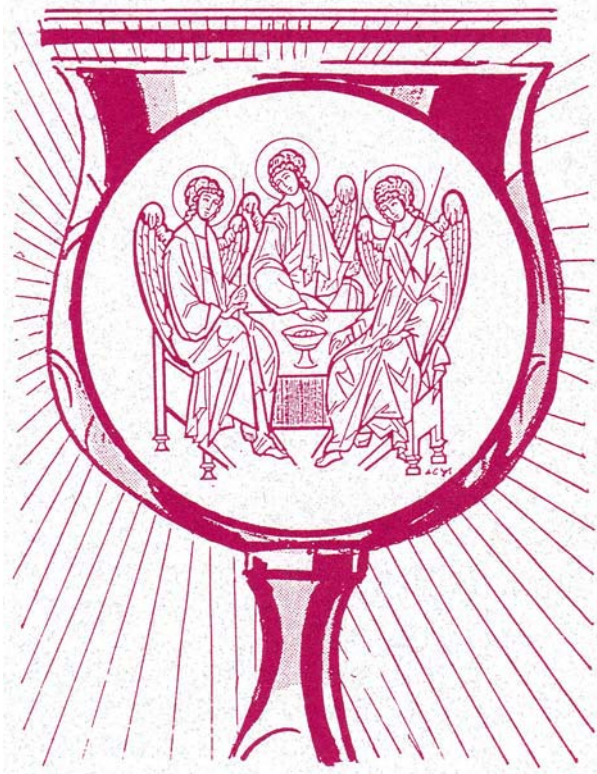


The Divine Liturgy



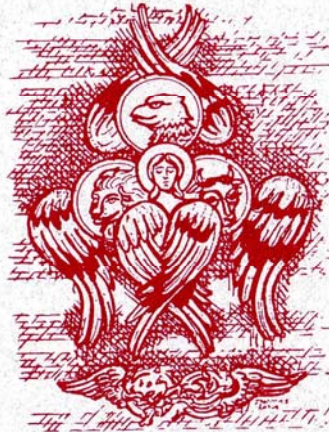
THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT in an Eastern Christian's life is the worship of the Church, especially the **Divine Liturgy**. *Liturgy* means "common work" or "common action". The Liturgy of the Church is the work of all God's people — priests, laity, singers, servers — who come together to proclaim their common faith and vision in the saving work of Jesus Christ. It is particularly the work of the Head of the Body, Christ Himself, who offers Himself to the Father for us.

The Good News Proclaimed ...

The first portion of the Divine Liturgy focuses on the *proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ* as recorded in the Scriptures. It consists in the following elements:

- **The Opening Doxology**, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." in which we acknowledge that we are entering, through worship, the very Kingdom of God;
- **The Great Litany**, during which we bring all the aspects of this world into that Kingdom and entrust them to the mercy of God;
- **The Antiphons**, verses from the psalms usually sung with a refrain, which connects these Old Testament praises with their fulfillment in Christ.
- **The Hymn to Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God**, in which we proclaim Jesus to be true God and true man, while imploring Him to save us;
- **The Beatitudes**, often sung while the Gospel Book is carried out of the sanctuary, as the summary of Christ's teaching;

- **The Little Entrance**, during which we solemnly invite all to worship Christ, present in the Scriptures;
- **The Troparia and Kontakia**, through which we hear the theme of the day's celebration; and
- **The Trisagion**, "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us" in which we glorify the Trinity;



Following these introductory hymns, the Scriptures are read:

- **The Prokimenon** is a responsorial psalm chanted alternately by the reader and the people. It prepares us for
- **The Apostolic Reading**, which is taken from the Acts of the Apostles or the New Testament epistles, and reflects the life and concerns of the early Church;
- **The Alleluarion**, consisting of two psalm verses, separated by the singing of "Alleluia", which means "Praise the Lord".
- **The Gospel**, the public proclamation of the Word of God, taken from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. After the Gospel we listen to

- **The Sermon**, during which the priest continues to proclaim the Good News of Christ while applying it to our daily lives.

The Eucharist Celebrated ...

Having been fed by the Word of God, we now turn our sights to the central mystery of our faith — *participation in the death and resurrection of Christ* through the celebration of the Eucharist. The word Eucharist literally means "thanksgiving" — for all the gifts of God, but especially for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. The word also refers to our thanksgiving gifts, which are returned to us as the body and blood of Christ. During this part of the Liturgy we participate in:

- **The Great Entrance**, performed during the singing of the Cherubic Hymn. As we offer our gifts of bread and wine to God, we are invited to unite ourselves with the angels and to "lay aside all earthly cares so that we may receive the King of all";
- **The Peace**, which expresses our faith that "Christ is in our midst" and invites us to worship the Trinity with one heart and one mind;
- **The Creed**, which expresses our common faith in the Trinity and the other tenets of the Church's doctrine;
- **The Eucharistic Canon**, which proclaims the holiness and love of God, while recalling the institution of the Eucharist by Christ at the Last Supper as well as His death, resurrection and ascension;
- **The Consecration**, the changing of our gifts of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Christ through the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit;

- **The Commemorations**, which enable us to recall all for whom this Eucharist is offered;
- **The Lord's Prayer** our acknowledgement that God is indeed our heavenly Father;
- **The Breaking of the Bread**, during which we express our belief that God alone is holy; and
- **The Reception of Holy Communion**, the climax of the Liturgy. We fulfill the purposes of our worship by uniting ourselves with Christ "for the forgiveness of sins and unto life everlasting".

After we receive God's greatest blessing in the Eucharist, we express our thanks to God for receiving the heavenly Spirit by worshipping the Trinity, who saves us. We are invited to:

- **Depart in Peace**, in the name of the Lord, in order to bear witness in our daily lives to all that we've experienced during the Divine Liturgy;
- **Pray for Salvation** and guidance during the closing prayer recited by the priest in the center of the church; and
- **Receive the Lord's Blessing**, proclaimed by the priest, through the veneration of the cross.



The end of every Divine Liturgy prepares us for the beginning of the next. If we strive to live all that we've experienced in our public worship of God, our lives become a part of the Liturgy and the Liturgy becomes a part of our lives. Having placed ourselves in the very presence of God through thanksgiving, prayer and the reception of the Eucharist, we are no longer children of this world, but inheritors of the Kingdom of God and everlasting life.

The Divine Liturgy ...

- enables us to praise and worship God in Christ, together with our brothers and sisters;
- is always celebrated in thanksgiving for the blessings and mercy offered us by God;
- unites us to Christ through the reception of Holy Communion — His very body and blood — which He offers us for the forgiveness of sins and unto life everlasting;
- is the very revelation of God's Kingdom in this world.

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