift up all of the laity in their prayers and hymnody to God. There is a beautiful synergy of worship between clergy, choirs, and people. The laity benefit by becoming “caught up” in this triad. Those with fine voices ought to join the choir in order to put their talent to good use for the Master. Choir-singers comprise a ministerial rank in the holy church and benefit from certain prayers in their behalf: “for those who serve (clergy and their assistants) and for those who sing...”

The litany of peace, also called the *great litany*, is a school of prayer unto itself. Notice the progression of biddings and reflect upon the course of prayer as it unfolds from a simple plea for peace to an encompassing of the whole world and everyone in it in the loving and merciful embrace of the Lord. Notice the beginning: first, the proper atmosphere of true prayer is peace. Without peace, we cannot pray at all: “In peace, let us pray to the Lord.” Then, with peace, we pray for the highest kind of peace: “the peace from above...” Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you” (John 14: 27). Only then, having this “peace which passes understanding,” do we pray for “the peace of the whole world.” Sometimes our priorities are topsy-turvy. The great ektenia helps us organize our prayer, so that first things come first. We pray for the most important persons first, our spiritual fathers who care for our immortal souls, then the civil authorities who govern our temporal lives. After that, we pray for all humanity, in its various states and conditions, and lastly, for ourselves with a final prayer from the deacon, “help us, save us...,” to which we add our “Lord have mercy.”

The *deacon*, like an angel, intones these biddings in a fulsome voice. If there be no deacon, the litanies (and some other diaconal parts) are assumed by the priest. Happy are the parishes where the diaconate is active, since they see a beautiful “ministering angel” holding his *orarion* (the long, fluttering element of his vestment which draws our attention to where it should go) aloft, carrying the prayers of the people from the nave to the altar and the Holy Gospel from the altar to the nave. The deacon is the ordained minister who “serves” in the fundamental sense rooted in the Gospel itself. Since the deacon moves so often to and fro, between altar and solea, we call the north and south doors (on either side of the Beautiful Gate) through which he so often passes the “deacon’s doors.”

3. *The Antiphons*

--One may remain seated--

After the great ektenia, we begin to chant a series of *antiphons*, or short repetitions of refrains, interspersed with verses from the Psalter, the great prayer-book of the church. These refrains help us to ascend from the affairs of this world to a vibrant and sober realization of the presence of God in our midst. In ancient times, the antiphons were very lengthy and provided a means for singing while folks were walking to the specific church where the liturgy would be held on that given day. In the first antiphon we ask the Mother of God to intercede for us. Here, our Orthodox understanding of the role of the Mother of God (*Theotokos*, God-bearer) is clarified. She is, above all, our great intercessor. She is not an apostle who teaches; rather, she is a mother who entreats for us. In the second antiphon, we implore the Son of God Himself to save us; and in the third, we take up the *apolytikion* (“dismissal hymn,” since we heard it first near the dismissal from the vespers on the evening just past) of the day as the refrain, celebrating the Kingdom within and among us. As a unit, the antiphons prepare us for the solemnities ahead. We are still in the beginning stage of the Liturgy. There are some alternatives during this portion of the Liturgy, depending on the parish and the practice of each diocese. Sometimes, the monastic (but not more ancient) practice of chanting the so-called “typical psalms” (Psalms 102 and 145, LXX) is followed by the chanting of the Beatitudes with interspersed hymnody taken from the Orthros service just past.

Each antiphon (or typical psalm) is completed by the intonation of a little ektenia. We use the little litanies so often that the question is often posed, “why do Orthodox services repeat so much material constantly?” Indeed, the little ektenia begins, “Again and again, let us pray to the Lord.” There is a basic tenet of pedagogy: repetition is the mother of learning. Every school teacher knows that new things to be learned must be presented, drilled, practiced, and re-presented, re-drilled, and re-practiced, many times before learning takes place. The wisdom of the church Fathers is present here: we are imprinted at the liturgy, so that the holy words we hear there will self-actualize in our memory later on. The many repetitions impress us deeply, even before we have come to think about the meaning contained in these words.

Through the three antiphons the priest offers specific prayers which dedicate the liturgy to God and underscore the divine promises which make the liturgy possible, including the word of Our Lord, “where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

4. *The (Little, or Gospel) Entrance*

--ALL STAND--

During the third antiphon (or toward the end of the singing of the Beatitudes), the deacon carries the Gospel-book aloft in a liturgical procession, preceded by candle-bearers and processional cross. Following him comes the presiding priest who will give the blessing to make the (Little, or Gospel) Entrance. The deacon cries out the first of several utterances to come: “Wisdom!” This cry always precedes some very important utterance or action and exhorts us to pay special attention at the deepest level of our being. Let us now be aware of Christ, the “Wisdom of God” (see Proverbs 8) along with the ministering angels in our midst! “Stand aright!” At this point, any of the faithful who were sitting now arise to join all who have been standing, ready to make a bow as the Entrance is made. Now the great recognition of Christ in our midst occurs as the entrance hymn is intoned by the clergy and choirs, “O come let us worship and fall down before Christ...” All make a metania (bow from the waist) to honor the manifestation of Christ in His public ministry which this Entrance symbolizes. The Gospel-book is the image of Jesus Christ, the living and abiding Word of the Father. “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (John 6: 63).

When the Bishop presides at the Liturgy, only at this point does he enter the altar actively to begin celebrating there. Up to this point, there is no difference between a liturgy presided over by bishop or priest. But now, when the bishop enters the altar, we see the fullest display of our apostolic heritage.

When the priest serves alone, it is not easy to see the apostolic nature of the Church. But when the bishop presides, a living apostle is before us. All this shows us that the beginning part, the *enarxis*, is passed and now the liturgy of the Word enters its most important stage.

If you arrive after the Little Entrance, you are quite late and should consult with your priest (ahead of time) to know whether you have a blessing to receive Holy Communion. In any event, out of respect and to avoid distracting others, latecomers should refrain from any commotion by remaining in the rear portion of the nave. We should not make our entrance into the nave during scriptural readings, during either the Little or Great Entrance, and during the Anaphora. Use good judgment, if the sermon is being delivered. As we are discussing the physical entry into the nave of the church, we ought to add here that it is not appropriate to go in and out of the nave without good reason. (It is always a good reason to take out a fussing infant. After the babe has calmed down, take it back into church, if possible.)

**5. *The Hymnody after the Entrance:
Troparia, Kontakion, and Trisagion***

--all remain standing--

After the Entrance, the choirs chant the appointed hymns of the day, which are called *troparia*, and almost always are concluded by the patronal saint's or titular festal troparion of the church after whom (or which) it is named. All the faithful should learn to sing their own parish's patronal or titular festal troparion by heart. After this sequence of troparia, the clergy (or choir, if only one priest is celebrating) will sing the appointed seasonal *kontakion*. Some of these kontakia are sung so often they, too, can be memorized. When all of the faithful sing, they show their active ownership of the liturgy and so fulfill their God-given vocation, to be "a holy people, a royal priesthood."

Now, after an exhortation to pray, the priest exclaims the holiness of God and all sing majestically the very simple and profound *Trisagion*, "the Thrice-holy." (We may make a metania and sign of the cross at each "*Holy God...*") The faithful now emulate the angelic chorus in heaven whom Isaiah the prophet heard, when he beheld the Lord in His holy temple: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6: 3). The attribute "holy" cannot be described adequately with human analogies. Basically, "holy," means "separated unto and thus belonging to God." Only God is holy in and of Himself, utterly holy, and He makes holy all who come to him, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2), and "Pursue... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). On certain feasts of the Lord, in place of the Trisagion, we sing either the baptismal hymn, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia" or that of the Cross, "Before Thy cross, we bow down in worship, Master, and we glorify Thy holy resurrection."

When the Bishop celebrates, the Trisagion is sung very elaborately, with a special prayer and episcopal blessing given three times, interspersed with the psalm verse, "Lord, Lord, look down from heaven and visit this vine which Thy right hand hath planted." The bishop holds in his left hand the *dikerion*, a two-branched candelabrum symbolizing the two natures of Christ, and in his right, the *trikerion*, a three-branched candelabrum symbolizing the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. Thus, in his hands the central dogmas of the Church are shown forth as living and abiding truths which give our lives spiritual order and meaning. Dogmas in Orthodoxy are not dead concepts inscribed on paper; but rather, they are living truths which correct our waywardness and heal our lives from the disorder of sin and corrupting passions. We Orthodox do more than just believe in the Trinity, we lead a triadic, or trinitarian, way of life. This chiefly means love. We more than believe in the two natures of Christ, we practice a *two-natured* spirituality: body and spirit in a synergistic combination, what we call *mystery*. What we see with our material eyes is flesh; what we see with our *nous*, the eye of the soul, is spirit.

6. *The Readings: Apostle and Gospel*

While the Trisagion is being completed, the *reader*, or someone capable of assuming this task, if there be no tonsured reader in the parish, approaches the solea, with the *Apostle* (Book with the New Testament readings from the Acts and the Epistles) and prepares to intone the *lesson*, a reading appointed for the day. Newcomers to an Orthodox service of worship notice right away that the manner of speaking in the church differs from that which one finds in our everyday world. Ours is a special kind of language, elevated, classical (“thees and thous”), a kind of “sing-song,” either in what the ancients called *recto tono*, “straight-chant,” or according to ancient, well-established melodies. Even our way of reading differs: the reader intones, or reads out in a melodic fashion, plainly but piously, confidently yet compunctionately. St John of San Francisco said that chanting and reading in a proper church fashion delivers the message contained much deeper into the souls of those listening than mere recitation, as when one reads out a newspaper article, or delivers an academic paper. Because readers require specialized training, the Church includes them among the minor clerical orders.

--All are seated--

The choir (or reader) intones the *prokeimenon*, “a text before (another) text,” a “pre-text,” if you will. It consists of a refrain along with a verse, both drawn from the Psalter. These are properly sung according to one of the eight liturgical tones, but sometimes are merely read out. The *prokeimenon* prepares us for the lesson from the Apostle. Once again, an important liturgical moment (the reading of the Apostle) is anticipated by a special action (the intonation of the *prokeimenon*), so that our hearing is adjusted spiritually to take in the profound message from the Apostle.

Now we are ready to hear the Apostle (a lesson either from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, or from one of the apostolic epistles). There is always a specific lesson appointed for the specific day of the week in a given order of weeks after the previous Pascha, and frequently another one for the saint or commemoration of the calendar date. We select one of those to be read out, according to specific rules. Everything is done in the Church “decently and in order,” with no one, not even the priest, exercising his own willfulness apart from the common and holy tradition. After sitting down, refrain from crossing your legs. Sit erect and focus your attention on the holy apostolic words. Try not to look at other persons and ignore the usual distractions for this moment.

--ALL STAND--

Now, as the choir begins to sing the *alleluiarion*, the triple “Alleluia,” and the priest is censuring about the altar, we are ascending even higher. The smoke of the incense honors the Lord and indicates the climax of this section of the Liturgy. The Apostle warmed our heart for Christ. Now Christ our God will directly speak His life-bestowing Word through the Holy Gospel. No layman ever reads the Gospel liturgically. That role is designated for deacon or priest. It is always chanted and accompanied by altar lamps. Even before the Gospel is read, we engage in the first substantive liturgical dialogue with the presiding celebrant. He encourages spiritual readiness, “Wisdom! Let us attend...” and grants the dominical blessing, “Peace be to all.” This is what Jesus said when He appeared to His disciples and apostles after the Resurrection. They were locked up in their chamber “for fear.” Now Christ gives us the peace, as we are locked up in the chamber of our heart and beset with many fears. How often did Our Lord say, “Do not fear”!

The Gospel-book lies front and center on the Holy Table, always the prominent position. The book itself can be very ornate and costly, its binding and covers made of fine metal, enameled or set with stones. When this majestic Book is opened, we stand attentively. Before and after the Gospel reading, we sign ourselves with the cross while saying, “Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.” The sign of the cross is the most profound act of prayer which the limbs of our body are capable of. At important liturgical

moments like this, but also in or out of the church temple, by day or by night, during any endeavor, and facing any temptation, we can make the sign of the cross and immediately be refreshed with a vibrant spiritual realization of Christ’s holy presence.

7. *The Homily, or Sermon*

--All are seated--

The authorized preacher is the priest or deacon, and the permitted themes for the sermon are drawn from the appointed scripture lessons and saint’s or festal commemoration of the day. Sometimes the bishop gives special instruction concerning what is read or said “from the pulpit.” In any event, the *homily* or *sermon* (both words, from the Greek and Latin languages, respectively, mean simply “a talk”) provides the hearers with a more clear understanding of the sacred words they have heard and the meaning of the specific teachings conveyed by the day’s commemoration.

In many other Christian gatherings, the sermon becomes the center-piece for the assembly. For Orthodox Christians, the sermon, although far too often undervalued and even in some places woefully neglected, remains an important but integral ingredient to the whole of divine worship. We do not break up the liturgy into segments, but rather take it as a uniform and spiritually enriching whole. The sermon provides its unique and very specific function, perhaps the part of the liturgy where the personal impress of the celebrant is most clearly stamped. For example, we know so much about St John Chrysostom, simply because of all the sermons he had recorded and left to posterity. God speaks through men, and men differ in idiosyncrasy of character and personality.

We must keep in mind, however, that the sermon plays a much less prominent role in Orthodox Christian worship than it does in Protestant assemblies. The reason for this is simple. Our purpose for gathering in the church is not to hear what the priest may happen to say on any given occasion, but rather to offer our “sacrifice of praise” to the Lord. There are, of course, times when the sermon is longed for: times of personal or civil distress, or at the cusp of some important ecclesiastical event.

The role of the laity during the preaching of the sermon is to listen carefully and to take to heart those elements from the homily which “strike home.” Our homilies are usually quite short; frequently the Orthodox homily is no more than 15 minutes long. Therefore, even small children can learn to listen with care. If the priest as preacher tends to speak too long, the laity have a responsibility to let him know so that he can learn to perfect the art of preaching. Elder Zacharias of Essex says that the core of a good sermon is “one simple thought, deeply expounded.”

B. The Liturgy of the Eucharist

--ALL STAND--

1. *The transitional stage with prayers.*

[These prayers are sometimes shortened, or entirely omitted.]

The transitional prayers now are said, in the form of several litanies. The first very visible act which takes place after the reading of the Gospel is the procession which accomplishes the *transfer* of the prepared bread and wine from the prothesis, through the nave, to the holy Table. This is accomplished in the Great Entrance, which will be discussed shortly. As mentioned earlier, important liturgical actions need proper preparation. Thus, the ektenias of this transitional section of the liturgy accomplish the proper disposition of the worshippers. We pray for all in the ektenia of fervent supplication (we say “Lord have mercy” now three times after each petition). Unlike the earlier litany of peace, we may even pray specifically for persons by name, both living and departed. Here, specific names can be supplied to the deacon before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy for mention in prayer. We mention aloud only the

names of Orthodox Christian faithful in these ektenias. Each believer can pray for his or her non-Orthodox loved ones personally when lighting a candle earlier.

After beseeching God for the catechumens who are preparing to enter the Church, their dismissal marks the formal end of the Liturgy of the Word. In the primitive church, the catechumens were ushered out of the synaxis and the doors were secured. In some monastic churches, even until the present, non-Orthodox are ushered out of the nave at this point in the Liturgy. In the beginning of the church age, the *catechumenate* was in a vibrant state of development. Adults came to Christ directly from paganism and thus needed long and thorough instruction in prayer, exorcism, knowledge of Holy Scripture, and formation in Orthodox Christian ethics. They had to rid themselves of many un- and even anti-Christian habits of thought, speech, and action. After Christianity was officially recognized, and even promoted by the Roman Empire, the catechumenate fell into abeyance. But now, increasingly in our day and age, when paganism and unbelief flourish in so many places, and where the Christian spiritual and ethical conscience in society-at-large is in such precipitous decline, the adult catechumenate is increasingly being reinstated. Thus, it behooves us to encourage the catechumens, if not to leave, at least to stand piously to the side or to the rear, and to take their time to learn. So, whereas beforehand this litany in behalf of the catechumens was omitted, it now finds new currency as increasing numbers of converts are finding their way home to Orthodoxy. And, all of the faithful can hear in these words a dismissal of all evil thoughts, and an expulsion of every distraction.

With the dismissal of the catechumens, along with all those “for whom the liturgy is no concern” (dismissal, as said in the Roman-Byzantine liturgy in southern Italy), the synaxis of the faithful proceeds with as little interruption as possible. For now the faithful attend to the serious acts which lie before them: the bringing of the gifts of bread and wine to the Holy Table and the Eucharist itself.

2. *The Cherubic Hymn and the Transfer of the Gifts*

--all remain standing--

After two very brief ektenias in which the celebrant prays for worthiness and the proper spiritual disposition to celebrate the Eucharist, the Cherubic Hymn is sung, very slowly with great ornamentation and beauty. This hymn is an expression of our emulation of the holy angels who accompany the Lord in glory. The image is actually drawn from the ancient Roman military ritual of acclaiming a new emperor. The soldiers would hoist the newly chosen leader on a shield and all would point their spears straight up, and utter their oath of loyalty, thus the words in the cherubic hymn, “the King of all, Who comes invisibly up-borne (“carried with raised spears”) by the orders of angels.” Thus, we present ourselves in an angelic state, bearing the Lord Himself as we utter the thrice-holy hymn (which is about to be sung in its oldest form, in the *anaphora*, discussed below). Most importantly, we now put aside (actually, *apothometha*, ‘let us reserve for later use,’ as in our expression, “put by,” or “save for later”) the cares of daily life. These cares are not necessarily bad or sinful, merely mundane and transitory. We ought, then, to leave them for later action, as we place our attention fully on the holy *anaphora*, or *oblation*. God does not want us to shirk our daily and mundane responsibilities; however, He does want us to put them in proper perspective. Right now, all else is secondary to the Eucharist.

While the choirs are singing the *cherubic hymn*, the priest says a prayer in a quiet voice beseeching God for the grace to serve Him without offence in the coming Eucharist. There, we learn that Christ Himself is both the chief Celebrant and the Victim: “for Thou Thyself art He Who offereth and is offered.” There is a special censuring, showing the solemnity of the moment, just as there was for the climax of the earlier liturgy of the Word, before the Gospel. After this censuring, during which the celebrating priest prays Psalm 50, the most profound expression of repentance in the entire Bible, he makes a reverence toward the people. This is the expression of reconciliation and forgiveness we must

extend to each other, if we are to “bring our gift to the altar” in a worthy manner. We ought never to liturgize, clergy or laity, if we bear ill-will against another human being.

The procession leading to the Great Entrance divides the cherubic hymn in the middle. Whereas in the Little Entrance, the Gospel-book is borne, symbolizing Christ’s appearance in His public ministry, so now in this Great Entrance, the *diskos* and *poterion* (*chalice*) are borne, symbolizing Christ’s willing self-oblation in His holy passion (suffering), death, and burial for our salvation. The deacon bears the *diskos*, and the priest the chalice, and they are preceded by candle-bearers and cross. In antiquity, there was a separate building or side-chapel where the bread and wine were prepared and lodged. As this part of the liturgy approached, the deacons would take up the gifts and bring them in a procession to the bishop who awaited them in front of the altar. Now, we keep the gifts on the Prothesis, for they were prepared there in the Proskomidia, earlier. The procession from the Prothesis to the Holy Table marks the formal beginning of the *anaphora* or holy oblation (offering). There is a pious custom, during the procession, for the faithful to briefly touch the priest’s *phelonion* (the outer cape) as he passes, in a tactile way participating in the procession itself. This practice is commendable, as long as it consists of a brief touch and never a grasping of the vestment (the children may need help with this!) In the procession, it has become customary to make special commemoration for all Orthodox Christians, including the chief hierarch of the local church, the diocesan bishop, and we also remember the civil authorities. (In olden times, no commemorations were said here, and then for a long time only the words, “All of us, the Lord God remember in His kingdom.”) It is always important to bear in mind that the Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church does not subscribe to any political party or specific political system. We do, however, pray for the welfare of the civil authority, recognizing that all authority comes from God (see Romans 13:1). After remembering both the living and the dead, the procession is concluded by the completion of the cherubic hymn and the deposition of the bread and wine on the Holy Table. These are placed upon the previously unfolded *antiminsion* (Greek, from the Latin, “in place of the (bishop’s) Table,” in English, commonly abbreviated to *antimins.*), a special cloth bearing the icon of the bodily repose of Our Lord Jesus Christ after His having been taken down from the Cross: “In the grave with the body but in hades with the soul as God; in paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and the Spirit wast Thou, O Christ, filling all things, Thyself uncircumscribed.” This cloth is signed by the metropolitan archbishop of the local church over whose synod of bishops he presides, or by the diocesan bishop himself. The antimins represents the license from the hierarch for the Divine Liturgy to be served at the specific church where it is placed and to which it is assigned by the inscription on the antimins. It is always protected, when folded up, by a red cloth called the *eiliton*.

3. Augmented Litany.

--We may be seated--

Once the gifts have been placed on the Holy Table, a prayer and a litany are offered which sum up all our desires for salvation in every state of life. We “complete our prayer unto the Lord” by appealing to God for the fulfillment of our needs, culminating in the greatest need of all, “that we may have a good defense before the fearful judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ.” This petition is important, since the name of the very place where the gifts have been placed is the *bema*, “the judgment seat,” one of the many names for the altar. We realize that the judgment is not only in the future, but even right now! Are we ready to meet the Lord? Will we be found worthy to partake of Him?

The Peace before the Eucharist

--ALL STAND--

With this sober reality before us, once again we hear the holy words to calm our hearts, “Peace be to all!” Now we will confess our faith together, but this again is never done without a deep connection to our spiritual state. Without inner peace, what can mouthing empty words mean?

4. *Symbol of Faith (The Creed)*

--all remain standing--

“Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess...” How can we dare to confess the holy dogmas of our faith, while we harbor hatred or unforgiveness in our hearts? The Church’s liturgy examines us carefully in this regard. So, the exchange of the “kiss of peace” is our guarantee of Christian charity and reconciliation, each person with his neighbor. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God... and thy neighbor as thyself.” Each rank of clergy and the laity, as necessary, then exchange a fraternal greeting before we confess our faith together. St Paul tells us, “faith...worketh by love” (Galatians 5: 6) and “greet each other with a holy kiss” (2 Corinthians 13: 12).

--ALL SAY THE CREED TOGETHER--

The Symbol of Faith, or the *Creed* (*credo*, Latin, “I believe”), consists of very specifically composed words which were authorized by the First Oecumenical² Synod held in the city of Nicaea in A.D. 325, augmented by the Second Oecumenical Synod held in Constantinople in A.D. 381, and sealed with divine authority by a synodal decree at the Third Oecumenical Synod held in Ephesus in A.D. 431. The exact wording is so important to the maintenance of the faith, that even the addition of a single word is cause for ceasing to be Orthodox. This is what took place over the Roman Catholic Church’s addition of the word, *filioque* “and the Son,” thus introducing a distortion of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Imagine a compass heading for a large ship sailing the Pacific Ocean. A mere one-degree error of heading by the compass would yield a massive error in sailing, by the time the ocean was crossed. The ship’s pilot would miss his port by hundreds of miles! Thus, we carefully preserve “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Before the common recitation of the Creed begins, we hear the diaconal exclamation, “The doors! The doors!” This is a call to secure the doors between the nave and the narthex, in order that no unworthy person, heretic, or persecutor, or unbaptized, be allowed in. This was actually practiced by the church in very ancient times. During the recitation of each of the twelve articles of the Creed, the church annunciation bell is struck once, if the custom exists for doing so. This striking of the bell underscores the sobriety and seriousness of our confession. The Creed is truly the flag of the Church. As the recitation continues, with the voice of the whole church, not merely the reader, the priest takes up and waves the *aer* (the covering cloth) over the diskos and chalice. Such actions, as this waving or fluttering of the *aer*, are amenable to a very great many interpretations of a fine spiritual nature. For example, many see in this a depiction of the hovering of the Holy Spirit, Who is about to descend upon the gifts. “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1: 2). At the words, “and He ascended into heaven,” the priest folds up the *aer* and resumes waving it in a circular motion over the gifts. From the beginning, many liturgical actions arose from very practical purposes, such as to keep any flying insects from alighting upon the prepared holy things, now uncovered (see Apostolic Constitutions, Book 8, which is the text of the ancient Clementine Liturgy). Unlike those who see only exterior meaning to things, we Orthodox see both: the waving of the *aer* to keep off flies as well as symbolizing the earthquake which occurred at Christ’s resurrection or the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost.

² The classical style of spelling is employed here to avoid confusion with the word, “ecumenical,” which refers chiefly to relations between the Orthodox Church and heterodox Christian communities, as developed in the 20th century.

5. *The Anaphora*

--all remain standing--

a. *The Eucharistic Dialogue*

The climax of the Divine Liturgy now takes place. The holy *anaphora*, the oblation or “offering up (to God)”, now begins. A very special dialogue serves to awaken and employ the highest human sensitivity: the *noetic*, or spiritual faculty of the soul. After the call to attentiveness, the deacon says, “that we may offer the holy anaphora in peace” and the faithful add to this a further description of the oblation, thus defining it: “a mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise.” The due sacrifice to God amounts to “the weightier matters of the Law: judgment, and mercy and faith” (Matthew 23: 23). “What does the Lord seek from you but to do justly and to love mercy, and to be ready to walk with the Lord your God?” (Micah 6: 8).

Before the prayer of the anaphora is uttered, the priest bestows the apostolic blessing, from the earliest times of the Church’s life: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14, and see the end of many of the other epistles).

--ALL INCLINE HEADS AT THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING--

With this blessing, all is in order for the liturgical act. Apostolic orders and blessing have been given; it remains to fulfill them. The faithful have already “laid aside” all earthly cares; now they are exhorted to an even higher, noetic awareness: “Let us lift up our hearts!” The wording suggests a specific action here, not just mental attention, but something much more profound—spiritual attentiveness: “Up (with) the hearts!” “We have them toward the Lord.” All join together now for the *Eucharist* per se, “let us give thanks unto the Lord” (in Greek, *eucharistesomen*). To this the laity, by singing the initial words, urges the celebrant to begin the anaphora proper, “It is meet and right.”

b. *Anaphora proper*

--ALL STAND, WITH GREAT ATTENTIVENESS--

The anaphora itself is a mighty epitome of the whole of the apostolic tradition. In it we hear all about “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2: 11). As mentioned at the beginning, there are various “liturgies” in use in the Orthodox Church: most commonly, those of St James, of St Basil, and of St John Chrysostom, in chronological order (but in reverse order of their frequency of occurrence in the year). Others exist as well, but are not used today. Each of these liturgies receives its name from the saint who composed the anaphora in it. In the beginning, the apostles and their successors prayed and eucharistized, “according to their ability” (Martyr Justin the Philosopher, *First Apology*, 67, written c. A.D. 150). As the faith spread, there was an increasing need for the writing down of this holy Eucharistic anaphora, especially as the bishops ordained presbyters to serve in their absence, since they could not be present themselves at every eucharistic synaxis. Thus, the written anaphorae came into being as we now have them.

The anaphora falls into three distinct sections, the juncture of each of which is marked by a special hymn sung by the people. The initial expression of thanks to God for His mighty acts culminates with the singing of the thrice-holy, directly using the words of the angelic hosts themselves, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of *sabaoth* (a Hebrew word which means “armies [of angels]”)...” (see Isaiah 6:3). Then, the center of the anaphora, the second section, stresses the manifestation of the love of God by the offering of His Only-begotten Son. Many people, even heterodox, love that verse in St John’s Gospel which occurs in this section, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in

Him, should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The remembrance of the economy of salvation is developed at much greater length in the Liturgy of St Basil. The culmination of this section is the rehearsal of the very words of our Lord Himself, uttered by the celebrating priest, as though Christ were physically present, “Take, eat, this is My Body... Drink of this, all of you. This is My Blood...” After these holy words which provide a unique authorization for the whole of the Liturgy, the priest (or deacon) elevates both the diskos and chalice, holding them in a cross-wise fashion. With this action, the anaphora reaches the apex of human ability. This is our offering, the simple basics of life, through which the Life of the world will come to us. “Wine maketh glad the heart of man... and bread strengtheneth man’s heart” (Psalm 103: 16-17). With the elevation, the priest intones very solemnly, “Thine own, of Thine own, we offer unto Thee, in behalf of all and for all.” In such a short expression the priesthood of the whole body of the Church is expressed. Together, clergy and laity, the whole of creation, “Thine own,” is voluntarily offered back to God Who gave it. And this with a special purpose: for the salvation and reconciliation of the whole of creation, “in behalf of all and for all.” This is the ministry of Jesus Christ in miniature; this is the ministry of the Church in depth—to bring all back to God, voluntarily, in the freedom of love.

Immediately, the choir appends a sung augmentation to the words that the priest just uttered: “we hymn Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks (*eucharistoumen*) to Thee, O Lord, and we pray to Thee, O our God.” This is meant as a completion of the priest’s words. Among many other things, this should emphasize that the liturgy is accomplished by the whole synaxis of the laity, not just the priest alone.

c. Offering and Epiklesis

--ALL MAKE A BOW (or inclination) AT THE EPIKLESIS--

At once, God answers the elevation by His action. The priest invokes (*epiklesis*, “invocation”) the Holy Spirit “upon us and upon these gifts,” thus rendering the bread to be the Body of Christ and the contents of the cup to be the Blood of Christ, “changing them by Thy Holy Spirit.” We speak of metabolism in the human body as it processes material or physical energy; now, the priest mentions a special kind of *metabolism* (“changing,” from the Greek word, *metabalon*) in which the Divine Energy infuses the material gifts offered. Our reception of these gifts will be a meal, but now a very special one, for we will, by faithfully partaking of them, become communicants in the divine nature. Unlike the Scholastics of old (with their “transubstantiation”), or the Protestants (with their opposite error in which they deny transfiguring grace to this mystery), we have no need to explain this dual-natured mystery: we have bread, it is the Body; we have wine, it is the Blood. Our Chalcedonian³ way of understanding gives us the key which holds all together, “holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (I Timothy 3: 9), we confess Christ, with two natures, divine and human, one person, “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation” (Definition, 4th Oecumenical Synod held in Chalcedon).

The Epiklesis

To summarize, the sacred exchange takes place: the worshipping community, represented by the presiding bishop or priest offers their all embodied in the bread and wine, “Thine own of Thine own.” In response, God receives this offering and “places His own Life in the Gifts, ‘the Holy for the holy’” (Elder Zacharias of Essex).

d. Commemorations (Diptychs)

--all remain standing--

³ At the Fourth Oecumenical Synod, held in the city of Chalcedon in the fifth century, the dogma of the “two natures” (*dyo physeis*) of Christ was decreed, while insisting in the utter unity of His divine-human Hypostasis (Person).

Once the *epiklesis* is completed, we enter the third section of the anaphora, the commemoration of the whole Catholic Church. We begin with the departed and greatest members of the Church, the Mother of God, and the Apostles, along with all the saints, mentioning especially those saints we are commemorating on that day, then by name the faithful departed (especially those newly-deceased). We can notify the priest on a slip of paper to remember such departed by name, ahead of time. The choir begins singing the *megalynarion* (magnification hymn) to the Theotokos, as she justly receives prime attention. During that hymn, the priest says all the commemorations and the deacon stands alongside the Holy Table, as he reads out the *diptychs* (a record of names of living and dead who are to be commemorated). We see ourselves standing by the very Altar of God, with no difference between heaven and earth, “behold, the tabernacle of God is with men” (Apocalypse 21:3). The commemorations continue with the first of importance among the living: “our father and metropolitan [*Name*], and our father and bishop [*Name*].” We receive our hierarchical authorities not as worldly princes or “strongmen,” but rather as “fathers in Christ.” In this spirit, they nourish us with apostolic teaching and authority and become the visible, personal, and concrete principle of catholic unity in the Church, “wherever the Bishop is, there is the Church” (St Ignatius of Antioch). The commemorations are only complete once every estate of Christian is mentioned, including the monastics and all the people, especially emphasized in the unique Greek way in which both genders are expressly noted, literally “and of all men and all women.”

The anaphora is concluded with a doxological exclamation in the name of the Holy Trinity, “Thine all-honourable and majestic Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The anaphora, however, is not sealed until the whole synaxis asserts the “Amen.” Recall what St Jerome said about this, mentioned above. We have eucharistized, given thanks. “The Christ is in our midst! He is, and ever shall be!”

6. *The Communion in the Holy Things*

Now that the anaphora is complete, the synaxis prepares for Holy Communion. This preparation consists of a movement toward the common recitation of the Lord’s Prayer, the bowing of heads (inclination) toward the Lord in reverence, and the invitation to commune in the form of an elevation of the now consecrated Body. After this, during the chanting in a very slow and solemn tone of the communion hymn, the priest completes the preparation for communion by the *fraction* (“breaking of the bread,” Acts 2:42) of the Lamb and its placement on the four compass points of the diskos. This is followed by the commingling of the IC, “Jesus,” quarter of the Lamb with the consecrated wine in the chalice and the addition of blessed *zeon*, or hot water. Now the clergy commune; after which they prepare the remainder of the Holy Gifts for the communion of the laity. Let us examine all of this in closer detail.

a. *Preparatory prayers for Holy Communion*

--After the priestly blessing, one may be seated--

The priest blesses the faithful, after which there is an ektenia anticipatory to the Lord’s Prayer. This ektenia emphasizes the importance of the prayer we are about to utter. It is the only ektenia which leads up to a common prayer said by all. It is often greatly abbreviated; however, if a new deacon has just been ordained, he is given this entire litany as his very first to intone.

b. *The Lord’s Prayer*

--ALL STAND AND SAY THE PRAYER ALOUD--

The prayer given to us, exactly word for word, by the God-man Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, is a pre-communion prayer. Among the many wonderful things taught us to say in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus instructed us to say, “give us this day our daily bread.” This is truly the mysteriological (sacramental)

Element, not mere bread from the marketplace. The express meaning of the petition runs like this: “give us today the bread which is more-than-daily,” or “give us our super-essential bread” (as the ancient Latin translation runs). Thus, our Lord taught us to yearn for the Eucharistic meal, through which we would receive the Life which never ends, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life... I am the living bread which came down from heaven... most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6: 27, 51, 53). In fact, we are taught to pray at least “three times a day” (Didache of the Twelve Apostles) the Lord’s Prayer which, in essence, is deeply liturgical and Eucharistic.

After the bestowal of peace, there is a *prayer of inclination*, of “bowed heads.”

--ALL STAND, WITH BOWED HEADS--

When we hear the admonition to bow the head, this is an invitation both literally to bow the head by bending the neck and also to observe deep silence while the prayer is prayed in our behalf. In the Old Testament, many times the prophets inveighed against rebellious Israel. The prophets called them “stiff-necked”; they rendered themselves incapable of receiving a blessing, because they could not bow the head, due to spiritual hardness. How important it is to bow, to bend, to lower oneself. Only then can a blessing be received! “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (I Peter 5: 6).

c. *The Elevation, the Fraction, and the Mingling.*

After the priest makes three *metanias* (bows), he reverently takes up the consecrated Lamb to present the formal invitation to Holy Communion: “Holy (things are) for the holy!” At its very foundation, the word “holy” means simply “belonging to God,” as we discussed above. When we say that God is holy, it means that God is completely OTHER; that is, that there is no part of creation, animate or inanimate, that is part of Him. However, in His love for the creature, He imparts holiness. This is to say that He makes it HIS! And, that which is holy becomes pure, set-apart, dedicated (*qurban*). The holy cannot now be put to any profane use, for “for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Exodus 34: 14). He desires what becomes His to continue to “flourish in the fatherly adoption” (Sunday Orthros, 2nd antiphon of the anavathmoi, tone seven). So, here, the four words in Greek (*ta aghia tis aghiis*) say so much more than we hear in English, something like this: “The things now consecrated and thus belonging to God are fitting for those persons who are consecrated and thus belonging to God.” How can we include ourselves in this condition? In answer to this, the choir leads the synaxis in the beautiful response, “(only) One is holy... Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen!” So, we become holy by our participation in Jesus, the only Holy One of Israel. This is the key, then, to preparedness for Holy Communion: am I a partaker in Christ, or am I dishonouring Him by my unworthy way of life? “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14: 15). Jesus receives all who draw near with repentance and forgiveness. This is our great comfort. Every Orthodox Christian ought rightly to seek absolution for sins committed, along with soul-saving “penance” (not punishment, but rather a therapy for the healing of the soul), on a regular basis. When sins are forgiven through the agency of the priest (by virtue of his apostolic orders), the penitent has the baptismal robe, “the garment of light,” renewed and is a worthy partaker. So, Christian *asceticism* (effort) is essential to preparedness to commune in the sacred Mysteries.

d. *Holy Communion: of the Clergy and of the Laity.*

--ALL REMAIN STANDING, WITH ARMS CROSSED OVER THE CHEST AND SAY THE PRE-COMMUNION PRAYER TOGETHER, AT THE PROMPT--

In order to prepare ourselves most assuredly, we all join together to say the last (10th of the Pre-Communion Service) prayer of St John Chrysostom, “I believe, O Lord, and I confess...” This prayer contains the fundamental ingredient for worthy communion, repentant hope: “I will confess Thee, ‘Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom!’” Every Orthodox Christian ought to memorize by word and meaning the holy sentiments of this prayer. In it, we carry all our Christian hope and love.

Usually during this prayer, the priest accomplishes the fraction of the Lamb. It is divided into four equal portions (along the cuts which were scored in the bread at the proskomidia) and the four are set at each of the four compass points of the diskos, with the commemoration crumbs in the midst. Three of the four fundamental manual acts have now been completed: the “taking up” (the Great Entrance), the “giving thanks” (the anaphora, or Eucharist), and the “breaking of the bread” (the fraction). There remains only the “distribution,” (Holy Communion). These four actions are specifically mentioned in the scriptural accounts, and are mystically recapitulated in the account of our Lord’s feeding of the five thousand (see Matthew 15: 36).

The priest places the “Jesus” portion into the chalice with the following words that bear the meaning expressed in italics, “*The union of the holy Body and precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.*” This means at least that the accomplishment of the complete chalice for Holy Communion is the work of the Holy Spirit. We commune with God, not by some ethereal magic or some law of necessity, but rather by the radically free agency of God the Holy Spirit. Some view the sacrament as a necessary consequence of the ritual now drawing to completion. This is not an Orthodox way to view it; our understanding is both mystical and personal. That is to say, our confidence does not lodge in whether the ritual was “valid” or “invalid” but rather whether it is conformable to the personal and apostolic tradition. This is why we do not point to any one spot in the liturgy to mark the precise time when the bread became the Body. The whole of the Liturgy is an experience of apostolic and catholic fullness. It is Christ Himself re-presenting His “once and for all” sacrifice, as the One Who is both Priest and Victim. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The commingling of Body and Blood is sealed with the addition of *zeon*, or boiling hot water to the chalice, to symbolize the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit: “the fervor (*zesis*) of faith, full of the Holy Spirit.”

Holy Communion: distribution

--All remain standing, before Communion.
After Communion, one may be seated--

The bishop, priests, and deacons all receive Holy Communion in the altar. All this is accomplished before the Holy Gifts are brought out to the faithful who commune on the *solea*, the area directly in front of the Beautiful Gate. Jesus distributed the bread to the disciples and then they, in turn, distributed it to the multitudes. As an indication to what is to come, the deacon cries out, “With fear of God, and faith, and love, draw near!” Here are our prerequisites. Do we have due reverence, “fear of God”? “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 1:7). Do we believe in Him with Orthodox faith and love Him in accordance with His commandments? If so, we are ready.

--ALL FORM A COMMUNION LINE, FIRST CHILDREN, THEN WOMEN, THEN MEN, IF
POSSIBLE. WITH ARMS CROSSED OVER THE HEART, WE APPROACH THE CHALICE --

So, each, in turn, decently and in order, receives. Every Orthodox Christian, from the smallest babe to the oldest, receives both the Body and the Blood. After reverently approaching with forearms crossed over the heart, reception of the Mysteries now takes place. At just the moment of taking his stand before the priest, the communicant says these words, “The servant of God, <*Baptismal Name*>” We always commune with the name we received at Holy Baptism, whether it is our given name in common

use, or not. After he identifies himself, the communicant now hears this: “The servant of God, *N.*, partakes of the precious and all-holy Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ unto the forgiveness of sins and unto life everlasting.” Notice that the priest never says “I,” as in “I communicate...” or in holy confession, “I forgive...” Jesus Christ Himself ministers; the priest provides the hands and voice.

Directly after receiving the Precious Gifts in the mouth, if necessary wipe your lips on the kalyma, then make a small step backward away from the Chalice. Only then, turn aside to take a piece of blessed bread offered for the purpose of effecting a complete consumption of the small fragments of the Precious Gifts which may still be in the mouth. Do not make a cross before the chalice now, after communing. Later on, after the dismissal, blessed bread will be offered to those who could not partake of Holy Communion (for whatever reason). This final offering of bread is called *antidoron* (“in place of the Gifts”) and provides a kind of consolation for the non-communicants. Strictly speaking, those who just received Holy Communion should not take this antidoron, but rather should stay behind and read the post-communion prayers of thanksgiving (see below for more).

7. *Post-Communion*

--ALL STAND--

After Holy Communion, the priest gives a blessing and, on most days, the choir sings the post-communion hymn of Pentecost, “We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true Faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity, for He hath saved us.” This is a recapitulation of all that the faithful have experienced in the Liturgy: Christ revealed as Light, heard through His life-giving Word, and accepted in Holy Communion. If people ask, we can say that “He hath saved us”! More Orthodox Christians ought to be aware of their spiritual life and confident when declaring the mercy of God to others, based on the experience of divine grace that comes through the Liturgy.

We must say something here about the very poor habit of some in leaving the church at this point in time. After receiving Holy Communion, we should stay in the nave until the priest says the final dismissal to formally end the Liturgy. It is good liturgical manners to honour the Lord by keeping our heart and mind fixed upon Him during the final prayers. We do not leave the dinner table until our divine Host excuses us!

During the singing of the post-communion hymn, the priest prepares to transfer the unconsumed Holy Gifts to the Prothesis. One act he must accomplish is the deposition of the remainder of the contents of the diskos into the chalice. The particles of all the commemorations are now placed into the chalice with the words, “By Thy precious Blood, O Lord, wash away the sins of Thy servants here commemorated, through the intercessions of all Thy saints.” This simple petition summarizes our Orthodox understanding of the role of the saints in heaven. Chiefly they intercede for us, urging on through their heavenly encouragement, all of us who struggle in this life. They are a “cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12: 1) who stand with us, inciting us to virtue.

After the chalice is covered, and all is put in order, the priest raises the chalice toward the west with the words, “Now and ever, and unto ages of ages!” This stresses the promise of our Lord to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28: 20, the very last word of that Gospel). With this encouragement, we respond to that promise by a petition to the Lord to be established in the sanctification, the holiness, which was imparted by Holy Communion. What was an event, we now desire to become a way of life. That simple yet profound hymn ends with the statement of the goal: “that we may meditate upon Thy righteousness.” This is the priority of the spiritual life in Christ, for He Himself urged us to “seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6: 33).

A short thanksgiving ektenia is now said. This prompts the faithful who have communed to give proper thanks to the Lord. Remember the account of the healing of the ten lepers. Only one came back and rendered thanks to Jesus. We should not find ourselves numbered among the “nine who did not return to give thanks.” Many parishes now have the blessed custom of reading the entire service of prayers of thanksgiving after Holy Communion, once the dismissal from the Liturgy has been accomplished. Unless some very great necessity interrupts, all of those who communicated should remain in the church temple for these prayers, whether read quietly from one’s Prayerbook while others are still communing, or attending to them read afterward (if it is the parish custom).

8. Dismissal

--All remain standing--

“Let us depart in peace!” The Liturgy began in that spirit, “In peace, let us pray to the Lord.” And in this same way it concludes, “in peace.” Now the priest offers a summary prayer, the “Prayer behind the amvon,” for all people, in every state of life. The *amvon* in the ancient church temples was the pulpit, located in the midst of the nave. The priest came out of the Beautiful Gate, among the people, and stood “behind the amvon” to pray. This shows the coordinated prayer of the priest with all of the faithful, as all are about to depart from the church temple. The faithful join with the priest in this prayer for all, “give peace to Thy world,” and to all of the local “churches.” We say “churches” because we now pray for the specific needs of each organized sister church, located in a specific place, within the whole of the One Church. Orthodoxy is not a theoretical universal concept, but is experienced in a specific organizational form in any given locale, headed by a chief hierarch. The communion of all of these “churches” amounts to the presence of Christ in the world. In response to the prayer, the faithful sing the three-fold declaration of the manifest blessedness of the Name of the Lord, “Blessed be the Name of the Lord, henceforth and forever more.”

Now the complete dismissal is said. In the dismissal, the priest always summarizes the commemoration of the day: the Lord Himself, His most holy Mother, and all of the saints, naming especially the patron of the parish church and those whom we festally commemorate that day. This leaves a final imprint on our mind, so that we may have a warm disposition to continue our inner prayer, once we leave. We depart in order to bring Christ into the world, not to leave Him in the church temple! The final word of the Divine Liturgy is a long form of the Jesus Prayer, “Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.” To which all respond, “Amen.”

The dismissal is complete. The custom of distributing *antidoron*, blessed bread, while the hand-cross is venerated, provides the occasion for the reading out of the post-communion prayers. The deacon consumes the remainder of the Holy Gifts, all the clergy remove their liturgical vestments and after making three bows, they “depart in peace.” Unfortunately, some have taken up the habit of engaging in small-talk in the nave, and even in the altar, while the post-communion prayers of thanksgiving are said. This violates the quietness and prayerfulness which have been cultivated for the last hour and a half. All should reserve any talk for outside of the nave, once all are gathered together for the customary *agape meal*, the shared dinner of the parish. Any talking within the nave of the church can potentially become a distraction for others who are quietly praying and watching. Let us refrain from all talking in the holy place. Outside, at the common table, all eat and share their joys and sorrows with love and serenity. We will have much to share one with the other, in the love of Christ Who now dwells afresh within us!

Concluding remarks

The Divine Liturgy bestows a profound dignity to the faithful. It also involves a very serious and high duty: to reconcile all the world to God. St Paul said to his spiritual children, “God was in Christ

reconciling the world to Himself... and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5: 19). So, the living Word is now implanted in us who have received Him. It is now up to us to live this and to bring others to Christ through our Christian example and selfless love.

The Divine Liturgy is a work of great beauty. The purity of the simple human voice, uncluttered with mechanical instrumentation, the perfume of incense, the soft, warm and fragrant glow of the waxen tapers, the many-colored icons, vestments and glitter of liturgical vessels, all raise our whole being in prayer and imbue us with a holy purpose. High and exalted language, in its classical and refined form, rather than “street-lingo”—all these characterize the Divine Liturgy. Yet, let this not be an outward beauty only, for God “looketh upon the heart.” Let us match the outward beauty with an inward disposition of repentance, humility, and obedience, lest the word of the prophet indict us: “these people draw near to Me and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Isaiah 29: 13; Matthew 15: 8).

It is fitting to conclude with the final words uttered by our father among the saints, St John Chrysostom, son of Antioch and archbishop of Constantinople, that great pastor, preacher, and liturgist,
Glory to God for all things!

Appendix A: Personal preparation for Holy Communion

The following elements of preparation may be considered foundational for approaching to commune in the sacred Mysteries of Christ. Your spiritual father provides the necessary details regarding the frequency and preparation of Holy Communion in a personally applicable way.

- ❖ You must examine yourself to be sure you have no ill-will, unforgiveness, or rancor toward anyone. “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).
- ❖ You ought to have recently confessed your sins before your father confessor and received absolution and a blessing to receive Holy Communion. There are varying expectations among priests regarding this. Talk to your parish priest about the frequency of confession, and how to confess, if this is new to you. The canons of the church require that all Orthodox make confession during Great Lent in preparation for Paschal communion. (However, St John Chrysostom censures those who prepare only this one time and then go on to live heedlessly once again. We should always be confessing!)
- ❖ Out of respect for the Lord, you should refrain from reception of Holy Communion if you arrive late to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The parish priest usually establishes this precise rule; in many parishes, those who would commune need to be present for the hearing of the Holy Gospel in the Liturgy of the Word.
- ❖ We observe a strict fast from all food and water from the previous evening (no eating or drinking after midnight, for morning Liturgy). In the event of an evening Liturgy, we begin this Eucharistic fast from no later than the noon hour (some require fasting throughout the whole day).
- ❖ We say the pre-communion prayers, in three units:
 1. a pre-communion canon before bed the night before, (designed to be said with Compline; however, it can be said with the usual evening prayers) takes 15 minutes
 2. a pre-communion service consisting of trisagion prayers, three psalms, three troparia, and nine pre-communion prayers, all of which are to be said on the morning of the Liturgy, before coming to church (the entire morning service takes 20 minutes to read out in full, as given in the Prayerbook near the back).
 3. the tenth pre-communion prayer, said by all in the Liturgy, “I believe, O Lord, and I confess...”
- ❖ “In order to receive eternal life into ourselves, let us approach Holy Communion with a pure soul and *‘with burning desire. Let us cross our hands [one upon the other], and receive into them the Body of the Crucified One. And after touching it with our eyes, our lips and our foreheads, let us partake of the divine Coal. Thus the fire of our love will be ignited by the divine Coal, and burn up our sins and illumine our hearts; and through participation in the divine fire, we shall catch on fire and be deified [= made God-like]’*” --Hieromonk Gregorios, citing St John of Damascus.

Appendix B: Laymen entering and serving in the Holy Altar

The eastern-most portion of the church temple is called the Holy Altar (or, Sanctuary) and is reserved to the ordained clergy and the men who are given a blessing to assist them in their sacred ministry at the Holy Table. Each priest in his own parish church, following the directives of his bishop, expresses his requirements to those who assist him in somewhat differing ways. Withal, the following guidelines would be considered as widely applicable.

- ❖ No layman enters the altar without a priestly blessing.
- ❖ Altar servers should dress in a dignified and respectful manner as directed by the priest. Since both the neck area and the shoes are visible after donning the sticharion, a lapel- or Nehru-collared shirt is recommended, with the top button fastened. Dark socks and dark polished (or otherwise clean) shoes for the feet. Shirts should have no loud color or imprint which may be visible through the sticharion or distracting attention at the collar. The sticharion should properly extend to touch the shoe below the sock-line, when standing erect.
- ❖ Anyone who enters the altar approaches the north or south deacon's door, venerates the icon on it, opens the door and enters, closing the door (or curtain) behind him noiselessly. In the manner in which the parish priest has instructed him, he reverences toward the Holy Table and then proceeds as follows.
- ❖ For the Divine Liturgy, the altar server proceeds to the area where the vestments are kept. He folds his sticharion (about this, see further, below) into a unit with the cross on the back facing upward. Bearing the vestment upon his palms, he approaches the priest and says, "Father, bless!" The priest blesses with his hand and then places his hand upon the folded sticharion. The altar server kisses the priest's hand, and then he kisses the cross on the sticharion and withdraws to vest.
- ❖ The sticharion, as with any vestment, should never be placed upon the floor for folding; this is very disrespectful to sacred things. Folding can be accomplished upon any table or even in the air, with training.
- ❖ The altar servers are to maintain silence and to keep their eyes upon the priest, in order to be at the ready for any need. The priest should never have to speak to gain the attention of an altar server. We avoid all talking or disruption to the ministry of prayer which dominates service at the holy Table. Parish priests usually work out sign language or their own marked booklets for the altar servers to follow.

Appendix C: Standing or sitting in the services of Vespers and Orthros

This book deals with the Divine Liturgy only. However, it seemed logical to provide a note about posture at the other common services in the parish, since these services are increasingly well-attended by pious communicants in the Divine Liturgy.

Vespers with an Entrance (always on Saturday evening)

We stand (up, if seated) at:

- ❖ “Blessed is our God...” and remain standing through the end of Psalm 103.
- ❖ “O Lord I have cried...” and remain standing until the censuring is completed.
- ❖ “Both now...” and remain standing until the Entrance is concluded and “Gladsome Light...” is finished.
- ❖ At the exclamation, “For Thou art a good God...” and remain standing through the prayer of bowed heads. (If the Service of Lita and Artoklasia is to be celebrated, we remain standing throughout it).
- ❖ At the diaconal prompt, “Wisdom!” and remain standing through the dismissal from Vespers.

Orthros with a Gospel reading (always on Sunday morning)

We stand (up, if seated) at:

- ❖ “Blessed is our God...” and remain standing through to the end of the Six Psalms. Note: during the Six Psalms we do not move about in the nave, and do not even make the sign of the cross.
- ❖ “That we may be accounted worthy to hear the Holy Gospel...” and remain standing until the veneration of the Gospel is completed.
- ❖ “The Theotokos and Mother of the Light...” until the censuring at the 9th ode is completed.
- ❖ “Glory to Thee Who hast shown us the light...” and remain standing through the opening exclamation of the Divine Liturgy.

These directions are very proximate; check for specific details with your priest and refer to your parish customs for more clarity.

Glossary

The following is an alphabetized listing of specialized vocabulary in common use when speaking of the various elements of the Divine Liturgy. Pronunciation schemes are supplied for certain difficult words. G. = Greek; H. = Hebrew; L., = Latin.

Aer **G.**, “*ah-EAR*”, the decorated cloth which covers both *diskos* and *chalice* from the conclusion of the *proskomidia* until the recitation of the *creed*.

Agape Meal **G.**, *ah-GAH-pee*, “love.” In the early church, the common meal in the midst of which the Eucharist was celebrated. Now, the common meal shared after the Liturgy is completed.

Alleluia **H.**, *AH-leh-LOO-ee-ah*, or *AH-leh-LOO-yah*, “Praise the LORD.” This “spiritual song” chanted before the Gospel lesson as an expression of spiritual ascent to God. It remains untranslated in all languages, like *amen*.

Alleluiarion **G.**, the triple *Alleluia* sung thrice in three sets, with two intervening psalm verses, which, as a whole, prepares the faithful for the hearing of the holy *Gospel*.

Altar **L.**, the area of the church temple where the *Holy Table* is located and into which only the clergy enter. Also called the *Bema* or Holy Place.

Ambon **G.**, pronounced, *AHM-vohn*. The pulpit located in the middle of the nave in the church temples of antiquity. It has one use now: “the prayer behind the ambon,” a general intercession said by the priest on the *solea* before the dismissal from the Liturgy.

Amen **H.**, *AH-MEN*, the chief prayer of the people by which they agree with and confirm the exclamations and extended prayers of the celebrant. It remains untranslated in all languages, like *alleluia*.

Anaphora **G.**, *ah-NAH-pho-ra*, also called (based on the Latin equivalent) *oblation*; the “offering-up,” the portion of the Liturgy of the Eucharist which begins with the Dialogue and encompasses the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer. The anaphora comprises the heart of the Liturgy.

Antidoron **G.**, *ahn-DEE-thoh-rohn*, “instead of the Gift,” the cut-up remains of the loaves from which the Lamb and other particles were taken in the preparation service. This was handed out at the end of the Liturgy only to those who were not prepared to receive Holy Communion, as a consolation. Today, all receive the antidoron when they venerate the hand-cross (the ancient practice is observed in certain monasteries to this day).

Antiminsion **G.**, *ah-dee-MIN-see-on*, or simply, **Antimins**. The cloth, bearing the image of the repose of the Lord after the taking down of His Body from the Cross and signed by the diocesan or metropolitan hierarch, which is unfolded upon the *Holy Table* for the celebration of the *Eucharist*. Traditionally, a sacred relic is invested in the antimins, if it is to be used upon an unconsecrated table.

Antiphon **G.**, So named since they were meant to be chanted by two choirs, back and forth. Any of the three opening bodies of psalmody (or fragments thereof, as is common-place now) with verses and refrains which serve to prepare the faithful for the solemnities of the Liturgy.

Apolytikion **G.**, *ah-poh-lee-TEE-kee-on*, “dismissal hymn” (since it is chanted at the end of Vespers and Orthros), a *troparion* which carries the theme of the saint or festivity of the day.

- Apostle** G., the first scriptural reading drawn from the Acts of the Apostles or from the Epistles of Paul, James, Peter, John, or Jude. Popularly called the “Epistle”; however, the Acts of the Apostles is not an epistle, therefore the term is not sufficiently inclusive.
- Bema** G., *VEE-ma*, “high place, judgment seat,” a reference to the *altar* as a whole, as we speak of “ascending” to the altar of God.
- Beautiful Gate** the double doors in the center of the *iconostasis*, the chief link between the *altar* and the *nave*. Also called the **holy doors** or, erroneously, the **royal doors**.
- Bishop** G., the chief rank of minister in the Church, a successor to the Apostles. The bishop personifies the whole Church in any given place.
- Catechumen** G., *CAT-eh-KYOO-men*, “one under instruction,” an unbaptized person who is preparing for Holy Baptism.
- Chalice** L., the liturgical cup which contains the commingled wine and water for the *Eucharist*. Also referred to by its Greek name, *poterion*, somewhat more preferably, since the holy Poterion is usually adorned with icon(s), whereas a Western chalice is frequently much simpler in design.
- Cherubic Hymn** the entrance hymn sung for the *Great Entrance* so named due to the opening words, in Greek word order, “We the Cherubim... representing...” There are only two times in the year when an alternative is chanted: Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.
- Creed** L., (*credo*, “I believe...”) the Symbol of the Faith, “I believe in One God...”
- Deacon** G., the ordained clergyman who assists the *bishop* (or *priest*) with a specific liturgical role of directing various actions and petitioning in prayers.
- Deacon’s Doors** the north and south doors which pierce the *iconostasis* on either side of the *Beautiful Gate*, through which the *deacon* frequently passes to lead the *ektenias*.
- Dikerion** G., *dee-KEE-ree-on*, the two-branched candelabrum wielded by the *bishop* (along with the *trikerion*) to depict the two natures of Christ.
- Diptychs** G., *dip-ticks*, the record of the living and the dead (thus, the word is literally, “two folds” to accommodate the two groups) read out quietly by the *deacon* during the commemorations in the *anaphora*.
- Diskos** G., **diskarion**; the liturgical plate (Latin, “paten”) upon which is arranged the *Lamb* and the commemorative particles for the *Eucharist*. We prefer the term, *diskos* (or, more accurately, **diskarion**) over “paten,” since the latter possesses no stem, but lies flat upon the table.
- Eiliton, see Iliton** G., the “corporal,” a silken cloth which is used to cover the unfolded antimission.
- Ektenia** G., a **litany**, or chain of biddings (petitions), intoned by the *deacon*, to which the people pray, “Lord have mercy,” or “Grant this, O Lord.”
- Entrance** in the Liturgy, the ending portion of the procession from the nave into the altar through the *Beautiful Gate*. There are two: the **Little Entrance** (with the Gospel Book) and the **Great Entrance** (with the offered bread and wine). The Little Entrance introduces the Liturgy of the Word, and the Great Entrance introduces the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- Epiklisis** G., *eh-PEEK-lee-sis*, “invocation,” the solemn act in which the celebrant calls down the Holy Spirit for the *metabolism* of the offered bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

Eucharist **G.**, *YOU-kah-rist*, “thanksgiving,” the central mystery of the Liturgy culminating in the reception of Holy Communion.

Fraction **L.**, “breaking (of the bread),” the third of the four manual actions of the Eucharist, performed just prior to the distribution of Holy Communion. It is the ancient name for the Eucharist (Acts 2:42).

Gifts, Precious Gifts a reference to the consecrated bread and wine, as the Body and Blood of Christ, given in Holy Communion.

Gospel **Anglo-Saxon**, “good tidings,” the second and chief scriptural reading taken from one of the four gospel books of the New Testament. In some cases, a composite Gospel is read, in which selections from more than one of the Gospels are drawn.

Homily **G.**, “a talk,” also called **sermon**, in which the Word of God is proclaimed and interpreted from the scriptural passages just read to the pastoral situation at hand.

Iconostasis **G.**, “icon screen,” also called the **templon**, which serves to mark the division between the nave and the holy altar.

Iliton, or Eiliton **G.**, *ee-lee-TON*, the red cloth which protects the antimins folded up underneath the Gospel Book.

Jesus Prayer A prayer of varying length, using some or all of these words: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, the sinner.”

Kontakion **G.**, a seasonal hymn, sung (usually by the celebrant at the holy Table, especially if there is a concelebration) as the last *troparion* after the Entrance and just before the chanting of the *Trisagion Hymn*.

Lamb the central portion of bread (marked with a seal in four quarters, from upper left to lower right, IC XC NI KA (“Jesus Christ overcomes”), which is cut out and placed in the center of the *diskos*. The Lamb itself will become the Body of Christ in the *Eucharist*.

Lesson **L.**, *lectio*, “Reading.” A selection of holy Scripture appointed to be read during the Liturgy of the Word. See *Apostle* and *Gospel*.

Litany see *ektenia*.

Liturgy **G.**, properly called the **Divine Liturgy**, the primary act of Christian worship, celebrated by an apostolic minister (the *bishop* or delegated by him to a *priest*) along with a congregation of faithful laity (the *synaxis*).

Lord’s Prayer the prayer beginning with the words, “Our Father Who art in heaven...,” taught to His disciples by Christ.

Mystagogy **G.**, “initiation” into the mystery of our salvation. A patristic eponym of the Divine Liturgy.

Orthros Also popularly called **Matins**, the morning prayer service, with hymnody for the given day’s commemoration. We prefer the term Orthros, as the term, Matins, chiefly evokes the Western (Roman Catholic) order for morning prayer.

Megalynarion **G.**, *meh-gah-lee-NAH-ree-ohn*, “Magnification hymn” sung to the Mother of God during the commemorations in the *anaphora*, and in some places it is followed by another megalynarion sung in commemoration of the saint or feast of the day, while the anaphora is concluded.

- Metabolism** G., the Orthodox reference to the “change” which occurs in the bread and wine during the Divine Liturgy.
- Metania** G., *meh-TAH-nee-ah*, “repentance,” a bow from the waist, the little metania, with an outstretched and open right hand to the floor, or a full *prostration*, the great metania.
- Mysterics** G., *mysteria*, always plural in the sense of referring to both the Body and the Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. In the singular, **Mystery**, a sacrament (in which case it is capitalized), and also a way of expressing the dual-natured givenness of existence: both spiritual (noetic) and material. The Orthodox Church views all Her rituals as mysteriological; i.e., as means of divine Grace for the healing of man.
- Narthex** G., the space of the Orthodox church *temple* through which one passes to enter the *nave*. Baptisms and certain other services are held in the narthex. This space is much more developed in monastery churches.
- Nave** L., “ship,” the central place of worship for the Orthodox Christian within the *temple*, viewed in the metaphor of the hold of Noah’s ark (the ship).
- Noetic** G., *no-EH-tic*, “mental, spiritual,” refers to the human capacity for spiritual knowledge (G., **nous**) in contrast to rational, or discursive, knowledge.
- Oblation** L., “*anaphora*, offering,” used in the opening dialogue of the anaphora, “Let us offer the holy oblation (*anaphora*) in peace”
- Orarion** G., the deacon’s stole, the end of which is elevated at certain times to visually stimulate the people toward more intentionality in prayer.
- Phelonion** G., (linguistic metathesis, from *phaenolion*) “cloak,” the priest’s outer vestment symbolizing solemn beauty and “joy” in liturgical action.
- Priest** G., from its older form, “presbyter” (“elder,” or “veteran”) the apostolic minister who serves the holy *Mysterics* (sacraments) with the *bishop*’s authority and who may serve as pastor of a parish community.
- Prokeimenon** G., *pro-KEE-meh-non*, “pre-text,” a psalmic refrain with one or more verses drawn from the Psalter. In the Liturgy, it prepares the people for the lesson from the *Apostle*.
- Proskomide** G., *pros-koh-mee-DEE*, “presentation,” the service of presenting and preparing the bread and wine for the *Eucharist*. Frequently anglicized as **Proskomidia**.
- Prospora** G., *PROS-for-ah*, “offerings,” the round loaves of bread prepared for the *Eucharist* by hand-kneading (usually) and stamped with special seals. The Liturgy itself as a whole is also called the Prospora.
- Prostration** L., a great *metania*, or full bow, touching the forehead to the floor.
- Prothesis** G., “setting forth,” the table, located in the north area of the altar, and often within a cave-like indent, upon which the *proskomidia* service is performed.
- Sacristy** L., “area for sacred things,” called in Greek, the **diakonikon** (since the deacon maintains this area) or **skévophylakion**, since liturgical vessels are kept there. It is the area of the altar to the south of the Holy Table where vestments and liturgical items are kept and maintained.
- Solea** L., the raised area between the nave and the sanctuary, where the *ektenias* are intoned, the *Apostle* is read, and the faithful receive Holy Communion.

- Synaxis** G., *SEE-nahk-sis*, “gathering,” the assembled faithful people, i.e., the liturgical community as a whole. Also a reference to the specific liturgical synaxis which occurs on the day after a great feast, in which the secondary person(s) of the feast are commemorated, with the name of “the synaxis of <Name>”.
- Table** The focus area of Orthodox Christian worship upon which the *Eucharist* is celebrated. The *altar* is not the Table; but rather the area of the church where the holy Table is located.
- Temple** L., the church building.
- Theotokos** G., “birth-giver of God,” the dogmatic title (decreed by the 3rd Oecumenical Synod) of the Virgin Mary which guarantees against Nestorianism, the heretical view that Jesus and Christ are two separable entities.
- Table** The focus area of Orthodox Christian worship upon which the *Eucharist* is celebrated. The *altar* is not the Table; but rather the area of the church where the holy Table is located.
- Throne-on-high, or Cathedra** The bishop’s throne located in the apse to the east of the holy Table. There is provision for this in only some churches, since from the time of the filling in of the templon to become an iconostasis, the bishop sits enthroned in the nave, on the south side.
- Transfer** G., *metaphora*. The act of moving the prepared Gifts from the *Prothesis* Table to the Holy Table by means of the procession and Great Entrance, just before the *Eucharist*.
- Trikerion** G., the three-branched candelabrum wielded by the bishop (along with the *dikerion*) which symbolizes the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.
- Trisagion Hymn** G., “thrice-holy,” the hymn sung just before the scriptural lessons, “Holy God, holy Mighty, holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” On certain great feasts, an alternate is sung.
- Troparion** G., the generic term for a short hymn for which there are various names depending upon the specific use: apolytikion, kontakion, etc.
- Vespers** L., the evening service of prayer which initiates the new liturgical day.
- Wine** Also called (G.) **Nama** to distinguish wine for the Liturgy from all other wines: dark red grape, very sweet and not artificially fortified. The wine is mixed with water in the *proskomide* and the *zeon* is added to this just before holy Communion, in the Liturgy.
- Zeon** G., *ZEH-on*, “hot,” boiling water added to (commingling) the consecrated *wine* in the *chalice* just before Holy Communion. So, holy Communion is administered warm, to physically symbolize the divine and dynamic nature it bears as the mystical Body and Blood of Christ.