



A C C O L L Y T E S

*Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church
1580 Atlantic Blvd.
Building D, Unit 160 Dulles, VA 20166
Rev. George Alexson, Proistamenos*

INSTRUCTION MANUAL

His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey

His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos was born in New York City on September 20, 1961 to John and Magdalene Kourounis, the Most Reverend Evangelos (Kourounis) attended the Greek-American parochial schools of St. Eleftherios and St. Spyridon in New York City. Upon graduation from Immaculata H.S. in N.Y.C., he enrolled in Hellenic College, in Brookline, MA from which he graduated in 1983 and then continued his studies at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology graduating in 1986 with a Masters of Divinity Degree.



In 1987-88 he attended the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey of the University of Geneva, Switzerland from which he received a Certificate of Ecumenical Studies. He was ordained to the Holy Diaconate February 1st, 1987 at the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Eleftherios in Manhattan and to the Holy Priesthood on July 30th, 1989 at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in New York City by His Grace, Bishop Philotheos of Meloa.

His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America elevated him [ordination] to the rank of Archimandrite on March 30th, 1991 at Sts. Catherine and George Greek Orthodox Church in Astoria, New York. He served as Deacon to the Orthodox Center of Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy, Geneva in 1987-1988, as Deacon to Archbishop Iakovos and Assistant Director of Archives of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in 1988-1989. From August 1989 until September 1993 he served as assistant to the Dean of St. Demetrios Cathedral in Astoria, New York.

Prior to his election to the Episcopacy, Metropolitan Evangelos served as Chancellor of the Diocese of New Jersey from 1993-1999. He also served as Director of the Department of Registry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese from 1996 to 2001, and as President of the Spiritual Court for the Archdiocesan District from 1996 until April 2003. From October 2001 until his election to the Episcopacy, he served as Dean of the Hellenic Orthodox Community of Astoria "St. Demetrios Cathedral".

On April 12th, 2003, upon the recommendation of and nomination by the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople under the Presidency of His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, unanimously elected Metropolitan Evangelos as Metropolitan and Spiritual Leader of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey.

The "Mega Minima" (Official announcement and declaration of the Election) of His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos was read on May 9th, 2003 at the Archdiocesan Chapel of St. Paul the Apostle.

On Saturday, May 10th, 2003 His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios together with His Eminence, Archbishop Iakovos, His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, His Eminence, Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta and several other Hierarchs, ordained the Very Reverend Archimandrite Evangelos Kourounis to the Episcopacy at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity.

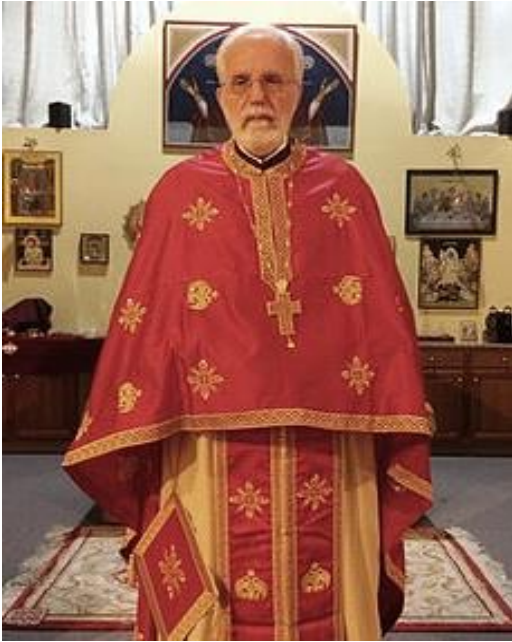
The Enthronement of His Eminence, Metropolitan Evangelos as the Spiritual Leader of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey took place on Sunday, May 11th, 2003 at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Theologian in Tenafly, New Jersey. H. E. Metropolitan Evangelos succeeds Metropolitan Silas and Bishop George of New Jersey. With the new Charter granted to the Archdiocese by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2003, the Diocese of New Jersey, which was established in 1977, was elevated to a Metropolis. Therefore, Metropolitan Evangelos is the first Hierarch enthroned as Metropolitan of New Jersey.

Upon his election Archbishop Demetrios stated: "I am sure that by the Grace and strength from God, the new Metropolitan of New Jersey will prove to be a true imitator of our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ and will lead the devoted flock of his God-saved Metropolis to 'springs of living water'" (Rev. 7:17)

The Metropolis is comprised of 55 parishes in New Jersey, the Greater Philadelphia area, Delaware, Maryland & Virginia.

Presiding Priest: Father George Alexson

Fr. George A. Alexson, a native of Cambridge, Mass., following graduation from Cambridge High and Latin, entered Hellenic College/Holy Cross Seminary (1962-1965), to pursue his life-long dream for the priesthood. In 1965, he transferred to St. Tikhon's Russian Orthodox Seminary, located near Scranton, PA, graduating in May of 1969.



Father married Joanna Demopoulos of Kozani, Greece, a student at St. Basil's Academy, following graduation on June 15, 1969 in Scranton, PA.

On July 26th, Archbishop Iakovos ordained Father to the Diaconate at St. Paraskevi Church, Greenlawn, NY. Metropolitan Silas ordained him to the priesthood on August 17th in Port Jefferson, N.Y.

On September 15th, Father began his first assignment as assistant to the Dean of Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral in New York City. His first parish as Proistamenos was St. Nicholas Church in Jamestown, N.Y. During this time, he also earned a degree in Philosophy from St. Bonaventure University.

In 1972, he transferred to Holy Trinity Church in Binghamton, N.Y. While in Binghamton, Fr. George attended SUNY Binghamton University and received an MA in Philosophy. During his last two years at Holy Trinity, he was invited to teach courses in Philosophy and New Testament Greek at his Alma Mater, St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, PA. In 1976, Father left Binghamton for St. George's Church in Greenville, S.C., where he served for 11 years. During his tenure there a new community center was built. Fr. George was also very active in the Greenville Ministerial Association and the Chaplaincy Program for Orthodox Students at Furman University. He also helped establish an Orthodox Fellowship for all the Orthodox Students at Clemson University.

In 1987, Fr. George accepted an invitation to pastor St. Katherine's in Falls Church, VA (1987- 2001). While serving there, he began studies at the Catholic University of America, in the Early Christian Studies Program receiving a Masters in Early Christian Studies. He completed all requirements for the Ph.D. (Cand.) in the program prior to his move to Atlanta. Fr. George was active in the Orthodox Clergy Fellowship of Greater Washington and served as its president for several years. He also represented the Archdiocese on the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Committee, whose task it was to represent to the American government concerns regarding Orthodox minorities, especially in countries hostile to Christians. In 1993 and 1995, he led Mission Trips to Poland and Slovakia for the Orthodox Mission Center and, in 1999 led a Mission Trip to the Holy Land. Fr. George also worked closely with the Greek and Cypriot embassies on behalf of Hellenic concerns and, in 2002 was honored by the Cypriot Society of Washington for his contribution to Greek-Cypriot causes.

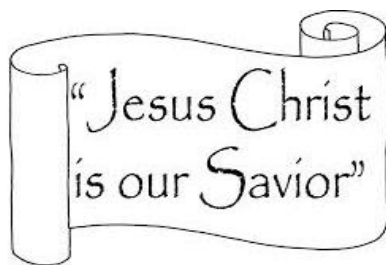
In January, 2001, he was installed as Dean of the Annunciation Cathedral in Atlanta. During his tenure there a new community center was built. As Dean of the Cathedral, he was instrumental in establishing the Annunciation Day School, a parochial school that combines secular and Orthodox studies. He was appointed by the Metropolitan as Spiritual Advisor to the Metropolis Philoptochos, an assignment he has always cherished. Fr. George was invited to lecture at Emory University in the Byzantine Studies Program, chaired by Prof. Andrew Enonomou, as well as to theology students at the university.

Upon retirement in 2010, Father and Presvytera Joanna returned to Northern Virginia to join their children and grandchildren. He received a blessing from Metropolitan Evangelos to serve as the first full-time Presiding Priest of the Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church, beginning January 2, 2011. Father George and Presvytera Joanna are the proud Parents of two children (Dimitri and Denise) and five grandchildren (Tristan, Joanna, Trinity, Alaxandra and George).

Dear Acolytes ~ Altar Servers

Welcome to the Altar Servers Group (Ages:10-18) for this year 2018-2019. Your willingness to serve your Church in this field of endeavor is most commendable. Truly, this is a great service you will be rendering to our Church, and the Community. Serving in the Altar is a sacred function. It means that you must be prepared to serve effectively and efficiently.

There are many rewards for serving the Church. You will grow closer to the Church through your efforts by building a strong moral character, developing a sound sense of values with your words and thoughts, and setting an example for younger children who want to serve the Church. Truly, you will enhance our parish's liturgical life, bringing joy to our congregation.



I want to thank all of you for participating in our Altar Servers Program. One of the greatest joys, privileges and responsibilities that an Orthodox Cristian male can experience, is serving in the Holy Altar. This enclosed booklet contains much information about the nature of that service. I want you to study it carefully. The information you find here will help you understand some of the important and basic teachings of our Church. Furthermore, it will assist you in appreciating the life and activity of service in the Altar.

When you are an Acolyte, you have to realize that it is a privilege to serve God in this way. You will have the chance to get firsthand exposure to the liturgy by participating in it. You will create many memories of your special role as an Altar boy in the Orthodox faith. This is a most sacred ministry of the Church for our dedicated youth of our Community.

I would like again to personally thank you for the unselfish gesture you have made in behalf of your Church. Please call upon me, Deacon Harry or Sub-Deacon Michael at any time when you have any questions.

Graduation day will always be on the 2nd Sunday of June. This way, all the older Boys (we are so blessed to have so many of them) will have the opportunity to serve as Captains in our Church and, to show their Talents and Love to all of us, too.

I Hope you have a most Productive Year!

Thank you very much and God Bless you!

Your Spiritual Father: Rev. Fr. George Alexson





Acolytes ~ Altar Servers ~ Our Angels ~ Ιεροπαιδα

The name Acolyte comes from the Greek word “akolouthos” meaning server, attendant or follower. So, the Acolytes are attendants to the Bishops or Priests and help them during the various services. During the Divine Liturgy the Acolytes represent the Angels that surround and serve Jesus Christ, in the same way as they surround and assist the Parish Priest. Angels are always ready to help, are quiet and have an excellent behaviour. These are characteristics the acolytes should strive to perfect. The Acolyte Ministry has its roots in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, where the Prophet Samuel is seen assisting Eli, the Levite Priest, and Elisha is seen assisting Elijah the Prophet. Thus, the role of the Acolyte is an important one. Acolytes are mentioned as early as 251 A.D. by Cornelius, Bishop of Rome. These early Acolytes were special people appointed to serving and assisting the Priests. (Edited by Rev. Fr. Georgii Gligorov)

An Acolyte Prayer

O Lord, may I always remember how

My Mouth is about to be used to sing your praises,

Kiss your Holy Icons, and above all,

Receive your Precious Body and Blood;

My Nose, to smell your sweet fragrances;

My Eyes, to gaze upon your Holy Images;

My Ears, to hear your Divine Words;

My Hands, to touch your Holy Things;

My Feet, to walk on Holy Ground.

Give me, the strength everyday to properly use

My Mouth, Nose, Eyes, Ears, Hands, Feet and my entire Body ...

Kept away from sin and properly giving

Glory to You, My Creator. Amen!!!



Being an Acolyte is a special honor, to serve in the Altar, the most sacred area of the Church. Your service is an offering to God. All of you are mandated to keep away from all kinds of evil and immoral practices and should lead a lifestyle that is an example to all. This will bring glory to God and dignity to the vocation of the Acolyte. May God bless you and protect you from any harm in accepting this vocation for the glory of His Name and of His Holy Church.

It will be an unforgettable learning experience for all the Acolytes serving next to Fr. George, Deacon Harry and Sub-Deacon Michael. You can be an Acolyte too! Come and join us!



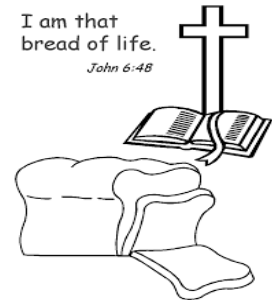


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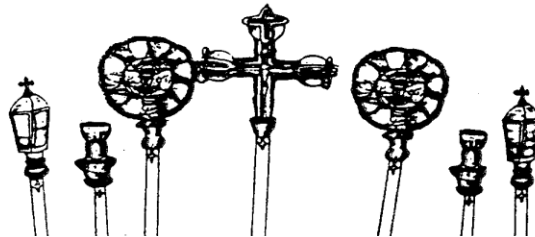
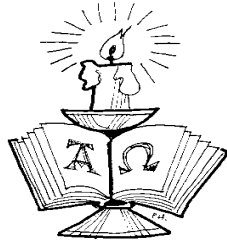
Acolyte's Rules and Regulations

"For to serve Thee is a great and awesome thing even to the heavenly powers" Prayer of the Cherubimic Hymn. Christ said to His Disciples & to Peter, "Follow Me!". Our Acolytes follow in procession in the light & path that our Saviour Jesus Christ in their Ministry to serve & adorn His Divine Services for our Healing, Inspiration & Salvation.



1. You are here to serve Christ. The Holy Altar of our Church represents the Throne of God. This is a very sacred place, where the "*Holiest of Holies*" is present, the place of Sanctification. Your behavior, your attitude, your service should reflect "Fear of God", Faith in God and Love to God.
2. Entry into the Holy Altar is restricted. Laymen or women are not permitted to enter except in cases of urgent need and then with a special permission. Some of the Acolytes have received such permission. This is *a very special privilege*. Do not abuse it and do not show any disrespect for the Altar of God. You must minister with Honor and Dignity because this little ministry is great in God's eyes. This blessed ministry can give you Wisdom and Strength. Please, Approach it carefully!
3. *Dress properly* for serving God. Acolytes must wear a necktie, dress shirt (white shirt if possible, especially on special Holidays) and dark color shoes (NO Jeans or Sneakers ~ No Exceptions).
4. **BE ON TIME**. All Altar Boys must be in the Altar at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy or other scheduled services, *otherwise you will be replaced by someone else. The latest you can arrive is 10:00 sharp!*
5. Upon entering the Holy Altar, *the Altar Boy gets his Robe* (the Belt is only for those servers blessed by the Bishop). He then neatly folds them and presents them first to the Bishop (if he is present) or to the Priest (if he is by himself) to be blessed. The Altar boy says: "Your Blessing Father = Evlogison Thespotia or Pater".
6. The Captain of the Acolytes directs them with hand signals. He and the Acolytes must avoid speaking or whispering, or moving from place to place. Acolytes are chosen because they *are reverent and, respect the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. They always have to remember that they are in the Holy Altar, in the "*Holiest of Holies*", which is restricted to others and when the Priest censes you always make a reverent bow.
7. Only the Clergy, the Priests or Deacons are allowed to stand or walk in front of the Holy Altar while serving. Acolytes must **NEVER** walk or cross in front of the Holy Altar (between the Altar Table and the Royal Doors). During the services No one should go back and forth behind the Holy Table.

8. *Do not walk too fast or too slow going in or out of the Altar.* For the small Entrance 4-6 of you go on the Solea and for the Great Entrance all of you go around the congregation *in a single line* (the younger boys go first preferably by height and stay close together (2 feet apart). When you arrive at the Solea bow with reverence in front of the Holy Doors, then stand on 2 straight lines on the left and on the right side (your feet must be on the red square carpet) and after the Priest goes inside, you go 2 steps closer to each other, turn towards the Altar, *bow with reverence* in front of the Holy Doors and, then return to the Altar *in order* through the side doors. Place first all the Items in the proper slot, then *turn around facing the Priest, make the Sign of the Cross* and on a straight line proceed again for your assigned standing position.



9. Blow out your Candles only when you arrive inside the Altar (never on the Solea).
10. *Have respect for your fellow Acolytes. Help each other & if someone is out of line, correct him.* Teamwork is the collaborative effort of a team to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way. Have the same love for one another as the love Christ instituted between His Apostles.
11. *Pay attention to the service.* No unnecessary talking, pushing, shoving, or clowning around is allowed. Never laugh, giggle and do not play with the Candles, your robe, the charcoal, etc. or do anything that may distract the Priest from his Prayers. No eating or drinking permitted in the Altar. NO GUM.
12. Whenever you walk behind the Altar, *stop and bless yourself.* On the holy Altar we have the Tabernacle, and in it we have the Body and the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The Priest uses this from the Tabernacle, when he visits the sick to pray for them and to offer to them the Holy Communion. We as Christians always show our Faith & Love for the Body and the Blood of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
13. Do not fall asleep, gaze around or daydream. The purpose is not only *to serve and assist the Priest*, but also to PRAY. All the services (Divine Liturgy, Vespers, Paraclesis, etc.) are prayer services not only for the Priest, but also for your benefit and for the entire Congregation.
14. Every Acolyte will *always kiss the hand of the Priest*, whenever he hands him something or when he returns something to him. We kiss the Priest's hand for the following reasons:
 a) First, by kissing the Priest's hand we show Respect for him, and because
 b) His hands hold the "Holliest of Holies", the Body and the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
15. When Fr. George gives the Sermon, *all of you should come out* and sit on the left side.
16. *It is your duty to keep the Altar clean and neat.* Before leaving make sure that the area used for the cutting of the andithoron (Holy Bread) is cleaned and everything is put back into the proper place.
17. *Check your Altar boys schedule and keep your dates in mind.* In case you can not serve on a particular day and you will be absent, you are responsible to call someone else to switch with you for that Sunday. This way everybody will serve at least one Sunday per Month.
18. *If you are a Substitute*, please allow the Boys of that Sunday's Team to *SERVE FIRST*. You can not take over and push the others out. That is a not appropriate! Please, have Respect for Them!
19. *A good Acolyte prepares himself to receive Holy Communion* as often as possible. He prepares himself with prayers, meditation, fasting (as much as you can) and Holy Confession.
20. An Orthodox Christian *always fasts every Wednesday and Friday* (at least from meat) and, during Lent.



Acolytes ~ Altar Boys ~ Ιεροπαιδα



Acolytes or Altar Boys have a very important role in the Orthodox Church services. It is a great honor to serve as an Acolyte. They represent the Holy Angels of our Church who are the heavenly servants of God. You will create many beautiful memories of your special role in the Orthodox Family! Acolytes have many jobs to do: They must be familiar with the different Vestments and Sacred Vessels, light the candles, prepare the Censer (be careful with the Charcoal and not too much incense), follow the Divine Liturgy, read the Epistle and some prayers, participate in the Small and Great Entrances, carry the Cross, Candles, Exapteryga and the Censer during Processions, as well as to participate in other Services (Vasilopita, Blessing of the Water, Memorial, Artoklasia, etc.). The Holy Altar is a very sacred place in our Church and only the Clergy and the Altar Boys are permitted to enter. No laymen or women are permitted entrance to the Holy Altar. An Acolyte or Altar Boy is someone who is privileged to serve in the Holy Altar where the "Holiest of the Holies" are present and where the Lord dwells. All the Altar Boys have received a special permission, an oath and a blessing to serve and to assist the Clergy in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and other special orthodox Services. Acolytes wear special Vestments: A tunic (Stiharion) which represents purity of soul, happiness, and salvation. Older Acolytes will be permitted to wear the belt, only when they are ordained as Readers by our Metropolitan.



Before entering the Holy Altar

- a) Every time you enter the Church, light a Candle, bless yourself and venerate the Icons;
- b) Before you enter the Altar, bow and bless yourself and venerate the icon on the door;
- c) Get your robe and have it blessed by the Priest (by the right side);
- d) Wear the robe and stand at your assigned place and follow the Divine Liturgy.

At the end of the Service

- a) After dismissal you get the Blessings from the Priest;
- b) After the Blessings venerate the Crucifix behind the Altar Table;
- c) Proceed to hang your Robe neatly and in the proper place (Small-Medium-Large);
- d) Before leaving, say a prayer of thanks, thanking the Lord for all his blessings.

Duties of an Acolyte Captain: *To be the Best Example to your Students!* The Captain is required to be near the Priest at all times during the Liturgy; He is responsible for assigning specific duties to the Altar boys; He makes sure everything is ready for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and at the end of the service he should check that everything has been put back in order (especially the Robes) and then he is the last one to leave.

1. During the Liturgy, after the choir completes the singing of the hymn "O Monogenis Ios...", (always make the sign of the Cross first ~ facing the Priest) and, then 4-6 Altar boys get the candles and lanterns for the Little Entrance;
2. Every Sunday *the Captain must be ready to read the Epistle lesson* of that week, *Loud and Clear! Get the Blessing, too.*
3. The older Acolytes once in a while have to read other prayers too; during different services;
4. During the reading of the Epistle, *four Altar Boys are to prepare with lighted candles/lanterns for the Gospel reading;* On the way back go in front of the Holy Doors, bow and then *split to go (left and right)* to the Altar;
5. While the Cherubic hymn is being sung, the Captain assigns *all of you for the Candles, Lanterns, Exapteryga, Cross and Thymiato (Censer) for the Great Entrance.* First make the sign of the Cross, while bowing slightly with reverence, get the Items and, then get ready to exit (by height) for the procession. On the way back go in front of the Holy Doors (2 lines), bow and then split to go (left and right) to the Altar and, then put them away. Finally, on a straight line *turn around always towards the Priest, make the sign of the Cross* and then go back to your assigned position;
6. After the Creed, an Acolyte prepares the Zeon (boiling water for the Holy Communion);
7. When the Priest says, "Let us attend The Holy Gifts for the Holy people of God", one Altar Boy brings the Zeon to the Priest (by the right side of the Holy Table);
8. Two Pairs of Altar Boys assist Fr. George and Deacon Harry with the Holy Communion;
9. One Altar boy is assigned to hold the Basket with the Antithoron ~ *Standing on the side by the 3rd Pew;*
10. If there is a Memorial Service, set the Table with the Kollyva in the middle of the Solea and *bring the Censer;*
11. After the Divine Liturgy, one Altar Boy is assigned to hold the (*basket*) Antithoron for distribution by the Priest;
12. At the end, the Priest has to do the Katalysis of the Holy Communion and the Captain has to read the Prayers.

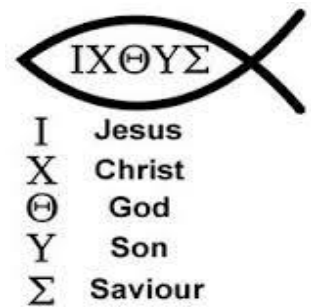
Pastoral Guidelines for Respectful Worship

The Orthodox Divine Liturgy begins when the Priest chants, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ..." = "Ευλογημενη η Βασιλεια του Πατρος και...". According to the actual Church service procedures, every member of the congregation is required to be seated in the pews at the beginning of the service. We do not arrive late or leave prior to their conclusion. When entering the Church, especially when services are in progress, we must remember that we are in God's House. We must be reverent and careful not to disturb parishioners already at prayer. Most of all, we must sincerely acknowledge that our Lord Himself, the Holy Trinity, is present. All unnecessary conversations must be avoided, including in the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Instead, we must make every effort to be conscious spiritually and physically to the Sacred Services taking place.

There are several parts of the service during which no one should be moving around. Wherever a person happens to be at these moments, he/she should stop and stand reverently, until the proper time to proceed.

These parts of the service are:

1. The Procession of the Priest and Altar Boys with the Gospel;
2. The reading of the Epistle and the Gospel;
3. The Cherubic Hymn and the Great Procession of the Priest and the Altar Boys with the Holy Gifts;
4. The recitation of the Nicene Creed;
5. The hymn, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord" ~ "Se Imnoumen, Se ...", and the prayers of the of the Consecration Holy Gifts;



6. The Lord's Prayer;
7. Holy Communion;
8. The Sermon;
9. The Dismissal Prayer;



10. Any special services (Artoklasia, Memorial services, Processions, Prayers for a Ministry, etc.).
11. Whenever the Priest is facing the people or he is outside of the Altar (with the Censer or giving a Blessing), everyone should stand wherever they are.

Please, remember that the Parish Council members are required to keep order during services and all of you should follow their instructions at all times.

Please also be respectful of other parishioners during services by avoiding unnecessary conversation.

Wear modest and appropriate attire and we do not cross our legs when seated in the Church.

All of us we must personally strive to welcome all visitors to our Church.



Parts of the Church Building ~ Εκκλησία

The Church Building is divided into 3 parts called the Narthex, Nave and Sanctuary

1. The Narthex ~ Ναρθηκας is the first part where we enter, light a candle, venerate the icons and generally prepare ourselves for entrance into the Nave for worship. Here when we enter, we do the sign of the Cross, light a Candle (which symbolises our acceptance of Christ as the light of the World), and kiss the icons (first the Icon of Christ and then the others). It is in the Narthex that we slow down our thoughts and begin our prayer. The Narthex is a place of preparation for our entrance into another reality, namely the Heavenly worship of the Church. If we arrive during the reading of the Bible or during any processions, we should stand still until they are finished before lighting a candle or doing anything else in the Narthex.

2. The Nave ~ Ο Ναος is the main middle part of the Church where the congregation gathers for worship. It represents Heaven on earth. The open elevated space between the Pews and Iconostasis is called the “**Solea**”.

3. The Sanctuary ~ Το Ιερό, separated from the Nave by the **Iconostasis = Το Εικονοστασιο**, is always located *toward the East* because Christ, the Light of the world is symbolised by the **rising sun**. In the sanctuary are the Altar Table, the Proskomide (where the Gifts for Holy Communion are prepared), and the Large Crucifix reminding us of Jesus sacrifice on the Cross for our salvation. Strictly speaking, only the clergy are allowed in this area and those to whom they give a blessing to be there also (Altar Boys, Sexton).

The Priesthood in the Orthodox Church ~ Η Ιερωσύνη: The Clergy in our Church are the ordained leaders of the Community. St. Paul says in the Bible that they will answer before God for the people in their care. Their responsibility is very great & they are heavily involved with the people of their community. During their ordination the people must give their approval by calling out Worthy during the Sacrament of Ordination. The community has high expectations of the clergy and generally has much love for it as well.



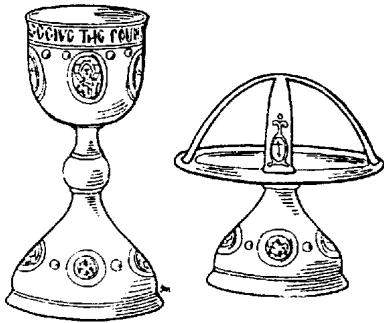
There are **3 orders** within the ordained ministry of the Orthodox Church

A Deacon is the **1st step in ordination ~ Χειροτονία**: The Deacon helps at services, in parishes, or may be attached as an assistant to a Bishop. He is not given authority to lead services on his own and thus he cannot officiate at the Eucharist or other Sacraments on his own. The Deacon's wife is called **Diaconissa**. **A Priest** (also known as a Presbyter) is the **2nd level** in the ministry. He is vested with the authority to lead worship and officiate at all Sacraments except that of Ordination, which only a Bishop can effect. The Priest is usually assigned a Parish in which he ministers both the Word of God and the Sacraments. Like the Deacon he is allowed to marry so long as he does so before ordination. His wife, because of her special role as the Mother of the community is called **Presvytera**. **The highest level** of Ordination is that of the **Bishop**. Ultimately, he carries most responsibility before God for the community. In Greek he is called **Episkopo** ~ Overseer.

All Bishops are equal in the Orthodox Church and they have some extra responsibilities, such as the **Metro-politan** or the **Archbishop**. All clergy in the Orthodox Church can trace their ordination through the laying on of hands to the Apostles. This is called **Apostolic Succession** and is very important from an Orthodox point of view in safeguarding our apostolic inheritance. It is a strong Orthodox custom to show respect toward the Priest as one responsible before God for leading the community. One physical expression of this is **to kiss his hand** (an ancient custom signifying **Respect and Love**) and there is a blessing for the person who does this.

EXPLANATION OF THE SACRED VESSELS

Every Altar boy has seen the Priest vest himself and arrange the sacred vessels for the Divine Liturgy and other services. The two most important of these is **the Chalice = Το Δισκοποτήριο** and **the Discos/Paten**. The Chalice will contain the Sacred Blood of Christ. It is frequently made of gold or gold-plated silver, at least inside the bowl of the cup. The Discos is usually a piece that matches the Chalice and is the small dish, usually one small stem so that it can be held easily.



During the Service of Preparation or Proskomide (which takes place at the Prothesis table, left of the altar), the bread that will become the Body of Christ is placed there with the appropriate prayers along with a piece for the Virgin Mary, the Angels and Saints, pieces for the living and for those who have departed this life. The Discos symbolizes, according to some, the cave where Christ was born and the manger where Christ was laid.



The Spear and the Spoon are also found alongside of the Chalice and the Discos for they are used during the services. The Spear is used to cut the Proskophora during the Service of Preparation. It denotes the Spear that the soldiers used when they pierced Christ in the side (the rib), out of which came blood and water. The Spoon is used for Holy Communion to the faithful.

The Asterisk or Star is a ceremonial instrument consisting of two gold plated metal strips held together in the middle and bent at a right angle and set upon the Discos, and is covered with the appropriate ceremonial cloth cover. Along with serving the practical purpose of keeping the cloth cover from touching the bread to be consecrated into the Body of Christ, it symbolizes the star that led the Magi to Bethlehem and stood over the manger where Christ lay as a new born child.

The Cloth Coverings are the veils cut in the shape of a cross and are used to cover and protect the Chalice and the Discos. There is a larger one which is used to cover both of these during the Divine Liturgy and is worn on the shoulders of the Priest or the Deacon during the Great Entrance. This cloth is called **the Aer**.

The Red Communion Cloth is a square cloth used as the Priest administers Holy Communion to the faithful and it covers the Chalice following the giving of Holy Communion. It should be in place on the Altar Table prior to the Divine Liturgy along with the Spoon that is used for Holy Communion.

All of the above are usually in place prior to the Divine Liturgy **on the Prothesis or Preparation Table**. Here is where the solemn preparation of the Elements takes place. It is usually on the left side of the Altar and it can be either a separate small table or piece of furniture or built into the wall. It symbolizes the Manger of Christ, and is decorated with an ornate table cloth, an icon of the birth of Christ or that of the Extreme Humility.

Close by the Preparation Table is found **the Censer** on which incense is placed on a burning charcoal offering a sweet smelling smoke. It symbolizes the prayers that are offered and rise to heaven. The Censer has four chains which denote the four evangelists and twelve bells which denote the gospel message of the twelve Disciples of Christ.

Also found on **the Preparation Table** are **the Cruets**; one holding wine and the other water. These are to be kept full at all times and are used in the Preparation Service.

By Rev. Fr. Georgii Gligorov



Explanation of Vesting ~ By Rev. Fr. Georgii Gligorov

As you may already know, there are three major orders of clergy in our Orthodox Church: The Deacon, the Priest, and the Bishop. All three have vestments that are common to them all.



With each elevation, from Deacon to Priest and from Priest to Bishop, there are some additions that occur in the vestiture. Clergy usually vest in what is called the Sacristy (Deaconikon), the room where the vestments are kept (right side of the altar). Many times, the clergy vest in the Altar. As they put on each vestment particular to their position, they recite certain prayers as appropriate for each item.

The Sticharion or Tunic (Deacon, Priest, Bishop) This is the basic vestment of the clergy and must be worn for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This is usually a long, straight robe with wide sleeves and is called "a robe of salvation and a tunic of happiness." It symbolizes a pure and peaceful conscience and spiritual joy.

The Orarion (Deacon only): This is a wide and long band of material that is the distinctive sign of the Deacon. It falls over the left shoulder and winds around, about waist height and over the left shoulder again. As the Deacon prays, he holds the front part of it up while the back part just hangs. The Orarion symbolizes the wings of angels.

The Epimanika or Cuffs (Deacon, Priest, Bishop): These are two cuffs, one for the right hand and one for the left which are worn by the Deacon, by the Priest and by the Bishop. Thus, they are common to all the clergy. They symbolize the tying of Christ's hands and wrist at the time he was flogged, and also serve to remind us that all things that we do with our hands, we should do for the glory of God. They also have a practical purpose; to hold the wide sleeves of the Sticharion in place.

The Epitrachelion or Stole (Priest, Bishop): This is the distinctive sign of the Priesthood and is placed over the head on the shoulders and hangs down in front. It symbolizes the grace of the priesthood that the priest receives on the day of his ordination). In effect it is a development of the Orarion, actually being an Orarion doubled with both ends hanging in front and reaching the full length of the Sticharion.

The Zone or Belt (Priest, Bishop): This is a ceremonial belt or sash that today fastens at the back but in times past fastened in the front, much like a common belt. The Belt is worn by the Priest and the Bishop. It symbolizes the power of the grace of the Priesthood and has the practical function of holding the Epitrachelion or stole in place against the Sticharion or tunic.

The Epigonateon (Priest, Bishop): The square or diamond shaped Epigonateon is suspended, hanging over the right knee. It is worn by Priests who have received the privilege to wear it (Protopresviter) and by Bishops too. It symbolizes the sword of the Holy Spirit and the power of the heavenly powers, the angels which may be embroidered on some of them. It denotes that the Priest wearing it has a title of distinction given to him by the Church.

The Phelonion (Priest only): Resembling a cape, the Phelonion rests on the shoulders of the Priest and is put on through a head opening. It is about arm's length in the front and reaches the edge of the tunic or Sticharion in the back. It sort of looks like a bell. On the back is usually an embroidered Cross or icon symbolizing the seamless robe of Christ, it stands for righteousness. With the Phelonion, a Priest's liturgical attire is completed.

The Cross (Priest, Bishop): A Priest is allowed to wear an ornately decorated Cross, if he has received the title and distinction from the Church (protopresviter stavrophor).

The Sakkos (Bishop only): The Sakkos is a richly embroidered liturgical vestment worn by the Bishop. It is one of the principal vestments worn by a Bishop and replaces the Phelonion of the Priest yet carries the same meaning: the seamless robe of Christ.

The Omophorion (Bishop only): This is one of the articles worn by the bishop that is symbolic of the wayward lamb carried on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd. It falls over the shoulders and hangs in front and the back. There is a shorter one that hangs only in front and is worn after the reading of the Gospel.

The Mitre (Bishop only): A Mitre is the Bishop's ceremonial crown and is worn only with the complete liturgical vestments. It denotes his apostolic sovereignty. **The Pectoral Cross and the Engolpion (Bishop only).** The Pectoral Cross and the Engolpion are worn by the Bishop during the Divine Liturgy. The cross denotes the self-denial of the Shepherd of the flock. The Engolpion is the distinctive sign of the office of the bishop and is usually oval in shape and suspended from a chain.

The Pateritsa or Pastoral Staff (Bishop only): This staff, made of a precious metal & having at the top a cross with serpents turned inward towards it, denotes the power of God's Holy Spirit & especially the cross as an instrument of support for all the faithful. It reminds us of Moses who held up the Cross in the wilderness as the snakes came to bite the people. As long as they looked at the cross, they suffered no more. The serpents on top, turn inwardly toward the Cross as reminders of the Lord's saying: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

The Clergy of the Eastern Orthodox Church and how we address them

1. Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople: His Holiness Bartholomew
Other Patriarchs: A bishop who is the head of an Ethnic Church
Your Holiness = Panayiotate
Your Beatitude = Makariotate
2. Archbishop of New York: His Eminence Dimitrios
Your Eminence = Sevasmiotate
3. Metropolitan of New Jersey: His Eminence Evangelos
Your Eminence = Sevasmiotate
4. Bishop ~ Επισκοπος
Thespota = Your Grace = Theofilestate
5. Presbyter / Priest = Ιερεας Πρωτο-Πρεσβυτερος: Fr. George Alexson
Father = Pater
Protopresbyter / Protopriest: A title of honor given only to non-monastic Priests
6. Archimandrites: A title of honor given only to monastic Priests
Father = Pater
Hieromonk = Ieromonachos (a "priest-monk"), Kalogeros ~ Nun
Yeronta / Yerontissa, Athelfi / e
7. Deacon, Protodeacon: A title of honor given only to non-monastic deacons. It means "first servant".
Our own Deacon: Harry Chelpon
8. Minor Orders: a) Sub-Deacon, b) Reader and c) the Altar Boys who assist the Priest

Services of the Orthodox Church

1. Sacraments ~ Μυστηρια

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Baptism ~ Βαπτιση | 2. Chrismation ~ Χρισμα |
| 3. Holy Communion ~ Θεια Κοινωνια | 4. Marriage ~ Γαμος |
| 5. Sacrament of Confession = Εξομολογηση | |
| 6. Holy Unction ~ Ευχελαιον | 7. Ordination ~ Η Χειροτονια |



2. **Matins ~ Ορθρος:** A morning service consisting of prayers and hymns and Gospel readings. This is held prior to the Divine Liturgy and always ends with the singing of the Doxology.
3. **The Divine Liturgy ~ Θεια Λειτουργια:** The most frequently attended service is the Divine Liturgy held every Sunday and major feast days throughout the year. The Liturgy is the Service in which we have Holy Communion. During each service the Priest stands at the Altar. He is human, a member of God's people, but vested with the authority to offer the Eucharist and lead the worship.
4. **Vespers ~ Εσπερινος:** Prayer service held in the evening. **Great Vespers**, (slightly longer than Vespers) are held Saturday evenings, or on the eve prior to important feast days.
5. **Little Compline ~ Μικρος Αποδειπνος:** A Prayer service read after the evening meal (20 minutes long).
6. **Great Compline:** It is longer than the Little Compline and also contains the singing of hymns.
7. **Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts ~ Προηγιασμενη:** On Wednesdays the Liturgy is the most popular of our Lenten services. It is very different from the Liturgy that we're used to. It features Communion from Gifts that were consecrated at the Liturgy of the preceding Sunday - hence the name pre-sanctified.
8. **Salutations to the Virgin Mary ~ Χαιρετισμοι:** Service of hymns honoring and praising the Virgin Mary during the first 4 Fridays of Lent. Consists of 4 stanzas (one stanza is sung each Friday). On the 5th Friday of Lent we sing the Akathist, a complex Byzantine poem of praise and devotion to Virgin Mary.
9. **Acathyst Hymn ~ Ακαθιστος Υμνος:** Service held on the 5th Friday of Lent, again honoring and praising the Virgin Mary. All stanzas are sung on this Friday evening.
10. **Great Canon ~ Μεγαλος Κανονας:** A lengthy prayer service during Lent (Wednesday evening before the 3rd Sunday of Lent).
11. **Paraklesis ~ Παρακλησις:** Prayer service to the Virgin Mary usually held during the 1st fifteen days of August, but may be performed at other times by request.



Introduction: What is the Greek Orthodox Church?

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



Volumes have been written on the inexhaustible treasures of our Greek Orthodox heritage. It is not the purpose of this guidebook to instruct its readers in Orthodox theology or Church history. However, it is important to understand that everything we do is based upon the premise that the Orthodox Faith is founded upon the teachings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, now and always. The Orthodox Church has 2 great sources of authority: Holy Scripture ~ **Αγία Γραφή** and Holy Tradition ~ **Παραδοση**.

Holy Scripture ~ Η Αγία Γραφή comprises the writings of both the New and the Old Testaments. The New Testament reveals the human & divine nature of Jesus Christ, and His sacred teachings that we are charged to follow. The Old Testament is a history of the Hebrew people. It contains, among other sacred writings, the prophecies and the writings of the Prophets that foretold the coming of the Messiah. It therefore serves as an introduction to the revelation and the saving message of the New Testament.

1. Holy Tradition ~ Η Ιερά Παραδοση, of which Holy Scripture is a part, includes the writings, teachings, and acts of the apostles, saints, martyrs, and fathers of the Church, and her liturgical & sacramental traditions throughout the ages, the oral tradition of the early Church, and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. All of this collective wisdom & experience through the centuries are combined to form this second great source of sacred authority.

2. The Creed ~ Το Πιστεω: The Creed contains the Church's basic summary of doctrinal truths to which we adhere as Orthodox Christians. It consists of the 12 articles of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, or the "Pistevo," which is recited at each Divine Liturgy.

3. The 7 Sacraments ~ Τα 7 Μυστηρια : The Sacraments are the visible means by which the invisible Grace of the Holy Spirit is imparted to us. Four Sacraments are obligatory:

1. Baptism, 2. Chrismation (anointment with holy oil), 3. Confession and, 4. Holy Communion.

Three are optional: 1. Matrimony, 2. Holy Orders (Ordination) and, 3. Holy Unction (anointment of the sick).

4. The Church Calendar ~ Το Εκκλησιαστικο Ημερολογιο it begins on September the 1st and ends on August 31st. Each day is sacred for the Orthodox Christian. The Church venerates at least one saint or sacred event in the life of the Church every day of the year. There are, however, several major feast days observed annually, and of these, Easter or Pascha, is the most important.

5. The Divine Liturgy ~ Η Θεία Λειτουργία: The central worship service of the Church is the Divine Liturgy, which is celebrated each Sunday morning and on all holy days. The Liturgy is also the means by which we achieve union with Jesus Christ and unity with each other through the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

6. Ecumenism ~ Οικουμενισμος: While the Orthodox Church considers herself the Mother Church of Christendom, she cooperates with other churches in programs of educational, philanthropic, & social endeavors.

7. The Major Feast Days ~ Οι Μεγάλες Γιορτές

8. At the center of the life of the Church is the **Holy Eucharist ~ Θεία Κοινωνία**, which is the principal celebration of our faith and the means through which we participate in the very life of the Holy Trinity. The major Sacraments are closely related to the Eucharist, and they bear witness to the continuing presence of Christ in the lives of His people. Besides the Eucharist and **the major SACRAMENTS ~ Μυστηρια**, the Orthodox Church has a number of Special Services and Blessings which are associated with the needs, events, and tasks of human life. In celebrating these various Services and Blessings, the Church is constantly bearing witness to the presence and action of God in our lives. Our God is one who loves us, cares for us, and is near to us. The liturgical Services and Blessings also serve to remind us that all of life is important, and that the many events and gifts of life can be directed toward God and receive their fulfillment in Him.

House of God: What's Inside an Orthodox Church? ~ Ορθοδοξη Εκκλησια

The visitor to an Orthodox Church is usually impressed by the unique features and the external differences between this place of worship and those of the various traditions of Western Christianity. The rich color, distinctive iconography and beauty of the interior of an Orthodox Church generally are in sharp contrast to the simplicity which one finds in many Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. When one enters the interior of the Orthodox church it is like stepping into a whole new world of color and light. The art and design of the church not only create a distinctive atmosphere of worship, but also, they reflect and embody many of the fundamental insights of Orthodoxy.

Beauty and Symbols ~ Ομορφια και Συμβολα

The Orthodox Church believes that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. The Creator is present through His creative energies of His handiwork. This means that the material world, being valuable and good, is an important means through which God expresses Himself. The Orthodox Church affirms this conviction through her extensive use of material creation not only for the embellishment of her places of worship, but also in her sacramental mysteries and services. For example, when the bread and wine – “the first fruits of creation” – are offered in the Eucharist, they are also a symbolic offering of all creation to God its Creator. Since there is no hesitation in using the gifts of creation, the interior of an Orthodox church is frequently very beautiful. Designed to create an atmosphere which is special, the building is filled with a feeling of joy and an appreciation of God’s bounty. Orthodoxy recognizes that beauty is an important dimension of human life. Through iconography and church appointments, the beauty of creation becomes a very important means of praising God. The divine gifts of the material world are shaped and fashioned by human hands into an expression of beauty which glorifies the Creator. As the pious woman poured her most precious oil on the feet of Our Lord, Orthodoxy seeks always to offer to God what is best and most beautiful.

Sacred Space ~ Ιερος Χωρος: The interior church is most importantly, both the background and the setting for Orthodox worship. The art and architecture are designed to contribute to the total experience of worship, which involves one’s intellect, feelings, and senses. The Eucharist and the other sacramental mysteries take place in God’s midst, and they bear witness to His presence and actions. Therefore, in the Orthodox tradition there is a very strong feeling that the church is the House of God and the place where His glory dwells. For this reason, all Orthodox churches are blessed, consecrated and set aside as sacred space. The whole church bears witness to God’s indwelling among His people. As one old admonition says: “Let the Christian consider well when he enters the church that he is entering another heaven. That same majesty of God which is in heaven is also in his church, and on this account the Christian must enter with reverence and awe.”

Ideally, an Orthodox church is relatively small in order to emphasize and enhance the sense of community in worship. The church is generally constructed in the form of a cross and is divided into three areas: **the narthex, the nave, and the sanctuary**. The narthex is the entrance area. Centuries ago this area was the place where catechumens (unbaptized learners) and penitents remained during parts of the services. Today, the beginning of the Baptismal service and in some parishes, the Marriage service, begins in the narthex and proceeds into the nave. This procession symbolically represents a gradual movement into the Kingdom of God. In many Orthodox parishes, the narthex is the area where the faithful make an offering, receive a candle, light it before an icon, and offer a personal prayer before joining the congregation. The nave is the large center area of the church. Here the faithful gather for worship. Although most Orthodox churches in this country have pews, some follow the old custom of having an open nave with no seats. On the right-hand side of the nave is the bishop’s throne from which he presides as a living icon of Christ among his people. Even in the bishop’s absence, the throne reminds all that the parish is not an isolated entity but is part of a diocese which the bishop heads. On the left-hand side of the nave is the pulpit from which the Gospel is proclaimed and the sermon preached. The choir and the cantors frequently occupy areas on the far sides of the nave. The sanctuary is considered the most **sacred part** of the church, and the area reserved for the clergy and their assistant. The sanctuary contains **the Holy Altar** and is separated from the nave by **the Iconostasion**. This division serves to remind us that God’s reign is not complete and that we often find ourselves ‘separated’ from God, through sin.

However, during the Divine Liturgy, when we have access to the Holy Gifts, we are reminded that, through Christ, heaven and earth are united and that through Him, we have access to the Father. It should be noted that not all services take place within the sanctuary. Many are celebrated in the center of the nave, in the midst of the congregation. In so doing, Orthodoxy emphasizes the fact that the worship of the Church is offered by, and for all the people.

The Altar ~ Το Ιερό: The Altar or Holy Table is the heart and focal point of the Orthodox Church. It is here that eucharistic gifts of bread and wine are offered to the Father as Christ commanded us to do. The altar, which is usually square in shape, stands away from the wall and is often covered with cloths. A tabernacle, with reserved Holy Communion for the sick or dying, is set upon the Altar, together with candles. When the Divine Liturgy is not being celebrated, the Book of Gospels rests on the Altar. Behind the Altar is a large cross with the painted figure of Christ.

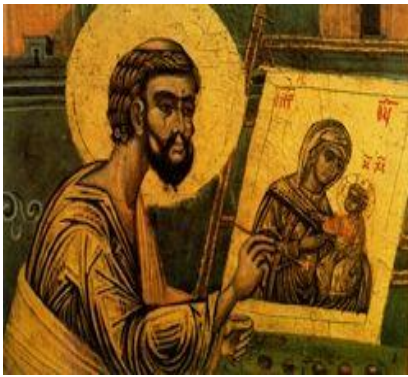
Iconostasion ~ Εικονοστάσιον: The Iconostasion is the panel of icons which separates the sanctuary from the nave. The origin of this very distinctive part of an Orthodox church is the ancient custom of placing icons on a low wall before the sanctuary. In time, the icons became fixed on a standing wall, hence the term iconostasion. In contemporary practice, the Iconostasion may be very elaborate and conceal most of the sanctuary, or it may be very simple and open. The Iconostasion has three entrances which are used during services. There is a Deacon Door on either side, and the center entrance which is called **the Royal Door**. A curtain or door, usually conceals the Altar when services are not being celebrated. **On the right-hand side of the Iconostasion are always the icons of Christ and St. John the Baptist. On the left-hand side are always the icons of the Theotokos (Mother of our Lord) and the patron saint or event to which the church is dedicated.** In addition to these icons, others may be added, depending upon custom and space.



Icons ~ Εικόνες: An icon is a holy image which is the distinctive art form of the Orthodox Church. In actual practice the icon may be a painting of wood, on canvas, a mosaic or a fresco. Icons depict such figures as Christ, Mary the Theotokos, the saints and angels. They may also portray events from the Scriptures or the history of the Church, such as Christmas, Easter, etc. Icons occupy a very prominent place in Orthodox worship and theology. The icon is not simply decorative, inspirational, or educational. Most importantly, it signifies the presence of the individual depicted. The icon is like a window which links heaven and earth. When we worship, we do so as part of the Church which includes the living and the departed. we never lost contact with those who are with the Lord in glory. This belief is expressed every time one venerates an icon or places a candle before it.

Many Orthodox churches have icons not only on the iconostasion but also on the walls, ceilings, and in arches. Above the sanctuary in the apse, there is very frequently a large icon of the Theotokos and the Christ Child (**Platytera**). The Orthodox Church believes that Mary is the human being closest to God. This very prominent icon recalls her important role in the Incarnation of the Son of God. The icon is also an image of the Church. It reminds us of our responsibility to give birth to Christ's presence in our lives. High above the church, in the ceiling or dome, is the icon of Christ the Almighty, "**The Pantocrator**". The icon portrays the Triumphant Christ who reigns as Lord of heaven and earth. As one gazes downward, it appears as though the whole church and all of creation comes from Him. As one looks upward, there is the feeling that all things direct us to Christ the Lord. **He is the "Alpha and the Omega", the beginning and the end.** This is the message of Orthodoxy.

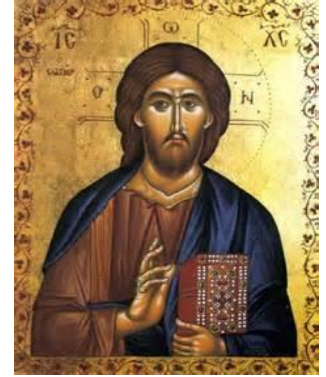
Iconography ~ Εικονογραφία



Apostle Luke's first painting



Restoration of the Icons



Iconography refers to the making and **liturgical** use of **icons**, pictorial representations of **Biblical** scenes from the life of **Jesus Christ**, historical events in the life of the Church and portraits of the **saints**. Icons are usually two-dimensional images and may be made of paint, mosaic, embroidery, weaving, carving, engraving, or other methods. A person who practices the art of iconography is called an **iconographer**. Images have always been a vital part of the **Church**, but their place was the subject of the **Iconoclast Controversy** in the 8th and 9th centuries, especially in the East. The **Sunday of Orthodoxy**, the first Sunday of the **Great Fast** (Lent) every year celebrates the reestablishment of the Orthodox **veneration** of icons. The use of iconography is considered one of the most distinctive elements of the **Byzantine Rite**.

From the first centuries of Christianity, icons have been used for prayer. Orthodox Tradition tells us, for example, of the existence of an icon of the Christ during his lifetime, the **Icon-Not-Made-With-Hands**, and of the **icons of the Theotokos** immediately after him written by the All-laudable **Apostle and Evangelist Luke**.

Icon made by Jesus: During the time of the earthly ministry of the Savior, Abgar, ruler in the Syrian city of Edessa, was afflicted with leprosy. Reports of the great miracles performed by the Lord extended throughout Syria (Matt. 4:24) and as far as Arabia at this time. Although not having seen the Lord, Abgar believed in him and wrote a letter requesting Christ to come and heal him. Abgar sent his court painter, Ananias, with this letter to Palestine telling him to paint an image of the Divine Teacher. Ananias was not able to go near Christ because of the great many people listening to his preaching. He attempted to produce an image of the Lord Jesus Christ from afar, but could not. The Lord called Ananias and promised to send his disciple in order to heal Abgar from the leprosy and instruct him in salvation. Then the Lord called for water and a towel. He wiped His face with the towel, and on it was His Divine Image. The Savior sent the towel and a letter to Edessa back with Ananias. With thanksgiving Abgar received the sacred objects and started healing. He continued healing until the arrival of the disciple Thaddeus, Apostle of the 70. The Apostle preached the Gospel and baptized the Abgar and all living in Edessa. The story is recorded by the 4th century Church historian, Eusebius of Cesarea.

Icons made by Apostle Luke: Apostle Luke painted icons of the Most-holy Theotokos—not just one, but three—as well as icons of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. St. Luke wrote the first icon, of the Most Holy Theotokos Directress or Hodigitria, mentioned in the Paraklesis to the Theotokos: Your great icon, the sacred one Which is called Directress, and was depicted for us by one of the apostles, Luke the Evangelist.

Icons in the Old Testament: Pictures of cherubim on temple door, on temple walls are mentioned in Old Testament in III Kings 6:29. If there would be an interdiction of all images, the groups claiming this interdiction would not use any images, photos or movies and Old Testament would probably not describe the Temple as having images of cherubim.

Icons with unknown author: There are several icons with unknown authors that were found done after people were praying. One such example is Prodomitra icon. The first draft was not liked by the icon writer. He prayed for help & then found the icon done. Another example is the icon of Saint George, and in this example, several monks did not agree on the patron Saint of their church. They asked God for help, leaving an empty icon support in the church and praying for God to show the Patron Saint. After several days of prayer, they found an icon of Saint George painted in the church. Third example is the icon done in Pangheo Mountains to Saint Gherman. Saint Gherman wanted an icon of the Holy Mother of God. So, he had several men make the support. However, the piece of wood had splintered in several parts. The Saint prayed to God so that icon will be made. Holy Mother of God appeared to St. Gherman assuring that the icon will be done, and the wood parts had united themselves and the icon started to be self-written in a reddish light. Many miracles are attributed to this icon, one being the healing of a child that was not able to speak or hear. Some believe these icons are made by angels.

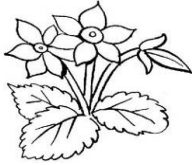
Miracle performing icons: As we saw the icon made by Jesus did perform a miracle, helping King Abgar escape partially of leprosy. Today there are many miracle performing icons.

"Written" or "painted"? The most literal translation of the Greek word εικονογραφία is "image writing," leading many English-speaking Orthodox Christians to insist that icons are not "painted" but rather "written." From there, further explanations are given that icons are to be understood in a manner similar to Holy Scripture that is, they are not simply artistic compositions but rather are witnesses to the truth the way Scripture is. Far from being imaginative creations of the iconographer, they are more like scribal copies of the Bible.

While the explanation of the purpose and nature of icons is certainly true and consistent with the Church's **Holy Tradition = Ιερά Παράδοση**, there is a linguistic problem with the insistence on the word *written* rather than *painted*. In Greek, a painted portrait of anyone is also a γραφή (*graphi*), and the art of painting itself is called ζωγραφική (*zographiki*) while any drawing or painting can be referred to as ζωγραφιά. Ancient Greek literally uses the same root word to refer to the making of portraits and the making of icons, but distinguishes whether it is "painting from life" (ζωγραφιά) or "painting icons" (εικονογραφία). Thus, from a linguistic point of view, either all paintings—whether icons or simple portraits are "written" or (more likely) "painted" is a perfectly usable English translation, simply making a distinction between the painting appropriate for icons & that appropriate for other kinds of painting, just as Greek does.

Modern Styles ~ Icons on Glass: Painting on glass – a very ancient art introduced to Transylvania after its annexation to the Habsburg empire (1699) – had an extraordinary diffusion as a mass phenomenon as the result of a miraculous event that happened at Nicula, a village in the north of Transylvania, where on the 15th February, 1694 (some scholars say 1699) tears were seen running down the face of the Blessed Virgin on a wooden icon of the Madonna with Child in the local church. This miraculous event transformed the village into a center of pilgrimage, the many pilgrims being anxious to obtain an image of the miraculous Madonna to take home. In this way began the great spread of the painting of icons on glass in Transylvania.

The Zosim Oancea Museum of icons on glass at Sibiel: Fr. Zosim Oancea Museum at Sibiel holds the intelligent vision and indefatigable tenacity we owe this extraordinary museum in the heart of Romania, largest existing exposition of icons on glass in Transylvania, a miracle of artistic creativity & religious inspiration born of the riches of the Orthodox Christian tradition and the imagination of Romanian peasant painters. A unique fusion of Eastern tradition and Western technique, icons on glass emerged and spread throughout this extensive region of Romania in the 1st decades of the 18th century, reaching their apogee between 1750 - end of the 19th century and almost vanishing in the period between the two world wars. Begun in 1969 under the aegis of Fr Zosim Oancea, the people of Sibiel and with the help of institutions and private donors, the collection in this museum (almost 600 masterpieces), represents all the main types of icons on glass along with works by some of the most famous icon-painters – when their names are known. A visit to the museum at Sibiel also presents the opportunity to discover the person who gave the museum its name: Fr Zosim Oancea, a truly exceptional man and priest to whose intelligent vision and indefatigable tenacity we owe this extraordinary museum in the heart of Romania. (Orthodoxwiki)



Introduction to the Divine Liturgy

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



In the 6th century the office of the Preparation (Proskomithi) was set apart, elaborated, and officiated before the Divine Liturgy, as it is now. At the same time the Cherubic hymn was inserted into the Liturgy. Symbolism and allegory entered this office of Preparation. The office of Preparation took its final shape in the 14th century. The Priest wears vestments and reads the prayers of Preparation.

On the table of Preparation are the sacred utensils: Paten (disc), Cup (Chalice), spoon, spear, asterisk, two small covers, one large overall cover (Aer), Also on the table are the sacred Species - the loaf of Bread, the Wine & Water to be mixed in the Chalice. The Bread is impressed in the center with the stamp "IC-XC, NI-KA", on its left has nine small elevations for the Saints & on its right a portion for the Virgin Mary. All these portions are cut with the spear and placed on the Paten with prayers and commemoration. Portions also are added in the name of the faithful, both the departed and the living. Both the Paten and Chalice are covered with the two small covers and overall is placed the Aer. The Priest censes them and reads the prayer of Preparation.

THE DIAGRAM: The Divine Liturgy of St. Chrysostom consists of readings from the Scriptures and of solemn hymns and prayers. Its spoken words are chanted by the priest and sung by the cantor or the choir. It is to be remembered that the Divine Liturgy is offered to enact the Holy Eucharist.

Beginning: The Liturgy starts with a blessing of the Kingdom of God, which includes the Sacred Body of Christ on earth; His Church.

Petitions: They are small prayers which the priest offers especially for the peace of the world, with the people responding, Kyrie eleison; Lord, have mercy.



Antiphons: These are readings from the Old Testament, especially from Psalms 102 and 145, with refrains of Christian meanings and specifically references to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Entry with the Gospel: This entry represents the ancient practice when the priest took the Gospel by the light of torches from the crypt, an underground safeguard to protect the Gospel from destruction by the pagans, bringing it up to the Church. The priest lifts up the Gospel and exclaims: "Wisdom," which means Christ, and calls the people to worship and bow down to Christ.

Trisagion: A short prayer praising the Holiness of God. (1) A part of the Book of Acts or the Epistles of the Apostles read by the reader. 2) Another section from the Gospels read by the priest.

Readings from the New Testament

Sermon: It is incorporated as an exhortation from the priest to the people on the Good News of salvation. (The part of the service for the Catechumens is now omitted).



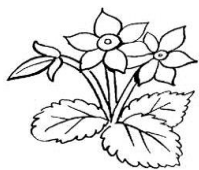
This is a procession with the yet unsanctified Species taken from the table of Preparation and brought to the Altar during which the Cherubic hymn is sung: "Let us put away all worldly care so that we may receive the King of all." (An addition made in the 9th century).

Ectenia of the Oblation: They are small prayers completing "our supplications to the Lord". To these supplications the people respond, "Grant this, O Lord". The Prayer of Oblation is now inaudibly read by the Priest saying: "Enable us to offer to Thee gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our sins."

Creed: This is the concise and accurate confession of the Christian faith in 12 articles formulated by 1st, 2nd Ecumenical Synod at Nicaea in 325 A.D. (The Nicæan Creed is recited during every Liturgy, an addition made in the 9th century; prior to that time it was recited only during the Liturgy at Easter).

Prayer of Sanctification: It includes dialogues of excerpts from the long prayer of sanctification which is now read inaudibly by the priest and in fact, is the very heart of the significance of the Divine Liturgy. The dialogues start with the offering of the Oblation (the Species, Bread and Wine), continues with blessings and the actual words of the Lord, "this is my body ... this is my blood," and climax in the sanctification of the Species. Now the Bread and Wine are lifted by the priest, who exclaims, "Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee, O Lord." At this time, generally the people kneel, and the choir sings: "We praise thee... we give thanks to thee, O Lord". In continuation, the priest commemorates the Saints and especially the Virgin Mary, as well as the faithful ones.

Petitions: These are small prayers referring to the spiritual welfare of the city, the nation, the Church and the individual.



Lord's Prayer It is recited by the people; the priest follows it with the exaltation.

Breaking the Lamb: At this point the Priest elevates the Lamb (the consecrated Bread) saying: "The Holy things for those who are holy," and breaks it in commemoration of the actual Eucharist. Also, at this time he pours warm water= zeon into the Chalice, a reminiscence of the very primitive Church (Justin the Martyr).

Prayers before Holy Communion and Partaking of the Holy Gifts by the Priest.

Holy Communion: Both the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Christ, combined in the Chalice, are given to the prepared faithful when the priest calls them to "draw near with reverence." In ancient times the Holy Gifts were given to the faithful separately, first the Body and then the Cup, from which the faithful drank in turn, as is the continued practice for the clergymen today.

Thanksgiving Prayers: These are prayers of gratitude to Almighty God for the privilege which is given to the faithful to commune with Him.

Dismissal Hymn: The priest calls the people to depart with a prayer by which he asks the Lord to "save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance." In conclusion he blesses the people, saying, "May the blessing of the Lord come upon you." The people seal the Liturgy by responding, "Amen." "Blessed bread = Antithoron, which means "instead of the Gift," is given to all at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.



The Divine Liturgy ~ Η Θεία Λειτουργία

By Rev. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald

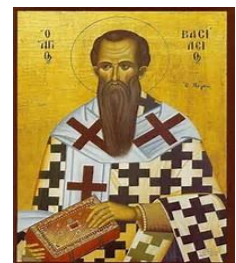
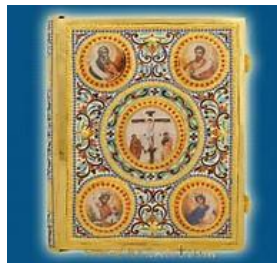
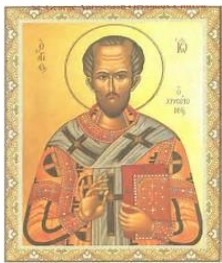


THE DIVINE LITURGY is considered the most significant ancient Christian service, not so much for its phrasing and words as for its meaning. In fact, **the Divine Liturgy was in practice right after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Disciples of Christ on the 50th day after His Resurrection**, as the sacred writer of the Acts of the Apostles records (Acts 2:46 ff). The Divine Liturgy in its swadlings at the beginning of the Christian era consisted of hymns and prayers for the officiating of a certain framework of faith. It was officiated long before the beginning of the writings of the New Testament.

The Prothesis or Proskomidi is the service of preparing the holy gifts, which precedes the Liturgy proper. The **Divine Liturgy** is a **eucharistic** service and is the primary worship service of the Orthodox Church. It contains two parts: **The Liturgy of the Catechumens**, and the **Liturgy of the Faithful**, in which the gifts of bread and wine are offered and consecrated; the faithful then partake of them in the **Sacrament of Holy Communion**. The Church teaches that the gifts truly become the body and blood of **Jesus Christ**.

We have the **Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom** (every Sunday), **Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**, (which is normally celebrated 10 times during the year: (on Jan. 1, the feast of St. Basil; on the five Sundays of Lent; on the eve of Christmas and Theophany; on the former feasts when they occur on Sunday or Monday; on Holy Thursday and on Holy Saturday) and, the **Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts** (during Lent). The Divine Liturgy begins with the memorable exclamation 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 service begins with the **Great Litany**, and its petitions touch on the needs of the world: peace and salvation, the Church, her bishops, her faithful, captives and their health and salvation. It is concluded, as with most litanies, by calling to the remembrance of the faithful the witness of the Theotokos and the saints. In light of that powerful witness, the faithful are charged to commend their lives to Our Lord Jesus Christ. A closing prayer is exclaimed by the Priest. The **Troparia**, **Kontakia** and **Antiphons** follow in 8 different very moving melodic tones.

Then, the Rite of Proclamation begins with the **Trisagion**. The rite of proclamation, the Epistle readings and Gospel are chanted by the Priest, Deacons, and Readers. The service continues with the Litany of Fervent Supplication, Litany of the Departed, and Litany of the Catechumens. The Liturgy of the Faithful follows with the **Cherubic Hymn** which is sometimes done kneeling, then there is the Great Entrance of the Eucharistic Gifts and procession. The doors of the altar are the venerated and the gifts are presented before the faithful. Then everyone proclaims the faith with the **Nicene Creed ~ Το Πιστεύω**.



Afterward, the celebration of the Great Anaphora Eucharistic Prayer is recited over the Gifts. Then **the Priest asks the Holy Spirit to consecrate the gifts** & turn them into the Body and Blood of Christ. Having invoked the Holy Spirit and consecrated the gifts, the priest commemorates the saints. At this point, the assembled faithful chant the ancient hymn in honor of the Virgin Mary. In the **Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom** the **Axion Estin**: "It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos,". Then altogether recite "**The Lord's Prayer**". After consecrating the gifts, commemorating the saints, the Priest lifts up the consecrated gifts, exclaiming, "The holy things are for the holy!" And the respond, "One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, Amen. The faithful then receive **Holy Communion**. After the dismissal of the services, all the faithful come forward to venerate the Cross, get the blessing from their Priest and receive the **Antithoron**.



The Antimension



The Antimension, (from the Greek: "instead of the table"), is among the most important furnishings of the altar in Orthodox Christian liturgical traditions. In the first centuries of Christianity, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Bishops **on the tombs of the Martyrs**. Later, as the Church expanded and the size of a typical Diocese expanded with it, the Bishops began to ordain Priests as their representatives to the growing number of Christian communities. Only with the Bishop's permission could a community and its Priest serve the Liturgy. The same holds true today. One of the vehicles by which these important ancient practices are effected today is a simple piece of cloth, folded within another, and resting always on the Holy Table of every Orthodox Church called the Antimension.

The Antimension is a rectangular piece of cloth measuring about 18 by 24 inches. While on the Holy Table it is folded within another cloth, red in color, called the Iliton, which represents the swaddling clothes and the burial shroud of Jesus Christ. Depicted **on the top of the Antimension** is an **Icon of the Burial of Christ**, along with Icons of the four Evangelists, as well as Saints Basil the Great and John Chrysostom, for whom the usual Divine Liturgies are named. Sewn into many Antimensions are an incorruptible relic of a martyr, making real the early liturgical connection with the Martyrs who died rather than renounce Christ, and whose blood, after the Blood of Christ, formed the very foundation of the Church.

Printed on every Antimension are the words: **"By the grace of the All-Holy, Life-giving Spirit, this Antimension, the Holy Table, is consecrated for the Offering on it of the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Divine Liturgy"**. Each one is signed by the ruling Bishop of the Diocese and placed on the Holy Table, constituting his permission for the community to exist as an Orthodox parish and to celebrate the Liturgy. This is important, since true Christianity has always held that without the Bishop there is no Church and through the Bishop comes our unity of Faith and Communion which is Orthodoxy.

The word Antimension is a combination of Greek and Latin which means in place of the table. While Holy Tables were always consecrated and had relics placed inside of them, it was not always possible for the Bishop to visit each community to do so. For that reason, Bishops consecrated cloths or boards and sent them to each community to be used in place of the consecrated Holy Table. This also allowed for portable Holy Tables for travelers. The use of the Antimension is mandatory, even on Holy Tables which have been consecrated, and a Priest is not permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy without it. Military Chaplains and Missionaries also use it instead of the table when serving in remote areas. From "These Truths We Hold - The Holy Orthodox Church: Her Life and Teachings".

Compiled and Edited by A Monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, PA.

Living the Liturgy: Getting something out of going to Church by Fr. Stanley Harakas

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is my body" and He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me. -Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19

Understanding the Divine Liturgy: The Divine Liturgy has two major parts: The Liturgy of the Catechumens involves the hymns, Bible readings, and sermon that are more the teaching portion of the Liturgy. The Liturgy of the Faithful is the Eucharistic section of the service, involving the prayers of consecration and distribution of the bread and wine to the faithful. The liturgy on the whole is the celebration of the Eucharist by the Church family. The Eucharist, or Communion, is the centerpiece of the Orthodox faith. "Eucharist" means thanksgiving in Greek.

It is our symbolic sacrifice upon the altar to commemorate the final sacrifice of Christ's life for our sins. The wine and bread are consecrated into the Body and Blood of Christ (though, not in the Roman Catholic sense), and thus, it is the means by which Orthodox Christians are united to Christ & able to grow into his Likeness. The Eucharist is also the means by which we are united to the rest of the Church family. The word "Liturgy" comes from Greek and literally translates as "the work of the people." This means that it is not solely the work of the chanter or the priests. It is not a show on Sundays where we can sit and just watch. We have to participate.

How do we participate in Liturgy? Receiving Holy Communion: This may seem obvious, but partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ are the deepest & profound ways to participate in the Divine Liturgy. Becoming the Church: When we attend Liturgy, we separate ourselves from the world for a time. The putting aside of all worldly cares is the preliminary step to participation. This means turning off your cell phone, not thinking about how much work you have to do, etc.

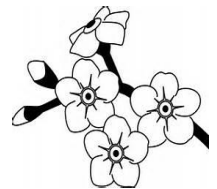
Sharing the Symbolism: The Orthodox Church and Liturgy are full of symbols. Understanding and appreciating these symbols help our participation. The Dome is heaven, the floor the Earth. The icons remind us of our family in Heaven, and that Christ resurrected from the dead. The chanter's stands, to Bishop's throne, etc., all remind us of the preaching and authority of Christ. The Liturgy itself is symbolic: The Gospel Entrance remind us of the beginning of Christ's ministry, the readings remind us of Christ teaching his truths. The Great Entrance remind us of Christ coming from Heaven (altar) to earth (sanctuary) to die for our sins. The words of Institution remind us of the Supper. Holy Communion is our sharing in the Resurrection of Christ, and the return of the Gifts to the Prothesis remind us of our Lord's ascension to Heaven.

Dialogues and Biddings: The Liturgy actually calls out for our participation: "Let us pray to the Lord", "Let us bow our heads to the Lord," "Wisdom! Let us be attentive! etc. Each time you hear a petition, you should silently repeat the prayer to the Lord. The priest isn't praying it for you, he's telling you what to pray for. When the priest blesses the people, this invites their bowing, when he asks them to bow their heads, they should bow their heads, etc.

Singing: The original Church had no choirs: the entire laity sung. We should be singing at church then. • If you're afraid that you can't sing or have a bad voice, you can do what Fr. Stan. Harakas calls "sub -singing," a sort of quiet mouthing of the words along with the choir. If you don't know the hymns, try and learn them, or ask someone to teach you! Recite the Creed & the Lord's Prayer. Self-explanatory, but very, very important! Using your Entire body: The Orthodox Church has several "movements" like Crossing oneself, bowing, or a metanoia. Listen for the commands of the priest ("Lift up our hearts") and use your body to pray. Listen carefully to the Bible Readings. Use the "Units" of the Liturgy. Breaking down the Liturgy mentally into parts helps keep the symbolism of each piece in mind and aids your participation.

Units of the Liturgy:

- **The Litany:** Call to prayer for specific things. Starts off the Divine Liturgy.
- **The Antiphones:** Hymns taken from the psalms, etc., that symbolize Christ coming into the world.
- **The Little Entrance:** Christ's teachings coming into the world.
- **The Readings:** Christ teaching his disciples.
- **Great Entrance:** Christ coming into the world to die for us.
- **Eucharistic Prayers:** Commemorating the sacrifice, reconciling us to our neighbors, preparing to be joined to God.
- **Communion:** Union with Christ, celebrating his Resurrection from the dead.
- **Dismissal:** We are sent out into the world to proclaim the Resurrection and to love all in the image of Christ.



Pastoral Guidelines for Fasting ~ Rev. Dr. Stanley S. Harakas

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

Fasting ~ Νηστεία: Just as there are times for feasting, there are also times set aside for fasting. During these periods, certain foods are prohibited. These are, in order of frequency of prohibition, meat (including poultry), dairy products, fish, olive oil and wine. Fruits, vegetables, grains and shellfish are permitted throughout the year. Of course, the Orthodox Church never reduces the practice of fasting to a legalistic observance of dietary rules. Fasting, that is not accompanied by intensified prayer and acts of charity, inevitably becomes a source of pride. The Church also recognizes that not everyone can fast to the same degree and assumes that individual Christians will observe the fast prescribed for them by their Spiritual Fathers.

The following are fasting days and seasons:

1. All Wednesdays and Fridays, except for those noted below;
2. The day before the Feast of Theophany (January 5);
3. Cheesefare Week (the last week before the Great Lent, during which meat and fish are prohibited, but dairy products are permitted even on Wednesday and Friday);
4. Great Lent (from Clean Monday through the Friday before Lazarus Saturday, olive oil and wine are permitted on weekends);
5. Great and Holy Week (note that Great and Holy Saturday is a day of strict fasting, during which the faithful abstain from olive oil and wine),
6. Holy Apostles' Fast (from the Monday after All Saints' Day through June 28, inclusive);
7. Fast for the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 1-14, excluding August 6, on which fish, wine and olive oil are permitted);
8. Beheading of St. John the Baptist (August 29),
9. Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14); and
10. Nativity Lent (November 15 - December 24, although fish, wine and olive oil are permitted, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, until December 17).



The following are fasting days on which fish, wine and olive oil are permitted:

1. The Feast of the Annunciation (March 25, unless it falls outside the Great Lent)
2. The Feast of the Transfiguration (August 6); and
3. The Feast of the Entry into the Temple of the Mother of God (November 21).

On the following days, all foods are permitted:

1. The first week of the Triodion, from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee through the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, including Wednesday and Friday;
2. Renewal (or Bright) Week, following the Sunday of Pascha;
3. The week following Pentecost; and
4. From the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) through January 4.



His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh ~ Fasting

Fasting, in our days, has become one of the most neglected spiritual values. Because of misunderstandings regarding the nature of fasting, because of confused and reversed priorities in its use, many of today's Orthodox Christians fast very little, or disregard fasting altogether. The Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church which is scheduled to be convened in the near future has placed the problem of fasting as one of the first items on its agenda. It is hoped that through this Council the age-old practice of the Church to use fasting as one of the important means of spiritual growth will regain its proper place in the life of the Church.

Fasting was practiced by the Lord Himself. After prayer and fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lord victoriously faced the temptations of the devil (Matthew 4:1-11). The Lord himself asked the disciples to use fasting as an important spiritual weapon to achieve spiritual victories (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37). The example of the Lord was followed by His disciples (Acts 14:23; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27, etc.). What is fasting? Why is it so important? Why does fasting precede such important feasts such as Easter and Christmas?

The importance of fasting depends on its meaning. Many of the Fathers have written on fasting. Among others, St. Basil has left us with most inspired comments on fasting. St. Basil tells us that fasting is not abstaining from food only; it is first of all, abstaining from sin. Grounded in the teaching of the Fathers, the Church in its hymnology describes fasting as the mother of chastity and prudence, as the accuser of sin and as the advocate of repentance, the life worthy of angels and the salvation of humans (The Lenten Triodion, trans. Kallistos Ware, London 1978, p. 195). Fasting becomes all of these when observed in the proper spirit.

First of all, fasting is abstinence from food. By detaching us from earthly goods and realities, fasting has a liberating effect on us and makes us worthy of the life of the spirit, a life similar to that of angels. **Second, fasting, as abstinence from bad habits and sin,** is the mother of Christian virtues, the mother of sound and wholesome thinking; it allows us to establish the proper priority between the material and spiritual, giving priority to the spiritual. Fasting is the advocate of repentance. Adam and Eve disobeyed God; they refused to fast from the forbidden fruit. They became slaves of their own desires. But now through fasting, through obedience to the rules of the Church regarding the use of spiritual and material goods, we may return to the life in Paradise, a life of communion with God. Thus, fasting is a means of salvation, this salvation being a life we live in accordance with the Divine will, in communion with God.

Because of the liberating effect of fasting, both material and spiritual, the Church has connected fasting with the celebration of the major feasts of our tradition. **Easter is,** of course, our main feast. It is the **"Feast of Feasts."** It is the feast of our liberation from the bondage of sin, from corrupted nature, from death. For on that day, through His Resurrection from the dead, Christ has raised us "from death to life, and from earth to heaven" (Resurrection Canon), Christ, "our new Passover," has taken us away from the land of slavery, sin and death, to the promised land of freedom, bliss and glory; from our sinful condition to resurrected life. If you have not ever fasted, you are missing an opportunity to grow spiritually.

It is most appropriate to prepare for this celebration through a liberating fast, both material and spiritual. This is the profound meaning that fasting takes during the Great Lent. Let us allow ourselves to take advantage of the spiritual riches of the Church. Let us use the precious messianic gifts offered to us through its sacramental life, through its celebrations of the central mysteries of our salvation in Christ. Let us use the spiritual weapons, "to fight the good fight, to walk the way of fasting, to crush the heads of the invisible dragons, to prove ourselves victorious over sin, and without condemnation to reach our goal of worshiping the Holy Resurrection" (Prayer of the Presanctified Liturgy). This is the challenge of the Great Lent: to use fasting to obtain the resurrected life, to unite with the Risen Lord.

Confessions ~ Εξομολογηση

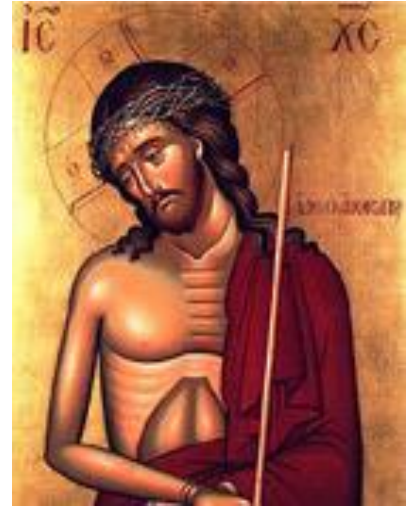
Preparation for Holy Confession ~ Department of Religious Education

The gift of God's forgiveness is received through private prayer, corporate worship, the disciplines of prayer and fasting, penitential services and above all through the sacrament of Holy Confession.

The value of Holy Confession is twofold. First, through this sacramental act of the ordained priest and the Christian believer we have the assurance of divine forgiveness, according to the words of Christ (Jn 20:23). Secondly, Holy Confession provides the opportunity to talk about one's deep concerns, to receive counsel and to be encouraged toward spiritual growth, all of which are universally recognized as extremely beneficial to personal life.

Holy Confession is appropriate whenever an Orthodox Christian feels the need for it. It is also a part of our total spiritual preparation during the fast periods leading up to the great feasts of Easter, Christmas, the Falling Asleep of the Theotokos and the Feast of Twelve Apostles. However, Holy Confession is especially necessary:

1. When a serious sin has been committed;
2. When a habitual sin has overwhelmed a Christian, or
3. When a Christian has stopped growing spiritually & needs a reexamination of priorities.



We confess our sins to God and the power of forgiveness is God's. However, the gift of God's forgiveness, although assured, is not magical. It does not automatically spare us from spiritual struggle - the continual vigilance against evil and the unceasing warfare against sin. Holy Confession will bear fruits in the Spirit only when the believer hates evil, utterly rejects sin and patiently cultivates positive habits of the life in Christ. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life" (Rm 6:11, 13)

How can one prepare for Holy Confession? Preparation for Holy Confession is a prayerful examination of feelings, thoughts, words, acts, attitudes, habits, values, priorities, goals, direction and way of life. This prayerful self-examination includes not only the personal religious life, but also family relationships, social activities, job conduct, business dealings, political commitments and even recreational pursuits, because our entire existence should be lived in under the light of the Holy Spirit is not to condemn ourselves, but to affirm our true selves in Christ who has given us access to God's mercy and forgiveness and who has taught us to live for God's glory.

Pray and think and your confession over several days. Ask God to help you perceive your sins and to make a thorough confession of them. Sometime before the sacrament of Holy Confession, offer selected prayers from the following Confessional Prayers, Psalm 51 or the following prayer of repentance:

Prayer of Repentance

O Lord my God, I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed.
I have also omitted to do what Your holy law requires of me.
But now with repentance and contrition I turn again to Your love and mercy.
I entreat You to forgive me all my transgression and to cleanse me from all my sins.
Lord, fill my heart with the light of Your truth. Strengthen my will by Your grace.
Teach me both to desire and to do only what pleases You. Amen.



Now, without justification or self-pity, make a prayerful examination of your conscience regarding all things. As a help, reflect on your life in the light of the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. Take pencil and paper and specify your sins so that, at the time of the sacrament, you will be able to make a thorough confession from the list, without confusion or lapse of memory.



The 10 Point Program for Living an Orthodox Life

1. ***Praying Daily***
Have a regular prayer rule that includes morning and evening prayer
2. ***Worshiping and Participating in the Sacraments***
Attend and participate in the Divine Liturgy receiving Holy Communion regularly as well as regular participation in Confession
3. ***Honoring the Liturgical Cycle***
Follow the seasons of the church and participate in the fasts and feasts of the Church
4. ***Using the Jesus Prayer***
Repeat the Holy name whenever possible throughout the day or night
5. ***Slowing Down and Ordering Your Life***
Set priorities and reduce the stress and friction caused by a hurried life
6. ***Being Watchful***
Give full attention to what you are doing at the moment
7. ***Taming the Passions:*** *Overcome your habits, attachment to your likes and dislikes, and learn to practice the virtues.*
8. ***Putting Others First***
Free yourself from your selfishness and find joy in helping others.
9. ***Spiritual Fellowship***
Spend time regularly with other Orthodox Christians for support and inspiration
10. ***Reading the Scriptures and Holy Fathers***
Be inspired by the lessons of the Holy Scriptures, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and the lives of the Saints of the Church.

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The Holy Eucharist ~ Η Θεία Κοινωνία by Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere on earth. We cannot describe it to you; we only know that God dwells there among men and that their Service surpasses the worship of all other places..."



In the latter part of the tenth century, Vladimir the Prince of Kiev sent envoys to various Christian centers to study their form of worship. These are the words the envoys uttered when they reported their presence at the celebration of the Eucharist in the Great Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople. The profound experience expressed by the Russian envoys has been one shared by many throughout the centuries who have witnessed for the first time the beautiful and inspiring Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church.

The Holy Eucharist is the oldest experience of Christian Worship as well as the most distinctive. Eucharist comes from the Greek word which means thanksgiving. In a particular sense, the word describes the most important form of the Church's attitude toward all of life. The origin of the Eucharist is traced to the Last Supper at which Christ instructed His disciples to offer bread and wine in His memory. The Eucharist is the most distinctive event of Orthodox worship because in it the Church gathers to remember and celebrate the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ and, thereby, to participate in the mystery of Salvation.

In the Orthodox Church, the Eucharist is also known as the Divine Liturgy. The word liturgy means people's work; this description serves to emphasize the corporate character of the Eucharist. When an Orthodox attends the Divine Liturgy, it is not as an isolated person who comes simply to hear a sermon.

Rather, he comes as a member of the Community of Faith who participates in the very purpose of the Church, which is the Worship of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, the Eucharist is truly the center of the life of the Church and the principal means of spiritual development, both for the individual Christian and the Church as a whole. Not only does the Eucharist embody and express the Christian faith in a unique way, but it also enhances and deepens our faith in the Trinity. This sacrament-mystery is the experience toward which all the other activities of the Church are directed and from which they receive their direction.

The Eucharist, the principal sacrament mystery of the Orthodox Church, is not so much a text to be studied, but rather an experience of communion with the Living God in which prayer, music, gestures, the material creation, art and architecture come into full orchestration. The Eucharist is a celebration of faith which touches not only the mind but also the emotions and the senses.

Throughout the centuries, Christians have seen many dimensions in the Eucharist. The various titles which have come to describe the rite bear witness to the richness of its meaning. The Eucharist has been known as the Holy offering, the Holy Mysteries, the Mystic Supper, and the Holy Communion. The Orthodox Church recognizes the many facets of the Eucharist and wisely refuses to over-emphasize one element to the detriment of the others. In so doing, Orthodoxy has clearly avoided reducing the Eucharist to a simple memorial of the Last Supper which is only occasionally observed. Following the teachings of both Scripture and Tradition, the Orthodox Church believes that Christ is truly present with His people in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharistic gifts of bread and wine become for us His Body and His Blood. We affirm that these Holy Gifts are transfigured into the first fruits of the New Creation in which ultimately God will be "all in all".

Three Liturgies

As it is celebrated today, the Divine Liturgy is a product of historical development. The fundamental core of the liturgy dates from the time of Christ and the Apostles. To this, prayers, hymns, and gestures have been added throughout the centuries. The liturgy achieved a basic framework by the ninth century.

There are three forms of the Eucharist presently in use in the Orthodox Church:

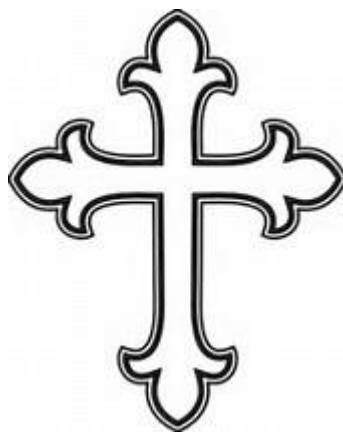
1. **The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom**, which is the most frequently celebrated.
2. **The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great**, which is celebrated only ten times a year.
3. **The Liturgy of St. James** which is celebrated on October 23, the feast day of the Saint.

While these saints did not compose the entire liturgy which bears their names, it is probable that they did author many of the prayers. The structure and basic elements of the three liturgies are similar, although there are differences in some hymns and prayers.

In addition to these Liturgies, there is also **the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts**. This is not truly a eucharistic liturgy but rather an evening Vesper Service followed by the distribution of Holy Communion reserved from the previous Sunday. This liturgy is celebrated only on weekday mornings or evenings during Lent, and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of Holy Week, when the full Eucharist is not permitted because of its Resurrection spirit. The Eucharist expresses the deep joy which is so central to the Gospel.

The Divine Liturgy is properly celebrated only once a day. This custom serves to emphasize and maintain the unity of the local congregation. The Eucharist is always the principal Service on Sundays and Holy Days and may be celebrated on other weekdays.

However, the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated by the priest privately, without a congregation. The Eucharist is usually celebrated in the morning but, with the Bishop's blessing, may be offered in the evening. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has recently encouraged the celebration of the Liturgy in the evening after Vespers, on the vigil of major Feast and Saints Days.



The Actions of Divine Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy may be divided into two major parts: The Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Liturgy of the Faithful, which are preceded by the Service of Preparation. Although there are many symbolic interpretations of the Divine Liturgy, the most fundamental meaning is found in the actions and prayers.

The Service of Preparation

Prior to the beginning of the Liturgy, the priest prepares himself with prayer and then precedes to vest himself. The vestments express his priestly ministry as well as his office. Next, the priest goes to the Proskomide Table which is on the left side of the Altar Table in the Sanctuary. There, he prepares the offering of bread and wine for the Liturgy. Ideally, the leavened loaves of bread, and the wine from which the offering is taken, are prepared by members of the congregation. The elements are presented to the priest before the service, together with the names of those persons, living and dead, who are to be remembered during the Divine Liturgy. The offering symbolically represents the entire Church gathered about Christ, the Lamb of God.

The Liturgy of the Catechumens

The Divine Liturgy begins with the solemn declaration: "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit now and for ever more." With these words we are reminded that in the Divine Liturgy the Church becomes a real manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth.

Since the first part of the Liturgy was designed originally for the Catechumens, those being schooled in the faith, had a very instructive quality. The Eucharist also has elements which are in common with other Services. We gather as Christians who share a common faith in the Holy Trinity. We sing and pray as a people united in Christ, who are not bound by time, space, or social barriers.

The Little Entrance is the central action of the first part of the Liturgy. A procession takes place in which the priest carries the Book of Gospels from the sanctuary into the nave. The procession directs our attention to the Scripture and to the presence of Christ in the Gospel. The entrance leads to the Epistle lesson, the Gospel, and the Sermon.

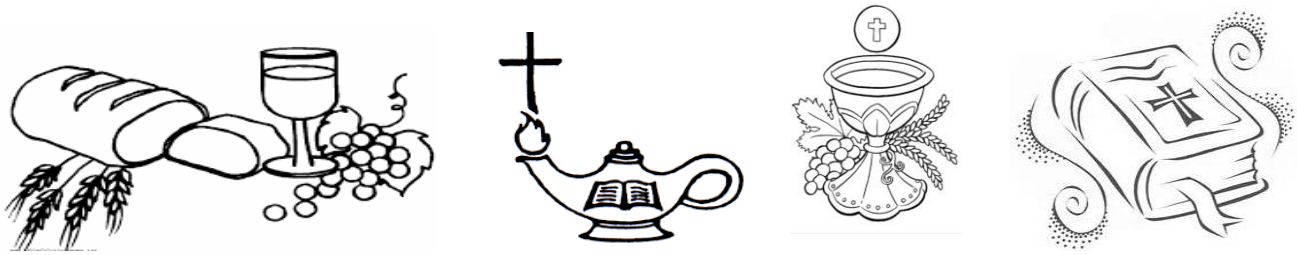
The Liturgy of the Faithful

In the early Church, only those who were baptized and not in a state of sin were permitted to remain for this most solemn part of the Liturgy. With the Great Entrance marking the beginning of this part of the Liturgy, the offering of bread and wine is brought by the priest from the Preparation Table, through the nave, and to the Altar Table. Before the offering can proceed, however, we are called upon to love one another so that we may perfectly confess our faith. In the early Church, the Kiss of Peace was exchanged at this point. After the symbolic kiss of Peace, we join together in professing our Faith through the words of the Creed.

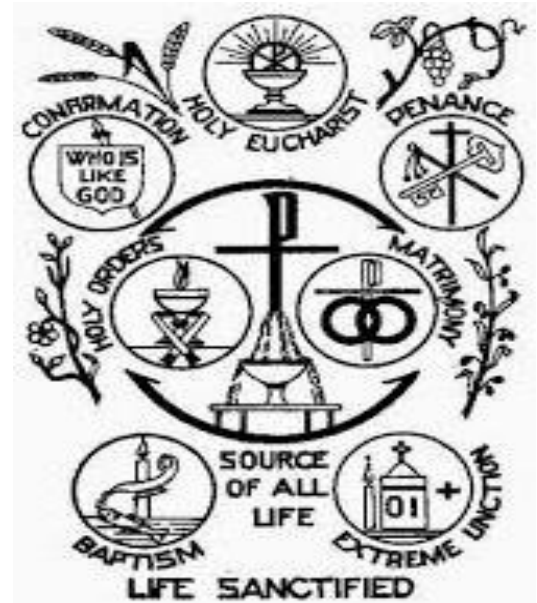
Only now can we properly offer our gifts of bread and wine to the Father as our Lord directed us to do in His memory. This offering is one of great joy, for through it we remember the mighty actions of God through which we have received the gift of salvation, and especially the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. We invoke the Holy Spirit upon ourselves and upon our offering, asking the Father that they become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. Through our thanking and remembering the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst.

The priest comes from the altar with the Holy Gifts, inviting the congregation to draw near with reverence of God, with faith, and with love." Our sharing in the Eucharist Gifts not only expresses our fellowship with one another, but also our unity with the Father in His Kingdom. Individuals approach the Holy Gifts and receive the Eucharistic bread and wine from the common chalice. The priest distributes the Holy Gifts by means of a communion spoon. Since the Holy Communion is an expression of our Faith, reception of the Holy Gifts is open only to those who are baptized, chrismated, and practicing members of the Orthodox Church.

The Liturgy comes to an end with prayer of Thanksgiving and the Benediction. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, the congregation comes forward to receive a portion of the liturgical bread (antithoron) which was not used for the offering.



The 7 Sacraments ~ Τα 7 Μυστήρια ~ Rev. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald



The Sacraments of the Orthodox Church are composed of prayers, hymns, scripture lessons, gestures and processions. Many parts of the services date back to the time of the Apostles. Most of the Sacraments use a portion of the material of creation as an outward and visible sign of God's revelation. Water, oil, bread and wine are but a few of the many elements which the Orthodox Church employs in her Worship. The Church is that living institution which is eternally joined to Christ, whose task it is to guide and bring all its children to God in His eternal Kingdom. All Orthodox Christians are called upon to observe the commandments of God: To love God with all their being and their fellow man as themselves; but they must also participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of His Church.

The Sacraments are considered the visible ways through which the Holy Spirit is imparted. The Greek Orthodox Church has 7 Sacraments, or *Mystiria*, of which **4 are obligatory: Baptism, Chrismation (anointment with holy oil), Confession and Holy Communion. The optional are: Matrimony, Ordination and Holy Unction.** Of these, the most relevant in the lives of the Orthodox are Communion, Confession and Holy Unction.

1st Sacrament is the Baptism and 2nd Chrismation ~ Η Βαπτιση και το Χρίσμα: Baptism and Chrismation take place during the same service. The priest, with the participation of the godparent, immerses the naked infant in the baptismal font and anoints the child with holy oil. Chosen by the child's parents, godparents must themselves have been baptized as Orthodox Christians. They are expected to have a serious life-long interest in the child's spiritual upbringing. The 'renewal' of the child and the new relationship that is formed with the godparent is celebrated by family and friends with feasting and dancing after the church service. Godparents and parents address each other as *koumbare* (male) or *koumbara* (female) and the child addresses the godparent as *noune* (male) or *nouna* (female). To the Greek family, the relationship of the godparent to family is of special importance and godparents are included in other family celebrations and festivities.

3rd Sacrament is the Confession ~ Η Εξομολογησις: As members of the Church, we have responsibilities to one another and, of course, to God. When we sin, or relationship to God and to others distorted. Sin is ultimately alienation from God, from our fellow human beings, and from our own true self which is created in God's image and likeness. Confession is the Sacrament through which our sins are forgiven, and our relationship to God and to others is restored and strengthened. Through the Sacrament, Christ our Lord continues to heal those broken in spirit and restore the Father's love those who are lost. According to Orthodox teaching, the penitent confess to God and is forgiven by God. The Priest is the sacramental witness who represents both Christ and His people. The Priest is viewed not as a judge, but as a physician and guide. It is an ancient Orthodox practice for every Christian to have a spiritual father to whom one turns for spiritual advice and counsel. Confession can take place on any number of occasions. The frequency is left the discretion of the individual. In the event of serious sin, however, confession is a necessary preparation for Holy Communion.

4th Sacrament is the Holy Communion ~ Η Θεία Κοινωνία

The Holy Eucharist, which is known as the Divine Liturgy, is the central and most important worship experience of the Orthodox Church. Often referred to as the "Sacrament of Sacraments", it is the Church's celebration of the Death and Resurrection of Christ offered every Sunday and Holy day. All the other Sacraments of the Church lead toward and flow from the Eucharist, which is at the center of the life of the Church. The previous pamphlet in this series was devoted to the meaning and celebration of the Eucharist in the Orthodox Church.

5th Sacrament is the Marriage ~ Ο Γάμος

God is active in our lives. It is He who joins a man and a woman in a relationship of mutual love. The Sacrament of Marriage bears witness to His action. Through this Sacrament, a man and a woman are publicly joined as husband and wife. They enter into a new relationship with each other, God, and the Church. Since Marriage is not viewed as a legal contract, there are no vows in the Sacrament. According to Orthodox teachings, Marriage is not simply a social institution, it is an eternal vocation of the kingdom. A husband and a wife are called by the holy Spirit not only to live together but also to share their Christian life together so that each, with the aid of the other, may grow closer to God and become the persons they are meant to be. In the Orthodox Marriage Service, after the couple have been betrothed and exchanged rings, they are crowned with "crowns of glory and honor" signifying the establishment of a new family under God. Near the conclusion of the Service, the husband and wife drink from a common cup which is reminiscent of the wedding of Cana and which symbolized the sharing of the burdens and joys of their new life together.

6th Sacrament is the Holy Unction – Anointing of the Sick ~ Το Ευχέλαιον

When one is ill and in pain, this can very often be a time of life when one feels alone and isolated. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, or Holy Unction as it is also known, remind us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of his Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life, and even the approach of death. As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God's presence, strength, and forgiveness. After the reading of seven epistle lessons, seven gospel lessons and the offering of seven prayers, which are all devoted to healing, the priest anoints the body with the Holy Oil. Orthodoxy does not view this Sacrament as available only to those who are near death. It is offered to all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit. The Church celebrates the Sacrament for all its members during Holy week on Holy Wednesday.

7th: Ordination ~ Η Χειροτονία: The Holy Spirit preserved the continuity of the Church through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Through ordination, men who have been chosen from within the Church are set apart by the Church for special service to the Church. Each is called by God through His people to stand amid the community, as pastor and teacher, and as the representative of the parish before the Altar. Each is also a living icon of Christ among His people. The bishop alone acts in the name of the universal Church and can complete the action. He does so with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the imposition of his hands on the person being ordained. Following the custom of the Apostolic Church, there are three major orders each of which requires a special ordination. These are Bishop, who is viewed as a successor of the Apostles, Priest and Deacon, who act in the name of the Bishop. *Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*



Special Services and Blessings of the Orthodox Church

Rev. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald



At the center of the life of the Church is the Holy Eucharist, which is the principal celebration of our faith and the means through which we participate in the very life of the Holy Trinity. The major Sacraments are closely related to the Eucharist and they bear witness to the continuing presence of Christ in the lives of His people.

Besides the Eucharist and the major Sacraments, the Orthodox Church has a number of Special Services and Blessings which are associated with the needs, events, and tasks of human life. In celebrating these various Services and Blessings, the Church is constantly bearing witness to the presence and action of God in our lives. Our God is one who loves us, cares for us, and is near to us. The liturgical Services and Blessings also serve to remind us that all of life is important, and that the many events and gifts of life can be directed toward God and receive their fulfillment in Him.

The Special Services are often referred to as Non-sacramental Services in the sense that they are events of community worship which are not usually counted among the major Sacraments. However, they clearly have a sacramental quality in the sense that they reveal the presence of the Holy Trinity. Many of these Services, such as the Funeral, the Blessing of Water, and the Entrance into Monastic Life, just to name a few, are very significant to the life of the Church. The various Blessings are brief ceremonies which are occasional and do not necessarily involve directly the entire parish community.

The Church blesses individuals, events such as trips, and objects such as icons, churches, flowers, fields, animals, and food. In so doing, the Church is not only expressing our thanks giving, but also affirming that no gift, event, or human responsibility is secular or detached from God. For the Orthodox Christian, all good things have God as their origin and goal. Nothing is outside of God's love and concern.

Funeral Service ~ Η Κηδεία



The death of a Christian not only affects the family, but also the entire Church, for we are all part of the Body of Christ. The Orthodox Funeral Service, which expresses this fact, is not to be seen primarily as an opportunity to extol, in a sentimental way, the virtues of an individual. Rather, the various prayers and hymns emphasize the harsh reality of death, as well as the victorious Resurrection of Christ through which the power of death is conquered. The Funeral Service comforts those who mourn; it is also the means through which the Church prays for one of its members who has died in the faith of Christ. Orthodoxy views the end of physical existence only as the termination of one stage of life. God's love is stronger than death, and the Resurrection of Christ bears witness to this power.

The Orthodox Funeral consists of three Services. First, there is a Vigil Service after death, which is usually conducted at the time of the wake. This service is called the Trisagion Service. The Church prays to Christ "to give rest with the Saints to the soul of Your servant where there is neither pain, grief, nor sighing but life everlasting." While the Church prays for the soul of the deceased, great respect is paid to the body. Orthodoxy believes the body of the Christian is sacred since it was the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

The body will share also in the final restoration of all creation. The Funeral Service is continued at the Church, where the body is brought on the day of burial. After the Funeral Service, the congregation offers its Farewell to the deceased. The Trisagion Service is repeated at the graveside.

Memorial Service ~ Το Μνημοσυνο

Death alters but does not destroy the bond of love and faith which exists among all the members of the Church. Orthodoxy believes that through our prayers, those "who have fallen asleep in the faith and the hope of the Resurrection" continue to have opportunity to grow closer to God. Therefore, the Church prays constantly for her members who have died in Christ. We place our trust in the love of God and the power of mutual love and forgiveness. We pray that God will forgive the sins of the faithful departed, and that He will receive them into the company of Saints in the heavenly Kingdom.

The Orthodox Church remembers the departed in the prayers of every Divine Liturgy. Besides this, there is a Memorial Service in which the Church also remembers the dead. According to tradition, the Memorial Service is offered on the third, ninth, and fortieth day after a death, as well as on the yearly anniversary of the death. In addition to these times, the Memorial Service is always offered for all the faithful departed on four "Saturdays of the souls." These are: the two Saturdays preceding Great Lent; the first Saturday of Great Lent; and, the Saturday before Pentecost.

In the United States the Service is also offered on Memorial Day. When the Memorial Service is offered, it is customary for the family of the deceased to bring a dish of boiled wheat to the Church. The boiled wheat is placed on a table in the center of the nave during the Service. The wheat, known as kollyva, is a symbol of the Resurrection. When speaking of the Resurrection, our Lord said: "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit." (John 12:24)



The Great Blessing of Water ~ Ο Μεγας Αγιασμος

Epiphany, one of the oldest and most important Feast days of the Orthodox Church, commemorates the manifestation of the Holy Trinity which took place at the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. Recognizing rich meaning in this event, Orthodoxy believes that when Christ was baptized, it not only marked the beginning of its public ministry and revealed the Trinity, but also signified that the entire creation is destined to share in the glory of redemption in Christ. While Christ entered into the Jordan to be baptized, two things were happening: He was identifying Himself with the people He had come to save; and, He was identifying Himself with the whole of Creation which was represented by water. Through His baptism, the Lord revealed the value of the created world and He redirected it toward its Creator. Creation is good and it belongs to God.

The Great Blessing of Water is held on the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany and on the day itself, following the Divine Liturgy. The Blessing not only remembers the event of Our Lord's baptism and the revelation of the Holy Trinity but also expresses Orthodoxy's belief that creation is sanctified through Christ. The Blessing affirms that humanity and the created world, of which we are a part, were created to be filled with the sanctifying presence of God. After the solemn blessing, the Holy Water is distributed to the faithful and is used to bless homes. When the faithful drink the "Epiphany Water," we are reminded of our own baptism. When the Church blesses an individual, or object, or event with the water, we are affirming that those baptized, their surroundings, and their responsibilities are sanctified through Christ and brought into the Kingdom of the Father through the Spirit. In addition to the Great Blessing of Water, there is a Lesser Blessing of Water service which can take place at any time. Usually, it is celebrated when a home is blessed, on the first day of the month, the beginning of the school year, and beginning of new responsibilities.

The Blessing of Bread ~ Artoklasia = Η Αρτοκλασία

The Blessing of Five Loaves of Bread is a brief service of thanksgiving through which we express our gratitude for all the blessings of life. Oil, wine, wheat, and the loaves of bread which are used in the service, are viewed as the most basic elements necessary for life. The Blessing reminds us of the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish by which Christ fed the multitude. This Blessing is usually offered during Vespers or after the Divine Liturgy on Feast days and other special occasions. After the Service, the bread is cut and distributed to the congregation.



Akathist Hymn ~ Ο Ακαθιστος Ύμνος

The Orthodox Church worships God alone. Yet, she does offer veneration to individuals who have been important human instruments of God in the history of salvation. Among those so venerated is Mary, the Mother of God the Theotokos. The Orthodox Church greatly honors Mary because she was chosen to give birth to the Son of God. As one of the hymns declares:

"By singing praise to your maternity, we exalt you as a spiritual temple, Theotokos. For the One Who dwelt within your womb, the Lord who holds all things in his hands, sanctified you, glorified you, and taught all to sing to you ... "The most beautiful and poetic service of the Orthodox Church in honor of Mary, the Theotokos, is the Akathist Hymn. The word akathist means without sitting. The congregation stands throughout the Service out of respect for Mary and her unique role in our salvation in Christ. The Akathist Hymn is chanted in four parts during the first four Fridays of Great Lent. On the fifth Friday, the entire Service is chanted.

The Service of Supplication ~ Paraklesis = Η Παρακλήση

The Service of Supplication, which is also known as Paraklesis, is one offered especially at times of sickness, temptation, or discouragement. The various prayers ask the Lord for guidance, personal strength, and healing. Many of the hymns and prayers are directed toward Mary, the Theotokos, and they ask for her assistance. Orthodoxy affirms that each of us, with Mary, the Saints, and the faithful departed is united in a bond of faith and love in Christ. Therefore, just as in this life we can turn to each other for prayer, the Church believes that we can also turn to Mary - the human being closest to God - and ask her to pray to God for us. This belief is expressed in the hymn which says:

"O never failing protectress of Christians and their ever-present intercessor before the Creator; despise not the petitions of sinners who have recourse to you, by your goodness extend your help to us to call upon you with confidence. Has O Theotokos, to intercede for us, O who have always protected those who honor you."

There are two forms of the Service of Supplication: The Greater and the Lesser. It is Lesser Service of Supplication which is briefer and the one most frequently offered. Both forms of the Service are offered during first fourteen days of August.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



The Virgin Mary ~ Η Παναγια μας

Παναγιτσα μου, βοηθησε με!



Greek initials for 'Archangel Michael', who holds the lance and the sponge. 'Michael' means 'who is like God?'

Greek initials for 'Archangel Gabriel', who holds the cross of Christ. 'Gabriel' means 'God is strong'

Mary's mouth is small, symbolising her few recorded words and the depth of her contemplation

Greek initials for 'Mother'

ΜΡ
ΜΗΤΕΡ

Greek initials for 'of God'

ΘΥ
ΘΕΟΥ

Greek initials for Jesus Christ

ΙC ΧC

Gold background symbolises heaven

The mother's supporting hand

The colour blue, worn by mothers in Palestine

Red tunic, the colour worn by virgins at the time of Christ

The Christ-child clings trustingly to his mother

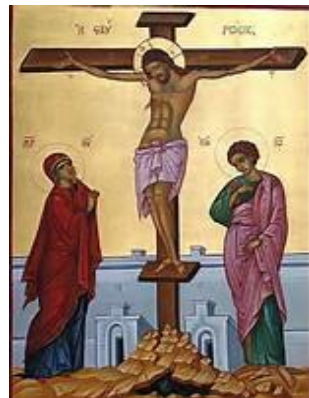
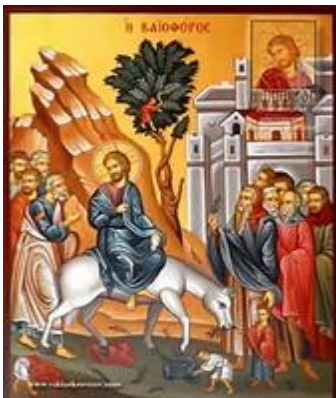
The falling sandal indicating his alarm at the thought of his Passion and death



Feast Days of Our Lord Jesus Christ ~ Οι Γιορτές του Χριστού



1. September 14th - **The Elevation of the Holy Cross ~ Η Υψώσις του Τιμίου Σταυρου:** (Procession with Basil and Flowers). This feast was introduced to commemorate the Triumphant Elevation of the Holy Cross, found by St. Helen in the 4th century, in the Church of the Resurrection built by St. Constantine on the believed tomb of Christ (a strict fast day).
2. December 25th – **The Nativity of Christ ~ Η Γεννηση του Χριστου, Chrismas ~ Τα Χριστουγεννα:** The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.
3. January 1st: **The Circumcision of our Lord ~ Η Περιτομή του Κυριου**
4. January 6th – **Theophany or Epiphany ~ Τα Θεοφανεια:** (The Baptism of Christ ~ Blessing of the Water). It signified the Divine manifestation of Our Lord during His Baptism in the Jordan river and His entering His Divine Ministry. Epiphany is also known as the “**Feast of Lights**” ~ “**Ta Fota**”.
5. February 2nd - **The Presentation of Our Lord ~ Η Υπαπαντη του Κυριου:** The Receiving of Christ into the Temple by the elderly Simeon 40 days after birth.



6. Sunday before Easter - **Palm Sunday ~ Των Βαιων:** The Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem.
7. **Easter Sunday ~ Το Πασχα:** The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ~ Η Αναστασις του Κυριου
8. Forty Days after Easter - **Ascension of the Lord ~ Της Αναληψεως**
9. Fifty Days after Easter–**Pentecost ~ Της Πεντηκοστης :** It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and it is “**The Birth of the Church**” ~ Η Γεννησις της Ορθοδοξιας.
10. August 6th - **The Transfiguration of Our Lord ~ Της Μεταμορφωσεως:** The Manifestation of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. This feast relates to the event of the Transfiguration by which Our lord. Though in the humble form of man, was shown to be the Lord and Master of the whole oniverse.



Feast Days of the Theotokos ~ Mother of God = Οι Γιορτες της Παναγιας



1. September 8th – **The Nativity of the Theotokos ~ Η Γεννησις της Θεοτοκου:** It is related to the ancient tradition of the Church, according to which the Theotokos was born from quite elderly parents (Joachim and Anna) in fulfilment of a divine promise to them.
2. November 21th – **The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple ~ Η Εισοδος:** It commemorates the holy tradition of the Church. When the Virgin Mary was 3 years old, she was bought by her parents to the Temple of Solomon, where she was dedicated to God and remained there to serve until she was 14 years old.
3. December 26th – **The Synaxis of the Theotokos ~ Η Συναξις της Θεοτοκου:** This feast is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to the son and Word of God, thereby becoming the Instrument of the Salvation of Mankind.
4. March 25th – **Annunciation ~ Του Ευαγγελισμού:** The day on which the angel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and announced that she had been chosen to be the Mother of God, Jesus Christ.
5. August 15th – **The Falling Asleep of the Theotokos ~ Η Κοιμησις της Παναγιας:** On this day the Theotokos was buried in Gethsemane and she entered Heaven, where she is venerated as “More Honorable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim”. Greek Orth. Archdiocese of America

The Triodion = Το Τριῳδιον ~ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The **Lenten Triodion** is the service book of the Orthodox Church that provides the texts for the divine services for the pre-Lenten weeks of preparation, **Great Lent** & **Holy Week** ~ **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**.



The 1st Sunday of the Triodion Period: Sunday of The Publican and Pharisee

The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee is the first Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. It marks the beginning of a time of preparation for the spiritual journey of Lent, a time for Orthodox Christians to draw closer to God through worship, prayer, fasting, and acts of charity. It is also on this day that the Triodion is introduced, a liturgical book that contains the services from this Sunday, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), to Great and Holy Saturday.

The 2nd Sunday of the Triodion Period: Sunday of The Prodigal Son

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son is the second Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. On the previous Sunday, the services of the Church began to include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), through Great and Holy Saturday. As with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the theme of this Sunday is repentance, and the focus on the parable of the Prodigal Son leads Orthodox Christians to contemplate the necessity of repentance in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.



The 3rd Sunday of the Triodion: Sunday of The Last Judgement (Meatfare Sunday)

The Sunday of the Last Judgment is the third Sunday of a three-week period prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During this time, the services of the Church have begun to include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, the tenth before Pascha (Easter), through Great and Holy Saturday. On this day, focus is placed on the future judgment of all persons who will stand before the throne of God when Christ returns in His glory.

The 4th Sunday of the Triodion Period: Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare Sunday)

The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday prior to the commencement of Great Lent. During the pre-Lenten period, the services of the Church include hymns from the Triodion, a liturgical book that contains the services from the Sunday of the Publican & the Pharisee, the 10th before Easter, through Great & Holy Saturday.



Holy Week ~ Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America



Great and Holy Week is the week from the conclusion of **Great Lent** on the **Saturday of Lazarus** to the celebration of **Pascha**. It is emphasized that the services of Holy Week follow the ecclesiastical day that is from sundown to sundown. While little is recorded of the development of the celebrations of the Holy Week during the early years of the Church, it apparently had very early origins. By the fourth century the celebration of the week appears well-founded and to be similar to our celebrations today. The pilgrim **Egeria** to Jerusalem in the latter part of the fourth century described the events of the week after the services of the Saturday of Lazarus, "...began the week of the Pascha, which they called here the Great Week", noting the procession commemorating Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the first day of the week. It is during this week that we remember Christ's Passion and Crucifixion.

The events of Holy week are the most moving of the year. During this week we experience Christ's journey to the Cross reminding us of the reality of sin and death. Christ conquered sin and death and his triumph is ours as well. By uniting ourselves with Christ we discover that death has no power over us. We urge you to participate in each day's services and to make **Prayer-Προσευχη**, **Fasting - Νηστεία**, **Holy Confession = Εξομολογήση**, and **Holy Communion = Θεία Κοινωνία**. essential parts of your Holy Week. Fast, pray, examine your life in relation to the ten Commandments and the word of God. Seek out your sinfulness. Ask for forgiveness and partake of the sacrament of Confession. On Wednesday participate in the service of **Holy Unction = Ευχέλαιον** and be healed. Then on Holy Thursday as the Church commemorates the first Mystical Supper, receive Holy Communion taking the Blood and Body of Christ into your own body for purification. Endure the suffering of Christ on his walk to and on the Cross. Change yourself. Truly prepare for the celebration of the truth of the resurrection and the trampling of death by death. We know this means a large commitment of time, but those who can do so find it rewarding and helpful in coming closer to God.

Participate in the services of Holy week. **Reflect** on Christ's supreme Sacrifice and His Victory over Death.

Lazarus Saturday ~ Σάββατο του Λαζαρου

On the Saturday before Holy Week, the Orthodox Church commemorates a major feast of the year, the miracle of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. Here, at the end of Great Lent and the forty days of fasting and penitence, the Church combines this celebration with that of Palm Sunday. In triumph and joy the Church bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King before entering the most solemn week of the year, one that leads the faithful in remembrance of His suffering and death and concludes with the great and glorious Feast of Pascha.

Saturday of Lazarus concludes **Great Lent - Μεγάλη Σαρακοστή**. This celebration remembers Christ's raising of Lazarus from the dead and the promise of universal **Resurrection** for all. Saturday of Lazarus provides a bridge to Holy Week during which the Church services remember Christ's last week before his **crucifixion** and **resurrection**, his **Passion**. During this week the **Matins** services for the upcoming day are celebrated the evening before, and Vespers is celebrated in the morning.



Raising of Lazaus

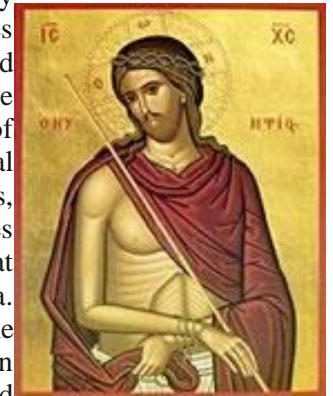
Palm Sunday ~ Κυριακή των Βαίων ~ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America The Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem ~ Η Εισοδος στα Ιεροσολυμα



On the Sunday before the Feast of Great and Holy Pascha and at the beginning of Holy Week, the Orthodox Church celebrates one of its most joyous feasts of the year. Palm Sunday is the commemoration of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem following His glorious miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Having anticipated His arrival and having heard of the miracle, the people went out to meet the Lord and welcomed Him with displays of honor and shouts of praise. On this day, we receive and worship Christ in this same manner, acknowledging Him as our King and Lord. The city. People had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover and were looking for Jesus, both because of His great works and teaching and because they had heard of the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus. When they heard that Christ was entering the city, they went out to meet Him with *palm branches*, laying their garments on the ground before Him, and shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel!*"

Sunday Evening Bridegroom Service ~ Ακολουθία του Νυμφίου (7:00pm)

Beginning on the evening of Palm Sunday and continuing through the evening of Holy Tuesday, the Orthodox Church observes a special service known as the Service of the Bridegroom. Each evening service is the Matins or Orthros service of the following day (e.g. the service held on Sunday evening is the Orthros service for Holy Monday). The name of the service is from the figure of the Bridegroom in the parable of *the Ten Virgins* found in Matthew 25:1-13. The first part of Holy Week presents us with an array of themes based chiefly on the last days of Jesus' earthly life. The story of the Passion, as told and recorded by the Evangelists, is preceded by a series of incidents located in Jerusalem and a collection of parables, sayings and discourses centered on Jesus' divine sonship, the kingdom of God, the Parousia, and Jesus' castigation of the hypocrisy and dark motives of the religious leaders. The observances of the first three days of Great Week are rooted in these incidents and sayings. The 3 days constitute a single liturgical unit. They have the same cycle and system of daily prayer. The Scripture lessons, hymns, commemorations, and ceremonials that make up the festal elements in the respective services of the cycle highlight significant aspects of salvation history, by calling to mind the events that anticipated the Passion and by proclaiming the inevitability and significance of the Parousia. *The title Bridegroom suggests the intimacy of love.* It is not without significance that the kingdom of God is compared to a bridal feast and a bridal chamber. The Christ of the Passion is the divine Bridegroom of the Church. The imagery connotes the final union of the Lover and the beloved. The title Bridegroom also suggests the Parousia. In the patristic tradition, the aforementioned parable is related to the Second Coming; and is associated with the need for spiritual vigilance and preparedness, by which we are enabled to keep the divine commandments and receive the blessings of the age to come. The troparion "*Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night...*", which is sung at the beginning of the Orthros of Great Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, relates the worshiping community to that essential expectation: watching and waiting for the Lord, who will come again to judge the living and the dead.



Holy Monday Evening ~ Μεγάλη Δευτέρα ~ Bridegroom Service ~ Του Νυμφίου (7:00pm) The name of the service is from the figure of the Bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13. expectation: watching and waiting for the Lord, who will come again to judge the living and the dead. On Holy Monday we commemorate *Joseph the Patriarch*, the beloved son of Jacob. A major figure of the Old Testament, Joseph's story is told in the final section of the Book of Genesis. The story of Joseph illustrates the mystery of God's providence, promise and redemption. Innocent, chaste and righteous, his life bears witness to the power of God's love and promise. Also, on this day the Church commemorates the event of the cursing of the fig tree (Matthew. Genuine Christian faith is dynamic and fruitful. It permeates one's whole being and causes a change. Living, true and unadulterated faith makes the Christian conscious of the fact that he is already a citizen of heaven. Therefore, his way of thinking, feeling, acting and being must reflect this reality. Those who belong to Christ ought to live and walk in the Spirit; and the Spirit will bear fruit in them: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-25).

Holy Tuesday Evening ~ Bridegroom Service ~ Μεγάλη Τριτη ~ Της Κασσιανης (7:00pm)

We remember the sinful woman who anointed Christ in anticipation of His death. Her repentance and love of Christ is the theme of *the Hymn of Cassiane* that is chanted this night. The woman who had fallen into many sins, perceiving Your divinity, O Lord, assumes the role of a myrrh-bearer; and lamenting, she brings the myrrh before Your burial. On Holy Tuesday the Church calls to remembrance two parables, which are related to the 2nd Coming. The one is the *parable of the Ten Virgins* (Matthew 25:1-3); the other the *parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25:14-30). These parables point to the inevitability of the Parousia and deal with such subjects as spiritual vigilance, stewardship, accountability and judgment. From these parables we learn at least two basic things. First, Judgment Day will be like the situation in which the bridesmaids (or virgins) of the parable found themselves: some ready for it, some not ready. The tragedy of the closed door is that individuals close it, not God. The exclusion from the marriage feast, the kingdom, is of our own making. Watchfulness is the deep personal resolve to find and do the will of God, embrace every commandment and every virtue, and guard the intellect and heart from evil thoughts and actions. Watchfulness is the intense love of God.

Holy Wednesday ~ Μεγάλη Τεταρτη (3:30pm & 7:00pm) The Sacrament of Holy Unction

On the afternoon of Great and Holy Wednesday, the Sacrament or Mystery of Holy Unction (**Το Ευχέλαιον**) is conducted in Orthodox parishes. The Sacrament of Holy Unction is offered for the healing of soul and body and for forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion of the service of the Sacrament, the body is anointed with oil, and the grace of God, which heals infirmities of soul and body, is called down upon each person. The Sacrament is performed by a gathering of Priests, ideally seven in number, however, it can be performed by a lesser number and even by a single Priest. We celebrate **the Sacrament of Holy Unction** commemorating Christ's anointing with myrrh. We confess our sins and seek to be reconciled with God. The priest anoints us with Holy Oil that we may be healed physically and spiritually. The services appointed by the **Typikon** for the evening of Holy Wednesday recall that on this day Judas betrayed Christ, which led to the tradition from **Apostolic** times of **fasting** on Wednesday throughout the year. It also focuses on the Mystical Supper, which is celebrated in the Holy Liturgy of the following day.

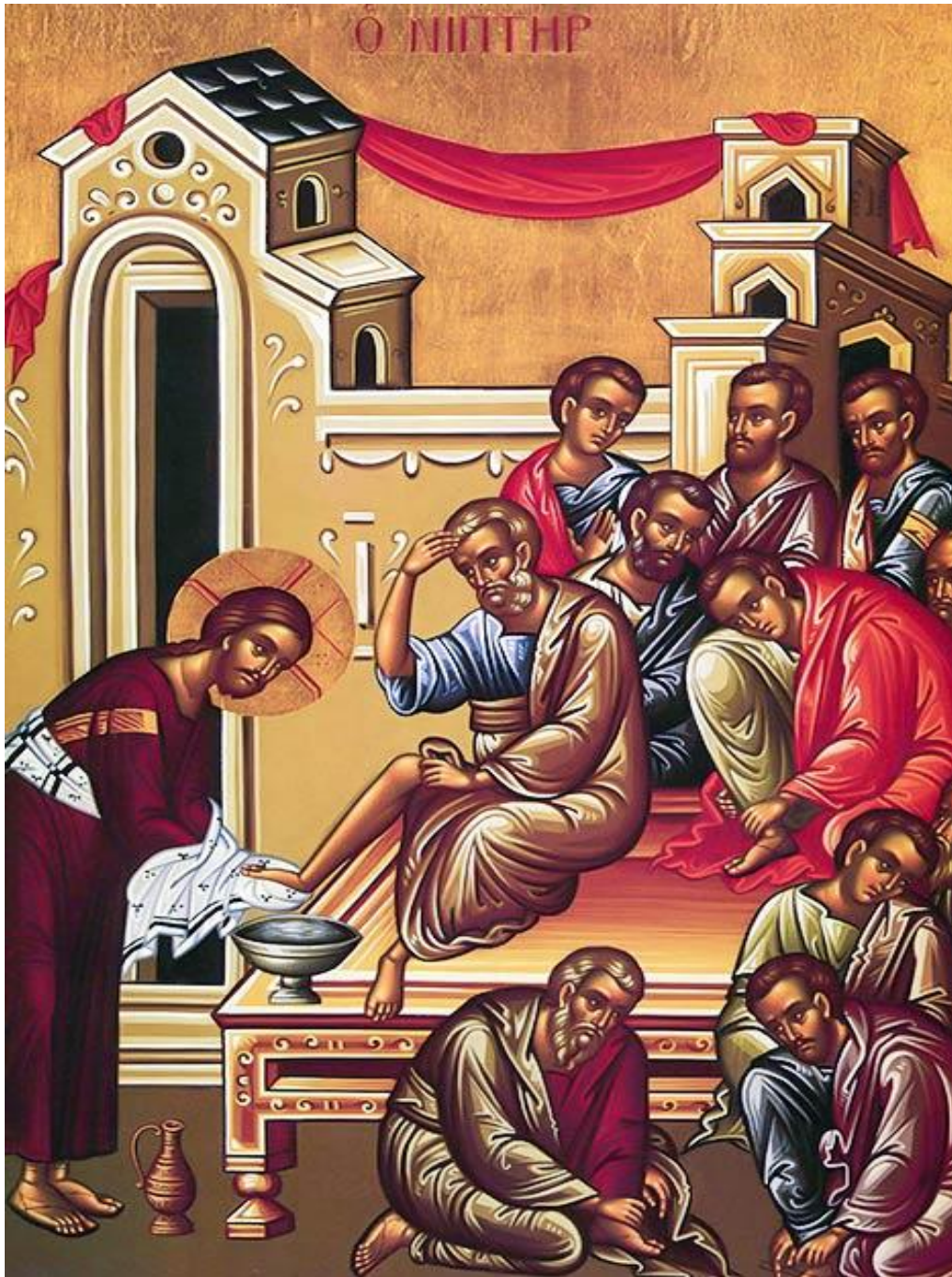
Holy Thursday Morning ~ Μεγάλη Πέμπτη ~ The Last Supper ~ Ο Μυστικός Δείπνος



On Thursday of Holy Week four events are commemorated: *the washing of the Disciples' feet*, the institution of *the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist* at the Last Supper, *the agony in the garden of Gethsemane*, *the betrayal of Judas Iscariot*; Jesus and the Disciples praying in the Garden and His arrest. At the Mystical Supper in the Upper Room Jesus gave a radically new meaning to the food and drink of the sacred meal. He identified Himself with the bread and wine: "Take, eat; this is my Body. Drink of it all of you; for this is my Blood of the New Covenant" (Matthew 26:26-28). In preparation for the great entrance, this special hymn is chanted, calling us to the sacred events in

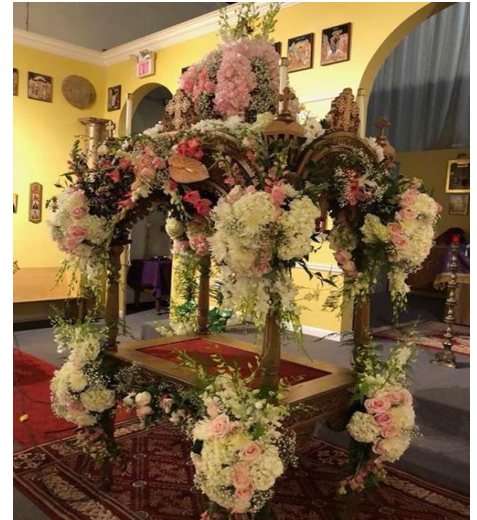
the Upper Room: "O Son of God, accept me today a communicant, for I will not speak of Thy mystery to Thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss, but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom." The Eucharist is at the center of the Church's life. It is her most profound prayer and principal activity. It is at one and the same time both the source and the summit of her life. In the Eucharist the Church manifests her true nature and is continuously changed from a human community into the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and the People of God. The Eucharist is the pre-eminent sacrament. It completes all the others and recapitulates the entire economy of salvation. Our new life in Christ is constantly renewed and increased by the Eucharist. The Eucharist imparts life and the life it gives is the life of God.

The washing of the Disciples' feet



Holy Thursday Evening ~ Μεγάλη Πέμπτη Βράδυ (7:00pm), Crucifixion = Η Σταύρωση is when we have the service of the **12 Gospel Readings** which relate the events of Jesus' Holy Passion, and His last instructions to the Disciples. The Gospel readings witness for us the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, *His trial and Conviction*, and finally *His torture, Crucifixion and Death*. The event of the Crucifixion leads us into the greatest expression of the divine mystery of love. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). We contemplate the Crucifixion and approach with awe and amazement God's awesome condescension. This service also includes a procession that reenacts Christ carrying His own cross. After this procession the congregation is invited to come and light candles at the foot of the Cross. (The Gospels: John 13:31-18:1; John 18:1-29; Matthew 26:57-75; John 18:28-19:16; Matthew 27:3-32; Mark 15:16-32; Matthew 27:33-54, Luke 23:32-49; John 19:25-37; Mark 15:43-47; John 19:38-42; Mat. 27).

Holy Friday ~ Μεγάλη Παρασκευή is a day of mourning, fasting and prayer. **Royal Hours** begin at **9:00am** and we read the first, third, sixth, and ninth Great Hours. On Great and Holy Friday the Orthodox Church commemorates the death of Christ on the Cross. This is the culmination of the observance of His Passion by which our Lord suffered and died for our sins. The power of death and the reality of evil rule the world on this dreadful day. Yet, Jesus Christ's death marks the beginning of His and our victory over death's power. This commemoration begins on Thursday evening with the Matins of Holy Friday and concludes with a Vespers on Friday afternoon that *observes the unnauling of Christ from the Cross and the placement of His body in the tomb*. On this day we commemorate the sufferings of Christ: the mockery, the crown of thorns, the scourging, the nails, the thirst, the vinegar and gall, the cry of desolation, and all the Savior endured on the Cross.



On Great and Holy Friday, Orthodox churches display the icon known as the "Akra Tapeinosis - The Extreme Humility." This icon depicts the crucified dead body of Christ upright in the Tomb with the Cross in the background. It combines the two awesome events of Great Friday - the crucifixion and burial of Christ. The Church also has an icon of the Crucifixion of Christ. He is shown nailed to the Cross. His right side is pierced and from the wound flows blood and water. At the foot of the Cross is a skull. (Golgotha, the Mount of the Crucifixion, means "the place of the skull."). On the top bar of the Cross is the inscription "I.N.B.I.", the initials for the Greek words meaning "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Another icon that depicts the events of Holy Friday is known as the Epitaphios Thrinos. In this icon, Christ has been taken off of the Cross, and His body is being prepared for burial.



During the Procession, Orthodox Christians kneel and venerate the Cross and pray for their spiritual well-being, imitating the thief on the Cross who confessed his faith and devotion to Christ. The faithful then approach and reverently kiss the Crucifix which has been placed at the front of the church. On Friday morning, the services of the Royal Hours are observed. These services are primarily readings of prayers, hymns, and passages from the Old Testament, Epistles, and Gospels.

Taking Down from the Cross ~ Η Αποκαθελωση is at 3:00pm: The Vespers of Friday afternoon are a continuation of the Royal Hours. During this service, the removal of the Body of Christ from the Cross is commemorated with a sense of mourning. Once more, excerpts from the Old Testament are read together with hymns, and again the entire story is related, followed by the removal of Christ from the Cross and *the wrapping of His body with a white sheet as did Joseph of Arimathea*. The Priest then carries the cloth on which the Body of Christ is painted or embroidered around the church before placing it inside the Sepulcher, a carved bier which symbolizes the Tomb of Christ. We are reminded that during Christ's entombment He descends into Hades to free the dead of the ages before His Resurrection.



The Lamentations at the Tomb ~ Ο Επιταφιος Θρηνος (7:00pm): On Friday night, the Matins of Holy and Great Saturday, a unique service known as **The Lamentation at the Tomb** is celebrated. Much of the service takes place around the tomb of Christ in the center of the nave. A unique feature of the service is the chanting of the Lamentations or Praises (Engōmia), which consist of verses chanted by the Clergy & the people. At this sacred service (3 hours long), the decorated Epitaphio is taken in a candle light procession by the entire congregation around the Church 3 times. The flowers are distributed to the congregation after the service.

Great and Holy Saturday ~ Το Μεγά Σάββατο: On Great Saturday the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord's descent into Hades, the place of the dead. Death, our ultimate enemy, is defeated from within. Saturday is the day between Jesus' death and His resurrection. It is the day of watchful expectation, in which mourning is being transformed into joy. The day embodies in the fullest possible sense the meaning of Harmolipi - joyful-sadness, which has dominated the celebrations of Great Week. Anticipating Christ's victory over the power of death we sing, Arise, O God, judge the earth for to thee belong all the nations (Romans 6:3-11 and Matthew 28:1-20).

Easter~ Το Πάσχα ~ Pascha~The Feast of Feasts: On Holy Saturday **at midnight**, in a darkened church, the faithful receive the resurrection light from the Priest while singing "**Come ye and receive light from the unwaning life, and, glorify Christ, who arose from the dead**" ~ "Δεύτε Λαβετε Φως". The congregation hears the good news of Christ's triumph from the Gospel and then form a procession out of the church. After circling the church 1 or 3 times, as the procession nears the entrance door of the church, the Priest leads in the singing of the joyous hymn of Christ's Resurrection is triumphantly chanted "**Christ is risen from the dead, trampling death by death, and bestowing life to those in the tombs**".

The Resurrection of Christ



Η Ανασταση του Χριστού



On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Orthodox Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life. Commemoration of The Great and Holy Feast of PaschaHoly Week comes to an end at sunset of Great and Holy Saturday, as the Church prepares to celebrate her most ancient and preeminent festival, Pascha, the feast of feasts. The time of preparation will give way to a time of fulfillment. The glorious and resplendent light emanating from the empty Tomb will dispel the darkness. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity captive" (Psalm 67:19). All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:21-22). Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day. The Resurrection constitutes the most radical and decisive deliverance of humankind.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth + absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life & vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling & unique teaching; His extraordinary works & His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity. The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order."

The profound experience of and the unshakable belief in the risen Lord enabled the Apostles to evangelize the world and empowered the Church to overcome paganism. The Resurrection discloses the indestructible power and inscrutable wisdom of God. It disposes of the illusory myths and belief systems by which people, bereft of divine knowledge, strain to affirm the meaning and purpose of their existence. Christ, risen and glorified, releases humanity from the delusions of idolatry. In Him grave-bound humanity discovers and is filled with incomparable hope. The Resurrection bestows illumination, energizes souls, brings forgiveness, transfigures lives, creates saints, and gives joy. The Resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. But it has revealed its powerlessness (Hebrews 2:14-15). We continue to die as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. "God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin." Thus, physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life - from this fallen world to God's reign.

Icon of the Commemoration of Great and Holy Pascha: One of the most symbolic of the Festal Icons of the Orthodox Church is that of the Holy Resurrection. In the center of this radiant event is Christ pulling Adam and Eve up from their tombs. The gates of the Realm of Death are broken and thrown down. Death, personified in human form is defeated, and bound hand and foot at the bottom of the scene. We recall the joyous words of St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). In the background stands the host of the departed, so numerous they can not be depicted. Among them in the front of the multitude are some of the righteous dead, though now invigorated by the Resurrection. King David and his son Solomon are seen on the left wearing crowns. Near the center is Saint John the Baptist. On the other side is Abel, the son of Adam and the first man to ever die. He wears a shepherd's robe and has a cane. Many Icons of this subject depict large crowds with a few other recognizable prophets.

Orthodox Celebration of Pascha: Before midnight on Saturday evening, the Odes of Lamentation of the previous day are repeated. The Orthros of the Resurrection begins in complete darkness. The Priest takes light from the vigil light and gives it to the faithful, who are holding candles. The Priest sings: "Come ye and receive light from the unwaning light, and glorify Christ, who arose from the dead", and all the people join him in singing this hymn again & again. From this moment, every Christian holds the Easter candle as a symbol of his vivid, deep faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as Savior. Some Priest leads the people outside the church, where he reads the Gospel which refers to the Angels statement: "He is Risen; He is not here". Then comes the breathless moment as the people wait for the Priest to start the hymn of Resurrection, which they join him in singing, repeatedly: "*Christ has Risen from the dead, by death trampling upon Death, and has bestowed life upon those in the tombs*". From this moment the entire service takes on a joyous Easter atmosphere. The hymns of the Odes and Praises of Resurrection which follow are of superb meaning and expression. The people confess, "It is the Day of Resurrection, let us be glorious, let us embrace one another and speak to those that hate us; let us forgive all things and so let us cry, Christ has risen from the dead". The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is then officiated. At the end of the Liturgy, a part of the marvelous festival sermon of Saint Chrysostom is read, which calls upon the people to "Take part in this fair and radiant festival. Let no one be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free, O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is Thy victory? Christ is Risen & Thou art overthrown. To Him be glory & power from all ages to all ages."

On Easter Sunday (11a.m.), Pascha of our Lord, we celebrate **the Vespers of Love ~ Εσπερινος της Αγαπης**, holding our Paschal candles, while chanting the hymn of victory, "Christ is Risen from the Dead, trampling Death by death, and bestowing life to those in the tombs," and we greet each other joyously, **"Christ is Risen" ~ "Christos Anesti"** and responding with, **"Truly He is Risen" ~ "Alithos Anesti"**. On this day, the Gospel is read in as many languages as possible, to illustrate the universality of the Good News of the Resurrection. For 40 days, until the Ascension of our Lord, we greet each other for centuries with the salutation, "Christ is Risen", responding "Truly He is Risen". At the end of the service parishioners receive a red egg. The red color symbolizes the blood shed by Christ for mankind and, the egg symbolizes the new life of the Resurrection. The Orthodox Christians greet each other for 40 days with the "Christ is Risen" and "Truly He is Risen". **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

The Pentecostarion (50 days) = Το Πεντηκοσταριον



The Great and Holy Feast of Pascha

On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Orthodox Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life.

Second Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of Thomas

The Orthodox Church observes the Sunday of Thomas one week following the celebration of the Sunday of Holy Pascha. The day commemorates the appearance of Christ to His disciples on the evening of the Sunday following Passover. It also commemorates the appearance of the Lord to His disciples eight days later when Thomas was present and proclaimed "My Lord and my God" upon seeing the hands and side of Christ.

Third Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers

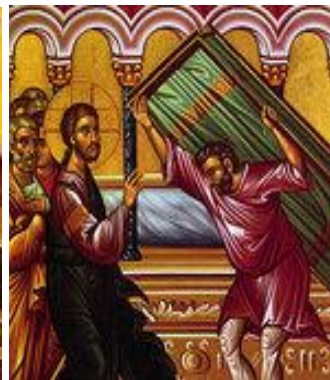
The third Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Holy Myrrhbearers. The day commemorates when the women disciples of our Lord came to the tomb to anoint his body with myrrh-oils but found the tomb empty. As the women wondered what this meant, angels appeared proclaiming that Christ had risen from the dead.

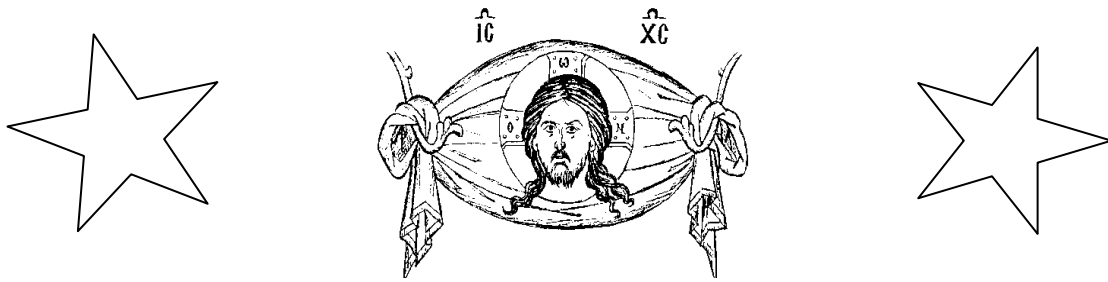
Fourth Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Paralytic

The fourth Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Paralytic. The day commemorates the miracle of Christ healing a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. The biblical story of the event is found in the Gospel of John 5:1-15.

Feast of Mid-Pentecost

The fourth Wednesday after the Feast of Holy Pascha is commemorated as Mid-Pentecost. This feast marks the halfway point between Pascha and the Feast of Pentecost. As explained below this feast is closely linked to the Sunday of the Paralytic.





Fifth Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

The fifth Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman. The day commemorates the encounter of Christ with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The biblical story of this event and the dialog between Christ and the woman is found in the Gospel of Saint John 4:5-42.

Sixth Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Blind Man

The sixth Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Blind Man. The day commemorates the miracle of Christ healing the man who was blind since birth. The biblical story of this event is found in the Gospel of Saint John 9:1-41.

The Ascension of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ~ Always on a Thursday

The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter). Since the date of Pascha changes each year, the date of the Feast of the Ascension changes. The Feast is always celebrated on a Thursday.

Seventh Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

The seventh Sunday after the Feast of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. This day commemorates the 318 God-bearing Fathers who gathered in Nicaea in 325 at the request of the Emperor, Saint Constantine the Great, to address the heresy of Arianism together with other issues that concerned the unity of the Church.

The Sunday of the Feast of Holy Pentecost = Της Πεντηκοστής ~ 50 Days after Easter

The Feast of Holy Pentecost is celebrated each year on the fiftieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter) and ten days after the Feast of the Ascension of Christ. The Feast is always celebrated on a Sunday. The Feast commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, a feast of the Jewish tradition. It also celebrates the establishment of the Church through the preaching of the Apostles and the baptism of the thousands who on that day believed in the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Feast is also seen as the culmination of the revelation of the Holy Trinity.



Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The Saints of the Orthodox Church ~ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

God and Holiness: It must be stated at the beginning that the only true "saint" or holy one (*Hagios*) is God Himself. The Bible states "For I am the Lord your God; you shall name yourselves holy and keep yourselves holy, because I am holy ... " (Levit. 11:44; 19:2 and 20:7). Man becomes holy and "sainted" by participation in the holiness of God. Holiness or sainthood is a gift (*charisma*) given by God to man, through the Holy Spirit. Man's effort to become a participant in the life of divine holiness is indispensable, but sanctification itself is the work of the Holy Trinity, especially through the sanctifying power of Jesus Christ, who was incarnate, suffered crucifixion, and rose from the dead, in order to lead us to the life of holiness, through the communion with the Holy Spirit. In the Second Letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul suggests: "But we are bound to thank God always for you, beloved brothers by the Lord, because from the beginning of time God chose you to find salvation in the Spirit that consecrates you, (*en agiasmo Pneumatos*) and in the truth that you believe. It was for this that He called you through the Gospel we brought, so that you might possess for your own the splendor of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2: 13–14).

Categories of Saints: Through the work of the Holy Trinity all Christians could be called saints; especially in the early Church as long as they were baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, they received the Seal of the Spirit in chrismation and frequently participated in the Eucharist. In the same spirit St. Paul, when writing to the Churches he had visited, calls all the faithful "saints." Writing to the Ephesians, he addresses "the saints who live in Ephesus" (1:1); writing to the Corinthians he uses the same expressions (2 Cor. 1:11). St. Basil, commenting on this point, writes that Paul refers to all those who are united with God, who is the Being, the Life and the Truth (*Against Eunomius*, II, 19). Furthermore, St. Paul writes to the Colossians that God has reconciled men by Christ's death, "so that He may present you before Himself holy, without blemish and innocent in His sight" (1:22). In our society, however, who can be addressed as a saint? Who are those men and women and children who may be called saints by the Church today?

Many Orthodox Theologians classify the saints in six categories

1. **The Apostles**, who were the 1st ones to spread the message of the Incarnation of the Word of God & of salvation through Christ.
2. **The Prophets**, because they predicted and prophesied the coming of the Messiah.
3. **The Martyrs**, for sacrificing their lives and fearlessly confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind.
4. **The Fathers and Hierarchs of the Church**, who excelled in explaining and in defending, by word and deed, the Christian faith.
5. **The Monastics**, who lived in the desert and dedicated themselves to spiritual exercise (*askesis*), reaching, as far as possible, perfection in Christ and
6. **The Just**, those who lived in the world, leading exemplary lives as clergy or laity with their families, becoming examples for imitation in society. Each and every one among all these saints has his or her own calling and characteristics: they all fought the "good fight for the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12 and 2 Tim. 4:7). All of them applied in their lives the scriptural virtues of "justice, piety, fidelity, love, fortitude, and gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:11).

The Concept of Theosis: The ultimate goal of the saint is to imitate God and live the life of deification (*theosis*). St. Maximos the Confessor (seventh century) writes that the saints are men who have reached theosis; they have avoided unnatural development of the soul, that is, sin, and tried to live the natural way of life (i.e., living according to created nature), turning and looking always towards God, thus achieving total unity with God through the Holy Spirit (*On Theology*, 7.73). It may be stated here that the Saints are first of all "friends" of God. Secondly, through their genuine piety and absolute obedience to God, they pleased Him and have therefore been "sanctified" both in soul and body, and subsequently glorified in this world. Third, they have been accepted in God's bosom after their passing from the world into eternal life. Fourth, many of them have been given special "grace" or "favor" to perform miracles either before their departure from this world or after. Fifth, they have been granted the special gift to pray and intercede for those still living in this world and fighting the "good fight" for the glory of God and their own perfection in Christ. This intercession springs from the fact that they also are part of the "Communion of Saints". They share prayers and good works with Christians on earth and there is a constant interaction & unity between the glorified saints in Heaven and Christians who still live in the world.

The Intercession of Saints: The fact that Christians ask the prayers of saints and their intercession is prefigured in the New Testament. St. Paul asks the Christian Ephesians, Thessalonians, Colossians and Romans to pray for him (Ephes. 6:19, 1 Thesal. 5:25; Colos. 4:3, and Rom. 15:30-31). In every Liturgy, we ask God the Father to accept, on our behalf, "the prayers and the intercession" of all the Saints who now live in heaven. The Fathers of the Church also accept as a matter of course the prayers and the intercession of all the saints. In one of his letters, **St. Basil** explicitly writes that he accepts the intercession of the apostles, prophets and martyrs, and he seeks their prayers to God (Letter 360). Then, speaking about the Forty Martyrs, who suffered martyrdom for Christ, he emphasizes that "they are common friends of the human race, strong ambassadors and collaborators in fervent prayers" (Chapter 8). **St. Gregory of Nyssa** asks St. Theodore the Martyr "to fervently pray to our Common King, our God, for the country and the people" (*Encomium to Martyr Theodore*). The same language is used by St. Gregory the Theologian in his encomium to **St. Cyprian**. St. John Chrysostom says that we should seek the intercession and the fervent prayers of the saints, because they have special "boldness" (*parresia*), before God. (Gen. 44:2 and *Encomium to Julian, Iuventinus and Maximinus*, 3).

The Veneration of the Saints: In the Orthodox Church the worship (*latreia*) given to God is completely different from the honor (*tim*) of love (*agape*) and respect, or even veneration (*proskynesis*), "paid to all those endowed with some dignity" (St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. III*, 40). The Orthodox honor the saints to express their love and gratitude to God, who has "perfected" the saints. As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes, "God is the teacher of the Prophets, the co-traveller with the Apostles, the power of the Martyrs, the inspiration of the Fathers and Teachers, the perfection of all Saints ... " (*Catechesis*, I). The feast days and the celebrations honoring the saints had become a common practice by the fourth century. The twentieth canon of the Council of Gangra in Asia Minor (between the years 325 and 381) anathematizes those who reject the feast days of the saints. So great was the esteem in which the Apostles, prophets, and martyrs were held in the Church, that many writings appeared describing their spiritual achievements, love and devotion to God. Throughout early Christianity, Christians customarily met in the places where the martyrs had died, to build churches in their honor, venerate their relics and memory, and present their example for imitation by others. Interesting information on this subject derives from the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp* (ch. 17-18), according to which the early Christians reverently collected the remains of the saints and honored them "more than precious stones." They also met on the day of their death to commemorate "their new birthday, the day they entered into their new life, in Heaven." To this day the Orthodox have maintained the liturgical custom of meeting on the day of the saint's death, of building churches honoring their names, and of paying special respect to their relics and icons. The Seventh Ecumenical Council (787 A.D.), in summarizing this practice of the Church, declares that "we adore and respect God our Lord; and those who have been genuine servants of our common Lord we honor and venerate because they have the power to make us friends with God the King of all." Together with the *Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*, information on the veneration of the Saints derives from the Martyrdom of the Martyrs of Scilli, a small town in North Africa (end of the second century). The list of sources includes St. Athanasius' *Life of St. Anthony*; St. Basil's Homily honoring the "Forty Martyrs"; Gregory of Nyssa's Homily honoring St. Theodore; St. John Chrysostom also delivered a considerable number of sermons dedicated to the Martyrs of the Church.

Relics of St. Lazarus, friend of Christ: The Fathers, and all early Christians in general, paid especially great respect to the relics of the martyrs. In addition to the sources already mentioned, **Eusebius of Caesarea**, the Church historian, says that "those who suffered for the glory of Christ always have fellowship with the living God" (*Church History*, 5:1). In the *Apostolic Constitutions* (5:1) the martyrs are called "brothers of the Lord" and "vessels of the Holy Spirit." This helps to explain the special honor and respect which the Church paid to the relics of the martyrs. St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, **St. Cyril of Jerusalem**, and **St. John Chrysostom** remind us that the relics of the martyrs "are filled with spiritual grace," that even their tombs are filled with a special "blessing." This Patristic practice still continues today, and people from all over the world visit churches that possess the relics of martyrs and saints. Also, according to the ancient tradition, the consecration of new churches takes place with the deposition of holy relics in the Holy Table of the sanctuary. Great controversies have occurred in the past over the special honor due to the icons of Christ as well as those of the saints of the Church. The Iconoclastic controversies which began in Byzantium in the seventh century shook the entire church. The Fathers of the Church, however, declared quite clearly that the honor belongs to the "prototype" and not to the material image of Christ or the Saints. The Acts of the Fourth session of the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicaea (787 A.D.) illuminate this particular point:

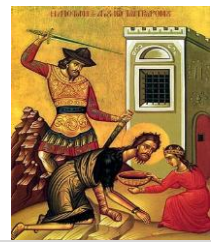
*"We accept (**aspazometha**) the word of the Lord and his Apostles through which we have been taught to honor (**timan**) and magnify (**megalynein**) in the first place Her who is properly and truly the Mother of God (**Theotokos**) and exalted above all the heavenly Powers; also the holy and angelic Powers; the blessed and all-lauded Apostles; and the glorious Prophets and the triumphant Martyrs who fought for Christ; holy and God fearing Doctors, and all holy men; to seek their intercession (**presveies**), to make us at home with the all-royal God of all, so long as we keep his commandments and strive to live virtuously. Moreover we accept (**aspazometha**) the image of the honorable and life-giving Cross, and the holy relics of the saints; and we receive the holy and venerable images; we accept them and we embrace them, according to the ancient traditions of the Holy Catholic Church of God, that is to say our holy Fathers, who also received these things and established them in all the most holy Churches of God and in every place of His dominion. These honorable and venerable images, as has been said, we honor, accept and reverently venerate (**timitikosproskynoumen**): the image of the incarnation of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, and that of our immaculate Lady, the all-holy Mother of God, from whom he pleased to take flesh and to save and deliver us from all impious idolatry; also the images of the holy and incorporeal Angels, who appeared to the just as men. Likewise we also venerate the figures and the effigies (**morphas, eikonismata**) of the divine and all-lauded Apostles, the God-speaking Prophets, and the suffering martyrs and holy men, so that through their representations (**anazografiseos**) we may be able to be led back in memory and recollections to the prototype, and participate in their holiness"* Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol 14, p. 541).

The Feast Days of the Saints: The early Christians used to meet on the name-day of a saint, which in practice usually was the day of his death. These gatherings took place either around the tomb of the saint or in the church, which kept and preserved his holy relics, or in churches with great historical and theological significance. Such a gathering, called a feast-day or festival (*Panegyris*), commemorates the memory of the saint. The faithful participate in these feasts to listen to an encomiastic speech praising the deeds or the martyrdom of the venerated saint, and in general to derive spiritual profit. An interesting description is that of the panegris of St. Thekla of Seleucia in Asia Minor (mid-fifth century), and of St. Demetrios in Thessalonica, Greece (twelfth century). The Church Fathers and the canons of the Church accepted this type of gathering, which still takes place, but they strongly warn against the "commercialization of such festivals" (Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Panegyris of the Byzantine Saint," *The Byzantine Saint*, 1981).

The Orthodox Church gives a special place to the honor and veneration of the Virgin Mary the Mother of God, the Angels, and St. John the Baptist. Concerning the Virgin Mary, as Mother of God, suffice it to say that the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus (431 A.D.) officially adopted the term Theotokos in her honor. There is a period of fasting (the first 14 days of August) and numerous feasts and hymns dedicated to her. Her image is traditionally painted above the Sanctuary and called "more spacious than the heavens" (*Platytera*). The Virgin Mary, being the mother of God, earnestly intercedes for us, for she gave her flesh to Christ in all humility and obedience, so that the Word of God could become man.

Beheading of St. John the Baptist: The Orthodox believe the angels to be incorporeal beings, created by God before the actual creation. They are immortal, not by nature but by the grace of God, and are called "second lights," the first light being God Himself. Their nature was originally changeable, but after the Incarnation of Christ, the angels were considered as saved (*sesosmenoi*) and, therefore, unaltered. The Fathers believed that every believer has his own "**Guardian Angel**"; the angels pray for us, sing, and unceasingly glorify the Holy Trinity. They also serve as examples that people should follow. St. John the Baptist, whose icon is found on the Iconostasis of all Orthodox churches, was the prophet who baptized Christ and prepared His coming on earth; yet he suffered martyrdom for his holiness and obedience to the will of God. The Church has five feasts in honor of St. John the Baptist.

Canonization of Saints: The Orthodox Church does not follow any official procedure for the "recognition" of saints. Initially the Church accepted as saints those who had suffered martyrdom for Christ. The saints are saints thanks to the grace of God, and they do not need official ecclesiastical recognition. The Christian people, reading their lives and witnessing their performance of miracles, accept and honor them as saints. St. John Chrysostom, persecuted and exiled by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, was accepted as a saint of the Church by popular acclaim. St. Basil the Great was accepted immediately after his death as a saint of the Church by the people. Recently, in order to avoid abuses, the **Ecumenical Patriarchate** has issued special encyclical letters in which the Holy Synod "recognizes" or accepts the popular feelings about a saint. Such an example in our days is St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain (1955). Since the early Christian period there have been preserved many moving descriptions of the lives and martyrdoms and the miracles of the saints. They were (and still are) called *synaxaria* (from the Greek word *Synaxis*, meaning a meeting in the church for liturgical purposes, where the lives of the Saints were read). St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain composed *synaxaria* of the saints during the eighteenth century; and, most recently, Fr. George Poulos and Dr. Constantine Cavarnos have written lives of the saints in English.



John the Baptist ~ Ιωάννης ο Βαπτιστής ~ January 7 and August 29

Life of the Saint: The divine Baptist, the Prophet born of a Prophet, the seal of all the Prophets and beginning of the Apostles, the mediator between the Old and New Covenants, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the God-sent Messenger of the incarnate Messiah, the forerunner of Christ's coming into the world (Isaiah 40:3; Mal. 3: 1); who by many miracles was both conceived and born; who was filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb; who came forth like another Elias the Zealot, whose life in the wilderness and divine zeal for God's Law he imitated: this divine Prophet, after he had preached the baptism of repentance according to God's command; had taught men of low rank and high how they must order their lives; had admonished those whom he baptized and had filled them with the fear of God, teaching them that no one is able to escape the wrath to come if he do not works worthy of repentance; had, through such preaching, prepared their hearts to receive the evangelical teachings of the Savior; and finally, after he had pointed out to the people the very Savior, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world" (Luke 3:2-18; John 1: 29-36), after all this, John sealed with his own blood the truth of his words and was made a sacred victim for the divine Law at the hands of a transgressor.

This was Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee, the son of Herod the Great. This man had a lawful wife, the daughter of Arethas (or Aretas), the King of Arabia (that is, Arabia Petraea, which had the famous Nabatean stone city of Petra as its capital. This is the Aretas mentioned by Saint Paul in II Cor. 11:32). Without any cause, and against every commandment of the Law, he put her away and took to himself Herodias, the wife of his deceased brother Philip, to whom Herodias had borne a daughter, Salome. He would not desist from this unlawful union even when John, the preacher of repentance, the bold and austere accuser of the lawless, censured him and told him, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6: 18). Thus Herod, besides his other unholy acts, added yet this, that he apprehended John and shut him in prison; and perhaps he would have killed him straightway, had he not feared the people, who had extreme reverence for John.

Certainly, in the beginning, he himself had great reverence for this just and holy man. But finally, being pierced with the sting of a mad lust for the woman Herodias, he laid his defiled hands on the teacher of purity on the very day he was celebrating his birthday. When Salome, Herodias' daughter, had danced in order to please him and those who were supping with him, he promised her -- with an oath more foolish than any foolishness -- that he would give her anything she asked, even unto the half of his kingdom. And she, consulting with her mother, straightway asked for the head of John the Baptist in a charger. Hence this transgressor of the Law, preferring his lawless oath above the precepts of the Law, fulfilled this godless promise and filled his loathsome banquet with the blood of the Prophet. So, it was that that all-venerable head, revered by the Angels, was given as a prize for an abominable dance, and became the plaything of the dissolute daughter of a debauched mother. As for the body of the divine Baptist, it was taken up by his disciples and placed in a tomb (Mark 6: 21 - 29). The commemoration of **the beheading of John the Baptist** is observed with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom which is conducted in the morning and preceded by a Matins (Orthros) service. The day is also commemorated with **a strict fast** no matter what day of the week it may be (**August 29**).

Hymns of the Saint: Apolytikion (Second Tone): The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for you, O Forerunner; for you have proved to be truly even more venerable than the Prophets, since you were granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom they proclaimed. Wherefore, having contested for the truth, you rejoiced to announce the good tidings even to those in Hades: that God has appeared in the flesh, taking away the sin of the world and granting us great mercy.

Kontakion (Plagal of the 1st Tone): The glorious beheading of the Forerunner was a certain divine dispensation, that the coming of the Savior might also be preached to those in Hades. Let Herodias lament, then, that she demanded a wicked murder; for she loved not the Law of God, nor eternal life, but one false and fleeting. **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America**

The Major Namedays of our Church ~ Οι Μεγαλές Γιορτές

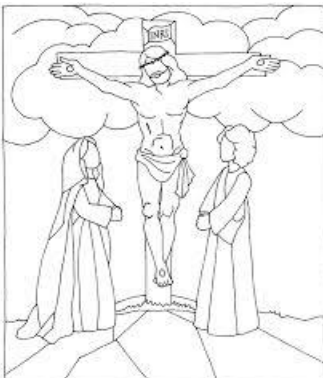
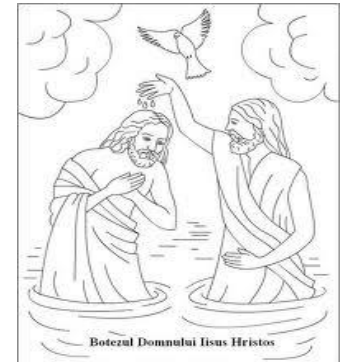
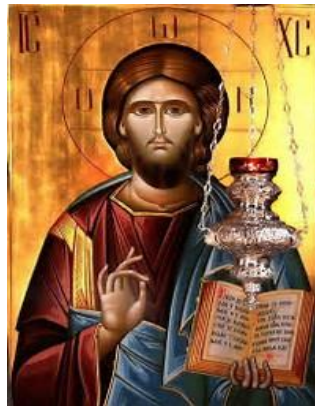
The ecclesiastical year, which according to Byzantine practice begins on the first of September, is divided between movable and immovable or fixed holy days. The movable holy days are determined by the date of Easter, the most important of all feast days, which is in a class by itself. The determination of the date of Easter was definitively regulated by the decision of the First Ecumenical Synod, held in **Nicaea (325)**. Next in importance to Easter are the "twelve great feasts," of which three are movable. Eight of these feasts are devoted to Christ and four to the Virgin Mary. There are also a number of feast days of varying importance, most of which commemorate the more popular saints.

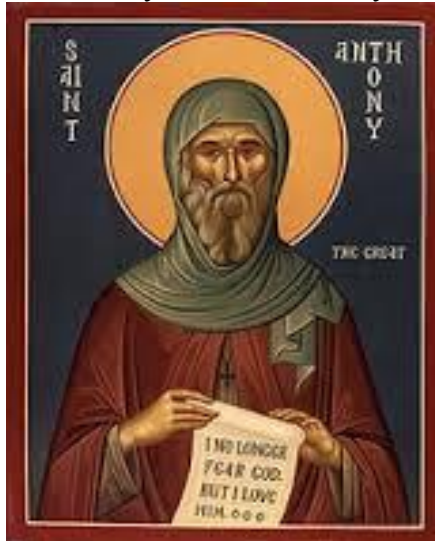
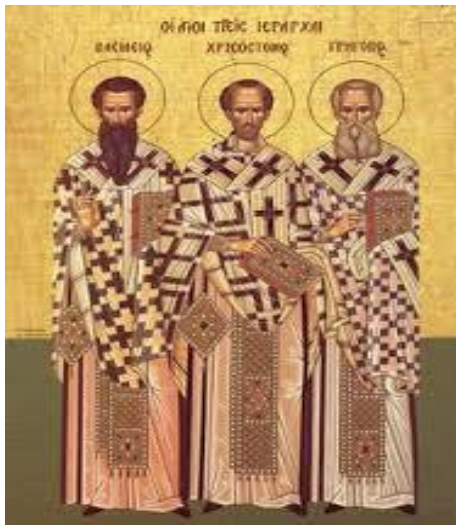
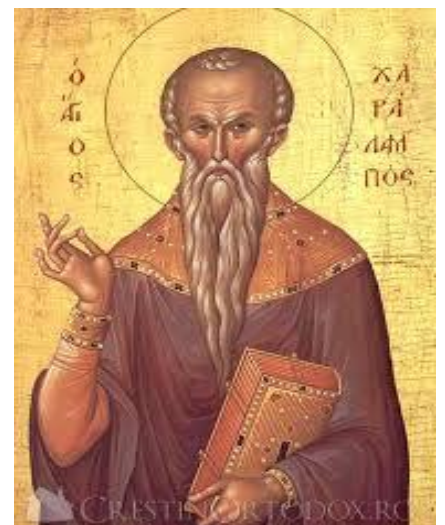
Here are the 12 major Feasts of our Church

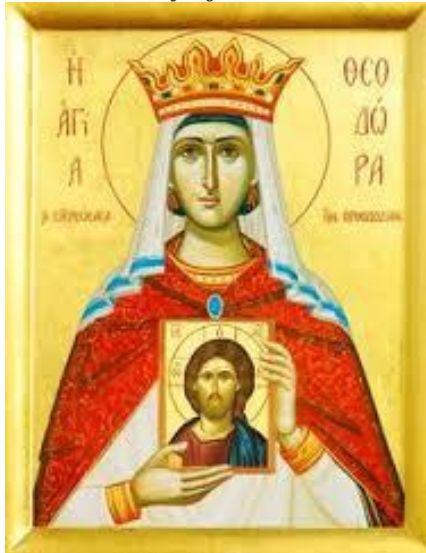
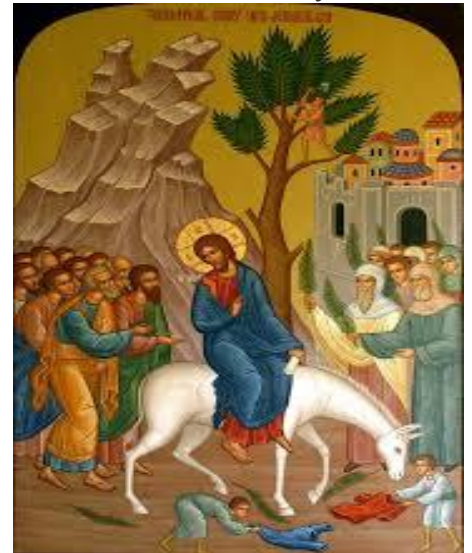
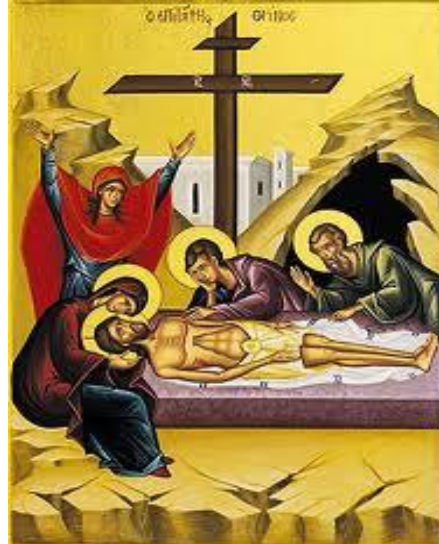
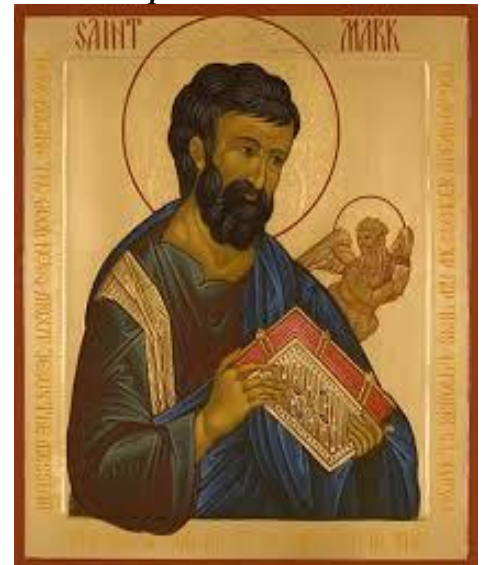
Sept. 8: Nativity of the Theotokos
December 25: Nativity of Jesus
March 25: Annunciation
Pentecost: Fifty Days after Easter

September 14: Elevation of the Holy Cross
January 6: Epiphany (The Baptism of Christ)
Palm Sunday: Sunday before Easter – Pascha
August 6: Transfiguration of our Lord

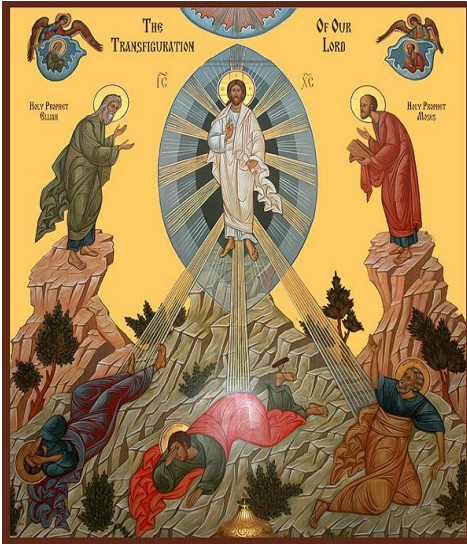
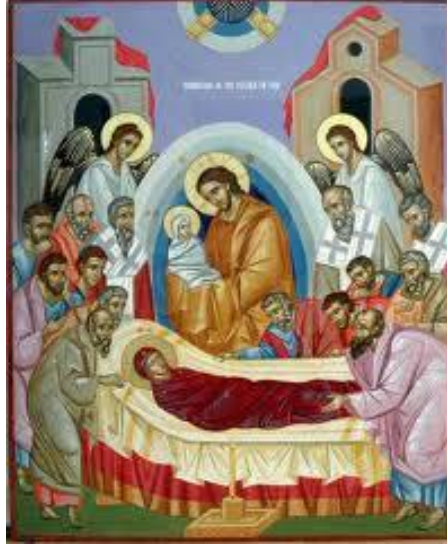
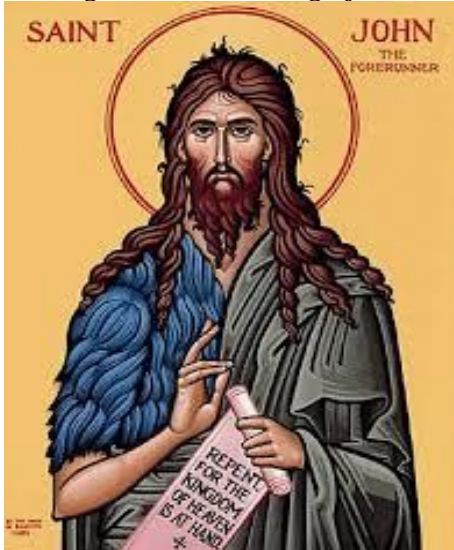
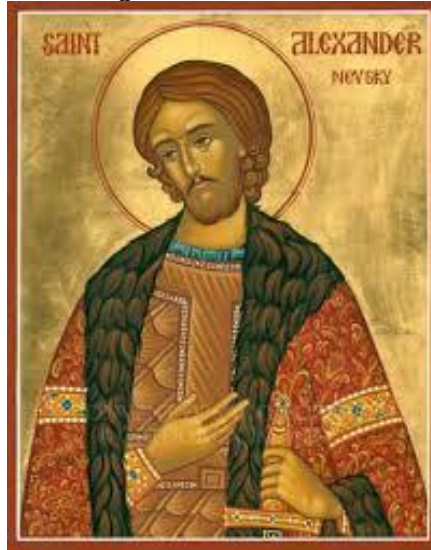
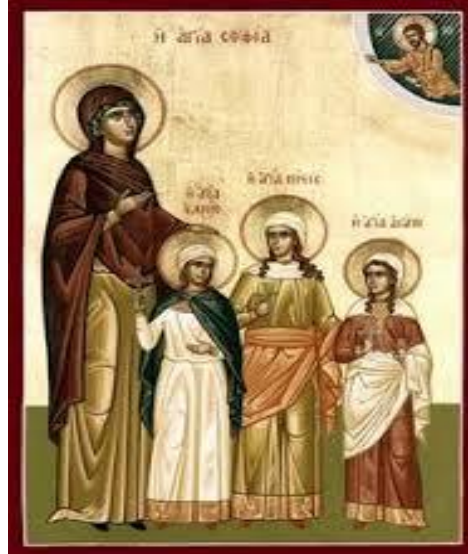
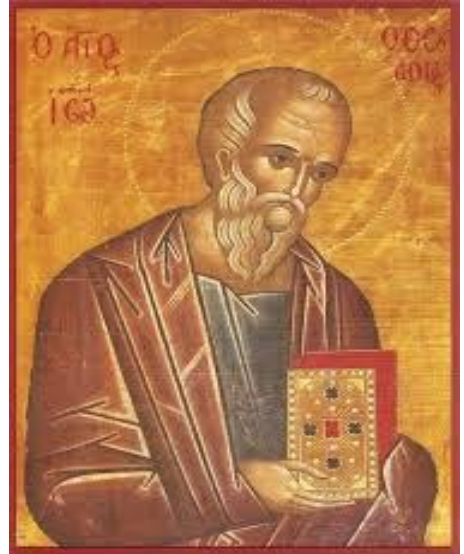
Nov. 21: Presentation of the Theotokos
February 2: Presentation of the Lord
Ascension of the Lord: 40 Days after Easter
August 15: Dormition of the Theotokos

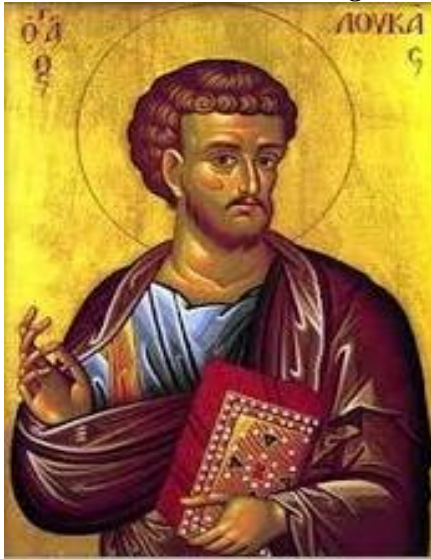
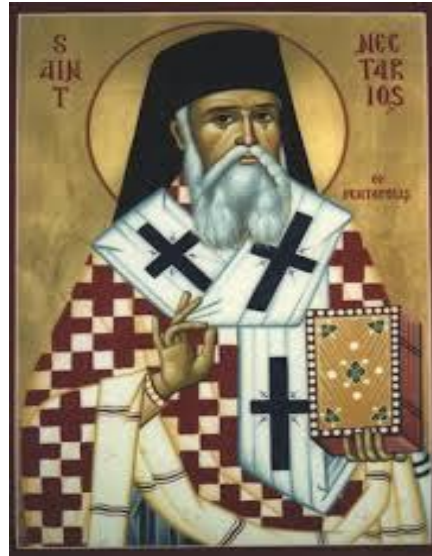
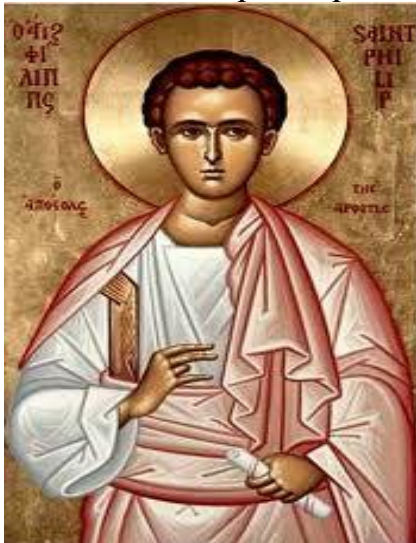
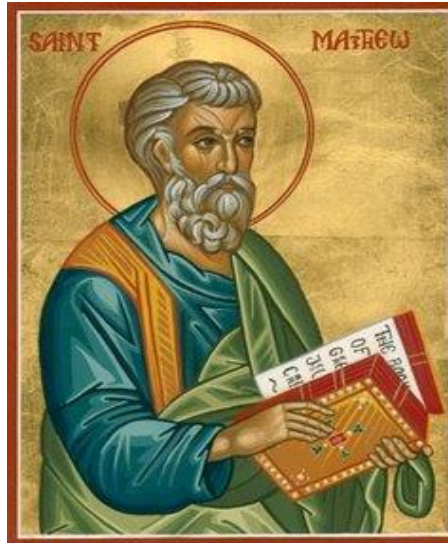


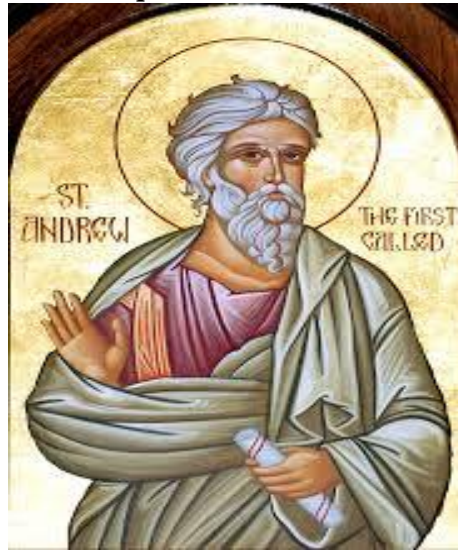
January 1st ~ St. Basil*January 6th ~ Epiphany**Jan. 7th ~ John the Baptist**January 17 ~ St. Anthony**Jan. 18 ~ St. Athanasios**Jan. 25 ~ St. John the Theologian**Jan. 30th ~ The 3 Hierarchs**F. 2 ~ Presentation of our Lord**Febr. 10 ~ St. Haralambos*

Saturday of Lent / Souls*March 25 ~ Annunciation**Palm Sunday**Holy Thursday**Holy Friday**Easter ~ Πάσχα**Sunday after Easter**April 23 ~ St. George**April 25 ~ St. Mark*

May 5 ~ St. Irene*M. 21 ~ St. Constantine & Helen**40 Days after Easter ~ Ascension**50 Days after Easter ~ Pentecost**June 29 ~ St. Peter & Paul**June 30 ~ Holy Apostles**July 20 ~ Prophet Elijah Ηλίας**July 26 ~ St. Paraskevi**July 27 ~ St. Panteleimon*

Aug. 6 ~ The Transfiguration*Aug. 15 ~ The Dormition**August 27 ~ St. Fanourios**Aug. 29 ~ Beheading of John**Aug 30 ~ St. Alexander**Sep. 8 ~ Nativity of Theotokos**Sept. 14 ~ Exaltation Holy Cross**S. 17 ~ St. Sophia Hope Love**S.26 ~ Falling asleep John Theologian*

Oct. 18 ~ St. Luke Evangelist*Oct. 26 ~ St. Demetrios**N. 1 ~ St. Kosmas & Damianos**N. 8 ~ Synaxis of Archangels**Nov. 9 ~ St. Nektarios**N. 13 ~ St. John Chrysostom**Nov. 14~ St. Philip the Apostle**Nov. 16 ~ St. Mathew**N. 21 ~ Entrance of Theotokos*

Nov. 25 ~ St. Katherine*N. 30 ~ Apostle Andrew 1st called**Dec. 4 ~ St. Barbara**Dec. 6 ~ St. Nicholas**Dec. 12 ~ St. Spyridon**Dec. 15 ~ St. Eleftherios**Dec. 25 ~ The Holy Nativity**D. 27 ~ St. Stephen the 1st Martyr*

Orthodox Church Etiquette ~ Εθιμοτυπία



The 4th Commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it Holy!
On Sunday ~ “The Lord’s Day” ~ nothing else is more important than to come to Church!

In the Orthodox Church there are numerous Customs and Traditions that form important elements of our Worship. Some of these Customs are universal to the Church, others may vary from parish to parish, or are influenced by Cultural Traditions.

The Proper Way to Greet a Bishop or a Priest

We always respectfully stand when a Clergyman enters a room. The proper way to greet a Bishop or a Priest is to ask for His blessing, “*Your Blessing = Evlogite, Despota or Father*” and kiss (We do not Shake) His Right Hand.

Entering the Church: The Orthodox Divine Liturgy begins when the Priest chants, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” It is always appropriate to arrive in a timely manner, before the service begins. The Sunday Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 a.m. (Weekdays at 9:30 a.m.). Arriving late is always inappropriate. It is inconsiderate to the rest of the faithful and, causes distraction to the celebrant. The same can be said for leaving services early. Experience testifies that coming to Church late is more a matter of “Habit” than circumstance. Those who arrive late to the Liturgy (most especially after the Epistle and Gospel) should not partake of the Holy Eucharist!

Lighting Candles: When an Orthodox Christian enters the Narthex of the Church, he/she makes the Sign of the Cross, an offering for a candle, venerates (not Worships) all the icons and lights the candle while saying a prayer, “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, forgive me and have mercy on me, a sinner*” and some more prayers of your concern. Candles are lit as an expression of our belief, that Jesus Christ is the “Light of the World” and the “Flame of the Holy Spirit”. A candle may be lit for our Health and Wellbeing; for our family members, relatives and friends, or in Memory of a departed loved one.



Venerating Icons: The Orthodox Church teaches that it is proper to venerate (not worship) the Holy Icons as pronounced by the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicea, in 787 A.D. We venerate them, because we admire those portrayed in them, as they are the best examples for us to follow. Don’t you hug and kiss a picture of your loved ones? The Saints are an extension of our family. All the *Saints are Heroes of Christianity, and they deserve our utmost Love, Admiration and Respect!* In the Orthodox Church, we Worship only “God” = “The Holy Trinity” = “The Father, The Son

and The Holy Spirit” and nothing else! The proper way to venerate an icon, is to kiss either the Hands or Feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ or of the Saint depicted in the icon, or the Hand cross (that a Saint is holding) or the Gospel book. **Please clean up your Lipstick** after kissing the icons.

Church Attire: Coming to Church involves preparation of oneself for a serious and sacred encounter and is not a casual experience! We dress accordingly out of love and respect for our Lord, who we meet in a mystical manner in Church each time we celebrate the Divine Services. We should offer Christ our “Sunday Best”, not our everyday or common wear and, we should dress modestly, not in an ostentatious way that would bring attention to ourselves.

Photography in Church

Whenever photographs are taken during a service in an Orthodox Church (Weddings, Baptisms, etc.), photographers must stand in one particular place, not moving hurriedly and disrespectfully from place to place. Also, they should be reminded that when taking pictures and videos, they must never stand in front of the Holy Altar.

Standing vs. Sitting

It is the custom of Orthodox Christians to stand throughout the services of the Church. If we need to sit during the Divine Liturgy, remember the General Rule is to stand at these times: When the Liturgy begins; when the Priest is outside the Holy Altar, for example, Censing the icons and the faithful or, giving a Blessing; during the Small and Great Entrances; during the Gospel reading; during the recitation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer; at the Anaphora; for Holy Communion; and, at the final Blessing. At these times there should be No movement in the Church. One basic Rule: *"We Stop, We Wait, and We Stand Reverently"*. Whenever a Hierarch is visiting our parish, out of respect follow His example and stand and sit whenever He does.

Bowing

Orthodox Christians bow when they hear the names of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Theotokos mentioned. We also bow every time the Priest gives a blessing & when he asks forgiveness before the Great Entrance and before Holy Communion. It is traditional for the Orthodox faithful to bow respectfully and cross themselves when they enter or leave the Church, when they pass in front of the Holy Altar & when they pray before the icons.

Kneeling

In the Orthodox Church there are times when kneeling signals an attitude of a piety during the Liturgy and other services. The most important occasion is at the Consecration of the Holy Gifts (at this moment No one moves around). However, kneeling is prohibited during the Paschal season, from Pascha to Pentecost, in honor of the Resurrection.

Fellowship Hour

When one of the Ministries sponsors an event or the Coffee Hour on a particular Sunday, they must prepare everything during Matins (before the Holy Liturgy begins). Following the thanksgiving prayer after Holy Communion, they may proceed to the hall to complete arrangements for greeting the parishioners.

NO ONE is allowed to loiter in the Fellowship Hall during the Divine Liturgy!

Turn off your Phone

Please, remember to turn off your Cellphone and/or Pager during the celebration of all Divine Services; Texting is also prohibited. Refrain from Reserving Seats for family or friends who arrive late to our Services. Make room for all that attend the Services, especially Visitors, so that they may feel welcome.



Crossing One's Legs

We should not cross our legs when sitting in church; when approaching for Holy Communion our hands should not be in our pockets. It is considered irreverent and very disrespectful. The rule is, cross yourself with your fingers and hands, but do not cross your legs! Please, no eyeglasses on top of the head (we are in the House of God not a classroom). Coats and other outerwear should be placed behind us on the pews ~ never hanging out on the sides (aisles).

Talking During Church

Refrain from socializing during Divine Services. We should save our greetings and conversations with fellow parishioners, relatives and friends for the Fellowship Hour. No Conversation is allowed in Church at any time during the Divine Liturgy. Besides being disrespectful to God, it is very distracting for others, who are striving to pray. During the Services we must focus on God and cultivating through prayer and worship our relationship with Him.

We come to Church to Greet and Glorify God with our Prayers and Worship, not to distract others.

In and Out during the Divine Liturgy

When entering the Church late we must follow these rules: Not during Readings, Sermons, or Entrances. On some Sundays, it almost seems as though we have a revolving door in the back of the Church, used by both children and Adults. It is unacceptable for anyone to be in the fellowship hall, a classroom, administrative office, or outside the Church *at any time* during the Divine Liturgy or other services. Taking restless little ones out is a different matter. We take a disruptive child out quickly and quietly, just long enough to settle him/her down, then we return to the Liturgy and continue our prayers. Remember especially: all who are preparing to partake of Holy Communion should neither drink or eat anything until after Communion (exceptions are made only for the ailing). We should try to avoid using the center aisle when required to leave prior to the conclusion of services.

Children in Church

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven’”. (Matt. 19:14). Our Christian Orthodox Church Baptizes and Chrismates children at a young age, making them full members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Parents should take the time to instruct their children (when they reach the age of understanding) regarding respectful and reverent behavior in church. Allowing a child to run or play in the aisles is inappropriate. In addition, toys are better left at home. Children should be encouraged to use the restroom before Church begins. Should a young child need a snack, please clear away leftovers, especially crumbs, before leaving church. The child should not have anything in his/her mouth when coming forward to receive Holy Communion. Two things to Remember: chewing gum in Church at any time is strictly forbidden and, the small book case in front of you is not a trash can!

When Should One Receive Holy Communion

As frequently as possible (if you are Married, your marriage must be blessed by the Church). Just as it is necessary to nourish our bodies with material food, so also it is necessary to nourish our souls with spiritual food. Our Divine Savior so loved us that He gave Himself in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist; He gave us His Own Body and Blood as food for our souls. Therefore, this is the greatest of our responsibilities: a) Preparation to receive Holy Communion includes fasting, but fasting not only from what we put in, but what comes out of our mouth? Without the one (fasting) we cannot control the other. b) Also, one should make serious preparation for the Holy Sacrament of Confession. Forgiveness of sin is a prerequisite for worthy participation in this great Mystery. And, c) an attentive reading of the Communion prayers prior to approaching the Holy Chalice. Ladies should remove lipstick before receiving Communion. On Sundays when we are to receive His Precious Gifts, we should not eat or drink anything, from the moment we arise from bed until after we receive Communion. The only exceptions to this rule are small children and individuals who must take medications. When the Priest chants: “The Holies are for the Holy”, this is an invitation to us all. Please allow Godparents to bring newly baptized children first, followed by Sunday School students and their Teachers. All others who are prepared to partake may then approach the Holy Chalice with Humility, Respect and Love for everyone!

Andithoron ~ The Blessed Bread

When receiving Andithoron from the Priest it is customary to kiss his hand. We put both our hands together in the form of a cross and cup them so that we can catch all the particles. If there is leftover Andithoron, it can be given to the faithful, many of whom take it home and eat it on a daily basis before breakfast. Please, make certain children consume all their Andithoron, not leaving it on the pew or other inappropriate places.

Leaving Prior to the Dismissal

It is the Responsibility of us all to leave everything in order: First, straighten up all the Books in front of you and, if anything is out of place, fix it! This is God’s House and we should care for it even better than our own. The respectful protocol is to leave the Church only after the final blessing and, after receiving Andithoron from the Priest. If you must leave before the Prayers of Thanksgiving, please exit the Church quietly, so as not to disrupt those remaining for the completion of the service. After exiting, it is customary to face the doors of the Church, Bow and make the Sign of the Cross before walking away.

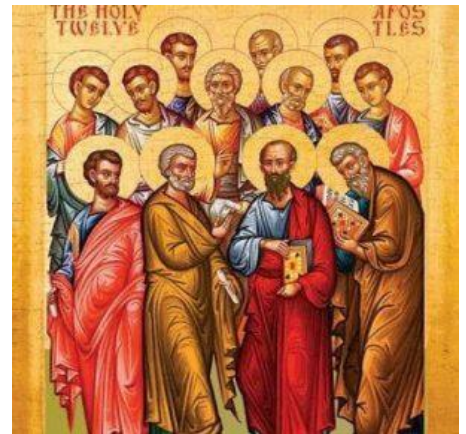
The Twelve Apostles ~ Our Patron Saints

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The 12 Disciples/Apostles of Jesus were the foundation stones of His church, several even wrote portions of the Bible. In Revelation 21:14 we are told that the 12 foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem will have in them the names of the twelve disciples/apostles. It is evident, therefore, that God attaches great importance to these 12 men. It is believed that Christ selected only 12 which was the number of the 12 sons of Jacob who later became the leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel. After Pentecost, Christ's 12 disciples became the leaders of the "new Israel." The number 12 was considered so important that very shortly after the falling of Judas Iscariot, the remaining 11 voted in a new Apostle by the name Matthias, so that there would be 12 once again.

These Disciples followed Christ as He traveled and were eye witnesses to His numerous wonders. After the Ascension of Jesus back to heaven they continued His work of redeeming mankind from sin. In fact, at the Ascension Jesus commanded the apostles to go out and make disciples of all nations through baptism and to teach nations all that they had observed and all that He commanded of them. He enabled them to succeed in that he bestowed the Holy Spirit upon them (at Pentecost) as they traveled to far away lands.

The authority of the Apostles in the Church was unquestionable from the very beginning. Their powers were derived from Christ Himself. They preached boldly and acted as His representatives, teaching and speaking "in the Holy Spirit." The place of honor accorded to them by the Church has no equal except for that of the Theotokos. They each have their own separate date of commemoration and they have a joint commemoration on **June 30th**, a feast whose importance is shown by the fact that it is preceded by a period of fasting.



The 12 apostles of Jesus are: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Nathanael or Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Less, Simon the Zealot, Thaddeus or Jude, and Judas Iscariot. The Bible books of Matthew, Mark and Luke list the names of the 12 apostles.

Jesus Christ selected 12 men from his early followers to become his disciples, and eventually the apostles. They were instructed by Jesus to spread the message of the gospel and they became the pioneers of the New Testament church. The men Jesus chose were not scholars, rabbis or religious people, but just regular people.

The Apostle Peter was a leader of the disciples; whenever they are listed, his name is first. **Andrew** was Peter's brother. **James** was the Apostle John's brother. **Peter, James and John** made up Jesus' inner circle. The least-known apostles are **James the Less, Nathanael** or Bartholomew, **Simon the Zealot & Thaddeus** or Jude. **Judas Iscariot** is well known as the apostle who betrayed Jesus Christ with a kiss. The name Judas is now synonymous with traitor. Judas led the temple guard to Jesus in Gethsamane & identified him to the guards by kissing him on the cheek. This led to the crucifixion of Jesus. Judas was paid 30 silver pieces for his betrayal.

Let us rejoice in the ministry of these 12 great men that began the spread of Christianity to the far corners of the earth. Let us remember their sacrifice by our own sacrifice and discipline during the preparatory days ahead in which we are called upon to focus on their commitment and devotion to the Lord's commandments.

Apolytikion of Synaxis of the 12 Apostles

O Holy Apostles of Christ, intercede to our merciful God, that He may grant us remission of our sins.

Kontakion of Synaxis of the 12 Apostles: O Lord, receive the steadfast and divinely voiced Preachers, the pinnacle of Your disciples, unto their rest and the enjoyment of Your blessings. You received, above every offering, their labors and their life. You alone know what the heart holds.

The Twelve Apostles ~ Οι Δώδεκα Αποστολοι

The Chosen Originators

Jesus Christ endowed His Church with Himself and His divine Message. He handed it down to His disciples, who constituted His Church. Jesus Christ selected from among them Twelve Apostles to carry on with authority His Gospel, and He sent them to preach it and to baptize converts all over the world:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world "Matt. 28: 19-20"



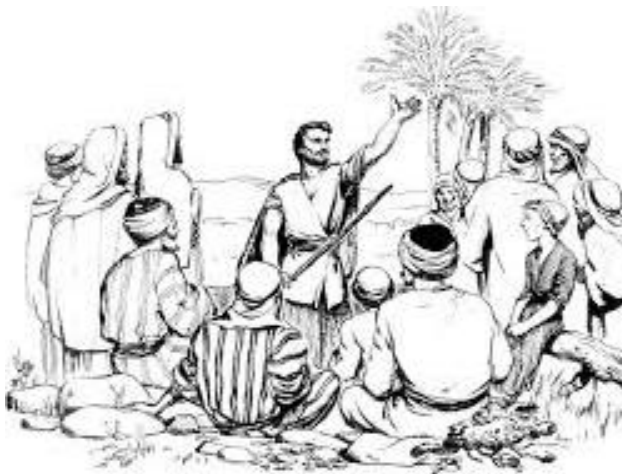
The Apostles kept their mission with integrity and faithfulness. They dedicated their lives to it; they injected the new faith in the 'true God into society to heal its infirmities

The Apostles organized the converts into groups called Churches. To these Churches the Apostles handed down the treasure of the new Gospel, their eyewitness account of the Word as they actually saw it take place, preserving it forever through the

Church. This is the Gospel - the Tradition in the broad sense of the word - which we cherish today. Taking the Truth from the Apostles, the Orthodox Church is an "Apostolic" Church; it has its roots in the apostolic ministry and succession, the apostolic faith and creed, and the apostolic word and scriptures by which the Apostles and their immediate successors defended the Orthodox Faith and kept it undefiled against heresies and persecutions.



But who are these blessed Apostles who were chosen to hand down the new Gospel and establish the Church to which we belong today? Who empowered them to preach the Gospel and disregard all the threats which endangered and, in the end, took their lives? Who are these mighty personalities who were the instrumental figures behind the worldwide movement which has changed the pace of life of men thereafter?



Sometimes the voice of the past is the clearest and most vivid guide for the minds and hearts of men of today, taking them out of the confused values of this life. Sometimes the lives and deeds of men of the past are unforgettable and stand as lightposts to illuminate the road for a future achievement. They stand as unshakable rocks on which the waves of disappointment of life lose their force and disappear. The Apostles of Christ are both the rocks and the lightposts for our life. To them, our ancestors in the Christian heritage and faith, this pamphlet is humbly dedicated, that both the writer and the reader might imitate their devotion and work and appreciate their convictions in Christ, "in Whom they lived and moved and had their being" (Acts 17: 28).

Origin and Definition

The only sources on the subject of the Twelve Apostles are the four Gospels and the first chapter of the Acts, describing the relationship between Jesus and His Apostles during His ministry on earth. Although the Apostles are the ultimate authors of the Gospels they do not appear prominently in them; they are never magnified in them. The Gospels refer to them only because Jesus Himself was occupied with them, teaching and training



them to understand His origin and mission, in order to transmit to others correctly His personality, His Gospel and His deeds.

Whenever they appeared later in their ministry, they spoke with authority and determination on behalf of the Lord Who sent them to present His Gospel to the world. They never usurp or appropriate for themselves the new teachings. It is true that the Gospel took some human aspects of their individual personalities. But these aspects were such that they showed their understanding and limitation of the words and deeds of their Lord; a reflection of the good news in their

own simple and humble life. The Apostles are both the preachers and the examples of the New Creation.

The Greek word "apostle" conveys to us the meaning of messenger, delegate, envoy or collector of tribute paid to the temple service. In the Gospels the Twelve were simply to be Christ's envoys. As Jesus was sent by His Father, so the Apostles were sent by Jesus. Jesus Christ used contemporary terms for "apostle" and gave it His own content and interpretation stressing the idea of being "sent," which means that an Apostle is a man with a mission throughout his entire life. Jesus Christ Himself gave the title "Apostle" to the Twelve in Luke 6:13 and Mark 3:14, "whom he also named apostles." The term "apostle" (*"apostolos"* in Greek; a derivative from *"apostellein"*, meaning "to send") signifies a special mission. An apostle is the commissioner of the person who sent him. Therefore, the term apostle is more definite than the term messenger (in Greek *"angelos"*). The apostle does not merely transmit a message, but he works to put it into practice among the recipients, both to let them understand it aright and to apply its contents in their faith and life.

Jesus "Called" His Apostles ~ The First Approach

Some of the Twelve Apostles were disciples of the Forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist. They were acquainted with the Scripture and the expectations of their master. When John the Baptist was "looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God'" (John 1:36). Andrew, one of John's disciples, with another, "heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (v. 37). They followed him without asking! Thus, the Apostolic Church began. They took of their own to find out-to discover the truth for themselves. They persisted, and "came and saw where he (Jesus) dwelt, and abode with him that day".

They had a long audience with Jesus. What did they discuss? We do not know. What we do know is that they came out of this sanctuary with, a definite faith in Him. He was the One they were expecting. Andrew felt the impulse to express his belief to others. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah", which means Christ, and "he brought him to Jesus" (v. 42). St. Andrew's act stands as an example for every disciple and apostle thereafter. First, the pure desire to seek the Truth; second, acquaintance with revelation and obedience to it; third, acceptance and conviction of the Truth, and then a full confession and proclamation of the faith. These acts make the Church a growing and moving entity. After Andrew and Peter and John, "one of the two", Jesus found Phillip in Galilee, and called him to His crew; Phillip not only followed Him, but stated his conviction to Nathaniel, we have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote ... come and see" (John 1:45, 46), and Nathaniel saw Him and believed in Him: "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel," he exclaimed in words to be echoed by millions in the generations to come. One day passed and five promising people were His devoted companions. Christ was no longer alone - except at His agony, and on the Cross.

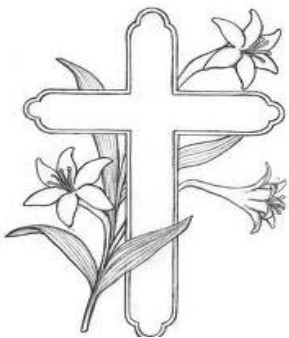
Demand and Dedication

After the acquaintance of Jesus with His first disciples both in Judea and in Galilee, a recess took place. The center of His ministry had to be selected. After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, Jesus stated in Galilee that the city of Capernaum would be the center of His expedient strategy. The inhabitants of that city were Jewish people, and its position was more suitable to command Galilee.

Walking along the shore of the "sea of Galilee", which actually is a lake, Jesus met again the two brothers, Simon and Andrew, who were casting their nets. He commanded them now to follow Him and become fishers of men. At the same time and place Jesus found James and his brother John, fishers at the shore of the sea of Galilee. He called them to follow Him. All obeyed instantly (Mark 1:16-20). Jesus called Matthew, Levi, in the same way (Mark 2:16; Matt. 9:9) in Capernaum. He was a collector of taxes, probably of the customhouse of this city. Matthew left this position, bade farewell to his fellow officials and followed the Lord. What a challenge for us today - for the merchants and the white-collar workers! They left work and home, pleasures and habits; they discarded the dreams of their youth and on the ruins built firmly a new fortress of defense and appeal. They demonstrated that an immutable conviction in the living God can move mountains.

What was the intention for calling these disciples? They were to capture men instead of fish, once they had passed through a period of training. He did not send them immediately on a special mission. The disciples were to take intensive training in divine attitudes, in the new interpretation of the Scriptures and in obedience to the Lord. They were invited to meet the new standards of moral life and to grow in courage to spread the Gospel and nourish its growth in mankind. The loyal Eleven have proven themselves worthy of the Mission. They have changed the orbit of the world in the name of Jesus.

The Choice and Installation



Jesus attracted many disciples. He knew them all, but He also knew that not all would be capable of being fishers of men. He had determined to make a formal selection of a definite number from the body of His disciples (Mk. 3:13; Lk. 6:13). It was one of the crucial moments for the destiny of His mission. Even for human activities the founders of an organization look carefully for co-workers of integrity and the capability to promote their ideals. The farsightedness of leadership is in being able to select capable men to accomplish the mission, rather than attempting the work alone, regardless of the wonders one man may be capable of. A good leader is not afraid of co-workers, but is very careful in selecting them. Jesus Christ spent one night praying to His Father for the right choice (Lk. 6:12). He sought specific guidance in this critical hour of His life. His choice would affect the future mission, and the world.

For this reason: "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples. And of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles: Simon (whom he also named Peter) and Andrew, his brother; James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon called Zelotes, Judas the brother of James and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor" Lk. 6:12-16.

In the New Testament there are four lists of the Apostles (Matt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:14-16, Acts). The arrangement of names in these lists are made in three steps, with changes occurring in each step. Peter appears first and Judas last. There is no primacy of Peter in the sense of jurisdiction or authority over his fellow Apostles. Such an authority Peter never received and never exercised. "His position is that of the foremost among equals; a position due not to any formal or official appointment, but to the ardor and force of his nature." (Hastings) What was our Lord's aim in selecting His special group? St. Mark states that the purpose was that they might be with Him so He might send them forth to proclaim the approach of the Kingdom of God, and so He could endow them with the power to heal and to exercise. St. Mark (3:14,15) records:

"He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach and to have power to heal sickness and to cast out devils." But the Lord's aim was more than that. It is described by Him on the eve of His death. He expected them to be His envoys on earth. Their supreme duty was to bear witness to Him; to teach the world how He lived, what He said, what He wrought. Jesus prayed for them: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 1 7, 18).



Apostles' Training

The Apostles were God-fearing people. Only a religious tie bound them to Jesus. Their integrity, justice and mercy cannot be denied. They were diligent, honest and pious people, and above all dedicated to the Lord and to His command. They were not men of high education, but neither were they illiterate. Most of them spoke Aramaic and Greek. They were educated in the knowledge of God in synagogues, and they managed a discipline of high standards.

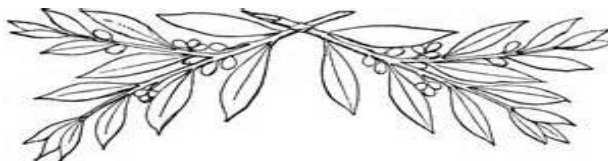
Four of them were fishermen, one was a collector of taxes and the rest belonged to the general working classes. They were not of rank or distinction. They worked to sustain themselves. The Gospels do not present them as men of genius, or original thinkers. All of them were young men about the same age as our Lord or younger. They were men of different background, temperament and habits. They had in common their devotion to Jesus and their pious life. They came together under the same roof to learn and to obey.

The Apostles accompanied the Lord from place to place. They heard all His preaching and admonition, His private advice to the people and His ambitions. They witnessed the healing of people and learned the causes of sickness and the power of the evil spirits. They learned not only in the clinic of preaching and pastoral work. The Twelve formed a Jesus Christ was the head. They had a common purse and one was appointed treasurer. The sources of their supplies came from their own property and gifts, especially the generosity of several women who accompanied them on some of their journeys (Lk. 8:2-3).

They were together for living and training. First of all they were training in the personality of Jesus. His presence was an education in itself. His acts and words in everyday life, in dealing with the depressed and humble, meeting the sinners, protecting the underprivileged and encouraging people of the rank a file - all these things were an education to them. They saw Him preaching and praying, healing infirmities and restoring broken hearts. Again, they were aware of the Master's acts against dry customs and aware of the Sabbath, circumcision, foods and times of prayer. They learned much from the Sermon on the Mount, from the parables and statements such as, "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

A second phase of their Apostle's training involved the miracles performed by Jesus. The Messiah was expected to work miracles, but the actual performance of the miracles kept the Apostles astounded. The nature of these works was beyond explanation then and still is today. The Apostles bore witness to many miracles - the catch of fish (Lk. 3:1-7), the stilling of the storm (Mk. 4:39), walking on the sea (John 6:16) and many others. They learned, too, that the miracles were made not only for the sake of the miracles, but also as a sign of conviction and faith, and a lesson of moral uprightness, as in the case of the fig tree.

Finally, the Apostles were trained in Jesus' teaching. For them He was the Teacher. He spoke with confidence.



Christ "Sent" His Apostles

The Apostles spent less than three years with their Master. He called them "that they might be with Him" (Mk. 3:14) to be trained and educated, and then "that He might send them forth to preach" the Gospel and minister unto the people. Their work between these two stages is in an agreement. It has been changed only in the stages of advancement. But what a change! From pupils they became teachers; from followers of Christ, they became leaders, bringing people to Christ. They started as disciples and in three years advanced as Apostles. Their visible Guide, their Lord, became the Invisible One, "The Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 1:6, 7), always present as He was before.

Jesus Christ selected them after devoting one night in prayer for their ministry. After their training, Jesus prayed for them and their future, even up to a few moments before His arrest. The prayer was recorded by one of His Apostles. He empowered them with the Holy Spirit on the day of the Pentecost The mighty Spirit as "tongues of fire" descended on the Apostles and transfigured their doubts and fears and attitudes in such a marvelous way that they became heralds of the new mission.

Their chief duty was to bear witness to the Savior Jesus Christ, His life, teaching, and atoning work, and especially to bear witness to Christ's resurrection, "a witness to his resurrection", "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead." "And with great power the Apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 1:22; 4:2,33).

The influence of their witness and testimony was enormous. They simply stated what they knew. There was no doubt in their minds as to the certainty of their knowledge. St. John, in finishing his Gospel, sealed it thus: "This is the disciple who bears witness to these things" (21:24); and in starting his first Epistle he states firmly:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" 1 John 1:1-3.

The ministry of the Apostles was guided and blessed, and they were aware of this. They felt the presence of Christ and the companionship of the Holy Spirit in every step and turn of their work. Also, they were aware of their appointment. They were not presenting themselves, but were representing the Lord as Prophet, Priest and King, with authority and effectiveness. They appointed their successors and thus established the special priesthood of the Church. In the Orthodox Church there is no ordination of deacon, priest and bishop without referring to the Apostles through the lists of names of predecessors. Thus, the Apostolic succession is very important not only for the teaching of the Church, but also for its sanctification. It is accepted in the Orthodox Church that the bishops of the Church are the successors to the Apostles.

The Orthodox Church upholds the Creed in which, for centuries, the beliefs of the Orthodox Faith have been stated. In the ninth article of the Creed the Church is defined as "one, holy, catholic and apostolic." One for its unique Lord; holy for its sanctification; catholic as preserving for all ("*katholou*") the whole truth, and apostolic through its establishment by the Apostles, whereby Scripture and Tradition refers to the Apostles and, through them, to Christ. The Church is the bulwark of the Truth because the Apostles who established the Church trained and appointed its "*Proestos*" (religious leaders) and bequeathed to it the oral and written teachings. The Apostles exercised in worship and prayer, in preaching and pastoral work, the New Testament of the Lord. By them and through them the believers of the Church, in the past and the present, rejoice in learning the atoning truth and will of the living God.

The personal life of the Apostles is not very well known. For some of them we know nothing except names. But their work remains for generations to come. It was their intention to carry on the Lord's work and will, rather than their own. From the fruits of their work we visualize their character and intentions.



Short Biographies of the Twelve Apostles



1. Simon, Peter: Born in Bethsaida in Galilee, he was a fisherman and was named by Jesus Christ "Cephas" (in Greek, *Peter*), and called to be a fisher of men, an Apostle. In all lists of the Twelve he is named first, and belonged to the inner group of Apostles. He was present at the Transfiguration and at the Agony of Christ. When he professed his belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord promised that "Thou art Peter and on this rock will I build My Church", meaning on the rock of faith in the Savior. Peter's confession of faith was soon followed by a sharp rebuke, from

the Lord. Peter said that he would never leave his Lord, and was answered by the prediction of his triple denial, which later took place. Later, Peter made reparation for his triple denial by a triple protestation of love.

After the Ascension, Peter took the leadership of the Apostles. He spoke on the day of Pentecost and was the first to perform a miracle in the name of Jesus. He accepted Cornelius for baptism and thus opened the Church to the Gentiles. His authority is evident at the Apostles' Council at Jerusalem, although Paul rebuked him for giving in to the demands of the Jewish Christians to disassociate himself from the Gentiles. Peter is the founder of the Church in Antioch. He probably went to Rome and was crucified head downward during the reign of Nero (54-68).

2. Andrew: A disciple of John the Baptist, Andrew heard him refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Andrew asked for an audience and saw Jesus for a day, then proclaimed, "We have found the Messiah," in itself a creed and confession for the Christian faith. He brought his brother, Simon-Peter, to Christ. Although not one of the inner circle, he played the first role in several events which are recorded. Eusebius in his Church History states that Andrew later went to Scythia. According to tradition he was martyred at Patras, Greece, crucified on an X-shaped cross, which since has become known as St. Andrew's Cross. He is regarded as being connected with the writing of St. John's Gospel. According to tradition, he is the founder of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

3. James (The Greater): He was the son of Zebedee. He, with his elder brother John and with Peter, constituted the privileged group - the inner circle of the disciples. James was present at the Transfiguration and the Agony in Gethsemane. His zeal was ardent and he and his brother were named by the Lord "Boanerges", which means "sons of thunder". James was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in A. D. 44, the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom. A theory that he preached in Spain is counter to the tradition of the Church and the Epistle to the Romans, 15:20 and 24, which concur that he did not leave Jerusalem. According to an old Spanish tradition, the body of St. James was transferred to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, where St. James was one of the most revered Spanish saints during the Middle Ages.

4. John: He was one of the inner circle with Peter and James. The son of Zebedee, he and his brother James were named the "sons of thunder". John is the author of the fourth Gospel, the Book of Revelation and three Catholic Epistles. He was imprisoned with Peter and later appeared in the Sanhedrin. John also was sent with Peter to Samaria, where they prayed that the converts might receive the Holy Spirit. In Jerusalem, he was present at the Council of the Apostles. John was "one of the two" with Andrew who first had an audience with the Lord, He was the one "whom Jesus loved" and who reclined on his bosom at the Mystic Supper.

Jesus from His cross entrusted His mother to John at the foot of the cross. He was the one who ran with Peter to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, and who recognized the Risen Lord at the Sea of Tiberius, where our Lord spoke to him the words that he would not die (John 21:7).

According to tradition, he went to Asia Minor and settled in Ephesus. Later he was exiled to Patmos.

5. Phillip: He is the Apostle from Bethsaida who obeyed the call of Jesus and led Nathaneal to Christ. At the feeding of the 5,000 people, Jesus said to Phillip to buy bread, and Phillip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." Phillip on another occasion asked Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father" and Jesus retorted, "Yet you do not know me Phillip?" Phillip the Apostle should not be confused with Phillip, one of the seven Deacons. The Apostle Phillip preached the Gospel in Asia and suffered crucifixion, according to tradition.

6. Bartholomew: His name is patronymic, meaning "son of Tolmai". Sometimes he is identified with Nathaneal whom Phillip led to Christ. According to the historian Eusebius, when Pantainus of Alexandria visited India between 150 and 200 A. D., he found there the Gospel according to Matthew left behind by Bartholomew one of the Apostles. According to tradition, Bartholomew was flayed to death at Albanapolis in Armenia.

7. Matthew: He was the evangelist who was a Jew and a tax-collector referred to as Levi before he was called by Christ, Whom he followed. He is the author of the First Gospel. In his genealogy of Jesus Christ, he emphasizes the Lord's human nature and origin. Therefore, in Christian symbolism, Matthew has been represented by the figure of man (cf Rev 4:7). The icon of Matthew in the Orthodox Church is to be found in one of the four triangles which are formed by the arches connected to the dome of the Church.

8. Thomas: He was called the Twin. On the way to Bethany He offered to die with Jesus. He interrupted the last discourse of Jesus with the question "We know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?". Thomas doubted the resurrection of Christ unless he were to touch the wounds of the Risen Lord, but later confessed his faith in Him: "My Lord and My God" - the first to confess so explicitly the Lord's divinity.

According to tradition, Thomas evangelized the Parthians. The Syrian Christians of Malabar called themselves "Christians of St. Thomas" and claimed they were evangelized by the Apostle Thomas, who was martyred and buried at Mylapore near Madras.

9. James (The Lesser): He was the son of Alphaeus. Was he the Lord's relative? This is doubted. Was he James the younger (or the "lesser", Mark. 15:40)? There are insufficient reasons to establish this either. Nothing is known of him.

10. Simon: He was called Cananaean and Zealot, two terms of the same Hebrew word. According to the Apocryphal "Passion of Simon and Jude", both of them preached and underwent martyrdom in Persia. In the New Testament, Simon, one of the brethren of the Lord, was identified with Simon the Apostle. There were many others bearing the same name in the New Testament.

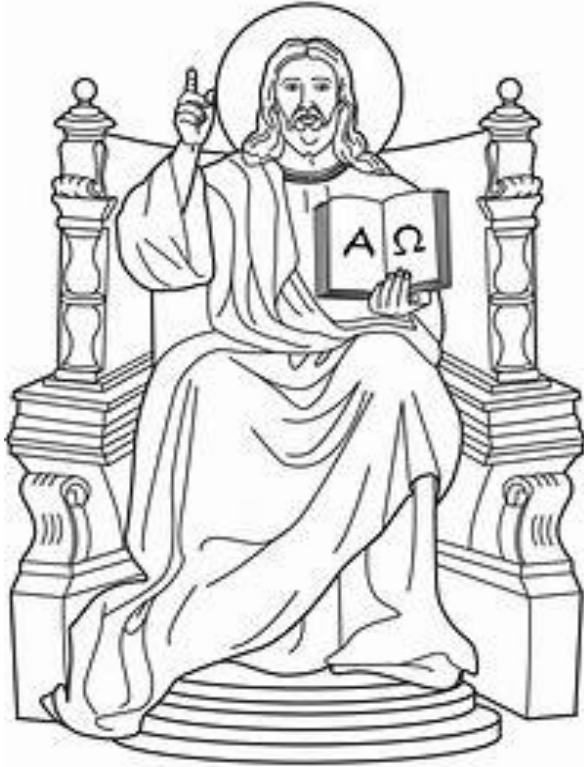
11. Jude: He is the Apostle referred to in the Gospel as "Judas of James", "Judas not the Iscariot". He also is known as Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus. Jude was the brother of James (or the son of James RV), the "brethren of the Lord" - the Lord's relative. Jude is the author of the Epistle of Jude. The Apocryphal "Passion of Simon and Jude" depicted them in Persia where they preached and underwent martyrdom.

12. Judas Iscariot: A selected Apostle, one of the Twelve, he betrayed Christ to the Jewish Sanhedrin - the supreme council and highest court of justice in Jerusalem - and kissed the Lord at the time of the arrest. He later committed suicide. The title "Iscariot", meaning in the Hebrew "man of Kerioth", a place in South Palestine, implies that Judas was from Judea. He was the only one from there, whereas the other Apostles were from Galilee. After his suicide the Apostles elected Matthias to replace him as one of the Twelve Apostles.



New Covenant Apostles Handed Down

The Church of Jesus Christ started in Bethlehem with His birth in the manger it was sanctioned in His presence with angels and shepherds worshipping Him. The Church was developed and enriched through Christ's efforts in Palestine, and was established with His Cross on Golgotha. Finally, after the resurrection of its Lord, the Church flourished in the upper room in Jerusalem with "tongues of fire" of the Holy Spirit guiding the Apostles in triumph. Thus **Jesus Christ, the Founder and Lord of the new sacred society**, bequeathed his precious endowment to His Church and made it the treasurer of salvation and eternal freedom. The Church of Christ, to which saints and sinners belong, constitutes His Sacred Body forever. It is, indeed, the realm of His Covenant, which the Apostles received from Christ and handed down to us.



What is this Covenant? The Lord's new will of life was wrought by Himself and handed down to all generations for all time. It contains the long-awaited reconciliation between God and man. It is the new covenant through the mercies of God, and empowered by His Son-the incarnate Logos. What is the content of this covenant, and who is the warrantor who secures its riches to its heirs? **Christ and His Gospel** are the answer to both questions. In Him man is destined to live anew, crossing again into Eden, the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the New Covenant which the Apostles received and handed down.

The new covenant is **"Good News of a Great Joy"**. Its title was given by the angel proclaiming in Luke 2:10,11 that "to you is born ... a Savior ... Christ the Lord," in Bethlehem at the incarnation of the Logos. The contents of this covenant were endorsed in Christ's baptism with His Father's statement, "Thou art my beloved Son" (3:22). Indeed, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). John the Baptist bore witness to Him, and in his admiration for Him proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God."

The signature on this covenant was placed by Christ's new order of Love at His mystic supper - the new testament - and ratified by His Cross and His last words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Lastly, the eternal seal was placed on this covenant by His triumphal resurrection, assuring the victory and joy of life.

This covenant was heralded by the First-called Apostle Andrew in his conviction and exclamation that "we have found the Messiah," and his brother Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ." His believers and devoted followers are destined to cover the globe in all centuries. His reign is everlasting.

This mighty covenant of reconciliation - the **New Testament** and Will - was handed down to the Church and entrusted to the hands of the eyewitnesses, the Apostles of Christ. They proclaimed the Orthodox faith in the True God and organized the new divine society in local Churches for men to **believe and worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit** ~ One living Triune God. The Apostles are the first golden links in our inherited Faith, which we today so dearly proclaim. The Lord sent them and the faithful accepted and honor them.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America





The Sign of the Cross ~ Το σημειο του Σταυρου



The Cross is the most powerful Symbol for Christians, not only as the instrument of the world's salvation by the crucified Christ, but also as the constant witness

to the fact, that men cannot be Christians unless they live with the cross as the very content of their lives in this world. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8.34). Crosses are placed on Church buildings, Holy Bibles, Vestments, Tables, Stands, etc. All Christians wear crosses because they all belong to Christ. **The Cross is the Weapon or the Sign of Christ's Victory over Sin and Death.** Now everything depends on us: If we wish to be delivered from the power of evil, sin, and eternal death, then we must follow Christ, love Him and, fulfill His Holy Will, being obedient to Him in everything and live with Christ.

How Do we in the Orthodox Church Make the Sign of the Cross?

To make the sign of the cross correctly, we place our thumb and the first two fingers of our right hand together to a point. This expresses our faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, as the Trinity one in essence and indivisible. The two remaining fingers are placed against our palm to show our belief in the two natures of Christ as God and man: that He is both True God and True Man (man without sin). Therefore, in our right hand, we hold the two major doctrines of our Christian Orthodox Church each time we make the sign of the Cross. In order to make the sign of the cross, **1st:** We touch our **forehead** to make our mind and thoughts pure in order to understand the Teachings of Christ, **2nd:** We touch our **stomach** for the blessing of eternal feelings, and to fill our heart with Love for Christ and for other people, **3rd:** We touch our **right shoulder** first because the Bible teaches us that when Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, He sat at the right hand of God in Heaven and, **4th:** We touch our **left shoulder** so that we may receive from God spiritual and physical strength (for both hands) to do good works. The sign of the Cross gives us great strength to repel and conquer evil and to do good. When we make the sign of the cross, we should make it carefully, reverently and earnestly and, **should always bow our head slightly as a sign of Humility and Reverence.**

The first mention of Christians making the sign of the Cross is in the 2nd Century by Tertullian who said: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting of our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupieth us, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross".

When Do We Make the Sign of the Cross and How Many Times?

1. During the Divine Services of our Church as well as many different times during the day.
2. When we enter the House of God and when we leave.
3. When you light a candle;
4. When you venerate the Icons, a cross or the Holy Gospel;
5. Every time we say the words, "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit";
6. When we hear the name of the Blessed Theotokos and the names of the Saints;
7. When we hear or say the Trisagion, "Holy God, Holy Mig..., have mercy on us";
8. Before and after the reading of the Holy Gospel;
9. When we recite the Creed and the Lord's Prayer;
10. When the Priest censes in your direction;
11. Before and after receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion;
12. Before and after our prayers and whenever we ourselves feel that we should;
13. We make the sign of the Cross as a public profession of our Orthodox Christian Faith;
14. We make the sign of the Cross before we eat, sleep, drive, pass by a Church, travel or begin any major endeavor, acknowledging our desire to include God in our Activities;
15. We make the sign of the Cross when something bad happens and we ask our Lord to help us;
16. We make the sign of the Cross when something good happens and we want to thank our Lord.
17. We should make the sign of the cross 3 times. The 3 times symbolize the Holy Trinity and the 3 days that Christ was dead. However, we may make it only once, or as many times as we wish, provided that each time it is done properly with Care, Reverence and Humility.



Το Πάτερ ημών ~ The Lord's Prayer



Πάτερ ημών
ο εν τοις ουρανοίς,
αγιασθήτω το όνομά Σου,
ελθέτω η Βασιλεία σου,
γενηθήτω το θέλημά σου
ως εν ουρανώ και επί της γης.

Τον άρτον ημών τον επιούσιον
δος ημίν σήμερα,
και άφες ημίν τα οφειλήματα ημών,
ως και ημεείς αφίεμεν τοις οφειλέταις ημών.
Και μη εισενέγκης ημάς εις πειρασμόν,
αλλά ρύσαι ημάς από του πονηρού. Αμήν.

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses, as we
Forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. Amen.



Συ, που κοσμους κυβερνας ~ You, Who Governs the World

Συ, που κοσμους κυβερνας
και ζωη παντου σκορπας,
ακου τουτη τη στιγμη
των παιδιων σου τη φωνη.

Φωτιζε μας την ψυχη
στο καλο, στην αρετη.
Δινε μας απο ψηλα
θαρρος, δυναμη, χαρα.

Για να ζουμε εδω στη γη
με γαληνη, με τιμη.
Και να υμνουμε αιωνια Εσε,
Πανσοφε, Δημιουργε!

You, Who governs the world
and spreads life everywhere,
listen at this moment
your children's voice;

Enlighten our soul
towards the good, the virtue;
Give us from above
courage, strength and joy;

So, we can leave on earth
with peace, with honor;
So, we can praise You,
All Wise, Creator!

The Nicene Creed 325 A.D. ~ Το Πιστευω

1. *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and Earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.*
2. *And in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all ages;*
3. *Light of Light, true God of true God,
begotten, not created,
of one essence with the Father
through Whom all things were made;*
4. *Who, for us and for our salvation,
He came down from Heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit
and of the virgin Mary, and became man;*
5. *He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
and He suffered and was buried,*
6. *On the third day He rose again,
according to the Scriptures;
and ascended into Heaven,
and sits at the right hand of the Father;*
7. *And He shall come again, with glory,
to judge the living and the dead;
His kingdom shall have no end.*
8. *And I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father;
Who together with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets;*
9. *In one holy Catholic and apostolic Church.*
10. *I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;*
11. *And I look for the resurrection of the dead,*
12. *And the life of the world to come. Amen*



Ten Prayer Steps



1. **Designate A Prayer Space:** Whether it is in the corner of your desk or a little stand in your room, it is important to have a place where you can put your Bible, Icons, etc. Dedicate the use of that space for God alone.
2. **Acquire A Time:** Incorporate prayer in your routine and set time aside to center your thoughts to God.
3. **Acquire A Library:** Start with a Bible, then get a small Orthodox Prayer Book, after that start collecting books. Here are some suggestions: 'Living the Liturgy' (Fr. Stanley Harakas), 'The Way of a Pilgrim' (Monk of the Eastern Church), 'For the Life of the World' (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann), 'Beginning to Pray' (Metropolitan Anthony Bloom), 'Bread for Life' (Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos), 'The Orthodox Way' (Bishop Kallistos Ware), 'Way of the Aesthetic' (Tito Collander).
4. **Assemble An Altar:** In your prayer center gather icons (Christ, Theotokos, Guardian Angel and patron saint), service books, incense, votive light, a cross, a prayer rope, etc. Incorporate your 5 senses in prayer.
5. **Pray:** Speak from your heart. Learn prayers of the Church. Try the Jesus Prayer or the Lord's Prayer. Also incorporate your own prayers and thoughts.
6. **Acquire A Spiritual Guide:** This is a very important step. One should build a relationship with either a member of the clergy, monk or nun, who will become your spiritual guide. He/she will help guide and pace you to a balanced prayer life. The Sacrament of Confession can be arranged through your priest.
7. **Fasting and Almsgiving:** Fasting adds a dimension to your prayer life. Your fasting practice should be regulated to avoid physical and spiritual harm. As for alms, give where you see a need and trust that the Lord will provide.
8. **Build On What You Already Have:** If you already have a routine, build on it. If, for example, you pray before you go to sleep, it will be easier to read a chapter from the Bible before your bedtime prayers, than to set up some time during the day to read.
9. **Sanctify All That You Do:** You may have set aside a time and space for a prayer routine, but that doesn't mean you should separate your life into sacred and secular. Privately thank God for what you have at all times, and make Him aware of your every concern. Dedicate everything you do to Him.
10. **Remember the power of the Life-giving Cross:** The sign of the Cross is a reminder of Christ in our lives. Blessing oneself with the cross by holding the first two fingers of the right hand and thumb together represents the Holy Trinity. The last two fingers held to the palm represent the two natures of Christ - God and man. Orthodox Christians cross themselves from the head to the breast and from shoulder to shoulder, right to left. This unique and embracing symbol shows that the cross is the inspiration, power and indeed the very content of our lives.

GREAT MIRACLE GIVEN BY GOD ONLY TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ~ Το Μεγα Θαυμα The Ceremony of the Holy Light in Jerusalem ~ Το Αγιον Φως στα Ιεροσολυμα

This ceremony takes place in the Orthodox Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem in such a way that bewilders the soul of the Christians. On Easter Saturday, at noon, the Orthodox Patriarch, or any other Orthodox Archbishop, enters the Holy Sepulchre, recites special prayers and remains waiting. Sometimes the waiting is long, sometimes short. The crowd, in the darkened church, repeats continually with a loud voice: "Lord, have mercy." (Kyrie eleison). At a certain moment the Holy Light flashes from the depth of the Holy Sepulchre in a supernatural way, miraculously, and lights up the little lamp of olive oil put on the edge of it. The Patriarch (or the Archbishop), after having read some prayers, lights up the two clusters of 33 candles he is holding, and begins to distribute the Holy Light to the multitude of pilgrims, who receive it with great emotion, accompanied with the pealing of bells, acclamations, and an unbridled enthusiasm.



The Holy Light is not only distributed by the Archbishop, but operates also by itself. It emits from the Holy Sepulchre having a gleam of a hue completely different from that of natural light. It sparkles, it flashes like lightning, it flies like a dove around the tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre, and lights up the unlit lamps of olive oil hanging in front of it. It whirls from one side of the church to the other. It enters to some of the chapels inside the church, as for instance the chapel of the Calvary (at a higher level than the Holy Sepulchre) and lights up the little lamps. It lights up also the candles of certain pilgrims. In fact, there are some very pious pilgrims who, every time they attended this ceremony, noticed that their candles lit up on the own accord! This divine light also presents some peculiarities: As soon as it appears it has a bluish hue and does not burn. At the first moments of its appearance, if it touches the face, or the mouth, or the hands, it does not burn. This is proof of its divine and supernatural origin. We must also take into consideration that the Holy Light appears only by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop. **EACH TIME THAT HETERODOX BISHOPS TRIED TO OBTAIN IT, THEY FAILED.**

Once the Armenians paid the Turks, who then occupied the Holy Land, in order to obtain permission for their Patriarch to enter the Holy Sepulchre, The Orthodox Patriarch was standing sorrowfully with his flock at the exit of the church, near the left column, when the Holy Light split this column vertically and flashed near the Orthodox Patriarch. A Moslem Muezin, called Tounom, who saw the miraculous event from an adjacent mosque, abandoned immediately the Moslem religion and became an Orthodox Christian. This event took place in 1549 under Sultan Mourad IV, when the Patriarch of Jerusalem was Sophrony II. (The mentioned split column still exists. It goes back to the XII c. The Orthodox pilgrims embrace it at the "place of the split" as they enter the church). The appearance of the Holy Light is an event which occurs every year in front of thousands of visual witnesses. Nobody can deny it. On the contrary, this miracle can reinforce those who have lack of faith. There are some very touching recent cases of some Jews, who believed in Christ after having seen the Holy Light, and who said to their compatriots: "Why are you still waiting for the Messiah? The Messiah came indeed".

The Miracle of Holy Light (Holy Fire) that happens every year in Jerusalem

Church of the Holy Sepulcher – The Burial site of Jesus Christ

- 1) Where and when the miracle occurs 2) Ceremony of Holy Light 3) How the miracle happens
- 4) The history of the miracle 5) The miracle that is unknown in the West
- 6) The question of the authenticity of the miracle

▲ **Where and when does the miracle occur?** The ceremony, which awes the souls of Christians, takes place in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. The date for Pascha is determined anew for every year. It must be a first Sunday after the spring equinox and Jewish Passover. Therefore, most of the time it differs from the date of Catholic and Protestant Easter, which is determined using different criteria. The Holy Fire is the most renowned miracle in the world of Eastern Orthodoxy. It has taken place at the same time, in the same manner, in the same place every single year for centuries. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. No other miracle is known to occur so regularly and so steadily over time. It happens in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the holiest place on earth, where Christ was crucified, entombed, and where He finally rose from the dead.

▲ **Ceremony of Holy Light:** In order to be as close to the Sepulchre as possible, pilgrims camp next to it. The Sepulchre is located in the small chapel called Holy Ciborium, which is inside the Church of the Resurrection. Typically, they wait from the afternoon of Holy Friday in anticipation of the miracle on Holy Saturday. Beginning at around 11:00 in the morning the Christian Arabs chant traditional hymns in a loud voice. These chants date back to the Turkish occupation of Jerusalem in the 13th century, a period in which the Christians were not allowed to chant anywhere but in the churches. "We are the Christians, we have been Christians for centuries, and we shall be forever and ever. Amen!" They chant at the top of their voices accompanied by the sound of drums. The drummers sit on the shoulders of others who dance vigorously around the Holy Ciborium. But at 1:00 pm the chants fade out & then there is a silence. A tense silence, charged from the anticipation of the great demonstration of God's power for all to witness.

Shortly thereafter, a delegation from the local authorities elbows its way through the crowd. At the time of the Turkish occupation of Palestine they were Muslim Turks; today they are Israelis. Their function is to represent the Romans at the time of Jesus. The Gospels speak of the Romans that went to seal the tomb of Jesus, so that his disciples would not steal his body and claim he had risen. In the same way the Israeli authorities on Holy Saturday come & seal the tomb with wax. Before they seal the door, they follow a custom to enter the tomb, and to check for any hidden source of fire, which would make a fraud of the miracle.

▲ **How the miracle occurs:** "I enter the tomb and kneel in holy fear in front of the place where Christ lay after His death and where He rose again from the dead... (narrates Orthodox Patriarch Diodor - ed.). I find my way through the darkness towards the inner chamber in which I fall on my knees. Here I say certain prayers that have been handed down to us through the centuries and, having said them, I wait. Sometimes I may wait a few minutes, but normally the miracle happens immediately after I have said the prayers. From the core of the very stone on which Jesus lay an indefinable light pours forth. It usually has a blue tint, but the color may change and take many different hues. It cannot be described in human terms. The light rises out of the stone as mist may rise out of a lake, it almost looks as if the stone is covered by a moist cloud, but it is light. This light each year behaves differently. Sometimes it covers just the stone, while other times it gives light to the whole Sepulchre, so that people who stand outside the tomb & look into it will see it filled with light. The light does not burn. I have never had my beard burnt in all the 16 years I have been Patriarch in Jerusalem & have received the Holy Fire. The light is of a different consistency than normal fire that burns in an oil lamp.



At a certain point the light rises & forms a column in which the fire is of a different nature, so that I am able to light my candles from it. When I thus have received the flame on my candles, I go out & give the fire first to the Armenian Patriarch and then to the Coptic. Hereafter I give the flame to all people present in the Church."

While the Patriarch is inside the **chapel** kneeling in front of the stone, there is darkness but far from silence outside. One hears a rather loud mumbling, and the atmosphere is very tense. When the Patriarch comes out with the two candles lit and shining brightly in the darkness, a roar of jubilee resounds in the Church.



The Holy Light is not only distributed by the Archbishop, but operates also by itself. It is emitted from the Holy Sepulchre with a hue completely different from that of natural light. It **sparkles, it flashes like lightning, it flies like a dove around the tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre, and lights up the unlit lamps of olive oil hanging in front of it. It whirls from one side of the church to the other. It enters some of the chapels inside the church, as for instance the chapel of the Calvary (at a higher level than the Holy Sepulchre) and lights up the little lamps. It lights up also the candles of certain pilgrims.** In fact there are some very pious pilgrims who, every time they attended this ceremony, noticed that their candles lit up on their own accord! his divine light also presents some peculiarities: As soon as it appears it has a bluish hue and does not burn. At the first moments of its appearance, if it touches the face, or the mouth, or the hands, it does not burn. **This is proof of its divine and supernatural origin.** We must also take into consideration that the Holy Light appears only by the invocation of an Orthodox Archbishop.



The miracle is not confined to what actually happens inside the little tomb, where the Patriarch prays. What may be even more significant, is that **the blue light** is reported to appear and **be active outside the tomb.** Every year many believers claim that this miraculous light ignites candles, which they hold in their hands, of its own initiative. All in the church wait with candles in the hope that they may ignite spontaneously. **Often unlit oil lamps catch light by themselves before the eyes of the pilgrims. The blue flame is seen to move in different places in the Church.** A number of signed testimonies by pilgrims, **whose candles lit spontaneously,** attest to the validity of these ignitions. The person who experiences the miracle from close up by having the fire on the candle or seeing the blue light usually leaves Jerusalem changed, and for everyone having attended the ceremony, there is always a "before and after" the miracle of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem.

▲How old is the Wonder?

The first written account of the Holy Fire (Holy Light) dates from the fourth century, but authors write about events that occurred in the first century. So Sts. John Damascene and Gregory of Nissa narrate how the Apostle Peter saw the Holy Light in the Holy Sepulchre after Christ's resurrection. "One can trace the miracle throughout the centuries in the many itineraries of the Holy Land." The Russian abbot Daniel, in his itinerary written in the years 1106-07, presents the "Miracle of the Holy Light" and the ceremonies that frame it in a very detailed manner. He recalls how the Patriarch goes into the Sepulchre-chapel (the Anastasis) with two candles. The Patriarch kneels in front of the stone on which Christ was laid after his death and says certain prayers, at which point the miracle occurs. Light proceeds from the core of the stone - a blue, indefinable light which after some time kindles unlit oil lamps as well as the Patriarch's two candles.



This light is "The Holy Fire", and it spreads to all people present in the Church. The ceremony surrounding "The Miracle of the Holy Fire" may be the oldest unbroken Christian ceremony in the world. From the 4th century A.D. all the way up to our own time, sources recall this awe-inspiring event. From these sources it becomes clear that the miracle has been celebrated on the same spot, on the same feast day, and in the same liturgical frame throughout all these centuries.

Every time heterodox have tried to obtain the Holy Fire they have failed. Three such attempts are known. Two occurred in the 12th century when priests of the Roman church tried to force out the Orthodox church but by their own confession these ended with God's punishment. But the most miraculous event occurred in the year 1579, the year when God clearly testified to whom alone may be given His miracle.

"Once the Armenians (monophysites) paid the Turks, who then occupied the Holy Land, in order to obtain permission for their Patriarch to enter the Holy Sepulchre, the Orthodox Patriarch was standing sorrowfully with his flock at the exit of the church, near the left column, when the Holy Light split this column vertically and flashed near the Orthodox Patriarch. A Muslim Muezzin, called Tounom, who saw the miraculous event from an adjacent mosque, immediately abandoned the Muslim religion and became an Orthodox Christian. This event took place in 1579 under Sultan Mourad IV, when the Patriarch of Jerusalem was Sophrony IV. (The above mentioned split column still exists. It dates from the 12th century. The Orthodox pilgrims embrace it at the "place of the split" as they enter the church).

Turkish warriors stood on the wall of a building close to the gate and lightning-struck column. When he saw this striking Miracle he cried that Christ is truly God and leaped down from a height of about ten meters. But he was not killed the stones under him became as soft as wax and his footprint was left upon them. The Turks tried to scrape away these prints but they could not destroy them; So they remain as witnesses. He was burned by the Turks near the Church. His remains, gathered by the Greeks, lay in the monastery of Panagia until the 19th century shedding chrism.

Muslims, who deny the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, tried to put obstacles in the way of the miracle. Well known Muslim historian Al Biruni wrote: "... a governor brought a copper wire instead of a wick (note: for the selflighting oil lamps), in order that it wouldn't ignite and the whole thing would fail to occur. But as the fire descended, the copper burned." [6] This was not the only attempt. The report written by the English chronicler, Gautier Vinisau, describes what happened in the year 1192.

"In 1187, the Saracens under the direction of Sultan Salah ad-Din took Jerusalem. In that year, the Sultan desired to be present at the celebration, even though he was not a Christian. Gautier Vinisauf tells us what happened: "On his arrival, the celestial fire descended suddenly, and the assistants were deeply moved.

The Saracens said that the fire which they had seen to come down was produced by fraudulent means. Salah adDin, wishing to expose the imposter, caused the lamp, which the fire from Heaven had lighted, to be extinguished, but the lamp relit immediately. He caused it to be extinguished a 2nd & a 3rd time, but it relit as of itself. Thereupon, the Sultan, confounded, cried out in prophetic transport: 'Yes, soon shall I die, or I shall lose Jerusalem.'

▲A miracle that is unknown in the West

One can ask the question of why the miracle of the Holy Fire is almost unknown in Western Europe. In Protestant may, to a certain extent, be explained by the fact that there is no real tradition of miracles; people don't really know which box to place the miracles, and they rarely feature in newspapers. But in the Catholic tradition there is vast interest in miracles. Thus, why is it not more well known? For this only one explanation suffices: Church politics. Orthodox Churches attend the ceremony which is centered on the miracle. It only occurs on the Orthodox date of and without the presence of any Catholic authorities. [2]

▲The question of the authenticity of the miracle

As with any other miracle there are people who believe it is a fraud and nothing but a masterpiece of Orthodox propaganda. They believe the Patriarch has a lighter inside of the tomb. These skeptics, however, are confronted with a number of problems. Matches and other means of fire are recent inventions. Only a few hundred years ago lighting a fire was an undertaking that lasted much longer than the few minutes during which the Patriarch is inside the tomb. He then could perhaps say, he had an oil lamp burning inside, from which he kindled the candles, but the local authorities confirmed that they had checked the tomb and found no light inside it.



The best arguments against a fraud, however, are not the testimonies of the Orthodox Patriarchs. The biggest challenges confronting the critics are the thousands of independent testimonies by pilgrims whose candles were lit spontaneously in front of their eyes without any possible explanation. According to our investigations, it has never been possible to light any of the candles or oil lamps igniting by themselves. However, I am in the possession of a video filmed by a young engineer from Bethlehem, Souhel Nabdiel. Mr. Nabdiel has been present at the ceremony of the Holy Fire since his early childhood. In 1996 he was asked to film the ceremony from the balcony of the dome of the Church. Present with him on the balcony were a nun and other believers. The nun stood at the right hand of Nabdiel. On the video one can see how he films down on the candles. At a certain point all lights are turned off - it is time for the Patriarch to enter the tomb and receive the Holy Fire.

While he is still inside the tomb one suddenly hears a scream of surprise and wonder originating from the nun standing next to Nabdiel. The camera begins to shake, as one hears the excited voices of the other people present on the balcony. The camera now turns to the right, whereby it is possible to contemplate the cause of the commotion. A big candle in the hand of the Russian nun, takes fire in front of all the people present before the patriarch comes out of the tomb. She holds the candle with shaking hands while making the sign of the Cross over and over again in awe of the miracle she has witnessed. This video appears to be the closest one gets to an actual filming of the miracle. <http://www.holyfire.org>

The Christian Bible: a) The Old Testament ~ Η Παλαια Διαθηκη

The Christian Bible contains the sacred writings of the Hebrews. It was written over the period of 1000 B.C. - 100 B.C., and it includes the narration of events that occurred many centuries earlier and had been passed from generation to generation in oral form. The Old Testament is the first of the two major sections of the Holy Bible and it was originally written in the Hebrew language with a few sections written in Aramaic.

b) The New Testament ~ Η Καινη Διαθηκη

The New Testament contains the sacred books that are unique to Christianity. The original texts were written in the 1st century of the Christian Era **in Greek**, which was the common language of the Eastern Mediterranean from the conquests of Alexander the Great (335–323 BC.). The Old and the New Testaments are a **Sacred Scripture** for all Christians. This Sacred Scripture reflects and serves as a source for Christian theology and morality. It has also influenced religious, philosophical, and political movements in Christendom and left an indelible mark on literature, art and, music in almost all Christian traditions. The collection of books we know as the New Testament emerged in the late second century, A.D. The church leaders accepted books they believed were based on eyewitness accounts of the events narrated, while rejecting many other early Christian writings. Eventually, the **27 books** which form the New Testament, along with the **49 books** of the Old Testament became the **Christian Bible** for the Orthodox Church as we know it today.

Synopsis: Jesus Christ is the Central Figure of Christianity. The New Testament tells of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection, the growth of the early Christian Church, and predictions of the second coming of Jesus. Jesus was born sometime between 6 and 4 B.C. in the city of Bethlehem, and He was destined from birth to fulfill the role of Messiah or Christ (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "messiah"). He lived an ordinary life for 30 years, and then He began His ministry among the Jews. Jesus traveled from town to town, healing the sick and preaching about the coming kingdom of God. He taught that God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that is now growing among the faithful, and it will find its fulfillment in the eventual sovereign rule of God and defeat of all evil. Jesus said He will come again someday to bring God's kingdom to fulfillment. He promised a wonderful eternal life after death for those who put their trust in God and obey His commandments.

Books of the New Testament

1. [The four Gospels ~ Τα 4 Ευαγγελια](#) tell of the birth, life, ministry, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel of **Mark** was written around 70 A.D., about 40 years after Jesus was crucified. **Matthew and Luke** were written between 80 and 90 A.D. Finally, the Gospel of **John** appeared in its final form around 95 A.D. Matthew, Mark and Luke are very similar. It is commonly believed that Matthew and Luke incorporated much of the material in Mark and another common source that is now lost. Each author then added some unique material. The Gospel of John is quite different. It is much more of a spiritual and theological work, although it relates many of the same events as the other 3 Gospels.

2. [Acts of the Apostles ~ Οι Πραξεις των Αποστολων](#) is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke, written by the same author. It tells the history of the first 30 years of the Christian Church. The story is mostly centered on the apostles Peter and Paul who were the preeminent leaders of early Christianity.

3. Many of the [New Testament letters](#) (also known as *Epistles ~ Επιστολες*) are traditionally attributed to the **Apostle Paul**. **1st Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon** are undisputed genuine letters of Paul. Paul probably wrote 1st Thessalonians and Galatians around 50 A.D., and they are the oldest books in the New Testament. Paul wrote his letters to various Christian communities to instruct and encourage them in the faith and to address specific problems and disputes that had arisen in those communities. Many of the beliefs and practices of Christianity originated from Paul's teachings in these letters.

4. [An Apocalypse ~ Αποκαλυψη, the Book of Revelation](#), which is a book of prophecy, containing some instructions to seven local congregations of Asia Minor, but mostly containing prophetic symbolism, about the end times.

The Orthodox Church teaches that we have knowledge of **God**, only because God has shown himself to his creation. *God is the Lord and has revealed himself unto us; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Ps 118:26-27). Also, God's self-revelation is found in His Son **Jesus Christ**, the fulfillment of the gradual and partial revelation of God in the **Old Testament**. Jesus is the one truly "blessed ... who comes in the name of the Lord."

Teachings of the Orthodox Church ~ Ορθοδοξη Εκκλησια by Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald

The Orthodox Church throughout the ages has maintained a continuity of faith and love with the apostolic community which was founded by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy believes that she has preserved and taught the historic Christian Faith, free from error and distortion, from the time of the Apostles. She also believes that there is nothing in the body of her teachings which is contrary to truth or which inhibits real union with God. The air of antiquity and timelessness which often characterizes Eastern Christianity is an expression of her desire to remain loyal to the authentic Christian Faith. Orthodoxy believes that the Christian Faith and the Church are inseparable. It is impossible to know Christ, to share in the life of the Holy Trinity, or to be considered a Christian, apart from the Church. It is in the Church that the Christian Faith is proclaimed and maintained. It is through the Church that an individual is nurtured in the Faith.

REVELATION ~ Αποκαλυψη: God is the source of faith in the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy believes that God has revealed Himself to us, most especially in the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom we know as the Son of God. This Revelation of God, His love, and His purpose, is constantly made manifest and contemporary in the life of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Faith does not begin with mankind's religious speculations, nor with the so-called "proofs" for the existence of God, nor with a human quest for the Divine. The origin of the Orthodox Christian Faith is the Self-disclosure of God. Each day, the Church's Morning Prayer affirms and reminds us of this by declaring, "God is the Lord and He has revealed Himself to us." While the inner Being of God always remains unknown and unapproachable, God has manifested Himself to us; and the Church has experienced Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is central to the Orthodox Faith, is not a result of pious speculation, but of the overwhelming experience of God. The doctrine affirms that there is only One God, in whom there are three distinct Persons (Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit).

INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST ~ Η Ενσαρκωση του Ιησου Χριστου: Together with the belief in the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation occupies a central position in the teaching of the Orthodox Church. According to Orthodox Faith, Jesus is much more than a pious man or a profound teacher of morality. He is the "Son of God who became the Son of Man." The doctrine of the Incarnation is an expression of the Church's experience of Christ. In Him, divinity is united with humanity without the destruction of either reality. Jesus Christ is truly God who shares in the same reality as the Father and the Spirit. Moreover, He is truly man who shares with us all that is human. The Church believes that, as the unique God-man, Jesus Christ has restored humanity to fellowship with God. By manifesting the Holy Trinity, by teaching the meaning of authentic human life, and by conquering the powers of sin and death through His Resurrection, Christ is the supreme expression of the love of God the Father, for His people, made present in every age & in every place by the Holy Spirit through the life of the Church. The great Fathers of the Church summarized the ministry of Christ in the bold affirmation, "God became what we are so that we may become what He is."

HOLY SCRIPTURES ~ Αγια Γραφη: The Holy Scriptures are highly regarded by the Orthodox Church. Their importance is expressed in the fact that a portion of the Bible is read at every service of Worship. The Orthodox Church, which sees itself as the guardian and interpreter of the Scriptures, believes that the books of the Bible are a valuable witness to God's revelation. **The Old Testament** is a collection of 49 books of various literary styles which expresses God's revelation to the ancient Israelites. The Orthodox Church regards the Old Testament as a preparation for the coming of Christ and believes that it should be read in light of His revelation. **The New Testament** is centered upon the person and work of Jesus Christ & the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. The 4 Gospels are an account of Christ's life and teaching, centering upon His Death and Resurrection. The 21 Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles are devoted to the Christian life and the development of the early Church. **The Book of Revelation** is a very symbolic text which looks to the return of Christ. The New Testament, especially the Gospels, is very important to Orthodoxy because here is found a written witness to the perfect revelation of God in the Incarnation of the Son of God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

TRADITION ~ Παραδοση: While the Bible is treasured as a valuable written record of God's revelation, is viewed as only one expression of God's revelation in the ongoing life of His people. Scripture is part of the treasure of Faith which is known as Tradition, which is "handed on" from one generation to another. In addition to the witness of Faith in the Scripture, the Orthodox Christian Faith is celebrated in the Eucharist; taught by the Fathers; glorified by the Saints; expressed in prayers, hymns, and icons; defended by the seven Ecumenical Councils; embodied in the Nicene Creed; manifested in social concern; and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is lived in every local Orthodox parish. The life of the Holy Trinity is manifested in every aspect of the Church's life. Finally, the Church, as a whole, is the guardian of the authentic Christian Faith which bears witness to that Revelation.

Eastern Orthodox Worship ~ Ορθοδοξη Λατρεία

The worship of the Orthodox Church is viewed as the Church's fundamental activity because the worship of God is the joining of man to God in prayer and that is the essential function of **Christ's** Church. The Orthodox view their Church as being the living embodiment of Christ, through the grace of His Holy Spirit, in the people, clergy, monks and all other members of the Church. Thus the Church is viewed as the **Body of Christ** on earth which is perpetually unified with the Body of Christ in heaven through a common act of worship to God.

Characteristics of Orthodox worship Λατρεία: Because the Orthodox draw no distinction between the Body of Christ in heaven and those on earth viewing both parts of the Church as inseparable and in continuous worship together of God. Orthodox worship therefore expresses this unity of earth and heaven in every possible way so that the earthly worshippers are continually reminded through all their senses of the heavenly state of the Church. The particular methods for doing this are very far from arbitrary but have been passed down from the earliest periods in Christian history through what the Orthodox call "**Holy Tradition**" = "**Παράδοση**".

Sight ~ Οραση / Θεα: Probably the most striking aspect of Orthodox worship are its visual characteristics. These are many and varied always conveying in the most striking colors and shapes possible the various phases and moods of the Church both as they change throughout the year and in individual services.

Icons ~ Εικονες are used to bring the worshippers into the presence of those who are in heaven, that is, Christ, the Saints, the **Theotokos** and the angels. The Orthodox believe these icons do more than visually remind the viewer of the fact that there are saints in heaven, they believe that these icons act as 'windows' into heaven through which we see those saints, Christ and the Theotokos. It is for this reason that God the father is traditionally not represented in icons because He has never shown His form to man and therefore man should not try to represent His form in icons. It is because of the connection which these sacred pictures have with their subjects that Orthodox Christians regularly **venerate** (but do not worship) them even as Orthodox still living on earth greet one another with a kiss of peace, so do they venerate those who have passed on through their icons.

Architecture ~ Αρχιτεκτονική: Both the internal and external forms of Orthodox churches are designed in imitation of heaven. The internal layout consists of three main parts: the Narthex, Nave and Altar. The Royal doors divide the Narthex from the Nave and the Iconostasis divides the Nave from the Altar. The Narthex or porch is the entrance to the church building and not yet the actual 'church' proper, and is a small open space often with some candles to buy before entering the church itself. Once through the Royal Doors (a term often applied now to the doors in the center of the Iconostasis as well) there is the Nave, which is the main and largest part of the church building. Here all the laity and choir stand during worship; it is shaped rectangularly in the back, opening into two wings forming a cross towards the front. Through the Iconostasis lies the Altar (or Sanctuary). This area is considered the most holy of the whole church, and laity other than church personnel are discouraged from entering. The Altar is square (completing the cross shape of the church building) and at its center is the altar table on which the Eucharist is celebrated and which only clergy may touch. There is no direct entrance to the outside of the church to the altar, only the deacons' doors. The main entrance from the nave to the sanctuary, the "Beautiful Gate", cannot be used by deacons and laity, only by priests or bishops.

Vestments ~ Αμφία: The choir wear some form of vestment to distinguish their office. There are many offices and each has its own distinctive vestment and each set of vestments becomes increasingly elaborate as the rank of the wearer increases; this principle also holds true for how weighty a service is being served. All these vestments are in the style of robes made of colored and decorated cloth. The colors of all the vestments change according to what **feast** the Church is celebrating For instance, for about two months after the celebration of the Resurrection, all church vestments are bright white and red whereas during the solemnity of Lent they are dark purples; thus, vestments serve to express the 'mood' of the Church.

Processions ~ Λιτανειες: As most actions in Orthodox worship, processions are most often used to commemorate events and also, of course, to display items of religious, and particularly Orthodox, significance. Their most fundamental purpose however is, as everything in Orthodox worship, to aid in the edification and salvation of the worshippers by giving glory to God. Processions are always led by a number of altar servers bearing candles, fans (ornamented discs with angelic visages represented), Crosses, banners or other processional implements relative to the occasion. After them come the sub-deacons, deacons and archdeacons with censers (ornamental containers of burning coal for burning incense), then priests and archpriests and so on up the Clergical ranks. This is the very 'ideal' in processions, most do not contain all these elements because the occasion may not warrant it. The reasons for why various processions are done at various times vary greatly.

Sounds ~ Ηχοι: The Orthodox Church traditionally does not use any instruments in the liturgy, instead relying entirely on choral music and chanting. Essentially all the words of Orthodox services, except sermons and such, are either chanted or sung by readers and choirs and when possible the congregations.

Candles ~ Κερια: Candles are used extensively throughout the church during services and after. They are viewed as continual, inanimate prayers offered by the candle's 'benefactor' to God or saints usually on behalf of a third party, although they can be offered for any purpose. Candle stands are placed in front of particularly significant icons throughout Orthodox churches, these always have a central candle burning on behalf of the church as a whole but have room for Orthodox to place candles. Candles are not restricted to this usage however, besides being used in processions a candle is kept burning above the Royal Doors in the Iconostasis, candles in a 7-branched candelabrum are burned during services on the altar (following in the footsteps of the 7 branched candle stand in the Old Testament) as well as other candles used at various times in the church year for special purposes.

Chanting ~ Ψαλμωδια: Nothing in Orthodox worship is simply said; it is always sung or chanted. Chanting in the Orthodox tradition can be described as being halfway between talking and singing; it is musical but not music. One or two notes only are used in chanting, and the chanter reads the words to these notes at a steady rhythm. The notes and rhythms used vary according to what the occasion is, but generally chanting is relatively low-toned and steadily rhythmic creating a calming sound. Chanting not only is conducive to a calm and elevated state of mind but also allows chanters to read through large portions of texts (particularly Psalms) more clearly and quickly than possible with normal speech while also conveying the poetry in the words. That is the essential reason for chanting. Worship at its heart is a song and is beautiful; therefore the words of Orthodox worship cannot be simply said but must be melodiously chanted to express the true nature and purpose of the words.



Singing ~ Ψαλμωδια: Originally singing was done by the entire congregation, however this rapidly became cumbersome and a select group of singers (the choir) was selected to represent the congregation. Since then the Orthodox Church music has expanded and become more elaborate. The Church uses 8 'tones' or 'modes,' which are broad categories of melodies. Within each of these tones are many small more precise melodies. All of these tones and their melodies rotate weekly so that during each week a particular tone is used for singing music. Singing naturally developed from chanting but, unlike in the west, Orthodox music developed from a Greek musical background. Singing is used in place of chanting on important occasions thus some things which are chanted at minor services are sung at more important services. Singing is as varied and multi-faceted in its forms as chanting and vestments, it changes with the Church 'seasons' of commemoration thus singing during Great Lent is always somber and during Holy Week nearly becomes a sorrowful dirge while during **Pascha** (Easter) and the **Paschal season** the notes are high and quick and as joyful as they were sad during Lent.

Bells ~ Καμπανες: In Russian Orthodox churches bells are often used. The size of the bells can vary widely as can their number and complexity of tone. Generally however they are rung to announce the beginning and end of services or to proclaim especially significant moments in the services. They are not used as musical instruments in the strict sense, that is, they are not used in conjunction with a choir and are not a part of the worship itself and are always positioned outside the church building.

Incense & Censer ~ Θυμιαμα και Θυμιατηρι: Incense in the Orthodox Church is burned at essentially every worship service usually multiple times. This is always done by burning granulated incense on a hot coal inside a censer. The censer is essentially two metal bowls suspended by chains and which can be raised and lowered to allow more or less smoke out. Incense is burned, in accordance with Old Testament tradition, as an essential mode of worship to God and is burned in token of reverence to objects of sanctity such as relics, bishops, icons, the congregation and many other besides.

The sign of the cross ~ Το Σημειο του Σταυρου: (three fingers imprinted on the forehead, torso, right then left shoulders) is the most fundamental religious action of the Orthodox Church and is performed very frequently in Orthodox worship. This action is, of course, done in remembrance and invocation of the Cross of Christ. This can be meant for protection from adverse powers, in reverence for something or someone. The Orthodox view it as a way of purifying the body and soul and the Orthodox oral tradition is very strong in viewing it as a weapon against demons and their activities.

Standing and kneeling – Η Ορθοστασια και το Γονατισμα: To express the respect and fear of God which is congruent with the worship of Him, Orthodox stand while in worship as if they were in the presence of a king. In most Orthodox churches, the congregants stand through the entire service with the exception of the elderly who may choose to sit in chairs or pews in the back of the church. Some Greek Orthodox Churches use pews in their churches. Kneeling is done in expression of penitence and deep cumpunction and is done almost exclusively during Lenten services. In contrast, no kneeling is ever done during the celebratory Paschal season. Orthodox Christians also kneel during some matins, vespers or other special services through the church year.

Bowing and prostrating ~ Μετανοια: A bow in the Orthodox Church consists of a person making the sign of the cross and then bowing from the waist and touching the floor with their fingers. This action is done extensively throughout all Orthodox services and is a fundamental way that the Orthodox express their reverence & subservience to God. For instance, at the culminating point of the consecration of the Eucharist all the Orthodox make a bow while saying "Amen". Bows are used more extensively in Lent than at any other time. Three bows are done when entering an Orthodox church and a series of bows are performed when venerating the central icons in the Nave. Prostrations express to an even greater degree the reverence evinced by a bow and both are used as tools to train the mind in reverence of God through the obeisance of the body.

Greetings and blessings ~ Χαιρετισμοι και Ευχες: Even as Orthodox venerate the icons and the church building as being physical objects filled with divine grace, so too they greet one another. Orthodox greetings are, just like the veneration of icons, expressions of love and reverence for the person being greeted. Between clergy of equal rank the same is done but at the end the parties kiss one another on the hand. Orthodox of lower ranks (lay people, altar servers and deacons) when meeting Orthodox priests receive a blessing by folding their hands (right over left) palm upwards while he of the priestly office makes the sign of the cross in the air with his hand over the folded hands of the lay person and then places that hand on the folded hands of he of lower rank for him to kiss. This is done because the Orthodox view the priestly office as the one through which Christ lives with his people and thus the blessing is the essential bestowing of Christ's love and grace through His priest to the Orthodox person being blessed.

Tastes ~ Γεύσεις: Orthodox worship, in keeping with the earliest traditions of Christian worship, involves eating as part of services probably more than any other denomination. Besides the bread and wine in the Eucharist, bread, wine, wheat, fruits and other foods are eaten at a number of special services. The kinds of foods used vary widely from culture to culture. During special memorial services, a special sweet called **Kolliva** is blessed and served in memory of the departed.

Bread ~ Προσφορά (Ψωμί): Bread is by far the most common Orthodox repast in worship and is viewed theologically as the quintessential food, the symbol of sustenance and life. As such, it is also considered to be the central component of communal meals and a mainstay of brotherhood. Although its use for **Prospophora** and in the **Eucharist** are ancient and universal. The most common non-Eucharistic bread is the **artos**. This is in two forms: five smaller loaves which are blessed during a portion of the **All-Night Vigil** known as the **Artoklassia** (literally, "breaking of bread"); and a single, large loaf which is blessed during the **Paschal Vigil** and then remains in the church during **Bright Week** (Easter Week). This Artos (capitalized because it symbolizes the **Resurrected Jesus**).



Wine ~ Κρασι: The continual companion of bread in the Church is wine which is also seen with it in the Eucharist and Prosphora. Wine is viewed theologically as the symbol of the joy and happiness which God gives to man. Thus it is also thought of as the essential component of meals and the community, to 'drink of the same cup' is a theological allegory to intimate spiritual union. In its various local usages, wine is always taken with the bread.

Wheat ~ Σιταρι: As the corollary to bread, wheat is very frequently seen in Orthodox services as well. Though it does not hold nearly as central a place theologically or in use, it is seen as a symbol of resurrection and rebirth because a grain of wheat must be buried in the earth, 'die' and then be 'born again' with new growth and life. Because of this it is often seen in prayers for the dead; in the Greek tradition **Kolliva** is a boiled wheat dish eaten at the end of a service for a deceased person.

Water ~ Νεπο: As wheat is to bread, so water is to wine or even more so because it holds a much more prominent position and use and theology. Wine in the Orthodox Church, as in early Christian history, is always mixed with water for the Eucharist. It is associated with cleansing of the soul & thus the Holy Spirit and **Baptism**. Besides its use in Baptism, **Holy water**, specially blessed by a priest, is used extensively for many sanctification purposes and is usually sprinkled on objects. At certain services, particularly at **Theophany**, a special holy water, is consecrated and partaken of during the service by each member of the congregation in turn.

Theophany water is blessed twice: on the **eve** of the **feast** and then the next morning, on the day of the feast, after **Divine Liturgy**, demonstrating the sanctification of all creation which in **Orthodox theology** was accomplished by Christ's **Incarnation, Death** and **Resurrection**. Later, the priest visits the homes of all of the faithful, and blesses their homes.

Orthodox Worship Services ~ Οι Ορθοδοξες Ακολουθίες may vary due to what the service may be commemorating. Services involve chanted or sung prayerful dialogue between the priest and the congregants. The services begin and end with the **sign of the cross**. The most common service is the **Divine Liturgy** which takes place during Sunday mornings and centers around the consecration and transubstantiation of the **Eucharist** and they use many series of long litany praying for the intercession and peace. Worship invokes all of the 7 senses; its main purpose is to bring the worshipers closer to heaven with an experience of heaven on earth through the services. During vespers and matins services, many different series of psalms and other prayers are sung in a fast, movable way while other prayers are sung in the background evoking the urge to worship. Wikipedia



Orthodox Worship ~ Ορθοδοξη Λατρεια



*O Come, let us Worship and bow down before our King and God.
O Come, let us worship and bow down before Christ, our King and God.
O Come, let us worship and bow down to Christ Himself, our King and God.*

This invitation marks the beginning of each day for the Orthodox Church. It comes from the office of Vespers, and it expresses the attitude which is at the heart of Orthodoxy. The Worship of God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, - is fundamental to the life and spirit of the Orthodox Church.

Since Worship is so important to Orthodoxy, the best introduction to the Orthodox Church is for the non-Orthodox to attend the Divine Liturgy or the celebration of one of the major Sacraments. At first, the visitor may be overwhelmed by the music and the ceremonies, but it is in Worship that the distinctive flavor, rich traditions, and living faith of Orthodoxy are truly experienced.

Dimensions of Worship

Worship is an experience which involved the entire Church. When each of us comes together for Worship, we do so as members of a Church which transcends the boundaries of society, of time and of space. Although we gather at a particular moment and at a particular place, our actions reach beyond the parish, into the very Kingdom of God. We worship in the company of both the living and the departed faithful.

There are two dimensions to Orthodox Worship which are reflected throughout the many Services of the Church. First, Worship is a manifestation of God's presence and action in the midst of His people. It is God who gathers His scattered people together, and it is He who reveals Himself as we enter into His presence. The Worship of the Orthodox Church very vividly expresses the truth that God dwells among His people and that we are created to share in His life.

Second, Worship is our corporate response of thanksgiving to the presence of God and a remembrance of His saving actions - especially the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Worship is centered upon God. He has acted in history, and He continues to act through the Holy Spirit. We are mindful of His actions and we respond to His love with praise and thanksgiving. In so doing we come closer to God.

Expressions of Worship

Worship in the Orthodox Church is expressed in four principal ways:

The Eucharist, which is the most important worship experience of Orthodoxy. Eucharist means thanksgiving and is known in the Orthodox Church as the Divine Liturgy. The Sacraments, which affirm God's presence and action in the important events of our Christian lives. All the major Sacraments are closely related to the Eucharist. These are: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the sick.

Special Services and Blessings, which also affirm God's presence and action in all the events, needs and tasks of our life. The Daily Offices, which are the services of public prayer which occur throughout the day. The most important are Matins, which is the morning prayer of the Church, and Vespers, which is the evening prayer of the Church.

Characteristics

Although Orthodox Services can very often be elaborate, solemn, and lengthy, they express a deep and pervasive sense of joy. This mood is an expression of our belief in the Resurrection of Christ and the deification of humanity, which are dominant themes of Orthodox Worship. In order to enhance this feeling and to encourage full participation, Services are always sung or chanted.

Worship is not simply expressed in words. In addition to prayers, hymns, and scripture readings, there are a number of ceremonies, gestures, and processions. The Church makes rich use of nonverbal symbols to express God's presence and our relationship to Him. Orthodoxy Worship involves the whole person; one's intellect, feelings, and senses.

Services in the Orthodox Church follow a prescribed order. There is a framework and design to our Worship. This is valuable in order to preserve its corporate dimension and maintain a continuity with the past. The content of the Services is also set. There are unchanging elements; and there are parts which change according to the Feast, season, or particular circumstance. The regulating of the Services by the whole Church emphasizes the fact that Worship is an expression of the entire Church, and not the composition on a particular priest and congregation.

An important secondary purpose of Worship is the teaching of the Faith. There is a very close relationship between the Worship and the teachings of the Church. Faith is expressed in Worship, and Worship serves to strengthen and communicate Faith. As a consequence, the prayers, hymns, and liturgical gestures of Orthodoxy are important mediums of teaching. The regulating of the Services also serves to preserve the true Faith and to guard it against error.

The celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the Sacraments is always led by an ordained Clergymen. In the local parish, this will generally be a priest who acts in the name of the bishop, and who is sometime assisted by a deacon. When the bishop is present, he presides at the Services. The vestments of the clergy express their special calling to the ministry as well as their particular office.

Since Worship in Orthodoxy is an expression of the entire Church the active participation and involvement of the congregation is required. There are no "private" or "said" Services in the Orthodox Church and none may take place without a congregation. This strong sense of community is expressed in the prayers and exhortations which are in the plural tense. The congregation is expected to participate actively in the Services in ways such as: singing the hymns; concluding the prayers with "Amen"; responding to the petitions; making the sign of the Cross; bowing; and, especially, by receiving Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy. Standing is the preferred posture of prayer in the Orthodox Church. The congregation kneels only at particularly solemn moments, such as the Invocation of the Holy Spirit during the Divine Liturgy.



The Litany is an important part of Orthodox Services. A litany is a dialogue between the priest or deacon and the congregation, which consists of a number of prayer-petitions, followed by the response "Lord, have mercy" or "Grant this, O Lord." Litanies occur frequently throughout the Services and often serve to distinguish particular sections.

Orthodox Worship has always been celebrated in the language of the people. There is no official or universal liturgical language. Often, two or more languages are used in the Services to accommodate the needs of the congregation. Throughout the world, Services are celebrated in more than twenty languages which include such divers ones as Greek, Slavonic, Arabic, Albanian, Rumanian, English, and Luganda.

By Rev. Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald

The Ten Commandments ~ Οι Δεκα Εντολές

1. I am the Lord your God, and you shall have no other gods before me

Has God been the source, center and hope of my life? Have I put myself, others or things before God? Have I failed to trust in God's existence, love and mercy? Have I failed to pray to God, to worship Him and to thank Him for His blessings? Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments faithfully? Have I murmured or complained against God in adversity? Have I praised and glorified God through my words and deeds?

2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image in order to worship it

Have I valued anyone or anything above God? Have I given to anyone or anything the love, honor and worship that belongs to God alone? Have I made an idol of any person, idea, occupation, or thing?

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

Have I blasphemed God's holy name in any way? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken any solemn vow or promise? Have I entered into an agreement, promise or contract against God's law? Have I cursed or used foul language?

4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy

Have I worshiped regularly on Sundays and major feast days and have I helped others to do the same? Have I worked unnecessarily on Sundays or major feast days or caused others to do so? Have I spent the Lord's Day in a wholesome and edifying ways?

1. Honor your father and mother

Have I loved and respected my parents as I should? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I disobeyed them, deceived them or caused them pain by my words or deeds? Have I treated all my family members with patience and love?

6. Thou shall not kill

Have I caused the harm, injury or death of anyone? Have I wished my own or anyone's harm or death? Have I been cruel to animals or destroyed any life unnecessarily?

7. You shall not commit adultery

Have I committed any immoral acts alone or with others? Have I caused others to commit immoral acts? Have I committed immoral acts in my heart?

8. You shall not steal

Have I taken anything that was not mine from anyone or from anywhere? Have I cheated anyone? Have I caused others to steal or cheat? Have I tried to find the owners of lost things I have found? Have I damaged or destroyed anything that belonged to another? Have I defrauded anyone of rightful wages? Have I paid my debts? Have I given to the poor and to philanthropic causes in proportion to my means?

9. You shall not bear false witness

Have I given false testimony against anyone? Have I spoken evil, told lies or spread rumors about anyone? Have I disclosed to anyone the sins and faults of another? Have I made careless statements or done anything else to harm the name and reputation of another? Have I engaged in idle gossip?

10. You shall not covet

Have I looked with envy jealousy or hatred toward the possessions talents or achievements of others? Have I desired the downfall or loss of others out of evil intent that I might benefit? Have I grieved that God has bestowed greater blessings on others than on me?





“The Beatitudes ~ Οι Μακαρισμοί”

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

A lot of people had come to see Jesus. He went up on the mountainside and called his disciples to him and He began to teach them saying:

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Have I truly recognized my complete dependence on God? Have I been proud arrogant and self-righteous in my ways? Have I been selfish, possessive and self-seeking? Have I sought after status power and wealth?

2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Have I endured difficulties and afflictions with faith and patience? Have I felt sadness for the sufferings of the poor, the hungry, and addicted; the sick, the lonely and the sinful of the world? Have I truly been sorrowful for my sins and faults?

3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Have I tried to serve or rather to dominate others at home, school, work, office, Church and elsewhere? Have I nursed against anyone? Have I been resentful, bitter, unforgiving or insulting and abusive to others? Have I loved my enemies?

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Have I truly yearned for God's will to be done in all things? Have I worked for justice in my family, society and the world in ways within my reach? Have I tried to cultivate a righteous life through prayer, fasting, worship, receiving Holy Communion and deeds of love toward others?

5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Have I shown compassion and help toward the poor, hungry, lonely and needy around me? Have I tried to understand and forgive others? Have I been indifferent judgmental or legalistic?

6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Have I loved goodness, purity and holiness? Have I succumbed to evil motives and intentions? Have I given way to impure thoughts, words or deeds? Have I been guilty of bias and prejudice? Have I been hypocritical, pretentious or self-indulgent to sinful passions?

7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Do I have God's peace in my heart? Have I been unfairly angry, aggressive or impatient? Have I worked for peace at home, work, Church and in society? Have I been irritable, polemical, or divisive?

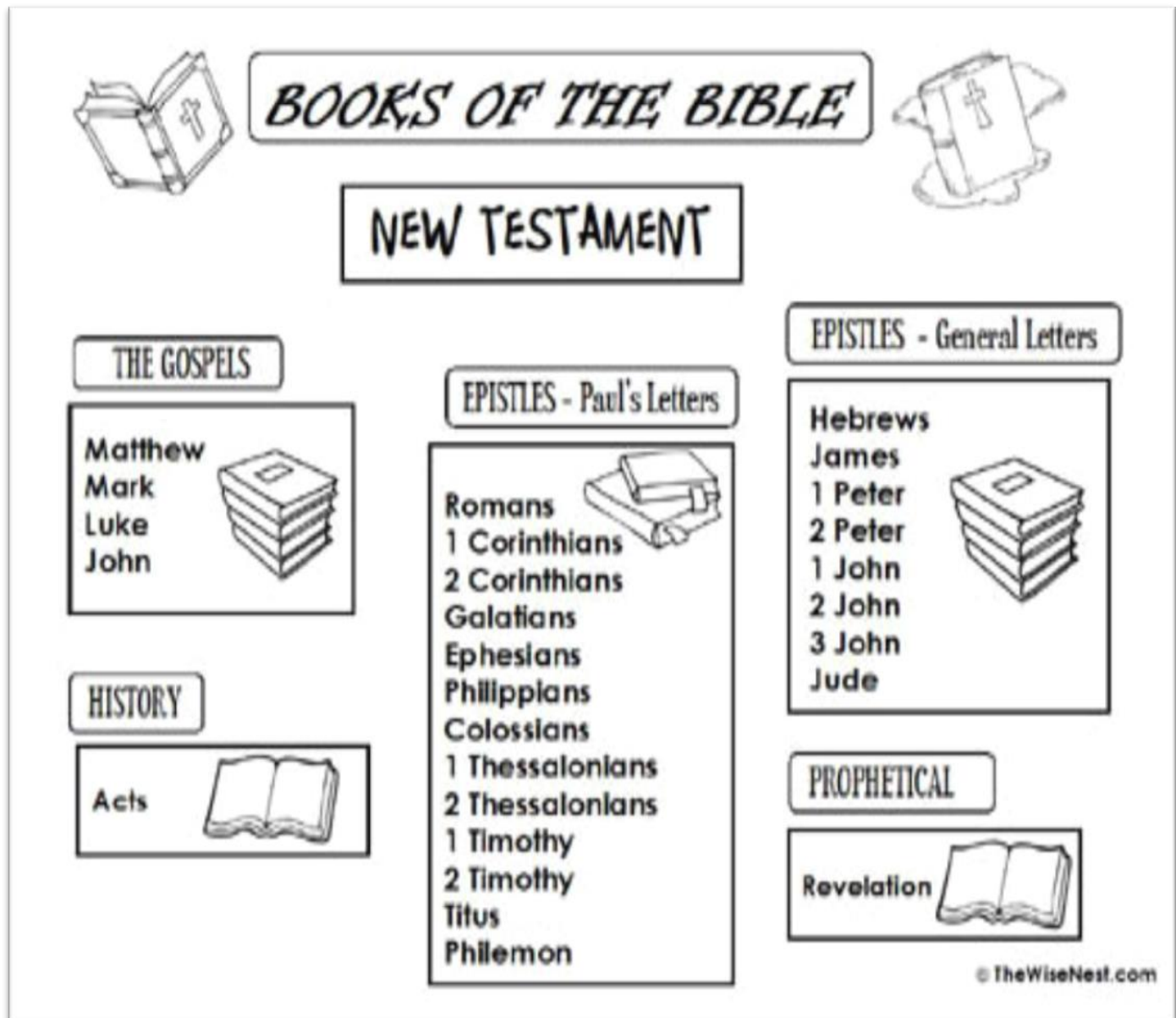
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Have I complained when persecuted for God's sake? Have I prayed for my persecutors? Have I failed to defend anyone in the truth for fear of humiliation or persecution? Have I had the courage to stand up for what is right despite criticism, ridicule or persecution? Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you on my account; rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. Is the joy of Christ in my heart even in trying moments? Have I been pessimistic despondent or despairing? Have I truly delighted in the promise of God's treasures in heaven?





Do you live a life of JOY? JESUS first, OTHERS next, YOURSELF last?

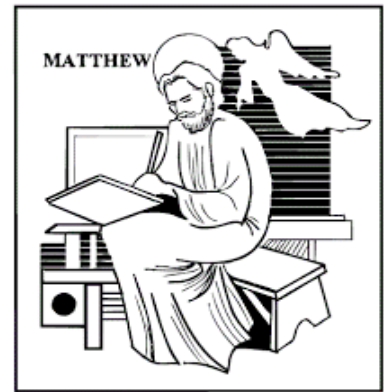
Christ is the Theme of each of the 8 sections of the Bible

1. **The Law:** The Foundation is told for Christ (Genesis- Deuteronomy)
2. **History:** Preparation for Christ (Joshua – Esther)
3. **Poetry:** Aspiration for Christ is expressed (Job – Song of Solomon)
4. **Prophecy:** The Expectation of Christ (Isaiah – Malachi)
5. **Gospels:** The Manifestation of Christ (Matthew – John)
6. **Acts:** The Propagation of Christ (Acts)
7. **Epistles:** Interpretation and Application of Christ (Romans – Jude)
8. **Revelation:** The Consummation of all things in Christ (Revelation)

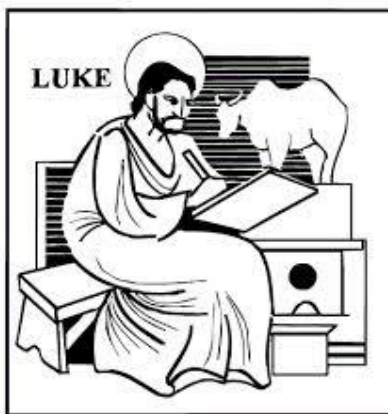


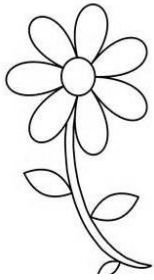


	Matt Lion	Jesus as the righteous King of the Jews, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Emphasis on righteousness . [Spoke 18, pg 323]
	Mark Ox	Jesus as the Servant and the Workman of the Lord. Emphasis on His Miracles, Strength, and Action . [Spoke 19, pg 331]
	Luke Man	Jesus as the Great Physician and Friend of Sinners. Emphasis on His Humanity , Wisdom, and Mercy. [Spoke 20, pg 342]
	John Eagle	Jesus as the Word of God, the Living Bread that "came down from heaven." Emphasis on His Divinity . [Spoke 21, pg 355]



The 4 Evangelists ~ 4 Gospels = Οι 4 Ευαγγελιστές ~ Τα 4 Ευαγγέλια



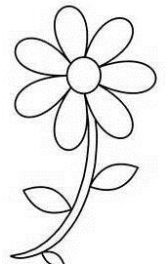


TEN ESSENTIAL VIRTUES ~ 10 Βασικές Αρετές

Parents can only give good advice or put their children on the right path

The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands

Virtues are habits of mind, heart, and behavior. They develop through deliberate practice.



1. The ancient Greeks considered **Wisdom ~ Σοφία** to be the master virtue, the one that directs all the others. Wisdom is good judgment. It enables us to make reasoned decisions that are both good for us and good for others. Wisdom tells us how to put the other virtues into practice, when to act, how to act, and how to balance different virtues when they conflict (as they do, for example, when telling the honest truth might hurt someone's feelings). Wisdom enables us to discern correctly, to see what is truly important in life, and to set priorities.

The 2nd virtue named by the Greeks is **Justice ~ Δικαιοσύνη**. Justice means respecting the rights of all persons. Since we are persons ourselves, justice also includes self-respect, a proper regard for our own rights and dignity. Schools, in their character education efforts, often center on justice because it includes so many of the interpersonal virtues—civility, honesty, respect, responsibility, and tolerance (correctly understood not as approval of other people's beliefs or behaviors but as respect for their freedom of conscience as long as they do not violate the rights of others). A concern for justice—and the capacity for moral indignation in the face of injustice—inspires us to work as citizens to build a more just society and world.

A 3rd, much-neglected virtue is **Fortitude ~ Θάρρος**. Fortitude enables us to do what is right in the face of difficulty. The right decision in life is often the hard one. One high school captures that truth in its motto: "Do the hard right instead of the easy wrong." A familiar maxim says' Fortitude, as the educator James Stenson points out, is the inner toughness that enables us to overcome or withstand hardship, defeats, inconvenience, and pain. Courage, resilience, patience, perseverance, endurance, and a healthy self-confidence are all aspects of fortitude. Teen suicide has risen sharply in the past three decades; one reason may be that many young people are unprepared to deal with life's inevitable disappointments. We need to teach our children that we develop our character more through our sufferings than our successes, that setbacks can make us stronger if we don't give in to feeling sorry for ourselves.

The 4th virtue named by the Greeks is **Self-Control ~ Αυτοελεγχος** (which they called "temperance"). Self-control is the ability to govern ourselves. It enables us to control our temper, regulate our sensual appetites and passions, and pursue even legitimate pleasures in moderation. It's the power to resist temptation. It enables us to wait—and to delay gratification in the service of higher and distant goals. An old saying recognizes the importance of self-control in the moral life: "Either we rule our desires, or our desires rule us." Reckless, self-destructive, and criminal behaviors flourish in the absence of self-control.

A 5th essential virtue is **Love ~ Αγάπη**. The Greeks covered a lot of the moral territory but by no means all of it. Love goes beyond justice; it gives more than fairness requires. Love is the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of another. A whole cluster of important human virtues—empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, service, loyalty, patriotism (love of what is noble in one's country), and forgiveness—make up the virtue of love. In his book *With Love and Prayers*, F. Washington Jarvis writes: "Love—selfless love that expects nothing back—is the most powerful force in the universe." Love is a demanding virtue.

6. A **Positive Attitude ~ Καλή Διαθεση** is a 6th essential virtue. If you have a negative attitude in life, you're a burden to yourself and others. If you have a positive attitude, you're an asset to yourself and others. The character strengths of hope, enthusiasm, flexibility, and a sense of humor are all part of a positive attitude. All of us, young and old, need to be reminded that our attitude is something we *choose*. "Most people," Abraham Lincoln said, "are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Said Martha Washington: "I have learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends on our dispositions and not on our circumstances. We carry the seeds of the one or the other with us in our minds wherever we go."

7. Old-fashioned *Hard Work ~ Σκληρή Δουλεία / Εργατικότητα* is a 7th indispensable virtue. There is no substitute in life for work. "I challenge you," says the great basketball coach John Wooden, "to show me one single solitary individual who achieved his or her own personal greatness without lots of hard work." Hard work includes initiative, diligence, goal-setting, and resourcefulness.

An 8th essential virtue is *Integrity ~ Ακεραιότητα*. Integrity is adhering to moral principle, being faithful to moral conscience, keeping our word, and standing up for what we believe. To have integrity is to be "whole," so that what we say and do in different situations is consistent rather than contradictory. Integrity is different from honesty, which tells the truth to others. Integrity is telling the truth to oneself. "The most dangerous form of deception," says author Josh Billings, "is self-deception." Self-deception enables us to do whatever we wish and find a reason to justify our actions.

9. *Gratitude ~ Ευγνωμοσύνη* is a 9th essential virtue. "Gratitude, like love, is not a feeling but an act of the will," observes writer Anne Husted Burleigh. "We choose to be thankful, just as we choose to love." Gratitude has been described as the secret of a happy life. It reminds us that we all drink from wells we did not dig. It moves us to count our everyday blessings.

10. *Humility ~ Ταπεινότητα* is the final essential virtue, can be considered the foundation of the whole moral life. Humility is necessary for the acquisition of the other virtues because it makes us aware of our imperfections and leads us to try to become a better person. "Humility," writes the educator David Isaacs, "is recognizing both our inadequacies and abilities and pressing our abilities into service without attracting attention or expecting applause." "Half the harm that is done in the world," said T. S. Eliot, "is due to people who want to feel important." "Every virtue turns worthless," writes the philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand, "if pride creeps into it—which happens whenever we glory in our goodness." Humility enables us to take responsibility for our faults and failings (rather than blaming someone else), apologize for them, and seek to make amends.

By Dr. Tom Lickona

Μια είναι η Αρετή: Η ταπεινώση = Humiliation, η Αγάπη Πνευματική, η Αρχοντία = Nobility και το Φιλοτιμο. Με αυτές τις αρετές είναι τα παιδιά της αγάπης και της ταπεινώσης.

Τα Παθή = Passion / Disease: 1. Η Φιλαντία = Selfishness είναι η μητέρα των Παθών.

2. Η Υπερηφάνεια = Pride είναι η ρίζα του κακού.

3. Η Κατακρίση = Criticism είναι η μεγάλη αδικία = Injustice

With these Passions are the Children of Selfishness and Pride

Με αυτά τα παθή είναι τα παιδιά της φιλαυτίας και της υπερηφάνειας



HOW OLD IS THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH? ~ Ποσο Χρονων ειναι η Ορθοδοξια;

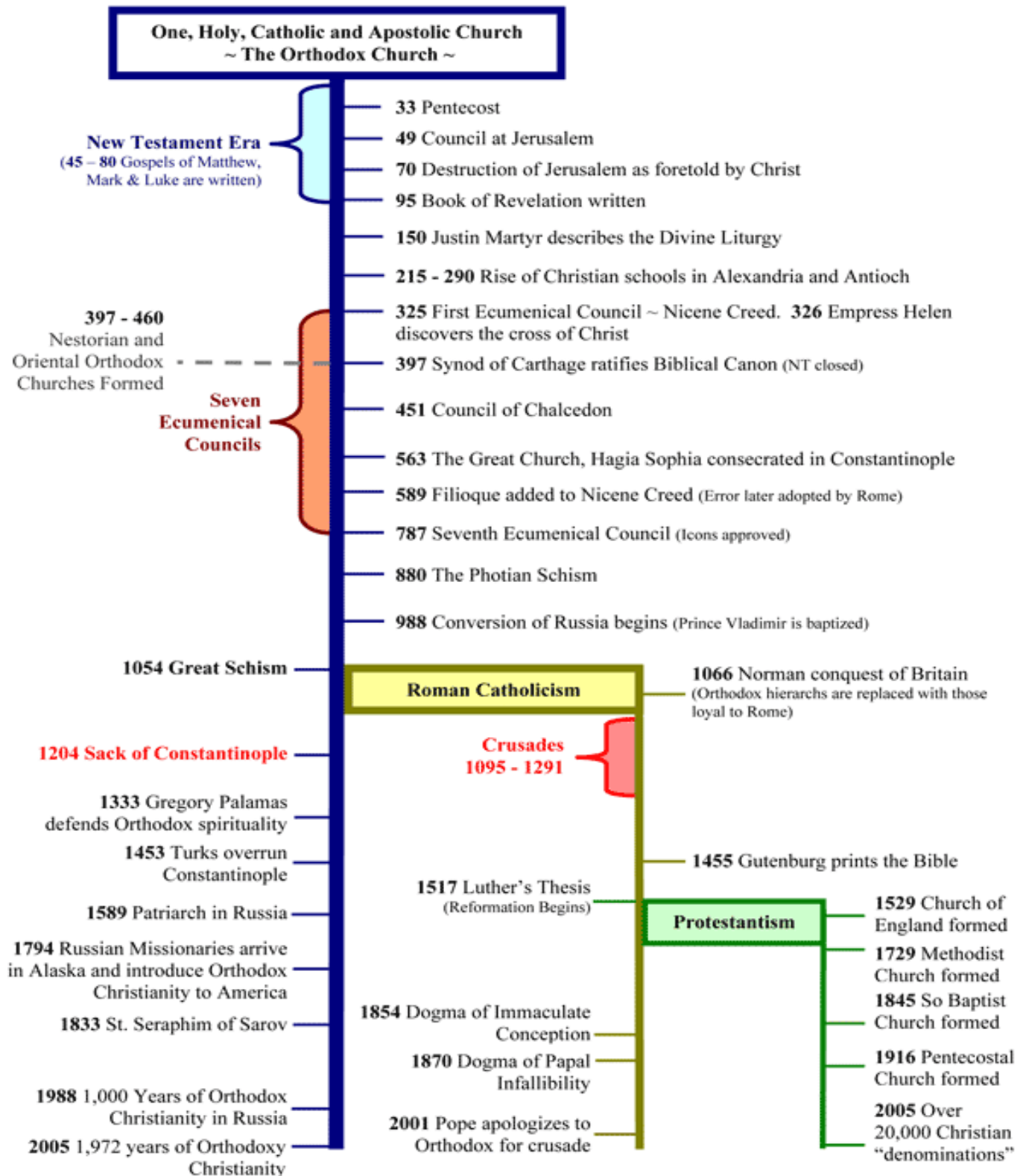
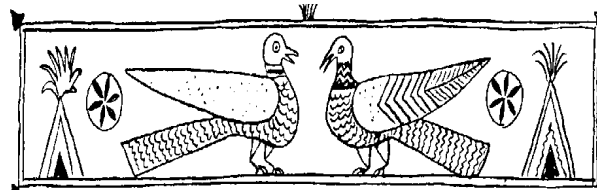
Rev. Dr. Miltiades Efthimiou

- If you are a Lutheran, your religion was founded by Martin Luther, an ex-monk of the Roman Catholic Church, in the year 1517.
- If you belong to the Church of England, your religion was founded by King Henry VIII in the year 1534 because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.
- If you are a Presbyterian, your religion was founded by John Knox in Scotland in the year 1560.
- If you are a Congregationalist, your religion was originated by Robert Brown in Holland in 1582.
- If you are a Protestant Episcopalian, your religion was an offshoot of the Church of England, founded by Samuel Seabury, in the American colonies in the 17th century.
- If you are a Baptist, you owe the tenets of religion to John Smyth, who launched it in Amsterdam in 1606.
- If you are of the Dutch Reformed Church, you recognize Michelis Jones as founder because he originated your religion in New York.
- If you are a Methodist, your religion was founded by John and Charles Wesley in England in 1774.
- If you are a Mormon (Latter Day Saints), Joseph Smith started your religion in Palmyra, N. Y. in 1829.
- If you worship with the Salvation Army, your sect began with William Booth in London in 1865.
- If you are a Christian Scientist, you look to 1879 as the year in which your religion was founded by Mary Baker Eddy.
- If you belong to one of the religious sects known as “Church of the Nazarene”, “Pentecostal Gospel”, “Holiness Church,”, or “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” your religion is one of the hundreds of new sects founded by men within the past hundred years.
- If you are a Roman Catholic, your church shared the same rich apostolic and doctrinal heritage as the Orthodox Church for the first thousand years of its history since during the first millennium they were one and the same Church. Lamentably, in 1054, the Pope of Rome broke away from the other four Apostolic Sees (Patriarchates), by tampering with the original Creed of the Church, and considering himself to be the universal pastor over other Sees and infallible.
- If you are a Uniate Roman Catholic of any Eastern Rites, you had your roots in the Orthodox Church, but were forced into the Roman Catholic Church, either by financial hardship, or regional political/ ecclesiastical unrest (e.g.: Malankara Syrian Catholics), or by western colonialization (e.g.: Syro-Malabar Rite), or by military strength.

If you are an Orthodox Christian

If you are an Orthodox Christian, your religion was founded in the year 33 by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It has not changed since that time. Our Church is now almost 2000 years old. And it is for this reason, that Orthodoxy, the Church of the Apostles and the Fathers is considered the true “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” This is the greatest legacy we can pass on to the young people of the new millennium!





Note: All Christian churches can be traced back historically to the Orthodox Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Only God can turn a **MESS**
into a **MESS**age, a **TEST**
into a **TEST**imony, a **TR**ial
into a **TR**iumph, a **VICT**im
into a **VICT**ory. **GOD** is
GOOD... all the time!*



Jesus came to give
LIVING WATER to
a thirsty world, and
we have the honor
and **PRIVILEGE** of
sharing his message
by the power of the
Holy Spirit.

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS – 4th Sunday of Lent

St. John taught that divine grace can only be achieved through Jesus Christ. He explains the virtues of the Christian faith in 30 steps. The rungs on the Ladder of spiritual perfection are:

1. Renounce the world and its glories.
2. Have a pure heart.
3. Always look to heaven, this life is only temporary.
4. Be obedient to God.
5. Have repentance.
6. Remember the dead.
7. Shed tears of sorrow and happiness.
8. Be humble.
9. Ask forgiveness and forgive others.
10. Don't speak evil of others.
11. Know when to speak and when to be silent.
12. Despise lies and speak only the truth.
13. Rest, but don't be lazy.
14. Be frugal and avoid lust.
15. Try to achieve harmony of mind, body and soul.
16. Gather treasures in heaven and not on earth.
17. Continually strengthen your faith.
18. Live for the soul and not only for the body.
19. Attend church services and glorify God publicly.
20. Practice private prayer.
21. Fear God.
22. Shun pride.
23. Shun boastfulness and vain ambitions.
24. Be wise as a serpent and meek as a lamb.
25. Nurture clean thoughts and good habits.
26. Have no passion except for God.
27. Learn silence and contemplation.
28. Pray, work and be steadfast.
29. Continually & courageously fight temptation & sin.
30. Believe in the Holy Trinity and ask for guidance.



**Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Archbishop of America Demetrios
Archbishop of Constantinople - New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I
Headquarters Patriarchal: Istanbul, Turkey
Archdiocesan: New York City, NY**



The Orthodox Church today, numbering over **250 million worldwide**, is a communion of self-governing churches, each administratively independent of the other, but united by a common faith and spirituality. Their underlying unity is based on identity of doctrines, sacramental life and worship, which distinguishes Orthodox Christianity. The mission of the Archdiocese is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, to teach and spread the Orthodox Christian faith, to energize, cultivate, and guide the life of the Church in the United States of America according to the Orthodox Christian faith and tradition.

The G. O. C. in America considers that it sanctifies the faithful through divine worship, especially the Holy Eucharist and other sacraments, building the spiritual and ethical life of the faithful in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, Sacred Tradition, the doctrines and canons of the Ecumenical and local Councils, the canons of the Holy Apostles and the Fathers of the Church and of all other Councils recognized by the Orthodox Church. The Archdiocese states that it serves as a beacon, carrier, and witness of the message of Christ to all persons who live in the United States of America, through divine worship, preaching, teaching, and living of the Orthodox Christian faith.

Before the establishment of a Greek Archdiocese in the Western Hemisphere there were numerous communities of Greek Orthodox Christians. **The first Greek Orthodox community in the Americas was founded in 1864, in New Orleans, Louisiana**, by a small colony of Greek merchants. History also records that on June 26, 1768, **the first Greek colonists landed at St. Augustine, Florida**, the oldest city in America. **The first permanent community was founded in New York City in 1892**, today's Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and the See of the Archbishop of America. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America was **incorporated in 1921** and officially recognized by the State of New York in 1922. In 1908, the Church of Greece received authority over the Greek Orthodox congregation of America, but in 1922 Patriarch Meletius IV of Constantinople transferred the archdiocese back to the jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople. In 1996, the one Archdiocese was split by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, dividing the administration of the two continents into four parts (America, Canada, Central America, and South America) and leaving only the territory of the United States for the Archdiocese of America.

The G. O. Archdiocese of America is composed of an Archdiocesan District (New York City) and **eight metropolises** (formerly dioceses): **New Jersey, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Boston and Denver**. It is governed by the Archbishop and the Eparchial Synod of Metropolitans. The Synod is headed by **the Archbishop (as the first among equals)** and comprises the Metropolitans who oversee the ministry and operations of their respective metropolises. It has all the authority and responsibility which the Church canons provide for a provincial synod.

There are more than **500 Parishes, 800 Priests** and approximately 440,000 to 2 million faithful in the GOA of America, depending on the source of reports and the counting method being used. The number of parishes in the Greek Archdiocese rose by about 9% in the decade from 1990 to 2000, and membership growth has largely been in terms of existing members having children. Membership is concentrated in the Northeastern United States. The states with the highest rates of adherence are Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and New York. However, there are also large numbers of members in Florida and California. The Archdiocese receives within its ranks and under its spiritual aegis and pastoral care Orthodox Christians, who either as individuals or as organized groups in the Metropolises and Parishes have voluntarily come to it and which acknowledge the ecclesiastical and canonical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

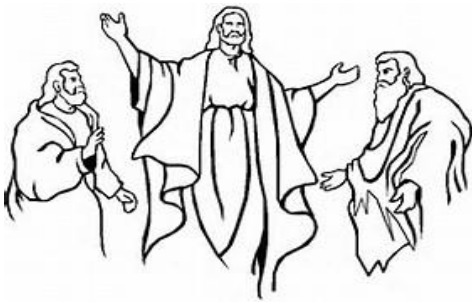
The Archdiocese also includes **21 monastic communities**, 17 of which were founded by Elder Ephraim (former abbot of Philotheou monastery). The largest of these is St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery (Florence, Arizona). Additionally, one seminary is operated by the Greek Archdiocese, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, which educates not only Greek Archdiocese seminarians but also those from other jurisdictions, as well. **Parishes:** The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has one **seminary school** under its jurisdiction. This school is called **Holy Cross**. The seminary is located in Brookline, Massachusetts and in 2012 celebrated its 75th anniversary as a school of theology. The campus is also home to the only accredited Greek Orthodox undergraduate college in America, **Hellenic College**. These two schools are situated on the highest geographical point adjacent to **Boston**, known as the "Holy Hill".

Orthodox Christian Virtues ~ Οι Χριστιανικές Αρετές

As Orthodox Christians, our goal is to live a pure and holy life. There is a set of guidelines we can follow to help us live a virtuous life. If we concentrate on doing what is pure and holy, then we don't need to worry about doing what makes God unhappy with us. The Holy Virtues are pleasing to God but their opposite sins keep us away from God. To help us, we receive the Holy Sacraments, we pray for guidance, and we surround ourselves with people who will lead us closer to God. At the same time, God understands that sometimes it is difficult to follow all these guidelines, and teaches us that through repentance and confession, all our sins will be forgiven.

Some Christian Duties ~ Χριστιανικά Καθήκοντα

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. To Teach the Ignorant | 8. To Give a drink to the Thirsty |
| 2. To Advise those in Doubt | 9. To Feed the Hungry |
| 3. To Correct the Sinner | 10. To Clothe the Naked |
| 4. To Comfort the Sorrowful | 11. To Visit the Sick |
| 5. To Bear wrongs Patiently | 12. To Redeem the Captive |
| 6. To Forgive your Enemies | 13. To Shelter the Homeless |
| 7. To Pray for the Living and the Dead | 14. To Bury the Dead |



The 3 Divine Virtues

1. **Faith**: We Believe in the Word of God
2. **Hope**: We Trust that God will give us Eternal Life and the Means to attain it.
3. **Love**: We Love God above all things, and our Neighbors as ourselves for the Love of God.

The 7 Cardinal Virtues

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Humility | Thinking of ourselves as we really are |
| 2. Generosity | Being Generous to others |
| 3. Charity | Being Pure in our Words, Thoughts, and Deeds |
| 4. Meekness | Not losing our Self-Control |
| 5. Temperance | Eating and Drinking properly |
| 6. Patience | Treating all with Kindness and Care |
| 7. Diligence | Doing our Duty to God, Neighbors, and Ourselves |

The 7 Capital Sins ~ Αμαρτίες

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Bride | Thinking of Ourselves as we really are |
| 2. Greed | Wanting all the Money & Material things we can get |
| 3. Lust | Wanting impure things |
| 4. Anger | Lack of Self-Control |
| 5. Gluttony | Eating and Drinking too much |
| 6. Envy | Being Jealous of another |
| 7. Sloth | Laziness is not doing our Christian Duties |



Altar Boys ~ Acolytes ~ Τα Ιεροπαιδα

Your Ministry is very Valuable for our Church!
Please, BE ON TIME! The Liturgy starts at 10 o'clock.
Or someone else will Replace you that day!

Pay attention to the Divine Liturgy!
During the Divine Liturgy the Acolytes represent the Angels;
The Captains must be Prepare to Read the Epistle;

Always be Respectfull to others! Stay only with your own Group!
If you're a Substitute that Day, Please, Stay back and allow that Team to Serve First!

If you know that will be Absent on your particular assignment,
Please, call your Captain or someone else to switch your day with his!
This way everyone definitely will serve once a month;

We are very Proud of You! Thank You so much and God Bless You!

Serving in the Holy Altar is a sacred ministry provided by the dedicated youth of our Parish. One of the greatest joys, privileges and responsibilities open to our Orthodox young men, is service in the Holy Altar. Our Parish is genuinely blessed to have so many boys willing to dedicate themselves to this ministry.

The responcibilities open to our graduated Acolytes are several: Learning to assist our Chanters; reading during the Services, and helping our Choir. Our Altar graduates are always welcome to serve during any Weekday services, Holy week and during the Summer months. We are always are exceedingly greatful to former servers for their love and dedication to our Church and to our Beloved Parish.

**On the 3rd Sunday of September: An Oath, a Team Picture and
 The Coffee Hour will be in Honor of our Acolytes by their Families**
Must attend the 4th Salutations to the Virgin Mary (Friday at 7:00p.m.)
Graduation day will always be on the 2nd Sunday of June



Ten Ways to Love

1. **LISTEN** without interrupting (Proverbs 18)
2. **SPEAK** without accusing (James 1:19)
3. **GIVE** without sparing (Proverbs 21:26)
4. **PRAY** without ceasing (Colossians 1:9)
5. **ANSWER** without arguing (Proverbs 17:1)
6. **SHARE** without pretending (Ephesians 4:15)
7. **ENJOY** without complaint (Philippians 2:14)
8. **TRUST** without wavering (Corinthians 13:7)
9. **FORGIVE** without punishing (Collosians 3:13)
10. **PROMISE** without forgetting (Proverbs 13:12)





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Epistles

Letters to Jewish Christians

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

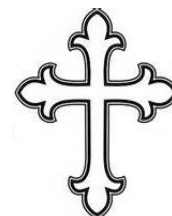
Letters to Jewish and Gentile Christians

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians

Epistles

Letters to all Christians

Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon



Rules for Daily Life



*BEGIN THE DAY WITH GOD;
Kneel down to Him in prayer;
Lift up thy heart to His abode.
And seek His Love to share.*

*OPEN THE BOOK OF GOD,
And read a portion there;
That it may hallow all thy thoughts,
And sweeten all thy care.*

*GO THROUGH THE DAY WITH GOD,
What ever thy work may be;
Where ever thou art – at home, abroad,
He still is near to thee.*

*CONVERSE IN MIND WITH GOD,
Thy spirit heavenward raise;
Acknowledge every good bestowed,
And offer grateful praise.*

*CONCLUDE THE DAY WITH GOD,
Thy sins to Him confess;
Trust in the Lord's stoning blood,
And plead His righteousness.*

*LIE DOWN AT NIGHT WITH GOD,
Who gives His servants sleep;
And when thou tread'st the vale of death,
He will thee guard and keep.*

Author Unkown



***J**esus, Son of God Eternal
Everlasting Lord is He,
Savior of a world of sinners,
Universal King to be,
Sought us, brought us victory.*

***C**hrist is due all adoration,
Humbly born to save our race,
Ruler of the whole creation
Intercedes and gives us grace,
Saves us from sin's condemnation,
Truly worthy of all praise!*