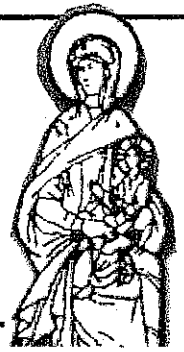


SOPHIA!

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BOARD OF THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN
SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2008
DIANNE O'REGAN, EDITOR



DID YOU KNOW . . . that while the Orthodox Church primarily celebrates the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the Liturgy of St. Basil, and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, there are actually FOUR others no longer in regular use. They are the Liturgy of St. James, the Liturgy of St. Mark, the Liturgy of St. Gregory the Great, and the Liturgy of St. Tikhon of Moscow.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH . . . THE DIVINE LITURGY (PART I)

Opening Prayer "On Entering A Church":

I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear I will worship toward Thy holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy Righteousness because of mine enemies; make Thy way straight before me, that with a clear mind I may glorify Thee forever. One Divine Power worshiped in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Discussion Topics:

1. *What is the Divine Liturgy?* The Orthodox Christian Faith teaches that the Church – through continuous prayer – is heaven on earth. We partake of the heavenly life in communion with God now in the Church. Christ our God has come – He has destroyed the power of death, granted us access to the Kingdom of God, and given us the Holy Spirit as our helper.
2. *Why Do We Worship In The Way We Do?* We are glorifying God during the Divine Liturgy. In addition, we experience God's ultimate purpose for our existence. True worship provides the answer to the question, "Who am I, and what is the purpose for my existence?"
3. *Why Do I Have To Attend Church? Can't God Hear Me In My Home?* Orthodoxy teaches us that the Lord is present in all things, but true worship must take place in the actual Church. In worship we enter the most intimate dwelling place of the Most High, and the Holy of Holies itself. Christ is also BEFORE us – by partaking of His body and blood, we have access to Him.
4. *The Different Parts of the Divine Liturgy:*
 - * The first part of the Liturgy is that of the Catechumens (or the Liturgy of the Word). For those new to the Church, think of this part as the "Liturgy of Learners" (for those "learning" about the Faith). It is where the scriptures are announced and explained.
 - * The Liturgy starts with the priest saying, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit." This statement calls the worshipers to detach themselves from everything else and to place themselves in the "realm of the Trinity." ("Meditations on the Divine Liturgy" by Gogol). We should come to realize that the Kingdom of Heaven is the ultimate gift offered by Christ to all those who serve Him in faith. The Divine Liturgy allows us to glimpse into this Kingdom through praise, the highest form of prayer.
 - * The faithful and choir respond to the petitions of the Great Litany with the words, "Lord, have mercy." Through these words, we are humbly asking Christ before his throne for tender-loving kindness. We also respond "Amen," meaning "Yes" or "It is So."

* Antiphons are sung by the choir, consisting of one or more psalms or portions from Holy Scripture. The term “Antiphon” derives from the traditional practice of hymns being sung by two choirs, each responding antiphonally to the other.

* The “Only-Begotten Son” hymn expresses the faith in the divinity and humanity of Christ, and was first introduced in the Divine Liturgy by Byzantine Emperor Justinian.

* The “Little Entrance” represents the movement of the entire Church and its people, through its Head Jesus Christ, to the altar, which symbolizes the Kingdom of God. It also represents the appearance of the Risen Christ Himself and the fulfillment of his promise that “Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I am . . .” (Matthew 18:20).

* The faithful sing: “Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ. O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing unto Thee. Alleluia.” In Hebrew, the word “Alleluia” means “Praise the Lord.” It accompanies such holy acts as when the Lord goes out to the people in the form of the Gospel or the Holy Gifts.

* Tropharia and Kontakia for the feast day, the patron saint of the church, and to the Theotokos are recited or sung. Originally, the kontakion was an extended homily in verse consisting of one or two stanzas. In the early church, the kontakia were so lengthy that the text was rolled up on a pole for use in the services (“kontakion” translates “from the pole” in Greek).

* Having fully entered the church liturgically and having gathered together around the Word, the congregation chants the Thrice-Holy Hymn to the Holy Trinity, “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.” The choir and the faithful praise the Holy Trinity in concert with the angels at the Heavenly Throne.

* The proclamation of the scripture is announced with the Prokeimenon, a psalm sung in responsorial fashion. The light which is held during the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel signifies the all-illuminating Light of Christ.

* The reading of the Epistle serves as a type of ladder to the subsequent reading of the Gospel. It is through the Gospel readings that we hear Christ’s sacred teachings. Christ’s promise of “When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you” (John 16:13) is the reason for the Gospel reading.

* The Liturgy of the Word concludes with a litany praying for the continued growth of the catechumens in faith. Even if no catechumens are present, this serves as a constant reminder of Christ’s words to spread His teachings to the rest of the world.

DISCUSS how you can come to appreciate the above portions of the Divine Liturgy and how you can become both a listener and a doer during the Liturgy.

Points to Ponder.

“Solitude and prayer are the greatest means to acquire virtue. Purifying the mind, they make it possible to see the unseen.” *St. Seraphim of Sarov*

“When someone says, “I can worship God anywhere,” the reply is, ‘Do you?’” *James Pike*

A Brief Vocabulary Lesson.

“*Ecclesia*” – translated as “The Church.” The Church represents the people of God, called together to assemble in one place to worship Him. The word comes from Ancient Greek, which was originally defined as the principal assembly in ancient Athens during its Golden Age.

“*Leitourgia*” – translated as “The Liturgy.” It comes from the Greek word which originally meant a public duty to the state undertaken by a citizen. For our use, it means that the Liturgy is the “Work of the People.”