

INTRODUCTION: The Importance of the Eucharist

- The Divine Liturgy NOT a mere text... not mere poetry to be studied and analyzed as such.
- The Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist is meant to be lived, celebrated.... To participate in.
- Goal of these classes... to increase understanding of the Liturgy so to
  - To improve our experience of the Divine Liturgy
  - Be knowledgeable worshippers.
  - Improve our worship
  - Increase our praise
  - Be inspired at the beauty and the wisdom of the Liturgy
  - Hear the Gospel preached through the Liturgy
  - Become RECIPIENTS of God's Grace... Spirit
  - Be sanctified
  - Be transformed... have our "original beauty restored."
  - By God's grace, mercy, compassion and man-befriending enter into God's presence.
  - Become ONE BODY of the SAME BLOOD with Christ
  - Be SAVED by being united with the God-man Jesus Christ.
- Participation the the Divine Liturgy is the most important thing that we do as Orthodox Christians. It is the most important thing that we ever do as clergy or lay people.
- The Divine Liturgy DEFINES Orthodox Christianity.
- It makes us recognizable as Orthodox Christians to each other and to the world.
- Our common belief in what we believe about the Eucharist is what has always made members of the Orthodox Body of Christ recognizable to other Orthodox Christians
- NOTE: How the Roman Government technically "persecuted" Orthodox Christians.
  - Outlawed Eucharist
  - Made legal charges against Christians based on rumors and accusations from what Romans heard about the Liturgy
    - "Cannibalism"
    - "Incest"
    - "Atheism"
    - "UnRoman"
  - Forbade Christians from congregating to celebrate the Eucharist
  - Culminating with "Great Persecution" of Diocletian, all religious articles confiscated so to eliminate Eucharist.
- Thus, it is the week by week gathering at the Eucharist that "constitutes the church." When we talk about the "Ekklesia" (Greek for congregation) is the gathering of the Body of Christ so to worship God... to commune with God both on earth and in heaven.
- By the Eucharist we become "the Body" of Christ.
- "The Eucharist is the eschatological presence of Christ in this age."
  - We are in the end times.
  - We belong to Christ.

- The age to come... the Heavenly Kingdom... is present... NOW... here and now when every we gather for the Divine Liturgy.
- Week by week, whether on Sunday or on a weekday, in the Eucharistic gathering we are planted in Christ.
- We become eschatological beings.
- The Eucharist is the means by which God...
  - Reveals Himself to us...
  - CREATES us.
  - Plants His Kingdom in the midsts of men.
  - The Liturgy as a JOURNEY... from whence to where?

### Origins of the Divine Eucharist

- The origins of the words and acts of the Divine Liturgy are well known.
- Directly traced back to the Eucharistic meal that Our Lord Had with His disciples in the Upper Room. All three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) narrate this meal.
- We perpetuate this meal because Jesus commanded them to do so and taught them how to do so.
- “Do this in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:19) “on the first day of the week” the Church has gathered together “to break bread.”
  - NOTE: “Remembrance” does NOT mean that this meal is merely “symbolic” as some Protestant denominations teach (and thus there is no “real presence” of the Lord in the Body and the Blood.)
  - The ancient and biblical understanding of “anamnesis” means to “call to mind, to commemorate”... in the sense of coming into the presence of what is commemorated. In fact, in a few classes, we are going delve deeper into this “anamnesis.”
  - The whole Liturgy is an anamnesis... a “remembrance.”
- The disciples and the apostles and their successors have followed this commandment to this day.
- In the first decades of the Church, until the Christians were barred from the synagogues, Christians worshipped in the Temple and met in the Synagogues and added this meal to that worship.
- Q: On what day of the week did they congregate for the Eucharistic meal? A: The Lord was crucified on a Friday, the Day of Preparation (Paraskevi), the day before the Sabbath, and He was risen on the day after the Sabbath. They celebrated the Eucharist on the day AFTER the Sabbath, the “Lord’s Day” (Kyriaki imera) (Acts 20:7).
- On the Lord’s Day the followers of Jesus gathered together to partake of the Lord’s Supper”, that is to celebrate the Liturgy.
- The PATTERN of worship for the early believers was the synagogue worship done on the Sabbath morning. The Christians would gather for worship on Saturday, then gather for the meal after sunset, which was considered “the next day” for the eucharistic meal.
- 70 AD: The Council of Jamnia. Purification of Jewish worship practices. Christians (and other Jewish sects) were removed from the synagogues.
- Christians brought the pattern with them.

## Simple liturgical structure of the ancient Church

Q: How many of these things sound familiar to you each Sunday at Liturgy?

- A bishop (episkopos, overseer) presided, surrounded by presbyters/elders.
- Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs were sung
- Lessons from the Prophets were read.
  - Question: Why not the New Testament? Not written yet!
  - Later the epistles and Gospels read.
- Preaching the bishop and/or presbyters given to expound on readings and to encourage.
- Deacons brought the Eucharistic Gifts and vessels in (bread and wine)
  - The bread and wine brought and offered by the people (prosphora)
- A prayer of thanksgiving (Anaphora) was offered.
  - “ana” up + “fero” “to offer up”
  - Bread and wine consecrated
- Collection made from the faithful
- “Kiss of peace” exchanged
- Service ended with the distribution of the Gifts.

## Early witnesses to this Eucharistic meal

- New Testament, Acts, Epistles of St. Paul
  - Acts 20:6-11, Eutyches falls asleep and falls out the window during St. Paul’s sermon
- Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 90-110 AD... shortly after St. Paul’s epistles). Contains the earliest Eucharistic texts outside of the Holy Scriptures.
- St. Clement’s “Letter to the Corinthians” (AD 95-98) contains what may have been a liturgical prayer used in this service.
- St. Justin Martyr (+AD 165) described the first Eucharistic service, including prayers, the readings that were used, what the sermon was like, what the kiss of peace was like, the Anaphora, Holy Communion, and many other details.

St. Justin Martyr describes the weekly worship of the Christians, (Apology, Chapter 67)

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost.

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a

participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

What we learn from these writings: Our Liturgy is essentially the same Eucharistic service (with some differences, of course) as these first Christians, which the Church has faithfully kept and transmitted to us.

- CHAPTER 1: Beginning the Journey
- At the Eucharist we stand in God's PRESENCE.
  - Face to face with the Living God.
  - This is a new privilege that many OT figures - patriarchs and prophets - longed for, hoped for, struggled and even were martyred for, but did not live to see the fulfillment in their longing.
  - WE enjoy this fulfillment... we, the spiritual children of the patriarchs and prophets... have inherited a great treasure... and the ministry of the OT saints is fulfilled in us. (Hebrews)
  - With the Incarnation, men were able to experience God's presence in a new, more fulfilled way.
  - Compare to Old Testament... God was present, but separate. Man, in his sin, could not approach their sinless God.
  - St. Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews that Christians have the privilege to approach God... God is in our midsts. He is our God and we are his people.
- What it means to stand in the presence of the Living God. What is necessary?
  - Desiring to be in God's presence.... Joyfully.
  - Must be done INTENTIONALLY. Conscious determination to be in Christ's presence.
  - Repentance.
  - The necessity of being fully present when coming to the Liturgy.
  - Faith in no other gods but the True God.
  - Renouncing the world.
  - Faith in Christ.
  - Sanctification.
- When does the journey of the Divine Liturgy "begin"?
  - Being in God's presence is a
    - BOLD thing to do.
    - Ask, "Do we really want to meet God"?
    - "Do I and we really want to be in His presence?"
    - Preparing for the Liturgy...
    - Anticipating the Liturgy.
    - Resolving to stand before God.
    - Do we long to meet Christ?

CHAPTER 2: “Blessed is the Kingdom!”

- The Divine Liturgy begins with an EXCLAMATION of joy by the priest.
  - Blessing the name of the Triune God
  - Blessing for God’s Heavenly Kingdom.
  - We bless the One, True God. The God in Trinity, undivided Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
  - We claim that there is only ONE true path to the Kingdom of Heaven.
- This exclamation is also an act of defiance... against...
  - Mammon
  - The World
  - All the Church’s rivals.
  - Denouncing false gods.
- The RESPONSE of the lay people to the priest’s defiant exclamation of joy: Amen!
  - “So be it.” “May it be so.” “Verily.” “Truly!”
  - A universal ancient response of strong agreement.
  - This response of the laity SEALS what the priest has exclaimed.
    - NOTE: Some Hebrew rabbinical scholars teach that the Hebrew word for “faith” emuna comes from the word “amen.”
    - So important is the response that in the Hebrew that it is the response of the people of God that DEFINES their faith.
  - This “amen” makes the exclamation by the priest a PRAYER of the whole Church.
  - It reveals the faith of the people in God and what the Orthodox Church believes and proclaims about Him.
  - Ecclesiastical note: The Divine Liturgy must have the presence of the laity to respond... at least one lay person must be present to have the Liturgy be valid.
  - The laity is critical to the celebration of the Liturgy. It is not the case in the Orthodox Church that the clergy are the “active” and the laity are merely “present” and/or a “passive” part of the Liturgy. BOTH have an active role in the Liturgy.
  - We think of worship as a specifically clerical sphere of activity. The priest celebrates, the laity attend. One is active, the other passive. It is another error and a serious one at that. The Christian term for worship is leitourgia which means precisely a corporate, common, all embracing action in which all those who are present are active participants. All prayers in the Orthodox Church are always written in terms of the plural we. We offer, we pray, we thank, we adore, we enter, we ascend, we receive. The layman is in a very direct way the co-celebrant of the priest, the latter offering to God the prayers of the Church, representing all people, speaking on their behalf. One illustration of this co-celebration may be helpful; the word Amen, to which we are so used, that we really pay no attention to it. And yet it is a crucial word. No prayer, no sacrifice, no blessing is ever given in the Church without being sanctioned by the Amen which means an approval, agreement, participation. To say Amen to anything means that I make it mine, that I give my consent to it... And “Amen” is indeed the Word of the laity in the Church, expressing the function of the laity as the People of God, which freely and joyfully accepts the Divine offer, sanctions it with its consent. There is really no service, no liturgy without the Amen of those who have been ordained to serve God as community, as Church.

- And, thus, whatever liturgical service we consider, we see that it always follows the pattern of dialogue, cooperation, collaboration, cooperation between the celebrant and the congregation. It is indeed a common action (“leitourgia”) in which the responsible participation of everyone is essential and indispensable, for through it the Church, the People of God, fulfills its purpose and goal.

### CHAPTER 3: The Great Litany

- The “Liturgy of the Word” begins. Explain “Liturgy of the Catechumen/Word” and “the Liturgy of the Faithful.”
- The Great Litany refers not just to its length, but to the scope that the litany covers... and to the totality of our needs and the requests that we make with these petitions.
- Every concern of men and women is prayed for. No aspect of human existence is left out.
  - Invitation to prayer... these are prayers by the people, both clergy and laity.
  - There are 11 petitions, 10 address common needs of people.
  - “Litany” comes from the Greek *lissomai*, to entreat
    - Originally chanted while in procession either around church or from one church to another (such as on a parish’s feast day)
  - “Great Synapse”
    - Sometimes the Great Litany is called “the Great Synapse” (*synapti*, collection)
    - When processions fell out of practice, the people “collected together” to pray.
  - Originally, these prayers are humble requests by catechumens and penitents who had not reached perfection.
    - Liturgy begins with humble prayers for material things... “ascending” to praying for loftier, spiritual things later on.
    - All needs are prayed for.
  - First three petitions are for peace.
    - Gives these petitions also the name “Litany of Peace.”
  - 10 of 11 are addressed by the deacon (if not, priest) to the people... these are not prayed directly to God.
    - the 11th “Help us, save us...” is not such a petition.
    - In all of these we pray for the common good.
- “In peace let us pray to the Lord...”
  - Begins with “In peace...”
  - “Peace” εἰρήνη (from *eirō*, "to join, tie together into a whole") – properly, wholeness, i.e. when all essential parts are joined together; peace (God's gift of wholeness).
  - Q: What is being joined when we pray for peace? A: Connected with God. Uniting our existence and our destiny with God. Uniting all of Creation with Him.
  - Peace is FUNDAMENTAL to all prayer and to the entirety of Christian life.
  - Peace is Jesus Christ’s great GIFT to the earth.
  - “In peace let us pray to the Lord.” Peace is something that we enter into. It is a state of being. It is entering into the fold of God’s protective wings.... Like hen that protects and guides her brood with her wings. We cast out all distractions.
  - First prayer gives the rule: when we pray, we must pray in peace. We cannot pray unless we are in peace.
    - First prayer tells us to clear the clutter, to leave the world of chaos at the door.
      - “peace” refers to peace with God... and with each other.
      - If we are at peace, we will be unassailable to the devil.
      - Rid confusion and double-mindedness.
  - “...let us pray to the Lord...”
    - *deithomen* (“let us beg of God”... let us pray)

- We admit that we are small and weak, insignificant, helpless before God.
- This prayer proceeds “glorifying” prayers such as “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal...” These will come later.
- We begin our prayers entreating, begging, imploring.
- “Lord have mercy.”
  - After this and each petition the people respond with “Lord have mercy.”
  - All petitions, again, are addressed to the people, not God. Then the people TURN them to God by saying “Lord have mercy.”
    - Shows us that these prayers are not just offered by priest. It is not just a dialogue between the priest and chanter/choir.
    - Everyone should shout, cry out “Lord have mercy.”
  - “Lord” here refers to Jesus Christ.
  - Why is this said at each petition?
    - Nothing else needs to be said.
    - We dare not ask for anything else but God’s mercy.
- “For the peace from above...”
  - The peace we seek does not come from this world.
  - It is a divine gift... divine peace that comes from Christ, the King of Peace.
  - Bishop K. Ware: “Peace is not just a psychological state produced by my own effort. True peace comes from above as a gift of God, a gift of grace.”
  - It is not man-made peace.
  - Christ is our peace.
  - It is righteousness bestowed, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
  - Peace is surety given to us from Christ, which comes from faith and hope in Him and His promises.
- “... and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - Christians are concerned about their souls, unlike the world.
  - We care about salvation... we pray for it as the supreme good that we can attain by God’s grace.
    - “What does a man gain if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul?”
    - We pray to obtain salvation of our souls which is in Jesus Christ.
  - Salvation is a process, a transformation.
    - We do not ask “are you saved?” like evangelical Christians do. It is not an instantaneous conversion.
    - We are saved if we “hold fast to the word that [is] preached to us” (1 Cor. 15:20)... “provided that we continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting (Col. 1:22,23)
    - St. Paul describes salvation as a process, a race. We are not finished until we are finished!
    - We can say “we shall be saved through the grace of Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:11)
    - We incessantly beg to receive this grace.
    - Salvation means wholeness, the fullness of life. We do not necessarily understand it only in legal, juridical, being released from guilt terms. We cannot have this wholeness of life without divine grace.
    - We pray for the salvation of our souls... as a community.
      - Salvation is not an individualistic matter.

- We are saved through and with others.
- We are to mutually support each other.
- “For the peace in the whole world...”
  - “Peace on earth” was declared by the angels at the birth of Christ.
  - True peace comes from us being “born from above.”
  - True peace can only come after achieving peace in our soul.
  - True peace cannot be imposed on others, i.e. by an army acting at the command of a king.
  - A true world of peace will only remain a utopia (*ou + topos*, no place) unless we live a life modeled after Jesus Christ.
    - “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27)
  - This peace is not passive, but active.... it is not just inward, but outward, practical, outgoing, active.
  - Like salvation, it is not just an individual quest, but for the whole world.
    - If you seek peace selfishly, you will not find it.
  - That being said, Christians can find a haven in the Church.
- “... for the well-being of the holy Churches of God.”
  - “well-being” here means to remain “Orthodox” and “steadfast to the Faith.”
  - We pray that all local Christian communities will be kept in the truth, that they remain firm in the Orthodox faith, and that they may overcome their trials and emerge victorious.
  - It is a prayer that we Orthodox may remain “the salt of the earth.”
  - “Churches” here refers to the Orthodox Churches, not to the various Christian denominations.
    - to the local Eucharistic Orthodox Communities as we encountered them in the New Testament.
  - Prayer from St. Basil’s Liturgy, we pray “to prevent schism in the Church; to pacify the raging of the heathen. Quickly stop the uprisings of heresies by the power of Your Holy Spirit.”
- “... and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - by “all” again we mean “all Orthodox Christians.”
  - As Churches remain stable, the faithful may remain united.
  - We may be united, partakes of one Bread and one Cup in the communion of the one Holy Spirit.
  - Christ himself prayed that His followers “may be perfectly one” (John 17:23)
  - The “unity” referred to is “oneness in Christ”... that the members of the various local churches must maintain, manifested in peace, love and harmony that we show for one another.
- “For this holy house...”
  - While we can pray anywhere, it is the sanctuary where we gather together to offer our common worship.
  - St. Germanos (8th Century): “The Church is the temple of God, a holy place, a house of prayer... an earthly heaven in which the heavenly God dwells.”
  - This building his “holy” because the people in it render it holy.... those who pray in it and are themselves “temples of the Holy Spirit” “temples of the living God.”
  - The building is called “the Church” because it houses “the Church.”
- “... and for those who enter it with faith, reverence and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - Not everyone who merely enters the Church is prayed for, but those who “enter with faith, reverence and the fear of God.”

- If we do not enter in such a way, the prayers of the Church are not offered for us.
- What does “fear of God” mean?
  - It does not mean to stand in terror before God, as if he were cruel.
  - Instead it means with reverent awe for his greatness, awesomeness, holiness and majesty.
    - The Greek *fovos* does not correspond to the English “fear.” It means “reverence.”
- “For our Bishop [name], the honorable presbyters, the deaconate in Christ and all the clergy and the laity, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - Here the Church prays for the entire Church... every single person.
    - First those in holy orders, higher clergy and lower clergy.
    - Then all faithful Christians.
    - The hierarchical nature of the Church is stated. The entire hierarchy, clergy and laity, is prayed for.
    - The Church is not a democracy in the same way that a family is not a democracy. The Church, like a family, is hierarchical.
    - The Clergy must not dominate, however... they are to be the first ones to live and lead in harmony.
    - “Clergy” refers also to the lower rank of clergy: readers, acolytes, altar helpers, chanters.
    - The people also share in the priesthood by virtue of their baptism and chrismation.
    - Unlike in Israel in the Old Testament, there is not “priestly tribe” in the Church.
      - All Christians partake in the “Royal Priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9)
      - Some of these are ordained so to celebrate the Mysteries.
    - We should pray for our hierarchs.
      - They will give an account for us. We are accountable for them.
      - If they are not well to lead, we will be lead astray.
      - If they do not teach truth, we will learn lies.
      - We should pray that they may be “above reproach” “temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable,” good teachers (1 Tim. 3:2), “blameless,” “upright, holy” (Titus 1:7,8)
  - “For our country, the president, our leaders...”
    - After we remember our Church’s leaders, we remember our country and our leaders.
    - St. Paul tells us to pray for our leaders in his epistle to St. Timothy: “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.”
    - St. Symeon the New Theologian: “This by divine decree and commanded from heaven, for he that transmits sanctification as clergy is superior to those sanctified, even if they are kings... so the Church prays, keeping the law of St. Paul precisely in praying for kings and those of high rank, especially those that are Orthodox, that God may assist them...”
  - “... and our armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.”
    - The Church prays for those who place themselves in harms way in defense of their nation.
    - This is often left out of political correctness.
    - There is sometimes found a petition “to enable them (the armed forces) to subdue every enemy and adversary.”
  - “For this parish and city, for every city and town, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord.”

- The parish is not “part” of the universal Church. Rather, it is the fulness of the Church in a given locality (i.e., here in Bellingham).
  - Metaphor: it is not a branch of the Church, it is not a “franchise.” It is the entire Church present in our city.
  - We don’t just pray for our own parishioners, but all Orthodox Christians in the world.
- “For favorable weather, an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and temperate seasons, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - This is the humblest of all of our petitions to God.
  - Our most common and material needs are lifted up by the people to God.
  - We do not just ask for spiritual things, but material things as well.
  - We ask in faith, knowing that God is the giver of every good thing (St. James)
  - Though spiritual things are higher things, we are not called to despise the body and the material world as the heretics of old did.
  - Though there are disasters and disorder, the creation is not perfect. However, God is in control.
  - In this prayer we signify our total dependence on God as the supreme Lord over our lives.
- “For travelers by land, sea and air, for the sick, the suffering, the captives, and for their safety, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - There are only a few good reasons to be absent from the Church at Liturgy... the rest are excuses.
  - The Church prays for those who are present and who are absent with good cause.
  - If one is absent without good cause, that person is not prayed for.
  - We pray for those who are not present, either because they are traveling, sick or captives.
  - Those who cut themselves off for worldly pleasures and pursuits are not prayed for.
  - Traveling is dangers... the Church prays for travelers.
  - Regarding the sick, “the prayer of faith will save the sick” says St. James.
    - We pray for the sick to be restored to wholeness through the Church.
    - Assisting privately and corporately is the call.
  - We pray for the healing of soul and body.
- “For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger and distress, let us pray to the Lord.”
  - We pray for rescue from all external threats to our health and safety.
  - This is the most humble and human request that we can make.
  - Question: with this prayer are we praying for divine, miraculous interventions?
    - Answer: We ask God not to take away the affliction from us, but to give us the strength to endure it; not to test us beyond what we can bear.
      - Human suffering is not necessarily related to personal sins. Sometimes they serve God’s inscrutable purposes.
- “Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and protect us, O God, by Your grace.”
  - This petition summarizes all of the previous ones.
  - It is repeated the most times (around eight times) along with the last petition.
  - We say “help us”... We are saved with our brother or not at all.
  - This petition, unlike the previous, is addressed directly to God.
  - We pray to God to strengthen us in our times of trial.

- St. Paul urges St. Timothy: “Be strong, my son, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1)
- Commemorating our most holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us offer ourselves, on another, and all our life to Christ Our God.
  - Recall the concept of “anamnesis”... we do not say “Remembering” as if we have “forgotten” the Theotokos. We “commemorate” in our living memory, not “remember” (as if we constantly forget them).
  - This is a “call to arms.”
  - With the aim of all the saints, among them, the Theotokos, we are ready to go to spiritual battle against evil and to overcome it, as these Saints did.
  - We are called to stand together as an Ecclesia, praying for each other and dedicating ourselves over and over to Christ.
  - We are not alone, we have intercessors.
  - We remember them as incentives to imitate them.
  - We wretched sinners have not boldness to ask on our own... we appeal to the Theotokos and to the saints to “save us” (interceded for us).
  - These petitions end by placing ourselves confidently in the hands of Christ our God.

Discuss, “Most Holy Theotokos, save us.”

- Not in Liturgy book.
- It is an established custom to softly chant this, as something that springs naturally from the hearts of the faithful.
- We do not pray for the Theotokos to “save” us as we pray for Jesus to “save us.”
  - We pray that we are saved [by Jesus] through her intercessory prayers.
  - It is Christ who saves, but He takes pleasure in doing so through the intercession of His Saints.
- “To You, O Lord.”
  - This is the Faithful’s response to the invitation to rededicate ourselves.
  - St. Symeon the New Theologian: “To You, O Lord” means “to You, Christ our God, we dedicate and offer ourselves.
  - This is repeated many, many times during the Liturgy and all services.
    - It is, literally, “incessant”
    - It is pledge to Christ... that we trust him and dedicate our existence to Him.

#### CHAPTER 4: THE ANTIPHONS

- Antiphon... from the Greek antiphoneo, which means “I respond.”
- Refers to two divided groups of singers, singing back and forth in response to each other.
- These hymns are from the Psalms.
- St. Basil the Great described the antiphons this way: “The laity... turn to psalmody, and, being divided into two, they chant to one another alternatively. Having allowed one to commence the song, the rest of them maintaining the balance; and thus in variety of psalmody they divide up the night, praying among themselves.” (St. Basil the Great +379, Letter to the clergy of the church of Neocaesarea)
- The deacon moves to the front of the icon of Christ on the iconostasis. After the Great Litany, three psalms are antiphonally sung, each preceded by a small litany, prayer and ekphronisis.
- In monastic Liturgies (and in Russian churches) the people also sign what is called the Typika... which consists of two psalms, 103 (a psalm of God the Creator and preserver 146, and then the Beatitudes.).
- Origin:
  - 1) from the “Cathedral rite”... chanting hymns in procession from the main cathedral church of a city (for example, Constantinople) to a particular saint’s chapel on the chapel’s patronal feast. The three antiphons in Constantinople churches... but not used in the whole church until the 7th or 8th Centuries.
  - 2) The Typika comes from the “Monastic rite.” It is only chanted on Sundays. Chanted in Slavic parish churches; not in Greek parish Churches.
  - In Greek Churches, only the antiphons (“Through the prayers of the Theotokos...” and “Save us O Son of God...”) with verses chanted between them.
- Psalms are sung with refrains:
  - Psalms 92, 93, 95 or 103 & 146. The themes of these psalms are prophecies of the coming of Christ and the Holy Eucharist itself. They help prepare us to receive the Sacrament.

Prayer of the First Antiphon:

Priest (in a low voice): “Lord, our God, Whose dominion is incomparable and glory incomprehensible; Whose mercy is immeasurable, and love for mankind ineffable: Look upon us and upon this holy house in Your loving-kindness, and grant to us and to those who pray with us Your abundant mercy and compassion. For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.”

- A prayer of praise said inaudibly (that is in a low, not intoned voice) by the bishop or presiding priest to the Triune God... (as is revealed in the ekphonesis).
  - “Inaudible” does not mean “secret” nor does it mean they are not to be heard by the people. (I read them aloud.)
- Four of God’s attributes are mentioned: dominion, glory, mercy and love.
- These terms are expressed each with their own apophatic term:
  - Dominion... aneikaston (incomparable)
  - Glory... akatalēptos (incomprehensible)
  - Mercy... ametrēton (immeasurable)
  - Love... afatos (ineffable or unspeakable)
- Each antiphonal prayer is completed by the senior priest by an ekphōnsis, that consists of a doxological formula... glorifying each Person of the Triune God. This is in obedience to St. Paul who said “Do all in the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31)
  - The ekphōnsis is completed with “both now and forever and to the ages of ages.”
    - We praise and glorify the triune God, but who are we... who are finite and insignificant creatures... to extol the eternal God? How can we give proper glory? We thus proclaim and extol that God’s attributes are true and worthy to be praised throughout all “ages” (aiōna... eons... ages).
      - Many translators say that it is more correct to say “ages and ages” rather than “forever and ever.”
      - “Forever” may mean to some only the time of creation. “Ages of Ages” is beyond historical time and creation.

“Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Savior, save us.” (3)

- We all feel that many times we are not worthy to lift up our heads and pray to God. Therefore we ask the Mother Mary to intercede for us and pray for us, because she, being close to her Son and God, can speak in our behalf. This is the meaning of the first Antiphon; that through her intercessions she may help us so we may be saved.
- We address Christ as our “Savior.” From the Greek Soter... from “Jesus, God Saves.”
- Small Litanies are sung after each antiphon that pre-date the 10th Century. They consist of a small call to prayer and the last two petitions of the Great Litany: “Help us save us...” and “Commemorating our most pure, blessed and glorious Lady, the the Theotokos...”
- The people thus pray incessantly... repetitively... and attentively. The deacon exhorts the people to offer themselves to Christ with “Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord.” The Church never tires of prayer because prayer is vital for our being and survival. We must always be attentive. We need communion with our God... to live our life in Christ.

- Q: What does it mean “to offer”? It means to pray for each other, to turn to God prayerfully and entrust ... to commend ourselves and one another to His care, protection and safekeeping.

Prayer of the Second Antiphon:

“Lord, our God, save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Protect the fullness of Your Church. Sanctify those who love the beauty of Your house. Glorify them in return by Your divine power, and forsake us not who have set our hope in You.” For Yours is the dominion, and Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

- God is addressed in the same way as the Prayer of the First Antiphon.
- “O God save Your People and bless Your Inheritance.”
  - Who are God’s “People”? What is His “Inheritance”? When the Jews worshipped the true God, they were God’s people and inheritance. Now the Church is God’s new people, since the “old people” turned their back to God when they rejected His Son. Christians became God’s people with whom God made a new covenant.... Sealed/made active with the Body and Blood and Death of Christ.

Save us, O Son of God, risen from the dead (or Who are wondrous in Your saints), we sing to You, Alleluia.  
(3).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.  
Only-begotten Son and Logos of God, being immortal, You condescended for our salvation to take flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary and, without change, became man. Christ, our God, You were crucified and conquered death by death. Being one with the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit: Save us.

- The Hymn “Only Begotten Son...” written by the Emperor Saint Justinian the Great.
  - It is addressed to Christ and has a single request: save us.
  - Christ is addressed as God, one of the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity, who was born in the flesh of the Theotokos and was victorious over death.
  - Church Tradition says that the Emperor St. Justin the Great composed or had commissioned the hymn in the 6th Century to be used as an entrance hymn.
  - It is sometimes referred to as the “short Creed”... a compendium of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In a few short sentences it expounds the the mystery of the Trinity and God’s Plan of Redemption. In other words, it is a synopsis of the teachings of the Holy Fathers and the first four Ecumenical Councils.

### The Prayers of the Third Antiphon and Procession with the Gospel book

Lord, You have granted us to offer these common prayers in unison and have promised that when two or three agree in Your name, You will grant their requests. Fulfill now, O Lord, the petitions of Your servants as may be of benefit to them, granting us in the present age the knowledge of Your truth, and in the age to come eternal life. For You, O God, are good and love mankind, and to You we offer glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

- This prayer recalls the Lord's promise: "If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three of you are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:19-20).
- Q: If we had one wish as a church community, what would it be?
- We are called to pray in Community, as one body. The assembly of the Faithful unite our common requests and petitions to the Lord... namely that "we all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).
- A: This means to come to know Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection... to share in His sufferings... so that we too may attain resurrection from the dead.
- The Makarasmoi / Beatitudes were traditionally chanted here in the Greek parishes, but fell out of practice.
  - Makarios means "blessedness" and comes from the Greek root for "length"... as in the one who follows these commandments will live long, healthy and spiritually wealthy lives... eternal life!
  - These are the commandments that Christ gave those who would be His disciples.
  - Suffer for Christ's sake. They are the way of struggle, yet of everlasting blessedness that comes from Christ and the way of the Cross. Be joyful. Be conscious of your imperfections, weakness and sinfulness.
  - All things that one must be to be in Communion with God. Pure in heart and spirit. Grieving over evil and Sin.
  - They depict the way of our Lord and Savior... the chief characteristics of Christ Himself. They teach us our to live and make perfect sense to be in the Liturgy and sung by the Faithful.

### The Procession and Entrance with the Gospel Book.

At this point of the service you will see the altar boys coming out of the north door with candles or lanterns and following them the priest and the deacon carrying the Gospel book. This is called the small entrance. The entrance is INTO the Sanctuary, not out of it. When you see this, you are being joined with a multitude of angels visually represented by the altar boys candles. Then, together with these angelic hosts, we welcome the Lord's entrance into the world and into our hearts.

This is a vestige of the entrance of the clergy in the ancient church, who brought the gospel book with them. Historically the Divine Liturgy began with the entrance of the Gospel book which was kept in a separate room or vault in the portico of the church, which contained all the valuables that were to be used in the Church during the Services. Amongst these valuables, of course, was the Book of the Gospels "Evangelion." This room or vault, was known as the "Skevofilakion", a composite Greek word meaning the guarding-pace of the implements or articles. These books were also hand copied and very valuable. This was changed in the 7th century and the Gospel was kept on the altar, signifying a more secure period for the Church.

The deacon carries the Gospel in a way that covers his face. This represents the coming of the Lord. The Priest recites the following prayer:

O Master, Lord our God, Who hast appointed in Heaven legions and Hosts of Angels and Archangels for the service of Thy Glory, grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance of Holy Angels serving with us and glorifying Thy goodness; for to Thee are due all glory, honor, and worship; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.”

During the Divine Liturgy we are joined with a multitude of angels who come down from Heaven who participate with us in the celebration. This is just like they came to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. Saint John Chrysostom testifies to this He says, "They had gathered around me escorting me to the small entrance. And something more awesome: I was deemed worthy to be carried up and to be offered their help to perform the Entrance: Next, I saw them surrendering the Holy Table, bowing their heads with great respect then again standing in silence and at times chanting liturgical hymns together with the chanters, escorting them in such melody..."

Facing the Sanctuary, the Priest blesses and says:

Blessed is the Entrance of Thy Saints: always, now and for ever and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.

At the completion of the resurrection hymn for this day the deacon raises the Gospel and says,

Wisdom, Let us stand aright.

The congregation sings,

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, Save us, O Son of God who rose from the dead, to You we sing: Alleluia

The deacon then places the Gospel on the Altar, on top of the Holy Antimension. Wisdom refers to the Gospel book, which is Jesus Christ, who is the true wisdom. The phrase "stand aright" refers to the faithful. It is as if we are saying like at the time of the nativity of Christ, Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. Those in attendance can live in the miracle of angelic presence. They can be captured in the ecstasy of the soul.

Following, the Resurrection hymn is sung along with hymns for the saint honored that day and the proper hymn or Kontakion for that feast period or day.

Some Historical Background and Reflections on the Small Entrance:

- The gospel book is held high, as the scrolls of the torah was in the synagogues.
- Unlike in the synagogue where the law of Moses was venerated, Orthodox Christians venerate/honor the Gospel book as we would Christ if He were standing in front of us.

- The Gospel is to be carried above the head of the deacon or the priest, instead of in front of him, because it is to show that only Christ exists and not to hide the priest's face.
- The deacon elevates the gospel even more at the entrance so that the people can venerate it.
- In St. John Chrysostom's time, this "Prayer of Entrance" would have been read OUTSIDE of the church by the clergy before the clergy and the bishop entered the church, followed by the faithful. Remember, this would have been done after a procession from a saint's chapel to the main city church for the Liturgy.
- The whole congregation waited outside and entered with/behind the clergy... especially the bishop... who entered, blessed the people and entered the altar area to sit in the bishop's throne (cathedra) in the center of the synthronon, in the apse. It was then and there that the bishop vested.
- Until the 7th Century, the Divine Liturgy then would begin at this point.
- The clergy would have arrived and entered the nave, processed straight to the altar and begun the Liturgy with "Blessed is the Kingdom." (Even in today's Hierarchical Liturgy, this is the point when the bishop enters the altar area, ushered in by the clergy.)
- The faithful would remain in the nave. Thus the whole community, the clergy and the laity together would enter into God's presence.... As one Body, one family.
  - In the "Prayer of the Entrance," the participants call upon Christ to grant that the angelic hosts join them and serve with them.
  - All the faithful, clergy and laity, would leave the fallen world behind them so to assemble in God's eternal Kingdom, present with the choir of the saints and the holy angels.
  - The heavenly hosts would join in with the choir.
  - "The angels drown out our imperfect singing. However, God is keener for our imperfect singing if it proceeds from our hearts (Fr. Farley)."
- Carrying the gospel is a ministry... and the angels are "ministering spirits" thus this is why the angels' presence is asked for, so that as we minister to Christ on earth, the angels minister to Him in heaven.
- The deacon proclaims "Sophia (Wisdom)!"
  - Orthoi (Let us stand up straight, upright, attentively). This means stand up straight in body and soul to greet the King of the Heavens.
  - The wisdom here refers to Christ, the incarnate wisdom and word of God.
- Then the Eisodikon (Entrance Hymn) is chanted. On Sunday's it is "Come let us bow down..." Major feasts have their own entrance hymn. When priests concelebrate, it is to be chanted by the clergy. If not, the lay people are to sing it.
- Then the other apolytikia are chanted... for the Resurrection... or for the feast of the day... then the saint(s) of the day is chanted... the patronal hymn... then the Kontakion.
  - Apolytikion: means "dismissal hymn," in that it refers to it being chanted at the end, near the "dismissal" of vespers the night before.
  - Kontakion: a short hymn that summarizes the content/theme of the feast celebrated.
  - These are daily lessons, themes and DOGMA of the church set to music.

### The “Trisagion” (Thrice Holy) Hymn

- In the early 6th Century it was sung as the entrance chant.
- The Trisagion was sung as the refrain for the verses Psalm 80.
  - A vestige of this remains in the Hierarchical Liturgy...
    - “O God of hosts, convert us now. Look down from heaven and behold and visit Your vineyard which Your right hand has planted.” (Psalm 80: 15-16).
    - Sung between “Holy God... Holy Mighty... Holy Immortal” and also “Lord, save the faithful!” (Kyrios, soston tous eseveis) and “Hearken unto us!” (Kai epakouson imas!)
  - Dynamis: “With Strength!” Sing louder... even more forcefully!
  - While the people sing the final “Holy God...” the presiding priest and the deacon have the following dialogue:

The Deacon then addresses the Priest: Command, Master.

They proceed to the synthronon/cathedra (throne on high behind the holy Table, that is, the Crucified Christ), and as they approach, the Priest says: Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.

Deacon: Master, bless the throne on high.

Priest: Blessed are You upon the throne of the glory of Your kingdom, enthroned upon the Cherubim always, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

- In the Liturgy as we celebrate it, even without a bishop, the Trisagion Hymn is the culmination of the entrance of the Gospel and the clergy into the altar (“The Small Entrance”).
- The “Anti-Trisagion” and Baptism Feasts.
  - On certain great feasts- such as Pascha, Saturda of Lazarus, Palm Sunday, Christmas and Theophany, instead of the Trisagion, we sing “All who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!”
  - We sing this hymn on these feasts because at that at these particular feasts the multitudes of catechumens were baptized. These are still very good and right days for converts to be baptized.

### The Prayer of the Trisagion

Priest (in a low voice): O Holy God, Who is resting among the holy ones, praised by the Seraphim with the thrice-holy voice, glorified by the Cherubim, and worshiped by every celestial power, You have brought all things into being out of nothing. You have created man according to Your image and likeness and adorned him with all the gifts of Your grace. You give wisdom and understanding to the one who asks, and You overlook not the sinner, but have set repentance as the way of salvation. You have granted us, Your humble and unworthy servants, to stand even at this hour before the glory of Your holy Altar of sacrifice and to offer to You due worship and praise. Master, accept the Trisagion Hymn also from the lips of us sinners, and visit us in Your goodness. Forgive all our voluntary and involuntary transgressions, sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may worship You in holiness all the days of our lives, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints who have pleased You throughout the ages. For You, our God, are holy, and to You we offer up glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

- Silently read by the presiding priest, while the people sing the Trisagion Hymn.
- Though read by the priest, it is prayer of the people.
- Its theme is God's transcendence and His condescension when He comes down to be with His people.

### The First Blessing

- The priests proceeded to the high place, the synthronon, and take their seats. (Or, if there is no synthronon, they gather around the altar table.)
- In the ancient practice, after the entrance of the Gospel, the readings would take place. The clergy and the people would sit.
- The deacon would give the direction “Let us be attentive.”
- The bishop or presiding priest would greet the people with “Peace be with you!”
  - Again, this is God’s “peace.”
  - This is a bestowal of peace on fellow members of the Body of Christ... not a mere wish for peace among a regular gathering of people.
  - This bestowal is upon the people and the clergy and the bestowing priest himself... all stand in solidarity, being encouraged... we all stand together in need of Christ’s blessing.
- We are all now ready to hear the readings and to hear them expounded upon.

### The Readings: The Epistle, Gospel and Homily

- The readings were critically important for the ancient Christians...
- ...as they are still today.
- In the ancient Church this was the faithful primary source and experience of the Scriptures.
- Q for Reflection: Why were the readings so critical? The Church Body... the clergy... the individual faithful found in the readings:
  - Joy and Delight
  - Education
  - Spiritual formation
  - Foundation
  - Wisdom
  - Direction
  - Exhortation
  - Chastisement
  - Prophecy
  - Purpose
  - Holy Tradition
  - Encouragement
  - Other?
- Their roots in Judaism instilled in Christians the holy habit of gathering to hear readings.
- Q: What was read? All of the readings that lead to Jesus. In the ancient Church they read from the Old Testament: Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, the Pentateuch. Old Testament readings were included in the Divine Liturgy in the East until the 8th Century. (In the Western, Roman Catholic Church they are still included).
  - In the Orthodox Church the Old Testament readings for the day are still read... but are read during Great Vespers for a particular Great Feast or patronal feast.
    - Example: St. Sophia and St. Innocent Feastdays have its own Old Testament readings... according to the kind of saint that they are, i.e. martyrs, apostles, etc.
    - They are also read during the Presanctified Liturgies.
- Very soon in the history of the ancient Church, the faithful also heard and shared the Gospels Epistles/Letters from founding apostles... Like the Four Gospels... Like St. Paul... John the Theologian... St. Peter... the Books of Acts by St. Luke.
- The last of the readings to be included in the Eucharistic gatherings were the Four Gospels! They are the CROWN... the culmination of the set of readings.
- SHORT DISCUSSION: How did a New Testament Gospel or Epistle make it into the canon of Scripture... versus those that did not? The universal use of them in the Church worship... in the Eucharistic gatherings. Why some were NOT used... two primary reasons... were not authored by a Disciple or first-generation Apostle... OR... were not used in the Eucharistic gatherings by the whole Church across the lands. Example: The Gospel of St. Thomas... only used regionally.
- Liturgical Structure:

- The Alleluia is paired with the Prokeimenon which preceded the reading of the Apostle. There may be either one or two Alleluias, depending upon the number of Prokeimena (there may be up to three readings from the Apostle, but never be more than two Prokeimena and Alleluia). Thus the joy that comes with the Gospels is expressed by crying “Alleluia.”
  - Prokeimenon: (means “that which lies before”): versus often from the Psalms according to the appointed theme of the feast or day... that served as a break between readings. They served to introduce the readings.
  - Alleluia: an expression of praise to God was preserved, untranslated, by the early Christians as a superlative expression of thanksgiving, joy, and triumph. After reading the Apostle (Epistle) at the Divine Liturgy, the Reader announces which of the Eight Tones the Alleluia is to be chanted in. The response of the choir is always the same: "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia." What differs is the tone in which it is sung, and the stichera (psalm verses) which are intoned by the Reader.
- While the Epistle is read, the priest censes the Gospel book and says the following the Prayer of the Holy Gospel in a low voice:

Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

- If there is a deacon, he will kneel next to the bishop (or the presiding priest) in front of the altar table, and a dialogue will take place. The deacon asks for a blessing to read the Gospel, and the bishop/priest gives the blessing.
- The Reading of the Gospel takes place. The deacon will read it from either the pulpit (formerly the ambon) or from the bishop’s throne. The priest, if there is no bishop, will read it from the Beautiful Gate... or, if there is a bishop present, he too will read it from the pulpit or bishop’s throne.
- The deacon or priest will call out: “Wisdom, let us stand (again, orthoi), let us hear the Holy Gospel!” From the ancient times the proper way to offer respect was to stand attentively. This is the proper way of prayer as well. We stand in total silence and respect and listen to the Holy reading from the Holy Gospel in peace.
- Bishop or Priest: “Peace be with you all!”
- The Reading is from the Gospel According to St. \_\_\_\_\_”
- “Let us be attentive.”
- After the reading, the Bishop will bless the reader: “Peace be with you who proclaims the Holy Gospel.” The reader will then give the gospel book to the bishop, who will bless the people with it.
- The Homily: This is an ESSENTIAL part of the Eucharistic gathering. The homily is traditionally given immediately after the readings. The English word homily is derived from the Ancient Greek word ὁμιλία homilia, which means “to converse or to talk with/together with a person.” The sermon is given by the priest

to help us understand the readings for this day. When Jesus sent His disciples into the world to teach to all nations he told them, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Lk 24:47). Apostle Paul preached, "repent and turn to God" (Acts 26:20). This is the preferred main message of the sermon, repent and return to God. The sermon is a continuation of the lesson from the Holy Scripture. It is to help us be illuminated by their teachings.

#### Reflection on the Homily/Sermon

- Fr. Farley: "Preaching is a DARING act by the celebrant priest to preach on the Gospel!" This gospel is an attempt to interpret the just proclaimed sacred words. The homily is meant to convey the truth... the reality of every thing about Jesus Christ: from His Incarnation and His full divine and human nature, to His death on the life-giving Cross, to His Resurrection on the third day, ascension to heaven and His sitting at the right hand of the Father.
  - Fr. Coiniaris, preaching professor at Holy Cross: "The perfect sermon is like the cover of the Gospel book... it contains elements of both our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection."
- The homily is NOT an opportunity to give one's mere opinion on a particular matter, especially mundane worldly matters, but to help the holy words of Scripture be comprehend and applied.

### **The Ektenia - The Intercessions**

- Ektenia (“fervent, earnest”)... Fervent supplications
  - Let us all say with all our soul and with all our mind, let us all say.
  - Lord almighty, God of our fathers, we pray You, hear us and have mercy.
  - Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great mercy, we pray You, hear us and have mercy.
  - Again we pray for our Archbishop (Name).
  - Again we pray for our brethren: the priests, the hieromonks, the hierodeacons, the monastics, and all our brotherhood in Christ.
  - Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, protection, forgiveness, and remission of the sins of the servants of God, all pious Orthodox Christians residing and visiting in this city: the parishioners, the members of the parish council, the stewards, and benefactors of this holy church.
  - Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy church, and for all our fathers and brethren who have fallen asleep before us, who here have been piously laid to their rest, as well as the Orthodox everywhere.
  - Again we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-venerable church, for those who labor and those who sing, and for the people here present who await Your great and rich mercy.
  - Priest (in a low voice): Lord our God, accept this fervent supplication from Your servants, and have mercy on us in accordance with the abundance of Your mercy, and send down Your compassion upon us and upon all Your people who await Your great and rich mercy.
  
- Originally these were said in times of special need, such as in times of famine, plague, earthquakes, floods, fires, war, invasion and other disasters. These were said during processions around the city, beseeching God’s mercy and intercession.
- By the 8th Century, these were included as a regular part of the Divine Liturgy... even apart from times of crises.
- This litany has a different character than the “Great Litany.” The Ektenia are very urgent prayers for help with specific needs.
- They are addressed directly to God Himself.

### **Prayers for the Catechumens**

- These are said for inquirers being instructed in preparation for baptism.
- The faithful are asked to specifically pray for them.
- The priest ask God to reveal to them the Gospel of Truth... to reveal the Gospel of righteousness to them.
- Prayers to ask God to unite them to the Church.

### **Dismissal of the Catechumens**

- The Prayers for the Catechumens
- Deacon: Catechumens, pray to the Lord.
- Let us, the faithful, pray for the catechumens.

- That the Lord will have mercy on them.
- That He will teach them the word of truth.
- That He will reveal to them the gospel of righteousness.
- That He will unite them to His holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- Save them, have mercy on them, help them, and protect them, O God, by Your grace.
- Catechumens, bow your heads to the Lord.
- The Prayer for the Catechumens
- Priest (in a low voice): Lord our God, Who dwells on high and watches over the humble, You sent forth Your only-begotten Son and God, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the human race. Look down upon Your servants, the catechumens, who have inclined their necks to You, and grant them at a proper time the baptism of rebirth, the remission of sins, and the garment of incorruption. Unite them to Your holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and number them among Your chosen flock.
- And he exclaims:
- So that with us they also may glorify Your most honorable and majestic name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.
- People: Amen.
- Deacon: Those who are catechumens, depart; catechumens depart; all those who are catechumens, depart. Let none of the catechumens remain.

- In most Greek parishes, these petitions are not said. They are said in the monasteries and in Slavic parishes.
- They are said in the Presanctified Liturgy.

#### “Liturgy of the Faithful” Begins

- This time, now after the Gospel lesson and homily has been completed, the “Liturgy of the Word” ends and the “Liturgy of the Faithful” begins.
  - “Anaphora” (ἀναφορά, meaning "carrying up", and so an “offering” (hence its use in reference to the offering of sacrifice to God).
  - The deacons in the ancient church ordered the catechumens and those under penances to leave the nave.
  - Only the Faithful would remain in the nave for the remainder of the Divine Liturgy... to witness and participate in the anaphora and to receive Holy Communion.

#### **The Two Prayers of the Faithful**

- At this point a litany/prayers for the Faithful are said

#### **The First Prayer of the Faithful**

Priest (in a low voice): We give thanks to You, O Lord God of Hosts, Who has made us worthy to stand even now before Your holy Altar of sacrifice and to fall down before You seeking Your compassion for our sins and those committed in ignorance by the people. Accept, O God, our supplication. Make us worthy to offer You prayers, supplications, and bloodless sacrifices for all Your people. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, make us, whom You have appointed to this, Your ministry, free of blame or stumbling and, with the witness of a clear conscience, able to

call upon You at every time and in every place, so that, hearing us, You may be merciful to us in the abundance of Your goodness.

### **The Second Prayer of the Faithful**

Priest (in a low voice): Again and countless times we fall down before You, and we implore You, O Good One, Who loves mankind: That You, having regarded our prayer, may cleanse our souls and bodies from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and grant to us to stand before Your holy Altar of sacrifice, free of guilt and condemnation. Grant also, O God, to those who pray with us, progress in life, faith, and spiritual understanding. Grant that they always worship You with awe and love, partake of Your Holy Mysteries without guilt or condemnation, and be deemed worthy of Your celestial Kingdom.

- Clergy prayers are said. The theme of this prayer is to have access to the holy altar table... “Thank you, God, for counting us worthy, though we have done nothing good upon the earth (Quoting from St. Paul, in the Liturgy of St. Basil).” “Enable us to call upon Your goodness that hearing us You may be merciful to us according to Your goodness.”
- The priest prays for himself as part of his own spiritual preparation for approaching the Eucharistic altar. He prays to be prepared to be God’s steward.
- These priestly prayer are continued in the “Prayer Before the Cherubic Hymn” and the “Great Entrance.”

## **The Cherubic Hymn, the Prayer of Access, and the Great Entrance**

### The Cherubic Hymn

We are now beginning The Liturgy of the Faithful, the third and last part of the Divine Liturgy, which commences with the "Great Entrance" while the Choir chants the "Cherubic Hymn."

This final part of the Liturgy begins with the priest chanting:

*"Grant, that being ever protected by Thy power, to Thee we may ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages."*

The Priest then unfolds the "Antimension" (meaning: "instead of the table"). On this Antimension we see imprinted the pious Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea taking down the Body of Jesus from the Cross. It usually contains the relics of a Martyr.... And brings us back to the days of the early persecutions, during which the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in various and remote places, catacombs, and so forth, not having one designated Place and Table as we have today. It is the same today, even though we do have established places of worship, we still use the "Antimension" as a reminder that the Church of Christ is not confined to any certain place or section. It also contains the Signature of the Bishop authorizing the conduct of the Divine Liturgy.

The laity begins to sing the Cherubic Hymn:

*"Let us, who mystically represent the cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving trinity, lay aside all worldly cares, that we may receive the King of all, invisibly escorted by the angelic hosts. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."*

This hymn invites us to walk with Jesus Christ on the path of martyrdom that leads to the sacrifice on the Cross, setting aside every worldly care we may have. Saint John Chrysostom says, "The soul of a Christian who has not learned how to become alienated from worldly cares during the Divine Liturgy, will never be able to admire the all-heavenly... Mind and heart will not be glorified in splendor by the inconceivable grandeur of the heavenly Altar and the angelic hymns" (P.G. 47, 414). Now is the time to set aside all worldly cares and focus exclusively on Christ our Savior. This includes all the thoughts of family, our jobs, all our worries, and our trials and tribulations. Fill the mind instead with Christ: "Lord have mercy on me." To be so attentive as to shed our worldly cares demands that we adopt a contrite state—one of extreme humility. We must recognize our unworthiness to receive the Precious Gifts that are about to be presented to us. We should realize how blessed we are to receive these gifts for our spiritual benefit. Our egoism must be crushed. This requires our attention and effort.

Why? So we can receive the "king of all." Jesus Christ was the most powerful king of all, God Himself, One of Three, who came without an army but with total humility.

Having set aside our worldly cares we join with the multitude of angelic bodiless powers, and "mystically represent the cherubim," who continually "sing the thrice-holy hymn." At this time the entire church is transformed into a part of the heavenly Church—the Church Triumphant.

We are now approaching the presentation of the Precious Gifts in the Great Entrance. Christ comes with these Holy Gifts during the Great entrance to offer us His sacrifice for the salvation of the world.

### **The Prayer of Access**

While the Cherubic Hymn is sung the priest recites the Prayer of Access, one of the most powerful and divinely-inspiring prayers of the Divine Liturgy beseeching the Lord to qualify him to perform this Great Mystery. Originally said during the procession... but now, for practical reasons, is said before. It reveals the essential truths about the nature of the Divine Liturgy... that we pray for God to pour His Holy Spirit upon the whole Church, on the gifts presented, and upon the clergy and laity as well. It reveals that the whole Divine Liturgy is an epiclesis... epi + kaleso... that is, an invocation, a calling upon God to TRANSFORM all those present... that we be transformed by receiving Christ.

*"No one who is bound with the desires and pleasures of the flesh is worthy to approach, or draw near, or to serve Thee, O King of Glory; for to serve Thee is great and awesome, even to the Heavenly Powers. Yet, through Thine ineffable and boundless love toward mankind, Thou didst unchangeably and immutably become Man, and served as our High Priest, and as Lord of All, hast committed to us the celebration of this liturgical and bloodless sacrifice.*

*For Thou alone, O Lord our God, rulest over all things in Heaven and Earth, Who art borne on the Throne of the Cherubim, Who art the Lord of the Seraphim and King of Israel, Who alone art Holy and resteth amongst Thy Saints.*

*Wherefore, I implore Thee, Who alone art good, and ready to listen: Look down upon me, Thy sinful and unprofitable servant, and cleanse my soul and my heart from an evil conscience; and enable me by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, vested with the Grace of the Priesthood, to stand before this, Thy Holy Altar, and consecrate Thy Holy and Immaculate Body and Precious Blood. For to Thee I come, having bowed my head, and beseech Thee: Turn not Thy face away from me, nor reject me from among Thy Children; but make me worthy, Thy sinful and unworthy servant, to offer these Gifts unto Thee. For Thou art the Offerer and the Offered, Who accepts and is distributed, O Christ our God, and to Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine Eternal Father, and Thine All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit; now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen."*

There is no priest who approaches the Altar trusting in his own holiness to serve the Divine Liturgy.

The priest will also at this time cense the Altar and the people while reciting Psalm 51. Incense is a strong urging for payer. When censed the people stand and bow. When this is complete the priest prostrates himself in front of the altar asking for God's mercy as a sinner. He then turns facing the congregation and asks for their forgiveness as a sinner. He also asks God to forgive all those who hate us and those who love us. Then he proceeds to the Table of Oblation where the gifts have earlier been prepared.

### **The Great Entrance**

The Great entrance is a solemn procession where the prepared gifts of bread and wine are taken from the Table of Oblation or Prothesis and placed on the Altar table. Later they are offered to God for consecration into the Blood and Body of Christ. Keep in mind that during the procession they are not yet the Blood and Body of Christ.

At the Table of Oblation, the Priest removes the Aer that enshrouds the gifts and places it on his shoulders or on the shoulder of the Deacon.

The Cherubic Hymn is interrupted. The Great Entrance takes place, exiting from the north door. The priest holding the Chalice and the deacon the Diskarion, raised covering their faces, carry them intentionally inside the Church Temple walking slowly among the parishioners with modesty. The faithful bow and make the sign of the cross in reverence. They are preceded by the Altar Boys carrying the processional Cross, Hexapteryga and Candlesticks, reverently exit from the Northern Door and slowly walking through the nave and then up the center aisle to the center of the "Solea" while chanting:

*May the Lord our God remember us all in His Kingdom, always, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages.*

This most emotional and devout prayer and cry chanted by the Deacon or the the priest is based on the confession of the thief upon the cross when he said to Jesus:

*Remember me, O Lord, when I come into Your Kingdom.*

(This phrase should be memorized and repeated by the Faithful every time the Priest performs the Great Entrance. Only in this and like manner can we become conscious of our participation in the Divine Liturgy.)

The grateful thief is presented spiritually as an example for all ages of faith and true repentance. According to Tradition the thief's name is Dysmas who was a murderer. He was on a cross to the right of Jesus and had most likely seen and heard the Lord earlier and knew of His miracles and teaching. At His last moments he recognizes Jesus in His divinity and asks for mercy which surely shocked all those who heard him cry out. The power of his cry is repeated during every Divine Liturgy.

The gifts are placed on the Holy Altar table on the Antimension which was previously laid out.

When the Priest enters the Sanctuary, the Choir completes the Cherubic Hymn follows:

*The King of All Who comes invisibly attended by the Angelic Hosts. Alleluia.*

The Great Entrance is one of the most prominent moments of the Divine Liturgy.

The Great Entrance has several symbolic interpretations. For some, it symbolizes the triumphant entrance of the Lord into the Holy city of Jerusalem where He is about to be crucified for the salvation of the world. For others it symbolizes the Lord's burial, the journey from the unnauling to the Tomb. It is also viewed as Christ's journey of martyrdom from the Praetorium to Golgatha. Still others view it as the Second Coming of Christ.

### Some Historical Background, Development of the Great Entrance and Cherubic Hymn

- When is the Bread and Wine Offering Prepared? Before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, often during the Orthros service the priest serves the Liturgy of Preparation, in Greek called the Prothesis (Greek: Πρόθεσις, lit. "a setting forth") or Proskomedia (Προσκομιδὴ Proskomidē "an offering, an oblation"). It is the act of preparing the bread and wine for the Eucharist.
  - In Constantinople, this would have taken outside of the church, in the skeuophylakion (the locked "safe" where the church valuables were kept). During this part of the Liturgy the deacons would have processed into the church with these items, and brought them to the altar to be received by the bishop.
  - The deacons, along with the presbyters/priests would silently process while the choir chanted Psalm 23:7-10 (LXX) about the entrance of the "King of Glory":

*"Lift up the gates, O you rulers, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter.*

*Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord powerful in battle.  
Lift up the gates, O you rulers, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall enter.*

*Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."*

- By the 6th Century, the Cherubic Hymn, as we sing it today, was added to this Psalm 23 as a refrain in between verses.

*Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy Hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside all the cares of this life...*

*The we may receive the King of all...*

*Invisibly escorted by the Angelic Hosts, Alleluia.*

- Tradition: as the Great Entrance took place, the people would tug on the phelonion of the priest asking them to pray for them. The priest would respond "May the Lord our God remember you in His Kingdom, always now and forever and to the ages of ages."
  - Thus the pious seek to be remembered in the Eucharist. The priest would collect the list of names for the bishop to commemorate and to pray for in the proskomide.
  - In the 7th Century the bishop began to commemorate the peoples's names aloud, along with the dead. Before then, only the Emperor's name was commemorated aloud.
  - This commemoration is still done today by the bishop in a Hierarchical Liturgy:
    - In this order:

- The Living: concelebrating priests and other clergy present, those who have asked to be remembered, whomever the bishop chooses.
- The Dead: The bishop's predecessors in the diocese, others who have reposed.
- Eventually, Psalm 24 was omitted, leaving just the Cherubic Hymn, which is sung, then "interrupted" for the entrance of the gifts and the commemoration of the living and the dead, then "resumed" when the offerings are placed on the altar table.
- The "Prayer of Access" reveals the essential truths about the nature of the Divine Liturgy... that we pray for God to pour His Holy Spirit upon the whole Church, on the gifts presented, and upon the clergy and laity as well. It reveals that the whole Divine Liturgy is an epiclesis... epi + kaleso... that is, an invocation, a calling upon God to TRANSFORM all those present... that we be transformed by receiving Christ.
- The Liturgy continues to the Litany of Supplication

## Litany of Supplication

The "Great Entrance" has taken place. The Holy Gifts, later to be changed into the real Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, have been brought from the "Prothesis" (Preparation Table) in a Procession and placed upon the Holy Altar Table. The Deacon or the Priest commence the "Petitions" as follows:

*Let us complete our prayer and supplication to the Lord.*

Even though we have expressed our prayers, it is time now to make those prayers more complete because the Great Moment is soon at hand.

*For the Precious Gifts here presented, let us beseech the Lord.*

At this point our hearts should be clean of any vengefulness maliciousness or negative attitudes towards others. Remember the Lord's words,

*"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Matt 5:23-24)."*

We entreat, we beseech the Lord to receive, to accept these Gifts, which we are offering and which in turn will grant us a new spirit.

*For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us beseech the Lord.*

Then we hear a grouping of six more petitions, to which the congregation chants, "Grant this, O Lord.

*For this whole day, that it may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.*

All Christians should strive to live perfect days blessed with Christian acts. But since many of us so easily drift from the prescribed course, at this moment of the Liturgy we ask our Lord to give us a peaceful day with all that surrounds us and more so a blameless one - to help us avoid any possible sin.

*For an Angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.*

We ask God to send us each day a guardian angel over our souls. Such an angel guides us to enlightenment and divine knowledge of faith. He also takes our prayers and offers them to God at the heavenly throne. He protects from all evil and from life's temptations. He is an aid in our spiritual struggles. During our baptism we were offered an Angel.

*For the forgiveness and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.*

We pray to our Lord to forgive us from our sins, but also from every transgression, which we so often commit. By remitting our sins we are re-instated in His Grace and become candidates of His Kingdom in Heaven.

*For all things that are good and profitable unto our souls, and for the peace in the world, let us ask of the Lord.*

Saint Paul tells us in his first Epistle to the Corinthians that "everything is permitted to us, but not everything is to our advantage." We therefore must distinguish between what is good and what is bad for our life. This is a major problem in this day and age of materialism. We tend to think only about material and sensual pleasures, glory and power, authority, honors, physical rest, having a good time, making easy money and so forth. In reality we are pretty hard hearted and indifferent to many important moral issues. We are not well equipped to make the proper discernment for what is best for our soul. In this petition we pray that God grants us those things which are profitable to our soul and surely will ultimately be profitable to our body.

In this fourth petition we also pray for peace in the world as we also prayed during the beginning of the Holy Liturgy.

*That we may complete the remainder of our lives in peace and penitence, let us ask of the Lord.*

In the first petition we asked the Lord to safeguard us from sin for the whole day. We are living a life filled with anxiety and this world's matters and have little appreciation about our life that is quickly passing by. Now through this petition we beseech the Lord to grant us the remainder of our days, peace of mind and heart, and also to aid us to recognize our sins for which we must truly repent, to ultimately save our souls.

Our happiness depends on our witnessing of our conscience. This is our ability to sleep calmly without any feelings of guilt. When we have peace in our heart, the Holy spirit nurtures and comforts us. To find this peace we must repent. We must be aware of our sinfulness and have sorrow over our condition and seek help from God. We all have a tendency to sin and we need to continually ask for God's help to help us in our struggle.

That the end of our lives may be Christian, without pain, blameless, and peaceful, and for a good account before the fearful judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

All of our lives should be lived according to the Christian principles, unto the very end. If we do our death will be the beginning of a new eternal life. For this we ask the Lord to help us to our very last day, to live without torment of various ailments and sicknesses, to live without being ashamed of any of our acts, to live in peace with all, but more so to enable us to give a good account, a good defense when we shall come face to face with our God Jesus, on the day of the Last Judgment.

After the six petitions we again commemorate the ever blessed Virgin Mary and we are reminded of her pure life and that of the Saints.

During these petitions, inside the Altar the Priest recites a very significant prayer:

*O Lord, God Almighty, Who alone art Holy; Who dost receive the sacrifice of praise from those, who call upon Thee with all their heart, receive also the supplication of us sinners, and accept it at Thy Holy Altar, and enable us to offer to Thee Gifts and spiritual sacrifices, for our sins and for the omissions of the people; and make us worthy to find grace in Thy Sight, that our sacrifice may be well pleasing unto Thee, and that the good Spirit of Thy grace may dwell upon us, and upon these Gifts presented here, and upon all Thy people.*

The ending of this beautiful prayer is heard aloud by the faithful as follows:

*Through the mercies of Thine Only-Begotten Son, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine All-Holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages.*

## The Creed

You will hear the Deacon or the Priest intone,

*“The doors, The doors, in wisdom let us be attentive!”*

This announces the recitation of the Creed which immediately follows. In the Apostolic instructions it says, "Let the doors of the Church temple be guarded, in case someone who is unfaithful or uninitiated enter. And if a certain brother or sister comes with a reference letter from another region may the deacon examine what pertains to them..., whether they are defiled by heresy." Today we are much more lax. We must remember, though, that the church is a sacred place only for the worship of the Triune God.

We can take this command allegorically to mean, take heed of your senses, mind, and thoughts. Do not let yourself be dominated by the things of this world. Guard the entrance to the temple in your own heart where God is within you.

The Creed is a "symbol of faith" stating what we believe as Christians. We recite it together to show that we are united in heart and mind in our beliefs about God. Almost all the statements are from the Bible.

The Creed was written at the First Ecumenical Council in 325 AD and amended in Second Ecumenical Council in 381 AD. It was agreed to never change it and it remains unchanged in the Orthodox Tradition.

The Creed is as follows:

1. I believe in one (1) God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth and of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in one (1) Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all Ages. Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made.
3. Who for us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became Man.
4. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and He suffered and was buried.
5. And He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.
6. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
7. And He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom shall have no end.
8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke through the Prophets.
9. I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
10. I confess One Baptism for the remission of sins.
11. I look for the resurrection of the dead.

12. And the life of the Age to come.

We end the creed with "Amen" which should be said in a loud cry.

During the recitation of the Creed the Priest picks up the "Aer", the veil covering the Gifts, and waves it over the Chalice and the Diskarion. This practice is a relic of the first Liturgies, some held outdoors and some in chapels with no windows. For fear that any insect might fall into the unveiled Chalice, two deacons or acolytes held large fans on either side of the Holy Altar. In place of this fanning the Priest waves the "Aer" (the veil).

However, the Church has also given a symbolism to the waving of the Aer. Just as in all contests or wars, ultimately the victor raises his flag, also in this case, the Faith has triumphed over all heresies, over all worldly bodies and now waves victoriously over all. The Aer is lowered during the 6th Article of the Creed which states that Christ ascended into Heaven.

## **Anaphora - Offering of the Gifts**

The people are called to order... attention... vigilance... because by God's grace we now are going to encounter the living God. Thus the deacon calls all to "Stand aright, stand in fear, be attentive, that we may offer the Holy oblation in peace."

We begin the "Anaphora"... the Eucharistic prayer of the Church...the climax of the Divine Liturgy.

The Anaphora is what we call the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

Anaphora means ascension. With profound reverence we are asked to focus intently on what is about to take place. Our earthly altar is about to become one with the one in heaven. The Holy Spirit is about to descend and make the Divine Conversion of the wine and bread into the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ.

What follows next is a dialogue between the clergy and the laity to encourage one another for what is about to take place. The Priest blesses all in attendance.

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

What is about to take place is not some kind of theatrical performance but the same exact Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Golgotha. The Congregation responds with "And with Thy Spirit." Everyone joins in with the Holy Spirit.

The Priest then asks us to "Lift up our hearts unto the Lord." God grabs us from within the church and elevates us to the Throne of His divine Majesty where the mystery of the communion of the Holy Spirit is being consummated. Our souls should long for this ascension with all their might. The greater our humility and sincerity the greater will be the gifts of the inner spiritual metamorphosis. With the words, lift up our hearts, the soul is being lifted up to heavenly heights with intense hunger for the immortal food, Holy Communion. We respond to the priests call with, "We lift them up unto the Lord." Fear, awe, respect reverence and vigilant attention should dominate inside the church at this moment. Our eyes should be attentive on the Holy Table along with our souls.

Next, the priest says, "let us give thanks unto the Lord." With our hearts uplifted we give thanks to god for all the endless benefits He provides is with.

We affirm this call with, "It is meet and right." In this way we have given our consent for the Holy Eucharist to be initiated. The Priest and the entire congregation are in agreement. At this moment we can experience the unity of the Body of Christ and the equality which clergy and laity approach the divine gifts.

What follows is one, single, UNBROKEN prayer.

The Anaphora includes a concise summary of God's mighty acts. This is said by the priest in the following Eucharist prayer.

*"It is proper and right to praise Thee, to glorify Thee, to bless Thee, to thank Thee, to worship Thee, in all places of Thy Dominion; for Thou art God ineffable, incomprehensible, invisible, inconceivable, existing always, as Thou dost exist; Thou and Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou hast brought us from nothingness into being, and when we fell away didst raise us up again, and Thou ceasest not, until Thou hast done everything to bring us to Heaven, and grant us Thy Kingdom to come. For all these things we thank Thee, and Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit; for all the things we know and do not know; for the visible and invisible bounties, which have been bestowed upon us. We thank Thee also for this Liturgy, which Thou dost deign to receive from our hands, even though Thou art surrounded by thousands of Archangels, and myriads of Angels, by the Cherubim and six-winged Seraphim, which are many-eyed, and soar aloft on their wings."*

All God's benefits given to us are for one purpose, our salvation. This is why we owe him gratitude, thanksgiving and doxology. The more we give thanks for His benefits the more he provides for us. With this thanksgiving the priest prepares the gifts of bread and wine.

NOTE: Until the 3rd Century, the church the bishop of each community wrote, even improvised his own "Anaphora." Today we read the Anaphorae written by St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil or St. James in their respective Liturgies.

We have followed a journey in the Divine Liturgy. We entered the church and first received Christ as the Gospel was brought out in the small entrance. We listened to the Divine Word. We heard about His miracles. Then with the Great Entrance we escorted Him to the dreadful Golgotha where He suffers, is slaughtered and we are saved. He is crucified and then we are raised up with Him. Step by step we move towards the center of the universe. We are transfigured through a liturgical transformation.

Next the triumphal hymn is sung.

*"Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabbath, Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest."*

This is the hymn of the Seraphim along with the part of the Psalm 117 that foretells Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Saint John Chrysostom tells us,

*"The Angelic hosts above are glorifying; on earth the people in the Churches are chanting a chorus offering the same doxology as them. The Seraphim above cry the Thrice Holy (Trisagion)*

*Hymn; on earth, crowds of people ascribe the same hymn. Common is the banquet that of the heavens and of earth that is being set up..."*

The heavenly being and the earthly beings are having a common celebration. When we chant this triumphal hymn in the Liturgy we stand along with the angels before God's throne, both glorifying the Lord. This why the priest calls us to "Singing the victory hymn, proclaiming and crying out."

The priest begins his steep ascent to the most heavenly Holy of Holies. Each step and every movement are being observed by the myriads of angels who are surrounding the Holy Table.

The priest reads the prayer of the Anaphora.

*"With these blessed powers, O Master, who lovest mankind, we also cry and say: Holy art Thou and all-Holy; Thou, and Thine only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. Holy art Thou, and all-Holy and magnificent is Thy Glory. Who, didst so love Thy world, as to give Thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life; Who, having come, and having fulfilled all the dispensation for us, in the night that He was betrayed, or rather, surrendered Himself for the life of the world, having taken bread in His holy, and immaculate, and blameless hands, and having thanked, blessed, and sanctified and broken it, He gave to His Holy Disciples and Apostles saying:"*

We are experiencing the mystery of Christ's redeeming Sacrifice on the Cross but now bloodlessly. The Lord is present, ascending to Golgotha, nailed to the Cross, sacrificed, dying for our salvation. He lies on the altar as the slaughtered lamb "who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29).

The priest now says,

*"Take eat this is my Body which is broken for you, for the forgiveness of sins."*

*And then after the Supper, He took the cup, saying...*

*"Drink of it all of you; this is my Blood of the new Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

NOTE: These words are not said as a "consecrating formula." They are not said, in other words, as if these words "transform" or "bring about" the change in the bread and wine. Rather, the priest speaks the words of Christ, through Whom the priest is authorized to offer the gifts.

These are the Words Christ used at the institution of the Holy Eucharist during the Mystical Supper. The priests continues the "anamnesis/memorial" silently praying the following,

*"Therefore, remembering this command of our Savior, and all that He endured for us, the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the sitting at the Right Hand, the second and glorious Coming again,"*

Then aloud,

*"We offer to You these gifts in all and for all."*

This is the HEART of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Saying these words the Priest elevates the diskarion and the Holy Chalice with crossed hands, to make the sign of the Cross.

NOTE: These words " "We offer to You these gifts..." We acknowledge that we have NOTHING or our own to offer God. Even the things we offer - bread, wine, our very lives- God provides it all. The bread and wine are His. WHAT DO WE GIVE? We we have to give back to God is our PRAISE AND GRATITUDE. Thanksgiving is the essence of the Orthodox Christian Faith.

Thus the Choir sings one of the most beautiful Hymns of our Church:

*"We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, and we entreat Thee, our God."*

This is the most crucial and the most sacred moment of the Divine Liturgy. What we offer as a sacrifice to our God, is the very Sacrifice our Lord made upon the Cross for us.

We begin what is called in Greek the "*Epikesis*" (Calling upon). We call upon the Holy Spirit. The whole Anaphora is an "*epiklesis*." Up to now the bread and wine were only symbols of our Lord's Body and Blood. Now, through the invocation to God, the Holy Spirit descends and changes the elements into the real Body and Blood of Jesus. The Priest prays intently.

*"Again we offer to Thee this rational and bloodless Worship, and we beseech Thee, and pray, and supplicate Thee: send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us, and upon these Gifts here presented."*

The Priest rises and making the sign of the Cross over the bread he says:

*"And make this bread the precious Body of Thy Christ",*

The Priest making the sign of the Cross again over the Chalice he says:

*"And that which is in this cup, the precious Blood of Thy Christ",*

Then making the sign of the Cross over both Gifts he says:

*"Changing them by Thy Holy Spirit. Amen, Amen, Amen."*

This prayer has approximately one hundred words that have been sanctified for two thousand years. The bread and wine are now the actual Blood and Body of Jesus Christ.

Kneeling, the Priest continues praying:

*"So that They may be to those who receive Them, for the purification of the soul, for the remission of sins, for the fellowship of Thy Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven, and for the boldness to approach Thee, neither unto judgment nor unto condemnation."*

*Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable Worship for those who have fallen asleep in the Faith: Forefathers, Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, Martyrs, Confessors, Ascetics, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith."*

Our worship is then offered for all the saints, especially the Theotokos, to our Bishop, and to those each of us have in mind and all the faithful.

After the Consecration of the Holy Gifts, transforming them into the real Body and Blood of our Savior, we have, as we have seen before, various inspired prayers commemorating the Saints and Martyrs, the governing heads, in order that by their peace we may live in tranquility, etc. Parts of these prayers are audible while the greatest parts are inaudible.

At this point of the silent prayer of commemoration, after the Hymn "We praise Thee, we bless Thee . . ." and the Consecration having been completed, we hear the Priest aloud in continuation:

*"Especially for our most holy, pure, most blessed, glorious Lady, Theotokos, and ever-Virgin Mary."*

In response to the appeal of the Priest to especially commemorate our Holy Virgin Mary the Choir sings the Hymn "Axion Esti."

*"Truly it is worthy to bless Thee, the Theotokos, ever blessed and pure, and the Mother of our God. Thee, who art more honorable than the Cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim; who incorruptibly didst bear God, the Word, verily the Theotokos we magnify."*

Silently, while the Choir chants the Hymn "Axion Esti," the Priest continues the prayer:

*"For the holy Prophet and Forerunner, John the Baptist, for the holy, glorious and most lauded Apostles, for Saint (of the day) whose memory we celebrate, and for all Thy Saints, by whose supplications do Thou, O God, visit us. Remember also, O Lord, those who have fallen asleep in the hope of a resurrection to life Eternal.*

The Priest at this point commemorates, whom he wills.

*Give them rest, O God, where the light of Thy countenance shineth. Further, we entreat Thee: Remember, O Lord, the Orthodox Episcopate, who rightly teach the word of Thy Truth, all the Priests of the diaconate in Christ, and all Priestly and monastic orders. Further, we offer to Thee this reasonable Worship for the World, for the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, for those living in purity and temperance, for our faithful Civil Authorities. Grant them, O Lord, peaceful government, that we in their tranquility may live a serene life in all piety and temperance."*

During the singing of this most magnificent description of our Lady Theotokos, an altar boy hands the Priest the tray or basket containing the pieces of Bread (Antidoron) to be blessed and distributed to the Faithful after the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

Finally, the Anaphora is completed with the following epilog by the priest.

*And grant with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise Your most honored and majestic name, of the Father and the Son and the Holy spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.*

These gifts that our Lord has given to us in this bloodless sacrifice for our salvation, He who took on the role of a servant, was humiliated, mocked, slandered, arrested as a thief, scourged, reviled, slapped, wore a crown of thorns, and was crucified. Instead of condemning us he makes us worthy of offering this sacrifice bloodlessly at the Holy Table. He proves us with immortal nourishment so we can be transfigured and redeemed, forgiven, saved and made holy. This is why we glorify and give thanks to Him with "one mouth and one heart."

This is the purpose of Holy Communion, so that it may lead to a "purification of the soul," "remission of sins" and the "fellowship with the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven."

## Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is the CULMINATION of the Anaphora. The Gifts have been consecrated and we now begin to prepare to receive the most awesome gift.

The Lord's Prayer are the last words that the Faithful say before they receive Communion. The Holy Gifts, Holy Communion, will be taken by the Clergy first, then offered to the people who have prepared themselves.

The Petitions which are to follow, ending with the Lord's Prayer, are all part of the last minute preparation of the Priest and the faithful to receive Holy Communion.

Deacon or Priest:

Having commemorated all the Saints, again and again, in peace, let us beseech the Lord.

For the precious Gifts which have been offered and sanctified, let us beseech the Lord.

That our merciful God, who hath received them on His Holy and Celestial and Invisible Altar unto a scent of spiritual fragrance, may send down upon us Divine Grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, let us beseech the Lord.

Having asked for the unity of the Faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commit ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

Priest (inaudibly):

To Thee we commit all our life and our hope, O Master who lovest mankind; and we beseech Thee, and pray Thee, and supplicate Thee: make us worthy to partake of Thy Heavenly and awesome Mysteries, of this sacred and spiritual Table, with a pure conscience, unto remission of sins, unto forgiveness of transgressions, unto communion of the Holy Spirit, unto inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, unto boldness towards Thee, but not unto judgment nor unto condemnation.

Priest (aloud):

And deem us worthy, O Master, that we may boldly and without condemnation dare to call upon Thee, the Heavenly God, as Father, and to say:

The whole congregation together prays the Lord's Prayer:

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.

Priest (aloud):

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages.

Amen

After the Lord's Prayer, the Priest continues to pray for himself and the Faithful before approaching to receive from the Holy Chalice. Wanting to keep our minds and hearts directly focused on the great moment, he turns and blesses the congregation saying:

*Peace be unto all.*

To which the congregation responds:

*And with thy spirit.*

We commit our whole heart in peace without passions, malice, doubt, or any sinful thought, may there now be peace in our hearts.

Deacon or Priest:

*Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.*

(All the Faithful present bow)

By bowing our heads before the Lord we confess that we are His servants. To receive His Gifts we must be humbled. This bowing of our heads indicates our most reverent humility and the removing all proud thoughts. Only then will God look down upon us and lay His hands on us and bless us.

Priest (inaudibly):

*We thank Thee, O King Invisible, Who by Thine Infinite Power hast created all things, and by the fullness of Thy Mercy hast brought forth all things out of nothing into being; do Thou Thyself, O Master, look down from Heaven upon those, who have bowed their heads before Thee; for they have not bowed before flesh and blood but before Thee, our Almighty God. Do Thou, therefore, O Master, administer these Offerings to all of us for the good, according to the special need of each of us; sail with those at sea; accompany those who travel; and do Thou, Who art the Physician of our souls and bodies, heal the sick.*

Then aloud we hear the completion of this Prayer by the Priest:

*Through the grace and mercy and love for mankind, Thine only Begotten Son, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-Holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.*

He is praying that all we have asked from God will be granted to us.

To this prayer another one is added, and repeated silently by the Priest as follows:

*Hearken, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, from Thy Holy dwelling-place, and from the Throne of glory of Thy Kingdom, and come to sanctify us; Thou Who sittest above with the Father, yet art here invisibly present with us; do Thou also deign by Thy mighty Hand to give to us of Thy Sacred Body, and of Thy Precious Blood, and through us to all the people."*

## Receiving Holy Communion

Receiving Holy Communion is the reason and goal of the Divine Liturgy... it is the reason we came. We are about to participate in union with God through His most precious gift of his Blood and Body that He gives to us for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.

Unfortunately many come to the service without preparing themselves to participate in this crowning awesome event. Some routinely participate out of obligation only on major feasts days a couple of times a year. But in his next exclamation the priest tells us that these gifts are for the "*holy people of God.*" We cannot participate without proper preparation and is it our duty to always be prepared. It is not proper to partake out of obligation or habit nor is it proper to routinely come to the Liturgy unprepared to participate.

Saint John Chrysostom says,

*...Many are those who partake of the immaculate mysteries once a year, while others twice and others many times. Whom shall we accept? Neither those who partake of Holy Communion once a year, nor those who partake of It many times, nor those who partake of It a few times, but those who partake of the immaculate Mysteries with a clean conscience, a clean heart and impeccable life. All those who are clean, may always draw near the holy Cup, whereas those who are unclean may not draw near even once. for they are given their own condemnation and disapproval and hell and punishment...*

*All of us - clergy and laity - should have good souls, a heart that is totally pure, and understanding that is illuminated and a countenance that should shine with Divine Grace... Whoever is like this, may draw near and may touch the royal Cup the celebrant is holding... let no one who remains sinful and unrepentant draw near. (G.C.F. 19 p 486)*

At this point in the service the deacon calls us to be attentive. The priest, raising the holy Body of Christ, then calls those who are prepared to participate. This elevation of the "Lamb", the Body of Christ, is seen by some as symbolizing Christ's soul being raised from Hades, releasing a multitude of Righteous; His soul then being reunited with the Resurrected Body.

The priest proclaims with strength:

*The Holy Gifts, for the Holy people of God.*

The Congregation then voices the sentiments and their humility and sing:

*One is Holy, one is Lord; Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father. Amen.*

## Breaking of the Bread

It is necessary to break the "lamb" into four parts and then into smaller pieces so that everyone can participate in communion with God. This is referred to as the Breaking of the Bread.

We have seen from the preparation or Prothesis that the center part of the Prosforon, which is cut and placed on the Diskarion has the following letters:

Interpreted these letters mean:

IC = contraction for Jesus (Ιησους)

XC = contraction for Christ (Χριστός)

NIKA = conquers

"Jesus Christ conquers"

The Priest takes this cube of Holy Bread (the center portion), which has been carved in the form of the Cross, but not broken, and breaks it into the four parts, saying inaudibly:

Broken and distributed is the Lamb of God; broken but not divided; always eaten, yet never consumed, but sanctifying those who partake.

Taking the piece marked IC, and making the sign of the Cross over the Holy Chalice, he drops it in saying quietly:

*The fullness of the Cup of the Faith, of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The Lamb of God is divided and distributed, yet It is not disunited. Even though the portion that each receives may be small, nevertheless, the whole Body of the Lord Who sacrificed His life on the Precious Cross for the salvation of the whole world is imparted to us. In each small piece that a communicant receives, whenever and wherever, is our Lord in His fullness. He is forever consumed by the Faithful, but never used up and always sanctifies those who partake thereof.

By uniting the Body and Blood in the holy Cup, the unity of Jesus Christ's nature is proclaimed: perfect God and perfect man. It is a union between the Sacrifice on the Cross and divine Grace, which is offered to the faithful through Holy Communion.

When the celebrant unites the Body and Blood of Christ, he is given some very hot water in a small container called "Zeon," brought by an altar boy. It is blessed and the hot water is poured into the Holy Chalice. Saint Nicholas Cabasilas tells us that it is hot because it reveals the Holy Spirit that is also called "water" and appeared as fire that "sat upon each of" Christ's disciples during Pentecost. (P.G. 150, 452, A, B). It is also a remembrance of the blood and water that came from the piercing of Christ's body on the Cross.

The Priest blesses the water saying:

*Blessed is the fervor of Thy Saints, always: now and forever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.”*

Pouring the water into the Chalice he repeats:

*The fervor of Faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

### **The Clergy Receive the Holy Communion**

The clergy receive Holy Communion first, before the laity. The clergy receive it the ancient way... the way everyone received Communion until the late 4th Century.

Reverently and full of faith, the Priest recites the following prayers before receiving Holy Communion. Originally these were PRIVATE devotions, as noted by the use of “I believe...”. This became a fixed part of the Liturgy in the 10th Century. The prayer is as follows:

*I believe, O Lord, and I confess, that Thou art verily the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who didst come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. Also I believe, that This is Thy Sacred Body, and This Thy Precious Blood. Therefore I pray Thee; have mercy upon me and pardon my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and in deed, both known and unknown, and make me worthy to partake of Thy Sacred Mysteries, unto the remission of sins and unto Life Eternal. Amen.*

*Into the magnificence of Thy Saints, how shall I, your unworthy and unprofitable servant enter? For should I also dare to enter the Festal Chamber, my robe betrays me, for it is not a festal garment, and I shall be bound and cast out by the Angels. Cleanse my soul, O Lord, from pollution, and by Thy compassion save me.*

*O merciful Master, Lord Jesus Christ my God, let not these Holy Gifts be unto me for judgment through my unworthiness, but rather for the purification and sanctification of my soul and body, and as an earnest of the Life and Kingdom to come. For it is good for me to cleave unto God and to place in the Lord the hope of my salvation.*

*Receive me today, O Son of God, as a partaker of Thy Mystical Feast for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thine will not kiss Thee as did Judas, but as the Thief, I will confess Thee: Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.*

The Priest prepares to receive by saying:

*Behold, I draw near to Christ, our immortal King and God.*

Taking the piece marked 'XC' and before consuming it he says quietly:

*To me (name), the unworthy Priest, is given the most Holy and Precious Body of our Lord, and God and Savior Jesus Christ, for the remission of my sins, and unto Eternal Life.*

Taking the sponge he wipes his fingers carefully in order that even the tiniest particle of Holy Bread is off and into the Chalice.

He then picks up the Holy Chalice and before drinking from it he repeats:

*The most Holy and Precious Blood of our Lord, and God and Savior Jesus Christ is given to me (name), the unworthy Priest, for the remission of my sins, and Eternal Life.*

Wiping his lips with the communion cloth, he kisses the Chalice and says:

*This hath touched my lips and my iniquities shall be taken away, and my sins cleansed." (Isaiah, Chapter 6, Verse 7)*

Then taking the portions marked NI and KI, he places them into the Holy Chalice, from which the Faithful will shortly receive. In doing this, he recites an exultant praise of the Resurrection, as follows:

*Having beheld the resurrection of Christ, let us adore the Holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One. We worship Thy Cross, O Christ, and Thy Holy Resurrection we praise and glorify; for Thou art our God, and we know no other than Thee; we call on The Name. O come all ye faithful, let us worship Christ's Holy Resurrection. For behold, through the Cross joy has come to all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, we praise His Resurrection. By enduring the Cross for us He destroyed death by death.*

The Chalice and the Diskarion are then covered with the veils as the Priest recites the Prayer of Thanksgiving:

*We thank Thee, O Merciful Master and Benefactor of our souls, that Thou hast this day vouchsafed to give us Thy Heavenly and Immortal Mysteries; Direct us into the right way; strengthen all of us in Thy fear; watch over our life; make safe our endeavors, through the prayers and supplications of the glorious Theotokos, and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all Thy Saints.*

### **Congregation receives the Holy Communion**

Finally, the priest or the Deacon announces to the congregation:

*With the fear of God, faith and love, draw near.*

The people come forward prayerfully and orderly. As we come to commune, we should sense this trembling in fear and awe, a fear that comes from extreme respect and reverence for the Triune God, not one with anxiety, but with the faith Christ himself revealed to us.

This fear is not the same as that of a person who is terrified of losing money, health or a job. It is a noble sentiment of godliness and contrition, of reverence and wisdom of divine humility. It is fear coupled with awe and reverence. It is with unquestioned faith in a particular Triune God that has been revealed to us by God Himself when he became man. There should be no question in the mind of the partaker that this is the actual Blood and Body of Jesus Christ. This reality raises within us reverent fear and awe—we are joining with our Creator. We also approach the Holy Cup with the unconditional love of God reigning in our hearts. This is a love based on the forgiveness our Lord modeled when he cried on the Cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?"

Saint John of Damascus says,

*Through the partaking of the Holy Eucharist's divine fire, sins must be burnt down and passions weakened. At the same time, we must be "burning and deified" through the divine Coal. Our whole hearts must become one with fire! As we receive Holy communion we must sense that within us there is a banquet, a marvelous celebration, a Paschal feast...*

Saint John Chrysostom says,

*When you are about to draw near this divine and dreadful Table, with fear and trembling, with a clear conscience, with fasting (of the soul and body) and prayer, you should do so without any commotion, with out stepping on and pushing the person who is next to you. For, this lack of order manifests the great madness and ignorance that exists towards the Holy Mysteries. ...*

*Let us therefore sense this trembling, as we draw near to commune. Let us tear and mourn for the sins we have committed. After we have cleansed ourselves, let us draw near so that we may commune with silence and order that are appropriate, for we are drawing near the Kingdom of Heaven....*

*We must absolutely draw near our Lord's most holy Table, wearing a bridal garment. Moreover, the most important jewel of this spiritual garment is the love towards all and mainly our enemies, to those who have tempted us, have treated us unjustly, have robbed us blind, have dishonored us, and have ruined us. Remission and concession are the jewels of love.*

As the faithful humbly and prayerfully approach the Chalice the priest says,

*The servant of, (name), partakes of the precious and all-holy body and blood of our Lord and God and saviour Jesus Christ, unto the forgiveness of sins and unto life everlasting.*

The Priest will give each person who come forth Holy Communion on a spoon. Originally, as said before, the laity received Communion in the same way that the priests do today. The use of the Communion spoon arose in the 8th Century... by the 11th Century it was a universal practice.

Why the use of the spoon? Not entirely known... On theory is that the spoon was used to ensure people would swallow the Body and Blood on the spot so to prevent people from taking it home for illicit use.

When one approaches the chalice, they give their first name received at the time of their Baptism.

When coming forward to receive Holy communion one should not talk with others as they patiently wait in an orderly fashion. One should keep their eyes low, avoiding eye contact with others, maintain concentration on this most important event. One can think what he or she is about to receive, what a magnificent gift this is, and how unworthy they are to receive such a gift. One should feel contrition for his own sinfulness and desire to become more like Christ Himself. This gift of the His Blood and Body to intermingle with one's own is for our spiritual benefit and growth in Him. As you receive this precious gift think of the priest's hand as the hand of Christ stretching out to you through his hand.

When you partake of the Blood and Body of Christ you have become one with Him. The Blood and Body of Christ is now intermingling with your own blood and body. You sense something that makes you radiant, a sublime feeling of being in union with Jesus Christ.

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas writes:

*Holy Communion sanctifies and makes the entire psychosomatic human being radiant, for one soul intermingled with the other soul - one blood with the other blood...God's judgment is an abyss, His Mysteries are magnificent...*

*What a great miracle, our nous getting mixed with that of Christ's! His Will with our will becoming one mixture...also His Body with our body and His Blood with our blood.*

*I wonder, what becomes of our nous, when the divine Nous prevails? What becomes of our will when the divine Will prevails? What becomes of soil and clay when divine Fire conquers?*

*Indeed, Holy Communion makes worthy those of us who are laudable of receiving It, who are similar with Him by Grace and communion, Who Alone is, the only One Who is Holy, the only One who is Good, the only One who is True?' (P.G. 150, 584 D - 585 A).*

### **Final Rites**

The final rites are done very quickly.

After all have communed, the priest says the following:

*O God save thy people ad Bless thine inheritance.*

The we sing the hymn, "*Eidomen to Fos...*" We have seen the true light.

*We have seen the true light;*

*We have received the heavenly spirit.*

*We have found the true faith,*

*In worshipping the indivisible Trinity:*

*For he hath saved us.*

This is a hymn of Pentecost... sung at the vespers at Pentecost. It celebrates the Holy Spirit poured on the Church at Pentecost and ever since. Each time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated and the Eucharist is given, this means the Holy Spirit has been poured upon us. It celebrates that the Holy Spirit FULFILLS everything! It ENLIGHTENS us all.

Holy Communion is the "true light" that is within us. Our soul is being transformed and is glowing from within. It has been united with Christ. Jesus tells us, "I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

The priest then censes the Holy Cup, faces the people, and proclaims after saying quietly,

*Blessed is our God, always, now and forever and to the ages of ages.*

## **Litany of Thanksgiving**

At this point the Priest takes the Holy Chalice and the Diskarion back to the "Prothesis" preparation table. All the contents are consumed at the very end of the Divine Liturgy by the Deacon or the Priest and not one particle remains unconsumed because it is the very Body and Blood of our Lord.

At this point the Deacon proclaims the following Litany:

*Let us rise. Having partaken of the divine, holy, pure, and immortal, heavenly, life-giving, and awesome Mysteries of Christ, worthily let us give thanks unto the Lord.*

*Help us, save us; have mercy upon us; and keep us, O God, by Thy Grace.*

*Having asked the Lord that this whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ, our God.*

The Priest folds the "Antiminsion", which was unfolded at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful during the singing of the Cherubic Hymn.

He says quietly this prayer:

*We thank You, loving Master, benefactor of our souls, that on this day You have made us worthy once again of Your heavenly and immortal Mysteries. Direct our ways in the right path, establish us firmly in Your fear, guard our lives, and make our endeavors safe, through the prayers and supplications of the glorious Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and of all Your saints.*

Then with the Book of the Gospels he makes the sign of the Cross over the Antiminsion and places it directly upon it chanting:

*For Thou art our sanctification, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages."*

Dionysius the Areopagite writes:

*With the holy initiation of Divine Mysteries, those who are initiated will get to know the enormous graces of these Mysteries well and while they will be giving reverently profound thought to their such divine height and extent, they shall praise the divine Godhead's most heavenly good works and gratitude. (P.G. 3, 445 B, C)*

All that is demanded of us is appropriate preparation, repentance and cleanliness, knowledge and action of faith, sensing our sinfulness and unworthiness, weaknesses, and nothing more.

We must prepare ourselves so we can see the true Light with the eyes of our soul each time we come to the Church.

## Dismissal

The Journey is now coming to an end. Its aim was our reunion with our Lord and Savior through Holy Communion. This aim has been fulfilled. We have received the Divine Mysteries and with them joy, peace, gentleness, love, gladness, calmness, forbearance, faith, hope, goodness, propriety and many other gifts and now carry these home to our family, our work and our whole life. We are now to be witnesses of the new life in Christ. We now offer the final prayers of the Liturgy. We must guard these gifts we have received through humility, prayer, patience, faith and watchfulness. The Priest calls on us to depart in peace and offers a final blessing.

*"Let us depart in peace; let us pray to the Lord."*

The Priest faces the Holy Icon of Christ prays aloud the "*Prayer behind the Ambon (Pulpit)*." It is called this because in the ancient Church the *ambon* was situated in the center of the nave and the priest would stand behind the *ambon* to say this prayer.

The *Ambon* was like a pulpit, but raised higher up and was connected to the sole by a walkway. It was from here that the sermons were given, such as the sermons of St. John Chrysostom. The walkway allowed quick, back and forth access to the altar in a very crowded church. It is also thought by some to be connected to the development of the *iconostasis*.

Now the Ambon is situated differently, but the priest remains saying the prayer in front of the icon of Christ.

Prayer Behind the *ambon*:

*O Lord, Who blessest those who bless Thee, and sanctifiest those who put their trust in Thee, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance; preserve the whole Body of Thy Church and sanctify those, who love the beauty of Thy Temple. Do Thou glorify them by Thy Divine power, and forsake us not, who set our hope in Thee. Grant peace to Thy world, to Thy Churches, to the Priests, to our Civil Authorities, to the Armed Forces and to all Thy people. For all good giving and every perfect Gift is from Above, coming down from Thee, the Father of Lights; and to Thee we ascribe glory, thanksgiving, and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages.*

Congregation responds with:

*Amen.*

*Blessed be the Name of the Lord, from this time forth, and for ever more. (three times)*

This is the final doxology from Psalm 112 v2.

While the above is chanted, Priest re-enters the Sanctuary and proceeding to the "Prothesis" prays inaudibly:

*O Christ, our God, Who art Thyself the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and hast fulfilled all the dispensation of the Father, fill our hearts with joy and gladness always, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen.*

The Deacon announces:

*Let us Pray the Lord.*

Exiting from the Royal Doors the Priest blesses and gives the benediction facing the people and saying:

*May the blessing of the Lord and His mercy come upon you, through His Divine Grace and Love for mankind; always, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages.*

Congregation responds:

Amen.

Priest proclaims:

Glory to Thee, O Christ, our God and our hope, glory to Thee.

*May Christ, our true God Who rose from the dead, through the intercessions of His most pure and holy Mother; by the power of the precious and life-giving Cross; the protection of the sublime Bodiless Powers of Heaven; the supplication of the honorable glorious Prophet, and Forerunner, John the Baptist; of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; of the holy, glorious and victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-bearing Fathers; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of Saint(s) (name or names of Saint(s) of day), whose memory we celebrate, and of all the Saints, -- have mercy on us and save us, because He is gracious and loveth mankind. Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us."*

The Priest then gives an added blessing by saying:

*May the Holy Trinity bless you and protect you.*

Distributing the *Antidoron*, the Priest descending to the lower step of the Sanctuary distributes to the Congregation a piece of "*Antidoron*" (Αντίδορον) saying to each:

*May the blessing of the Lord and His mercy be upon you.*

The Antidoron is the remaining part of the Prosforo from which the lamb of God was taken. It is a small gift instead of the Communion. Remain after the service and take the Antidoron from the priest's hand which you kiss with reverence.

Here is what Saint Nicholas Cabasilas says reading the Antidoron,

*The bread that is distributed as Antidoron has previously been sanctified, for it has been offered to God. All the Christians who have been to Church receive it with reverence in their right curved palm and kiss the priest's right hand, which a short while ago touched and cut Christ the savior's most holy Body; for all of it was sanctified. This is why the Church claims that the celebrant's hand imparts the sanctification to those who touch and kiss it. (P.G. 150, 489 C)*

Note: may also be taken home for use during the week. It is a pious custom for Orthodox Christians to begin the day, after their morning prayers and before eating, by consuming a particle of *antidoron* and drinking *agiasmos*, or blessed holy water.

After the congregation has left, the Priest goes to the Prothesis and consumes the contents of the Holy Chalice, and removes his vestments; for both these acts he recites appropriate prayers.