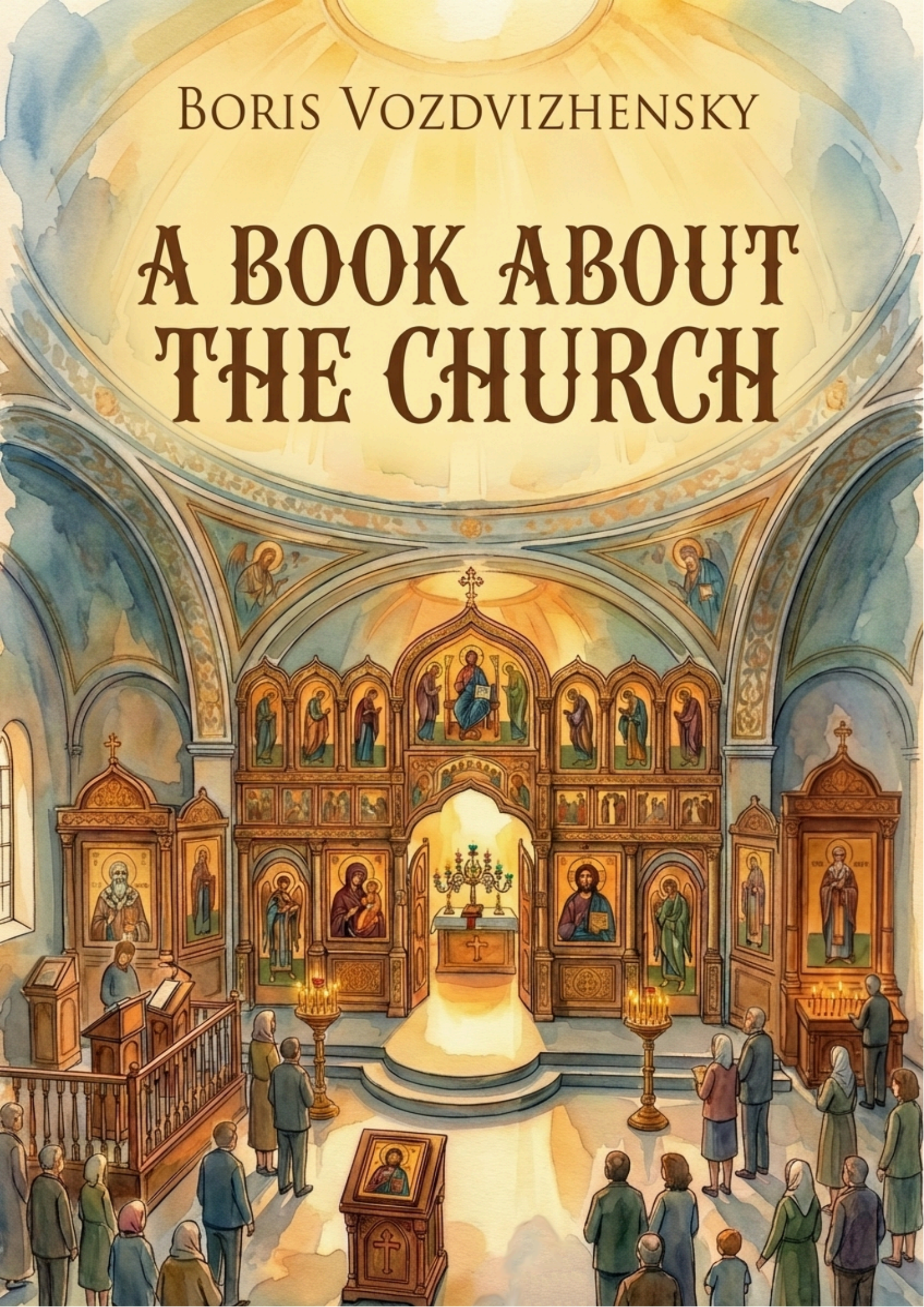
Boris Vozdvizhensky

A BOOK ABOUT THE CHURCH



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Editor's Foreword

Dear Reader,

Before you is a book about what has been celebrated daily in Russian churches for over a thousand years: the Orthodox Divine Service. Perhaps you are not a religious person and are generally indifferent to both faith and worship because you are quite confident in your own abilities and manage without help from above, but in your near and distant circle, there are religious people, and you have surely had to visit a church for the baptism, wedding, or funeral service of a relative or friend. Most likely, before visiting the church, you had questions about how to behave, what to do and when to do it, what not to do, and, in general, how to understand everything that was happening. Also, there was not always someone "at hand" who could answer these questions concisely, accessibly, intelligently, and, most importantly, correctly.

Perhaps, at times, you find yourself curious about what goes on in a church. Why are candles placed before icons? Why is a man in strange and uncomfortable attire waving an object that emits fragrant smoke? What is another man, standing on a raised platform before the icons with his hand raised, loudly proclaiming? And the day before yesterday, your five-year-old son came up to you and asked, "Papa, is a Name Day on Sunday or New Year's Day?" What did you tell him?

I would also venture to guess that at times in your life, situations have arisen where you feel an inexplicable inner need to simply enter a church and stand there in silence for a while... But when can you go, and how exactly should you enter to avoid the bewildered glances and remarks from the "*babushkas*"[1]?

This book can certainly become your reliable guide in such situations. It is written by an Orthodox Christian who is well-versed in liturgics (the study of divine worship). Moreover, the author is a successful entrepreneur who knows firsthand the life of a modern person—the hectic pace of business activity, meetings, negotiations, solving urgent problems, processing intense flows of information... It is precisely this kind of person who will appreciate the clarity, accessible style, and conciseness of this book's sections. Complex subjects are explained here intelligently and simply, but not simplistically and without profanation, in strict accordance with the teaching of the

[1] A colloquial term for the older, devout women in a parish, sometimes known for strictly upholding church etiquette

Church and with historical and systematic liturgics. Historical episodes and real-life anecdotes make the narrative engaging and lively.

For religious people, this book will help them to better understand the divine services and to make their prayer in church and at home more conscious and meaningful.

Finally, in any case, a new, colossal realm of human knowledge and experience will be opened to you, into which, for thousands of years, a multitude of people have invested all the strength of their spirit, the wisdom of their minds, and the fervor of their souls. Before you are the gates to a vast country, a journey into which, I am certain, will be educational, life-giving, and inspiring for you.

May you have a good journey!

Archpriest Vitaly Golovatenko,
Rector of the Church of the Nativity
of the Most Holy Theotokos
at the Saint Petersburg
State Conservatory,
Lecturer

Chapter 1

Types of Divine Services and Churches

- **What are the types of divine services?**
- **What types of churches are there?**
- **Which churches are best to attend and when?**
- **At what times are the services held?**
- **Why ring bells?**

In recent years, many of us have started coming to church. Some come rarely, only for the major feast days, while others come more often. Some come to light a candle before an exam, others to submit commemoration slips for their loved ones, marked as "for the living" or "for the departed". Even those who have never been to church are often interested in what happens there and why.

We do not always feel at ease in church. It has its own rules, customs, and traditions with which not everyone is familiar. It is an unfamiliar country, and when setting off for an unfamiliar country, we read a guidebook. How and for whom it is customary to yield the way, how the traffic lights work, what gestures and words mean, etc.—all of this is important for becoming acquainted with a new country.

The purpose of this book is to explain these same simple rules and principles that exist in Orthodox divine services. When a person knows these principles, he feels calm and natural in church. Then, no vexing trifles will distract from the most important thing, from the very reason one comes to church.

> In common parlance, a temple is often called a "church." It is important to clarify the distinction between these words. The original meaning of the word "church" is "assembly"; that is, the assembly of the faithful performing common prayer and divine services. The "temple," however, is the building itself where this assembly takes place.

WHAT TYPES OF DIVINE SERVICES ARE THERE?

The divine services that one typically encounters can be conditionally divided into two categories:

- Public divine services—regular services performed at a precisely determined time that gather a large number of worshippers. For example, the Sunday service, services for feast days (Pascha, Nativity, Theophany, etc.).
- Private divine services—occasional services performed for a smaller circle of people at a time they themselves determine. For example, a wedding, a panikhida (memorial service), etc.

We will be speaking mainly about public divine services. The general principles and rules, however, are the same for all types of divine services.

WHAT KINDS OF CHURCHES ARE THERE?

The most common type of church where divine services are held is the *parish church.*

In former times, a "parish" referred to the community of people who came to the same church and, as a rule, lived nearby. That is, the word "parish" implied both a territorial and a human community. As a rule, the *parishioners*, the members of the parish, were well acquainted with each other.

In our time, the people who come to church are not necessarily acquainted. Usually, at each service in a parish church, there are regular parishioners who prefer that particular church, but they are relatively few. Since transportation is much more developed than it was 100 or 200 years ago, people sometimes visit various churches given a variety of circumstances and situations.

The second type of church that can be found in cities is the *cathedral*, or *cathedral church.*

> In ancient times, the main church of a city was called a cathedral (Russian: *sobor*). While in parish churches divine services were usually held on feast days and Sundays, in cathedrals, the service was (and still is) generally held daily. In Russian, the word "cathedral" (*sobor*) comes from the fact that in the old days, priests from the surrounding churches would gather *(*Russian: *sobirat'sya)* in the main church to celebrate the daily service. There was a kind of duty roster, according to which the parish priests would each serve in the cathedral on their appointed day. Nowadays, divine services are held daily in many parish churches as well.

In our time, large cities usually have several cathedrals. For example, in Moscow, there is the Cathedral of Christ the Savior (Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ), the Yelokhovsky Epiphany Patriarchal Cathedral, and others. In St. Petersburg, there is the Kazan Cathedral, the Holy Transfiguration Cathedral, and the Holy Trinity

Cathedral, among others[2]. As in ancient times, divine services in cathedrals today are held daily.

The third type of church is the *monastery church.* Usually, in large urban monasteries, there are several churches, the main one of which is a cathedral. In Moscow, for example, these are the cathedrals of the Donskoy, Svyato-Danilov, Sretensky, Novodevichy, and other monasteries. In St. Petersburg, there is the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, the Cathedral of the 12 Apostles of the Ioannovsky Monastery on the Karpovka, and the Church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God of the Voskresensky Novodevichy Monastery.

In addition to urban monasteries, large cities also have so-called *metochions (monastic dependencies,* Russian: *podvorye),* which are a kind of "branch" of large monasteries located in other cities. For example, there are the metochions of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, Valaam Monastery, the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, and Optina Pustyn. Each metochion has its own church, which is usually open to the public.

As a rule, in both monastery churches and the churches of monastic dependencies, the divine services are longer than in ordinary parish churches. This is dictated by the particular structure of the monastic way of life, the most important component of which is unceasing prayer. The chanting and the entire order of the services here are usually more austere, in keeping with the ascetic monastic tradition.

Finally, we should mention institutional *chapels*—those located at educational institutions, schools, orphanages, hospitals, and the like. In Russian, they are called *domovye khramy* (literally, *"house churches"*) because they are most often located within the very building (Russian: *dom*) of a particular institution. Many of them are open to the public. For example, the chapels of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Theological Academies are well-known, being located in the buildings of these academies within the Trinity-Sergius and Alexander Nevsky Lavras, respectively.

> We are accustomed to divine services taking place almost always inside a church. This was not always the case. For example, in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), the capital of ancient Byzantium, on the feast day of a venerated saint, the Patriarch, along with the clergy and the people, would begin the service in the main church of Hagia Sophia and then move in a solemn procession to the church dedicated to the celebrated saint. Part of the service took place on the city streets and in front of this church, and part took place inside it. Thus, in a certain sense, the "place" of the divine service was the entire city.

[2] The author apologizes to readers who are not residents of Moscow or St. Petersburg for limiting the examples to these two cities. Many church institutions, media outlets, and churches have websites where one can obtain information about the times and places of divine services.

The Athonite metochion in Moscow
(the representation of the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon, located in Greece on the Holy Mountain of Athos).

WHICH CHURCHES ARE BEST TO ATTEND AND WHEN?

Parish churches and cathedrals are the most accessible for visiting. The churches of monastic metochions and institutional chapels are, as a rule, less "open"—one needs to know their opening hours, they may not always have a street entrance, and so on.

On holidays and Sundays, it is best to go to a parish church: cathedrals are usually very crowded at this time. However, it should be noted that in the residential areas of large cities, parish churches are usually overcrowded, with many thousands of residents per church. Conversely, in city centers, there are usually more churches and fewer people. Therefore, if you live in a large city, it is better to travel to one of the parish churches in the city center.

It is more convenient to visit a cathedral, including the cathedral of a city monastery, on weekdays. Morning and evening services are usually held here daily, and, as a rule, there are not many people in attendance. Furthermore, even when there are no services, cathedrals are usually open (unlike some parish churches).

However, there are parish churches where services are held daily, just as in cathedrals. In any case, it is best to check the service schedule in advance.

WHEN CAN I VISIT A CHURCH?

You don't have to come during a church service. As mentioned, many parish churches and almost all cathedrals are open throughout the day. There is always someone at the candle desk, where you can buy candles, icons, neck crosses, books, and other items. This is also where you can submit names for *commemoration* (or as we say in the Church, for *prayerful remembrance*) — slips of paper with the names of your relatives and loved ones to be read during special moments of the divine service.

As a rule, in large churches and cathedrals, a priest, from whom you can ask for advice on important matters and problems, is on duty outside of service times. There are usually no specific 'office hours,' so it is best to inquire with the person at the candle desk about the possibility of speaking with a priest.[3]

It is good to come to church when no services are being held to calmly and unhurriedly view the church's interior (the iconostasis, frescoes, and icons), as well as to write and submit commemoration slips, light candles, and so on. However, the best time to visit a church is during a public divine service, for in the Church's tradition, communal prayer has always been considered the most important and the most powerful.

AT WHAT TIMES ARE THE SERVICES HELD?

Public divine services in a parish church are generally held on Sundays and feast days. It is important to know that the liturgical (church service) day begins on the preceding evening. For example, the Sunday service begins on Saturday evening.

The evening service in Moscow and St. Petersburg churches typically begins at 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. (less often at 4:00 p.m.), depending on the schedule of the specific church. The duration varies from church to church, but it generally lasts approximately 2 to 4 hours.

The morning service, depending on the church's schedule of services, begins at either 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. (less commonly at 8:00 a.m.), and lasts for about 2-3 hours.

[3] At meetings of the clergy of the Moscow diocese, Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia expressed the position of the church leadership regarding the need for priests to be on duty in the church at all times (when the number of serving priests allows for it), so that anyone who comes can speak with a priest, ask questions, and so on. The extent to which this directive is carried out in any given parish church, of course, depends on the circumstances.

Furthermore, in many churches, if a church feast day falls on a weekday, the morning service will begin earlier so that parishioners may attend before the start of the workday.

The schedule of services can usually be found on the church doors or at the candle desk. Many churches and monasteries have websites where, among other things, they publish their service schedules.

It is best to arrive at church for the beginning of the service and to leave after its conclusion. However, one does not always have the strength or time for this. Many holy ascetics and theologians have said that in this matter, to use a modern expression, "quality is more important than quantity." Therefore, if a lack of time does not permit you to be at the service from beginning to end, it is not a problem; you may come and go at any time.

In Chapter 5, which is dedicated to the various services, we will learn in greater detail which particular service is celebrated at what time and, accordingly, which moments of the divine services are most important to attend.

The Liturgical Rule (in Greek, the *Typikon*), which took its present form by the 16th-17th centuries, measures the time of the divine services by the hours of the day. However, it also contains more subtle regulations and recommendations regarding the timing of the services.

For example, the service for feast days, which lasted all night, was to begin "a little after the sun has set," that is, at sunset. Moreover, the clergyman presiding over the service had to ensure that the solemn exclamation, "Glory to Thee Who hast shown us the light," and the hymns that follow it, were chanted at the precise moment when the sun began to rise. The timing for all the elements of the service was allotted based on this.

WHY RING BELLS?

On the way to the church, we are greeted by the ringing of bells. It serves the function of announcing, first, the beginning of the divine service, and second, its most important moments.

In the Old Testament Temple in Jerusalem, the function of summoning people to prayer was performed by the sounds of special trumpets. Prof. M. N. Skaballanovich, a famous historian of the divine services, cites 4th-century testimony of a special "waking hammer" with which the abbot of a monastery would strike the doors of the cells to summon the monks to the nighttime service. In the early Christian tradition, as well as in the old Russian one, a so-called "*bilo*" was used, a block of iron or wood

that was struck a certain number of times. The use of the bells we are accustomed to dates back to the 4th-5th centuries.

The bell ringing usually begins 10–15 minutes before the start of the divine service. The more solemn the feast, the more beautiful and varied the ringing. On Pascha (Easter), the main Christian feast, it is customary to ring the bells at any time throughout the entire Paschal week. On the weekdays of Great Lent, on the contrary, the ringing is more restrained, strict, and ascetic.

The ringing also marks the most important moments of the divine service. Thus, if a person cannot be present in the church during the public service, the ringing will remind him of the main episodes of the service.

HOW TO DRESS FOR CHURCH

As in many other situations in life, there is a certain etiquette for dress and behavior when visiting a church. The first rule when visiting a church is to turn off your mobile phone and not to talk during the service. If you must speak (for example, to get candles), do so quietly. In this simple way, you will show respect for the church, for everything that takes place within it, and for those present.

The rules regarding clothing are also quite simple. We are not surprised when people attend business meetings in a suit and tie, or an evening reception in a cocktail dress. Similarly, the culture of the church has its own long-standing and established traditions regarding clothing. Men enter the church without a head covering; women, with their heads covered (a scarf, kerchief, a modest, small hat, etc.). Shorts, t-shirts, and athletic wear are discouraged; for women, this also applies to mini-skirts, trousers, and heavy makeup.

The degree of strictness regarding clothing depends on the particular church. It is usually higher in monasteries, but parish churches also vary greatly in their level of leniency in this matter. In some parishes, no one will pay any mind to a woman without a headscarf and wearing trousers; in others, this would be considered a violation of every conceivable standard, and a remark may be made in an improper, rude manner that has nothing in common with Christian love, patience, and humility. It is almost impossible to know this in advance. Still, if you are not doing anything egregiously offensive, but are simply, out of ignorance, not behaving quite as is customary, a reasonable, well-mannered person in the church will either not correct you at all, or will do so quietly and politely. Therefore, if you are corrected about your clothing or behavior, simply apologize, try to correct your oversight if possible, and continue to pray. Remember that in the Church, as in any human community, you will encounter all sorts of people, including those who are not very well-mannered, but you should not judge all Christians or the entire Church by them.

> On the island of Valaam, in the famous Valaam Monastery, tour guides warn that for an excursion to the central monastery complex, men should wear trousers, not shorts. The attitude toward personal appearance in the monastery is quite strict; however, for female visitors, upon entering the central complex, it is sufficient to put on the provided headscarves and wrap-around skirts to cover their trousers. For men who arrive in shorts, however, no such coverings are offered, and they are not permitted to enter the central complex.
>
> In the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, the author was told that the strictly Russian custom of a mandatory head covering for all women is not characteristic of Orthodox churches in Ukraine, as illustrated by a popular anecdote in church circles: "Is your baby a boy or a girl? A girl? Then put a bonnet on her!" A headscarf is considered obligatory only for a married woman, which, it must be admitted, corresponds more closely to the well-known injunction of the Apostle Paul that a woman ought to cover her head as a sign of her husband's authority over her, while a man ought not to cover his head as a sign of Christ's authority over him (1 Corinthians, chapter 11). It is these words of the Apostle that form the basis for the tradition regarding head coverings in church. In general, concerning church etiquette and similar matters, one of the great teachers of the Christian Church—Blessed Augustine—put it well: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, love."

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1:

- Orthodox worship is conventionally divided into public and private services.
- The most common types of churches are parish churches, cathedrals (including monastery cathedrals), churches of monastery metochia, and house chapels.
- In parish churches, services are usually held according to a schedule, but always on Sundays and holidays, whereas in cathedrals, they are held daily.
- The evening service most often begins between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., and the morning service between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., depending on the church's service schedule.
- One may visit a church and attend a service at any time, but it is advisable to find out the church's opening hours and service times in advance.
- The ringing of bells, announcing the beginning of the service, can indicate the start time of worship.
- Appropriate and modest attire is expected when visiting a church, with specific traditions for head coverings and clothing.

Chapter 2

Church Etiquette: The What, How, and Why

- **The Sign of the Cross**
- **Bows and Prostrations**
- **Candles**
- **Holy Water**
- **Veneration of Icons, the Cross, and the Gospel**
- **Blessings from the Clergy**

The word "religion" is traced to the Latin for "connection" or "to connect." The purpose of divine services is to help a person establish a connection, a "contact," a personal, living communion with God.

In human interaction, there are certain "rituals" that facilitate the establishment of a living connection: a handshake, a welcoming smile, sharing a meal together... So it is in the divine services: all rituals, gestures, and rites are, in essence, the external expressions, developed over centuries, of our communion with God, of our encounter and living conversation with Christ in His Kingdom and in His Church.

Divine services and religious rites always represent a certain unity of the internal and the external, of form and content. A gesture, a rite, or a ritual, without a corresponding prayerful striving and the movement of our spirit toward God, is meaningless. However, it is precisely their external manifestations, when performed with understanding of what is being done and why, that are intended to form and correctly direct this spiritual striving.

This is why it is important to properly understand the inner content of the actions performed in church. These are by no means conventions that have lost their meaning but rather are intended to help one properly attune oneself for living, prayerful communion with God and His saints.

HOW TO "CROSS ONESELF" CORRECTLY

"To cross oneself" is a colloquial term; it is more correct to say "to sign oneself with the sign of the cross" or "to make the sign of the cross." The making of the sign of the cross is the first action a worshipper performs upon entering the church, and also at certain moments throughout the divine services.

The word "sign" in its Old Testament sense signifies a supernatural phenomenon that bears witness to the presence of God, and at times reveals something about the present or the future. In a broader sense, a "sign" is a symbol of something (for example, "a sign of the times"). By making the sign of the cross upon ourselves (or, in common speech, "crossing ourselves"), we inwardly testify and outwardly signify our belonging to the Christian faith, the center and chief substance of which is the death on the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Liturgical hymns trace the history of the sign of the cross back to the Old Testament. The authors of these hymns see a prefiguring of the sign of the cross, in particular, in the symbolic gestures of the prophet Moses during the crossing of the Red Sea by the Hebrew people in their flight from Egypt. As it is said in one of the hymns for the feast of the Exaltation of the Lord's Cross:

> "Inscribing the invincible weapon of the Cross upon the waters,
> Moses marked a straight line before him with his staff and divided the Red Sea,
> opening a path for Israel who went over dry-shod.
> Then he marked a second line across the waters and united them in one,
> overwhelming the chariots of Pharaoh. ..."

To make the sign of the cross, one joins together the thumb, index, and middle fingers of the right hand (symbolically, this union signifies the unity of the Holy Trinity), while the ring finger and the little finger are pressed to the palm (they signify the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ). The three joined fingers are touched to the forehead, then to the belly, then to the right shoulder, and finally to the left, thus tracing the sign of the Cross upon oneself.[4]

One of the "stumbling blocks" in the church schism of the 17th century was the question of the correct way of folding the fingers for the sign of the cross. Before the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, it was customary in the Russian Church to cross oneself by joining the index and middle fingers, while the remaining three were held together. The transition to the new method of making the sign of the cross caused fierce disputes, and the

[4] To the question of one of the first readers of the book, "May I, an unbaptized person, make the sign of the cross upon myself in an Orthodox church?" one of the priests who had familiarized himself with it answered with a quotation from the Gospel: "Do not forbid him; for he who is not against you is for you" (Lk 9:50).

> Old Believers continue to adhere to the two-fingered sign (Russian: *"dvoeperstie")*. It is worth noting that at the Local Council of 1971, the Russian Orthodox Church officially recognized the "Old Rite," the pre-Nikon forms of worship, including the "dvoeperstie," as equally grace-filled and salvific.

BOWS AND PROSTRATIONS

Making a bow is one of the most ancient and universal forms of expressing respect and reverence across various cultures, and, in religion, it signifies 'worship' itself. In Orthodox divine services, we can conditionally distinguish several types of bows.

A *waist bow* is when a person makes the sign of the cross, then bows low enough to touch the floor with the fingers of their right hand or, somewhat less deeply, according to each person's strength and ability. These bows are performed most frequently during divine services.

A prostration is when, after making the sign of the cross, the worshipper kneels and bows, practically touching their head to the floor, then rises from their knees. Prostrations are performed relatively rarely during Sunday and festive divine services, which we most often attend in a parish church.

It is worth noting that, unlike in the Catholic liturgical tradition, it is not customary in the Orthodox Church to kneel for extended periods (with some rare exceptions), although in practice it is not forbidden.

A bow when receiving a priest's blessing is when we slightly incline our heads toward the priest as he blesses the people with the words, "Peace be unto all" or "The blessing of the Lord be upon you..."

An inclination of the head is made during the reading of the Gospel (for the entire duration of the reading), and also during certain prayers (the so-called "head-bowing prayers"), when the priest or deacon exclaims: "Bow your heads unto the Lord."

> Already in the temple worship of the Old Testament, the inclination of the head and the waist bow were practiced. During fasts, they would also sometimes prostrate themselves on the floor in the form of a cross. The ascetics of the first centuries of Christianity did not adopt this latter custom, believing that "he who lies on the ground for a long time is assaulted not only by thoughts, but also by sleep" (St. John Cassian, 5th century).

WHEN IT IS CUSTOMARY TO MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS AND BOWS

As with many other aspects of Orthodox worship, there are several general principles within which a considerable degree of freedom is permitted, related to the traditions of a particular parish, personal disposition, and so on.

Three waist bows with the sign of the cross are customarily made when entering and leaving the church. Before kissing an icon, the Gospel, the Cross, or another holy object, one usually makes two waist (or full) bows with the sign of the cross, and one more after kissing it.

One makes the sign of the cross and a waist bow during the exclamations of the clergy, for example, "For Holy art Thou, O our God, and unto Thee we send up glory..."

Prostrations are relatively rare in parish worship, occurring mainly during Great Lent. This is because the main focus of parish services is on Sundays and major feasts, during which prostrations, an expression of special repentance and a sense of one's own unworthiness and humility before God, are not customary.

On the feast of the Holy Trinity (Pentecost), special kneeling prayers are traditionally read, during which everyone, both clergy and parishioners, prays on their knees.

> It is worth noting that in modern parish practice, it is customary to make waist bows noticeably more often than the Liturgical Typikon (service rulebook) prescribes. For example, during the litanies proclaimed by the deacon, when the choir sings "Lord, have mercy" for each petition, most modern parishioners make a bow for each petition. However, as recently as the 19th century, according to the testimony of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, this was not the custom.
>
> We might venture to suggest that this change in tradition is related to the comparatively lesser participation of modern parishioners in church singing. In Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages, according to various sources, "all who were able" participated in the singing. Our Liturgical Typikon, which took its present form by the end of the 17th century, often uses the expression "the choir sings... with the brethren joining in," meaning "the choir sings a certain hymn, and all those present sing along." Furthermore, before some choir responses, the instruction is often found: "the people" (all the worshipers) sing.
>
> In this regard, it is possible that with the limited familiarity of most parishioners with the texts and melodies of the hymns, and the consequent inability to participate in the congregational singing, bows have become more frequent as an element of participation in the "common work" that the divine service always is, serving as an expression of agreement with what is being proclaimed.

IS IT OKAY TO SIT DURING THE DIVINE SERVICES?

A common misconception is that one may only stand during Orthodox divine services, in contrast to Catholic or Protestant services. Indeed, the Liturgical Typikon presumes that a person who is standing is more focused, collected, and attentive. Nevertheless, there are specific moments during the service when one may sit.

However, in parish practice, which does not follow the Typikon in its entirety, these very moments are usually abbreviated. These are the readings from the Psalter and of

certain other books of the Bible, the readings of the lives of the saints, and of various 'Homilies' and instructions pertaining to the commemorated event.

Stasidia are folding seats on which one may sit during the divine services.

Therefore, in parish churches, as a rule, people stand for the entire service, especially since the service is not as long as prescribed by the Typikon, and the overcrowding of the churches during festive services does not allow for a sufficient number of seats to be installed. In monastery churches and metochion (dependency) churches, where the Typikon is usually followed more precisely, one can, even without knowing the subtleties of the Typikon, be guided by the behavior of those around. The main thing to remember is the words of the famous 19th-century Russian saint, Theophan the Recluse: "It is better to think about God while sitting, than to think about your legs while standing."

> The Psalter, the biblical Book of Psalms, is divided for liturgical use into 20 sections – *"kathismata"* (sing. *kathisma*), each of which contains several psalms. The word "kathisma" comes from the Greek for "sitting," because it is precisely during the reading of the psalms that the Liturgical Typikon in most cases prescribes praying while seated. For the same reason, the hymns read at the morning service after the kathismata are called *"sedalny"* (sing. *sedalen*) in the Church Slavonic liturgical books (from the Slavic word for "to sit"). Conversely, one of the liturgical genres, the *"akathist,"* received its name from the fact that it was not permitted to sit during its singing.
>
> In the practice of the Greek Church, as well as in some Russian monasteries, "stasidia" are

> used, which are a type of folding seat placed along the walls of the church. One stands in them, leaning on the armrests, and at those moments of the service when it is permissible to sit, a small seat is folded down. Stasidia can be seen, for example, in the Trinity Cathedral of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, in the gate church of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, and in the cathedral of the Valaam Monastery.

"BEFORE WHICH ICON SHOULD I LIGHT A CANDLE?"

Perhaps the most well-known and beloved custom, popularly associated with Orthodox divine services, is the lighting of candles. This is not surprising, as the lighting of lamps in one form or another is one of the most ancient religious traditions of mankind, intended to signify the burning of the spirit and a prayerful aspiration, which are most often compared to a flame of fire.

In this regard, one very often hears the question: "Before which icon should I light a candle so that...?" This brings to mind an anecdote popular among the clergy: "Father, could you tell me before which icon I should light a candle to get a good grade on my exam?" "Have you tried studying?"

It is important to understand that the Church is not a coffee machine that dispenses espresso for 10 rubles and cappuccino for 20 and that any of our actions in the church are not a magical ritual that guarantees a certain result if performed correctly. A candle lit before an icon is an expression of our love and personal prayerful communion with the one before whose image we pray, whom we ask for help in our daily affairs.

> At one time, I was deeply struck by a ritual "pharmacy" I saw in a church shop. There, in neat rows, lay several dozen small icons of various saints, each with a neat little sign: "For leg ailments," "For eye ailments," "For a happy marriage," etc. Such blatant, benighted, primitive paganism is something you might not even encounter in every African tribe...

Nevertheless, there are certain traditions regarding "to whom" or "where to place a candle". When praying for the repose of the departed, candles are usually placed on the *kanun* (the *memorial table*), a special stand with a place for candles. When praying for the health of the living, candles are placed before icons of Jesus Christ, our Savior from all evil, the Theotokos (Mother of God), the heavenly Mother of all Christians, Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, or the Great-Martyr Panteleimon the Healer, who became famous during his lifetime for his skill as a physician and his many miraculous healings.

In difficult life circumstances, you can also place a candle and pray before the icon of the saint whose personal help you wish to ask for, a saint who in his own life went through trials similar to yours. More on this will be said in Chapter 7, in the section "Prayer in Different Situations."

The kanun is a stand with a place for candles, where it is customary to place them when praying for the repose of the departed.

Candles can be placed at any time during a divine service, except during particularly important moments that require the special attention and concentration of those praying: the reading of the Gospel, the audible priestly prayers, the Eucharistic Canon at the Divine Liturgy (for more on the structure of the main services, see Chapter 5), and so on. The main thing is not to do it for show and, as much as possible, not to disturb those around you or the general flow of the service.

> In the Revelation of St. John (in Greek, the Apocalypse), which concludes the canon of biblical books, mention is made of "seven lamps of fire... burning before the throne" of God (Rev 4:5). Mentions of lamps as an integral part of worship are also common in the Old Testament. In the biblical books of Exodus and Leviticus, it is specified what quality the oil (*eleon*, or vegetable oil) used in the lamps should be. There are also mentions of the use of oil and wax in the Canons of the Holy Apostles. The Typikon, or the Liturgical Rule, also contains instructions for the church server responsible for preparing the service "to enter the temple and light all the candles and lamps".

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING CANDLES

At the candle desk, one can see different kinds of candles: large, small, beeswax, paraffin, etc. From a liturgical (divine service) standpoint, the size and material of the

candle are of no significance, and, certainly, it makes no difference whether one uses the right or the left hand to place a candle on the candle stand, whether one heats the bottom end of the candle in the flame of another to make it stand more securely, and the like. Furthermore, one should not interpret a candle going out or falling over as some kind of 'dreadful' or 'fatal' omen, or a superstitious 'prophecy.'

In other words, if you happen to encounter various blatant superstitions and prejudices concerning candles, pay them no mind. This kind of folk magic has nothing to do with the Orthodox Faith.

Likewise, you should not be concerned if your candle is extinguished by a church attendant. This can happen in two situations: during the reading of the *Six Psalms* (see Chapter 5, section “The All-Night Vigil: Matins”), or in a crowded church when there are few candle stands and space must be made for more candles.

In some churches, where it is difficult to approach a particular icon due to a large number of parishioners, there is a custom of passing candles forward through other worshippers. If someone behind you taps you on the shoulder and asks you to pass a candle forward, saying "For the Feast," "For the Kazan icon," or something similar (this generally refers to the name of a venerated icon), take the candle and pass it to the person in front of you with the same words.

One of the points of confusion for many people who come to church is the "price list" for candles, commemoration slips, and the like. The official position of the Church leadership on this matter is as follows: price lists may only exist as recommended (suggested) donation amounts, not as a "fixed payment for goods and services." How consistently this position is observed by the rector of a particular church is another matter. It is worth noting that in a growing number of churches this position is being put into practice, with candles left freely available without any "price tags," and a donation box placed nearby.

> We should recall that one of the themes in the epistles of the Apostle Paul, which are part of the books of the Bible, is the collection of donations for the Church of Jerusalem. Thus, the tradition of donations, which make it possible to provide everything necessary for the divine services, support the choir, build and repair church buildings, etc., has always existed, taking on various historical forms at different times.

"HOLY WATER"

It is more correct to call it "sanctified." Water is one of the most ancient religious symbols and attributes; water is a symbol of life and a symbol of purity, purification, and sanctification. The Mystery of Baptism, when a person becomes a member of the Church, is performed precisely in the element of water.

> Hierarchically, the most important "consecration of water" takes place on the feast of Theophany (the Baptism of the Lord) and on its eve, that is, on January 18 and 19 according to the new calendar (see Chapter 6, "Feasts and Fasts"). On this day, one of the most important Gospel events is commemorated: the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist (the Forerunner) in the Jordan River, marking the beginning of the Christian Mystery of Baptism. In the Gospel of Matthew, this event is described as follows (Chapter 3, verses 13–17):
>
> "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"
>
> One of the central themes of the divine services for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the sanctification of the "nature of the waters" by Christ during His baptism—the restoration of the element of water to its primordial purity in the Divine Light, that is, to the holiness of the primordial sinless world (before the Fall of Man). This new water, sanctified by the prayer of the Church, produces by our faith its grace-filled, purifying effect on both man and his surroundings. Every prayer service at which the consecration of water is performed (a so-called water-blessing moleben) throughout the entire liturgical year is, in a certain sense, an echo of the divine service of Theophany, and all consecrated water is an heir to the waters of the Jordan, sanctified by Christ.

In the practice of parish worship, water is consecrated during a water-blessing *moleben* (prayer service), which is regularly performed in most churches. The vessel with holy water is usually located closer to the entrance of the church. Typically, there is also a cup and a plaque with the prayer "for the partaking of *prosphora* and holy water" (for more on prosphora, see the next chapter). The water can be collected in any container and taken home. It is customary to drink it on an empty stomach; it can also be used to sprinkle on food, a sick person, belongings, the entire living space, and so on.

KISSING ICONS, THE CROSS, AND THE GOSPEL

One of the ways to express our veneration of God and the saints is by kissing icons, the Cross, and the Gospel. In their time, theologians broke many lances over how the veneration of icons is possible and whether it violates the commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol." The struggle between the "iconoclasts" and the "iconodules" (as the warring parties were called) continued in the Byzantine Empire for more than a hundred years, accompanied by ecclesiastical and political crises; such was the great importance the Church attached to this issue.

Ultimately, t*he Seventh Ecumenical Council*, a gathering of clergy and laity convened to resolve the most important questions of faith, established that "the honor paid to the image passes on to the prototype." That is, the veneration of holy icons is an expression of our worship of the living God and His entourage, the saints who shone forth in the feat of faithfulness to Him. One of the decrees of the Council, held in Constantinople in 787, states:

> "We preserve... the ecclesiastical traditions established for us, one of which is the painting of icons, as it corresponds to the preaching of the Gospel…
> We decree: that, like the image of the precious and life-giving Cross, there should be placed in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, on walls and boards, in houses and on streets, venerable and holy icons, painted with colors and made of small stones (*referring to various kinds of mosaics.* - Author's note), and of other suitable material, such as icons of the Lord and God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and of our immaculate Lady, the holy Theotokos, as well as of the honorable angels, and of all the saints and venerable men.
> For, by looking at the images on the icons, we are prompted to remember and to love and to honor those depicted on them…
> For the honor paid to the image passes on to the prototype, and he who venerates the icon venerates the person depicted on it."

It is customary to accompany prayer to Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Theotokos, and the saints before their icons with the following actions. First, one makes two bows from the waist with the sign of the cross (on weekdays and fast days, the bows can also, at the worshipper's discretion, be prostrations), then kisses the edge of the icon, and then makes another bow with the sign of the cross.[5]

In the practice of parish worship, the faithful usually proceed as follows: upon entering the church and making the sign of the cross and a bow, they first kiss the icon, which is placed on an *analogion* (a special stand in the center of the church), of the celebrated saint or event, as well as those icons before which they light candles. These are the icons of those saints to whom they particularly wish to pray and to pay them due honor, their love, and their gratitude.

The Gospel and the Cross are kissed at specific moments of the All-Night Vigil and the Divine Liturgy, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. The "order of actions" for this is the same as for kissing icons: two bows from the waist with the sign of the cross before kissing, and one after.

[5] Some people are troubled by the hygienic aspect of this rite, although in most churches the icons are wiped quite frequently. However, it would not be a great departure from the spirit and meaning of the service to touch the icon with one's cheek. The same applies to women wearing makeup, if there is a fear of staining the icon with lipstick. At the same time, with all the discussions about hygiene when visiting a church, it is important for a Christian to remember the words from Holy Scripture: "What God has made clean, do not call common" (Acts 10:15, 11:9).

THE BLESSING OF A PRIEST

One may receive a blessing from a priest at any time when interacting with him outside of a church service. During a divine service, however, it is most convenient to do this after confession (see Chapter 5), either after your own confession or, if you are not confessing yourself, when the line of penitents has ended. At this point, you can approach the priest with a question and for a blessing. In doing so, it is quite appropriate to ask for a blessing for a specific task. For example, "Bless, Father, for my exam," “for a journey” — for anything in your life’s circumstances that requires God’s special help and the support of His Church.

When approaching a priest for a blessing, one places the right hand over the left, with palms turned upward, as if receiving something invisible but precious. After the priest blesses you by making the sign of the cross over your bowed head, if the priest uses a Cross for the blessing, one kisses the Cross and the image of the cross on the priest's cuff.

The blessing of a priest

> The first mention of a priestly blessing is found in the book of Genesis, chapter 14, verses 18–19:
> "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine—he was the priest of God Most High—and he blessed him [Abram, and later Abraham, the forefather of the Jewish people] and said: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Lord of heaven and earth…'"

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2:

- When entering the church and at significant moments of the divine service, the faithful make the sign of the cross, the tracing of the sign of the Cross upon oneself.
- Bows can be from the waist (waist-bows) or full prostrations, and they are made with the sign of the cross. Additionally, there are bows made when receiving a blessing or during the reading of certain prayers, which are done without the sign of the cross.
- In parish divine services, waist-bows with the sign of the cross, which occur during the exclamations of the clergy and at certain other moments of the service, are most common, as is the bowing of the head when receiving a blessing and during the reading of certain prayers.
- According to the Typikon, the liturgical rulebook, one may sit during certain parts of the divine services, but in contemporary parish worship, these parts of the services are often abbreviated. In general, however, it is not forbidden to pray while sitting in cases of general fatigue or infirmity.
- Candles are usually placed before the icons of those saints to whom one wishes to offer a special prayer. When praying for the repose of the departed, candles are placed on the kanun (the memorial table).
- Holy water can always be obtained in the church, and it should be treated with great reverence as a sacred object; it should be drunk with prayer and also used to sprinkle on anything that, in your opinion, requires sanctification (spiritual cleansing): a person, a home, an object, food, etc.
- In venerating God and the saints, one kisses their icons. At certain moments of the divine service, one also kisses the Cross and the Gospel. When doing so, one makes two waist-bows with the sign of the cross before kissing, and one after.
- In the church, one can receive a priest’s blessing for any good undertaking. When doing so, it is customary to place one's palms together crosswise (right over left), and afterward, if desired, to kiss the priest’s hand.

Chapter 3

How to Pray for Those Near and Far

- **Commemoration sheets for the living and for the departed — how to write and submit them**
- **Types of prayerful commemoration**
- **The possibility of prayer for the unbaptized and unbelievers**

One of the main spiritual needs with which people usually come to church is prayer for someone. Usually, we pray for our relatives and loved ones, and if we recall Christ's commandment "pray for your enemies", then also for those who are "distant."

Even in the earliest written accounts concerning the order of Christian worship, one can find mentions of prayers "for all the saints," those illumined by the Light of Truth, that is, Christians, as a most important moment of the divine service. Also, in the same texts, we find the instruction to pray "for kings, for authorities, for princes, and even for those who persecute you."

The union in prayer of the near and the distant and of friends and enemies is an essential component of the life of the Church. It is actualized in various liturgical forms, which will be described in this chapter.

THE COMMEMORATION BOOK AND "COMMEMORATION SHEETS"

You can pray for the health of the living and the repose of the departed yourselves at any point during the divine services, as well as during your home prayers. For this purpose, a Commemoration Book (Russian: *pomyannik*), a small book, notebook, or notepad in which the names of all those for whom one wishes to pray, both at home and in church, are recorded, is often used. The Commemoration Book is divided into two parts—"for the living," where the living are listed, and "for the departed," where the names of the departed are written.

In addition to its use in home prayer, it is appropriate to read from your own Commemoration Book to yourself during those moments of the divine service when

the names being commemorated from the sheets are read aloud by the priest or deacon.

There is an opportunity to commemorate people who are particularly significant to you and have been baptized in the Orthodox Church, with the participation of the clergy and all those praying in the church. There are several forms of such commemoration, which will be discussed in detail later, but, speaking purely technically, they all begin with the submission at the candle desk of commemoration sheets for the living and for the departed with the names of those people for whom a particularly fervent church prayer is important to you. In essence, these sheets are the same as the Commemoration Books, only more brief.

Usually, near the candle desk, there is a separate small table with pre-cut slips of paper of a suitable size and sometimes with printed forms for the commemoration sheets. It is customary to write the commemoration sheet in the following way: in the upper part, draw an eight-pointed cross and the words "FOR THE LIVING" or "FOR THE DEPARTED." Then, vertically, one after another, the names are listed in legible handwriting. In some churches, the number of names on a sheet is limited (usually to ten), while in others it is left to your discretion.

When you write commemoration sheets, the following descriptive words may be used before the names:

- "Bishop," "Priest," "Deacon," etc. — when commemorating clergy. It is customary to place their names at the beginning of the sheets.
- "Monk," "Nun" — when commemorating monastics.
- "Newly-departed" — when commemorating someone who has passed away within the last 40 days.
- "Ever-memorable" — when commemorating the deceased on the anniversaries of their death.
- "Soldier" — when commemorating military personnel.
- "Infant" — when commemorating children under 7 years of age.
- "Ailing" — when commemorating the sick.
- "With child" — for a pregnant woman.
- "Traveler," "student," "prisoner," etc.

Commemoration sheets can be written not only in the church but also at home. However, different churches have different attitudes towards sheets that are printed on a printer. There is nothing wrong with this practice, but from the perspective of the general logic and meaning of commemoration, it seems more reasonable to write the sheets by hand, for it is a good opportunity to consciously pray for all those being commemorated, rather than simply handing over a ready-made list of names to the "professionals."

PROSKOMEDIA AND "COMMEMORATION SHEETS FOR THE PROSKOMEDIA"

When you submit commemoration sheets at the candle desk, the attendant will ask (or expect you to say) what specific type of commemoration you intend. Most often, people submit *"commemoration sheets for the Proskomedia."* Behind this simple sheet lies a rather complex and theologically profound order of commemoration.

The *Proskomedia* is the first, preparatory, part of the *Divine Liturgy*, the chief of all Christian services. The name comes from the Greek for "offering". During the Proskomedia, the bread and wine are prepared for the celebration of the *sacrament of the Eucharist,* and the living and the departed are commemorated. (The sacrament of the Eucharist and the connection of the Proskomedia with the Divine Liturgy will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.) In the course of this sacrament, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

T*he prosphora*, a special bread, is used for the celebration of the sacrament. On it is depicted a cross and the letters **IC XC — NI KA** (from the Greek: "Jesus Christ — Victor"). This bread is also called the "*Lamb*", in memory of the biblical prophecies about Christ as the Lamb, sacrificed for the sins of the people. During the Proskomedia, this bread is prepared in a special way for the celebration of the sacrament while special prayers are read.

An integral part of this preparation for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is the commemoration of the living and the departed, which takes place as follows. Simultaneously with the reading of the commemoration sheets, small particles are taken out of the prosphoras in memory of the Theotokos, the saints, as well as all those whom we commemorate in prayer. After the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, these particles are immersed in the wine that has become the Blood of Christ, with the prayer, "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those commemorated here by Thy precious (that is, *priceless*) Blood." In this way, both the saints glorified by the Church and the living and departed members of the Church whom we commemorate are united in Christ.

> The spiritual meaning of this commemoration is revealed by St. John of Kronstadt: "The greatness, holiness, life-giving power, and immeasurable vastness of the awesome Sacrifice of Christ is revealed already at the Proskomedia, at which the matter for the sacrament of the Eucharist is prepared—the bread and wine, or the Lamb of God, who is ever being offered in sacrifice for the sins of the whole world and as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for all the saints, in whose honor particles are taken from the prosphoras and placed beside the Lamb.

> The redemptive sacrifice will be offered for them also, that is, in thanksgiving to God for them, as those already redeemed from the earth and made perfect by the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, and who are rejoicing in the triumphant Heavenly Church. A wondrous sacrifice!.. A truly Divine sacrifice!.."

The prosphoras from which particles were taken in memory of the living and the departed are distributed to the faithful after the Divine Liturgy. It is customary to eat them on an empty stomach, washing them down with holy water. To receive a prosphora at the candle desk after the service, it is enough to say that you submitted commemoration sheets for the Proskomedia. Sometimes in large churches, when submitting the sheets, they give out a "ticket" with which you can later receive a prosphora. It also happens that the prosphora is given immediately upon submission of the sheets from among those prosphoras from which particles were taken at the previous Divine Liturgy.

In our time, the commemoration sheets and the names written on them are not linked to specific prosphoras—in the altar during the Proskomedia, all the sheets are read, and, at the same time, particles are taken from all the prosphoras, which are then distributed to those who submitted the sheets. In pre-revolutionary practice, the connection was clearer: a prosphora was submitted with a commemoration sheet for the living (or for the departed) for a specific person, and it was precisely this prosphora that was returned after the Liturgy to the one who had submitted it. On name days, it was customary to present the person with a personalized prosphora "for the living", that is, one that had been submitted with a commemoration sheet for the living.

THE SOROKOUST AND PERPETUAL COMMEMORATION

Requesting commemoration at the Divine Liturgy for a period of 40 days (Russian: *Sorokoust*) is a fairly widespread practice. If the Liturgy is not celebrated daily in a parish, then it is a commemoration for 40 Liturgies. The Sorokoust is often associated with the commemoration of the departed, though it can be for both the departed and for the living. A Sorokoust for the living is often requested in difficult life situations that require special help from God, such as illness, travel, a lawsuit, imprisonment, an important and responsible undertaking, etc.

To request a Sorokoust for someone, it is sufficient to write their name on a commemoration sheet and, when submitting it, to say that you are requesting a "Sorokoust." A corresponding note will be made on the sheet. Usually, in such cases, only one name is written on the sheet (unlike the Proskomedia commemoration sheets, where several names are often written), but different parishes may have different rules regarding this.

Similar to a Sorokoust, one can request a commemoration for a longer period. As a rule, the length of the commemoration can be for a year or for "perpetual commemoration," that is, for as long as the church exists. In such cases, a commemoration sheet is usually not submitted; instead, a church attendant immediately writes the name into a special book and issues a corresponding document to the person making the request.

THE MOLEBEN AND THE PANIKHIDA

In addition to Proskomedia commemoration sheets, one can separately submit commemoration sheets "for the living" for a *moleben* (a short service of supplication) and commemoration sheets "for the departed" for a *panikhida*.

A Panikhida is a service for the repose of the departed. Its name comes from the Greek for "all-night," that is, a service that was served all night, and originally this name did not specifically refer to a memorial service.

In many parishes, the Panikhida is served regularly, most often on Saturday, as it is a day specially designated by the liturgical calendar for the commemoration of the departed. However, this service can also be performed at the request of the faithful, such as on the anniversary of a person's death, for whose repose they wish to pray. It is also customary to serve Panikhidas on dates of memorable events (for example, May 9th in memory of those who died in the Second World War, January 27th in memory of the victims of the Siege of Leningrad) and at educational institutions on the commemoration days of their founders or famous alumni, etc.

When submitting a commemoration sheet "for a Panikhida," it is worth clarifying when exactly it is served in that particular parish because, based on the general logic and meaning of prayer and commemoration, it is desirable for you to be present and to pray together with the clergy for the people you wish to commemorate. It is important to understand that submitting commemoration sheets is not a "delegation" of our prayerful labor to "professionals," but the inclusion of the commemoration of our dear ones into the *common prayer of the Church*, in which both clergy and laity, gathered together, participate.

A Moleben is a short service that, as a rule, has a specific subject or event for which prayers are offered. For example, a moleben "for health," "for a safe journey," "for the enlightenment of students who struggle with their studies," etc. Such molebens are usually requested privately.

A common type of moleben is the one for the *blessing of water*, during which water is consecrated and the faithful are sprinkled with it. In many parishes, a water-blessing

moleben is served regularly. During this service, a rather large number of commemoration sheets "for the living" are usually read "aloud" (audibly for all, in contrast to those read "silently" in the altar during the Proskomedia). These are precisely the commemoration sheets that were previously submitted "for the moleben."

In church kiosks, one might sometimes find other names for commemoration sheets, such as "special request" (Russian: *zakaznaya*). These classifications have no additional theological or liturgical meaning; the difference is usually only in how many times, whether aloud or silently, and during which services the sheet will be read. Specifically, audible commemoration during the Divine Liturgy is sometimes highlighted, as it is the custom in some parishes at a certain point in the Liturgy, in addition to the general prayer for the health of all Christians, the ruling bishop, and so on—to read the names from the commemoration sheets.

> All forms of commemoration for the living and the departed are beneficial and useful, but it is important to remember that commemoration at the Proskomedia is the priority, the most significant. Here is what, for example, Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov) writes about this in his commentary on the liturgical reflections of St. John of Kronstadt:
>
> "Meanwhile, the taking out of particles for the living and the departed—as we have already seen—Fr. John of Kronstadt, following the entire Church, places higher, values more, and considers more salvific and beneficial than even prayers for them (referring to verbal prayers—a moleben, etc.—*Author's note*). And it is more beneficial for both sides; for through the Lamb of God, we are united with those commemorated more essentially than through our prayers for them. By 'praying... and especially by having particles taken out for the health and salvation [of the living] and for the repose [of the departed],' you 'are in communion at the Proskomedia and the Liturgy' with everyone.
>
> The Optina Elder, the holy and wise Macarius, also taught this. The common people also believe this: they rightly consider submitting a 'small prosphora' to be more important than a cold mention by the deacon in the litany; 'to have a particle taken out' is more precious even than a bishop's prayer; for in its time it will be placed into the Blood of the Lamb with the prayer: 'Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those commemorated here by Thy Precious Blood, through the prayers of Thy saints.'"

THE POSSIBILITY OF PRAYER FOR THE UNBAPTIZED AND UNBELIEVERS

In our complex modern world, we may be bound by ties of kinship and friendship with people of various faiths, of different perceptions of religion in general, and of different perceptions of the Orthodox Church in particular. In this situation, the question is often asked: what forms of church commemoration are possible for such people?

Here it is important to separate the position of the Church from a "good-naturedly pan-humanistic" position, which can be summarized by theses such as "everyone prays to the same God in different ways," "our partitions do not reach heaven," "all religions generally speak of the same thing," and so on. This position is usually held by those who have no idea about the basic tenets of various known religious teachings, but they move away from it after becoming acquainted with them, when it becomes clear that it is far from always "about the same thing," and not even "to the same God"...

The position of the Orthodox Church is quite definite: church prayer, especially commemoration at the Divine Liturgy (in practical terms, submitting a commemoration sheet for the Proskomedia), is possible exclusively for a person baptized in the Orthodox Church. That is, we ourselves can pray for non-Christians at home and during worship, but their church commemoration in the common prayer for Christians is impermissible.

Likewise, the Church does not permit common prayer for those who have committed suicide, even if they were baptized, as suicide is considered one of the gravest sins. However, private prayer for them is possible, but only with the blessing of a bishop. Such exceptions are possible in cases where the suicide was the result of a mental illness, and not a free decision made in a sound mind to reject God's greatest gift—one's own life. There are also special prayers for departed infants, including those who did not have time to receive the sacrament of Baptism.

There is no consensus on how appropriate it is to commemorate at the Divine Liturgy people who are baptized but are unbelievers, including vehement opponents of the faith and the Church. This question is especially important when it concerns people who have already departed. Most often, in such cases, priests advise commemoration, since, despite the person's individual position, through the sacrament of Baptism he or she still remains a Christian and belongs to the Church.

> In N. Leskov's novel The Cathedral Folk, there is an episode where the local "revolutionary," Varnava Prepotensky, orders a panikhida for the executed Decembrists, which greatly troubles the protagonist, Archpriest Savely Tuberozov. However, while from a political point of view this was clearly an "unreliable" act, from a church point of view it was entirely correct, as no one had excommunicated the executed Decembrists from the Church or deprived them of the possibility of church commemoration.[6]

[6] A comment from one of the priests who were among the first readers of the book: "It is another matter when a living and mentally sound baptized person consciously opposes God and His Church. It is not recommended for people who are spiritually weak to pray for such apostates, because during prayer for them there is a serious danger of entering into their hostile and embittered state (by analogy with the danger of contracting an infectious disease through careless and epidemiologically ignorant contact with an infected person)."

Complex cases are also possible, related to a person's affiliation with an Orthodox church that is not in so-called canonical communion with the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. For example, before the reunification in 2007, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) was in such a state relative to the Russian Orthodox Church, and currently, the so-called Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church is, and so on.

In such cases, there are no doctrinal disagreements between the churches (as there are between the Orthodox and Catholics, for example), but there is a state of broken church communion that has occurred due to accumulated "canonical" (related to the "*canons*," or administrative rules of church life) disagreements.

The absence of communion is expressed in the fact that bishops do not commemorate one another at the Divine Liturgy (just as, for example, the Patriarch of Moscow commemorates the names of the primates of other local Orthodox Churches at every Liturgy); priests are not permitted to celebrate the Liturgy together ("concelebrate"); and the laity are not permitted to receive communion in the churches of a church with which their "mother" church is in a state of schism, except in cases of mortal danger and the absence of a priest from their own Mother-Church nearby.

Schisms and disagreements of this kind between churches can also place limitations on the possibility of commemoration at the Proskomedia. But in each specific case, it is better to consult with a priest, since in this matter as well, there are no single, hard-and-fast rules that cover every situation.

In some complex cases, such as those concerning the possibility of church commemoration for a suicide, or for a person about whom it is not known for certain whether they were baptized, and if so, in the Orthodox Church, a decision from the ruling bishop may be required. *The ruling bishop* is the accepted term for the bishop who heads the corresponding diocese, that is, a church region, which most often coincides with the secular division of regions (e.g., the "Novosibirsk diocese," the "Belgorod diocese," etc.). In any divine service, he is commemorated immediately after the Patriarch, for example: "...for our great lord and father, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, and for our lord, His Eminence Metropolitan Vladimir..." It is to him that a parish priest may refer someone if he finds that the issue is too complex and requires the sanction of a higher church authority.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3:

- For the commemoration of the living and the departed, it is useful to keep a commemoration book—a small booklet containing the names of those to be commemorated.
- In church, one submits commemoration sheets "For the living" and "For the departed," containing the names of people for whom you desire special church prayer.
- The most significant commemoration is at the Proskomedia (during the Divine Liturgy), when particles are taken from the prosphora for those being commemorated. At the end of the Liturgy, the particles are immersed in the Blood of Christ, and the prosphoras are distributed to the faithful.
- It is possible to submit not just a "one-time" commemoration sheet, but one for a longer term of commemoration—a "Sorokoust" (for 40 days), for a year, or for "perpetual commemoration."
- The Church also has separate types of commemoration: for the living—"for health"—during a Moleben, and for the departed—"for repose"—during a Panikhida.
- Church forms of commemoration are possible only for people who have been baptized in the Orthodox Church. However, in your private prayers at home and during the services, you may also commemorate the unbaptized.
- In complex cases (such as the commemoration of suicides, etc.), one must certainly consult with a priest, and some issues are resolved exclusively by the ruling bishop.

Chapter 4

What We See and Hear in the Church

- **The interior arrangement of the church, the iconostasis, icons**
- **Church Slavonic**
- **Understanding what is read and chanted in the church**
- **Varieties of chanting and reading**
- **Sacred vestments, distinctions in clerical ranks**
- **Censing**

The meaning of everything that takes place in the church is communion with God, prayer to God, and the worship of God. This meaning is expressed in a multitude of diverse external forms, sometimes self-evident, sometimes quite complex, and, at first glance, not always understandable.

As we become acquainted with these external forms, it is important to remember that they were developed over the course of several thousand years by people who were no less intelligent than we are, and who, in terms of holiness and communion with God, understood perhaps even more than we do, and to understand why their spiritual and prayerful experience, their experience of communion with God, found expression in precisely these forms, is extremely beneficial.

How important is it to understand the form in order to grasp the meaning? Let us be permitted this analogy: one can enjoy beautiful music and feel one's soul uplifted without knowing the difference between a symphony and a concerto or whether a symphony is by Tchaikovsky or Mahler. However, by understanding the "history and theory of the matter," one can hear much more and perceive subtle nuances that remain inaccessible without an elementary knowledge of the logic and principles upon which the Divine services are built.

Of course, one can abide in Christ and save one’s soul without knowing what a "troparion" is or how the "Great Entrance" differs from the "Little Entrance." Yet, knowledge and understanding of what is happening in the Divine services, including complex and, at first glance, "confusing" matters, will at the very least not harm the main thing, but will rather help it, provided, of course, that this very knowledge and

understanding does not become a cause for self-exaltation and pride and that the form does not turn into an end in itself, obscuring Him toward Whom this form and this knowledge should direct our soul, mind, and heart.

THE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE CHURCH

The arrangement of the church has its roots deep in Old Testament history, tracing back to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was divided into several parts: Gentiles were admitted into some, only Jews or only priests into others, while the main chamber, the "Holy of Holies," could be entered only by the High Priest and only once a year.

The modern Orthodox church is also divided into several parts:

- *The Narthex.* This is the space immediately following the entrance into the church building. Historically, the narthex was intended for penitents (those temporarily excommunicated from Communion for various sins), for catechumens (those preparing for Baptism), and generally for all those inquiring about the faith. In modern practice, this specific function of the narthex has largely been lost.
- *The Nave.* This is the main body of the church (the church proper, or *naos* in Greek), where the faithful stand during the Divine services.
- *The Sanctuary* or *Altar.* This is the space in the eastern part of the church, accessible only to the clergy. The origin of the word is traced to the Latin *altaria* ("high altar" or "place of sacrifice"). The sanctuary is separated from the main body of the church by the *iconostasis* (translated from Greek as a "stand for icons"). Historically, the iconostasis traces back to the early Byzantine templon, a low barrier upon which several icons stood. Only over the course of time did it develop into the independent, complex, and theologically rich structure we see today.

In the center of the sanctuary stands the *Holy Table* (Russian: *prestol*), the most important and sacred structure in the church. The Sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated upon the Holy Table. During the consecration of a church, particles of the relics of Christian martyrs are placed into the foundation of the Holy Table.

This is done in memory of the early Christians who celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Roman catacombs (underground cemeteries) upon the tombs of their brethren in the faith who suffered a martyr's death for their loyalty to Christ and His Church. Behind the Holy Table, in the easternmost part of the sanctuary, is the *High Place.*

In some churches, especially cathedrals, in addition to the main sanctuary, there are so-called *side chapels* (Russian: *pridely*), or *attached churches.* These are small, independent sanctuaries with their own iconostases, located to the left and right of the main sanctuary. A side chapel, like the main church, is dedicated to a specific feast or saint, and Divine services are celebrated there as well. As a rule, if two Liturgies, early and late, are served on feast days, the late Liturgy is celebrated in the main sanctuary, while the early one is held in the side chapel.

In front of the sanctuary lies the *solea*, a raised platform of 1–3 steps, with a small projection in the center called the *ambo* (from the Greek *ambon*, meaning "rim" or "projection"). In Byzantine churches, the ambo often extended far into the central part of the church; it was from there that litanies and sermons were proclaimed and certain hymns were chanted. The ambo continues to fulfill this liturgical function to this day. The laity do not ascend the solea, for it is reserved exclusively for those serving the church: singers, readers, and servers.

In the center of some churches, particularly cathedrals (the main church of a city where the ruling bishop serves), one can see a special raised platform for the *Bishop's Cathedra*, a special ritual seat (from the Greek *kathedra*, meaning "seat" or "throne"). Usually, a rug depicting an eagle soaring over a city (a symbol of episcopal authority) is placed upon it. It is here that the bishop sits during the opening moments of the Divine services.

To the right and left of the sanctuary, located on the solea, are the *kliroses*: places for the singers and readers, sometimes separated by icons. The name derives from the Greek *kleros* ("lot," "casting lots," or "portion"), reminding us that in ancient times, clergy were chosen by lot, and the ministry was their "lot" or portion in life. In modern churches, there is usually only one choir, located either on one of the kliroses or in the *Choir Loft* (Russian: *chory*), high above the entrance to the church. The liturgical rule (Typikon), however, prescribes the alternate singing of two choirs located on the kliroses to the left and right of the sanctuary.

THE ICONOSTASIS AND ICONS IN THE CHURCH

As previously mentioned, the sanctuary is separated from the nave, the main body of the church, by the iconostasis. In the center of the iconostasis stand the *Royal Doors*, which are opened during the most significant moments of the divine services. Upon them, typically, is the icon of the Annunciation (the appearance of Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary with the tidings that she would bear the Savior), as well as images of the four Evangelists (the Apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), the authors of the Gospels. Above the Royal Doors, the icon of the Mystical Supper (Christ’s meal with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion) is traditionally placed.

These images emphasize and reveal the concept of the opening to us of the gates to the heavenly, divine abode. This entry was made possible through the Incarnation of the Savior, His teaching (the Gospel, meaning the "Good News"), and the Sacrament of the Eucharist established by Him at the Mystical Supper (the Eucharist will be discussed in Chapter 5).

The inner view of a church.

A considerable number of books have been dedicated to the symbolism of the iconostasis, so we will not dwell on it in detail here. Classic Russian iconostases can be seen in the churches of the Moscow Kremlin, the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, and other ancient Russian churches of the 12th–17th centuries. In churches of the Synodal period (18th–19th centuries), iconostases are usually simpler, containing fewer icons but featuring more decorative elements. In modern churches, one may encounter both very simple iconostases resembling the Early Christian low partition with only a few icons and complex iconostases modeled after ancient Russian examples.

In addition to the icons included in the iconostasis, icons of Christian feasts, venerated images of the Theotokos, and icons of various saints are usually hung, with candle

stands placed before them, on all of the walls of the church. It is before these icons that candles are typically offered.

In front of the ambo, on an *analogion* (a special church stand), lies the icon of the current liturgical day. On Sundays, this is the icon of the Resurrection of Christ. On other feast days, it is the icon of the corresponding feast (colloquially referred to simply as "the Feast" — for example, "please pass a candle to the Feast"). On a saint's memorial day, it is their image, and, on other days, it is the icon of the feast or saint to whom the church is dedicated (the patronal icon).

> Beyond icons, a significant role in organizing the liturgical space is played by church murals (frescoes on the walls and ceiling). In cases where the fresco painting is sufficiently detailed (which is especially characteristic of ancient Russian churches), it reveals a true symbolic "heaven on earth," reflecting the unity of the Heavenly and Earthly Church. In the main dome of the church, Christ Pantocrator (The Almighty) is usually depicted. On the concave surfaces formed by the transition from the dome to the main body of the church (called pendentives), the four Evangelists are typically portrayed. On the vaults and walls of the church, saints and events of sacred history—both Old and New Testament—are depicted. While the logic of the arrangement of subjects varies in different churches, the general idea remains the same: the unity of all historical events in God's plan for the salvation of man, and the unity in the Church and in prayer of all the saints—Old Testament prophets, New Testament martyrs and venerable ones (monastic saints)—and us, the Christians praying in the church.

CHURCH SLAVONIC: WHY IS IT SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND?

One of the main "stumbling blocks" for those entering an Orthodox church is undoubtedly the obscure language of prayer.

> Different Local Orthodox Churches employ different liturgical languages. For instance, the Greek Orthodox Church uses the Byzantine form of Greek rather than the modern one. In the Serbian Church, all the fixed liturgical hymns have been translated into the modern language (the renowned Serbian saint, Venerable Justin Popović, participated in this translation, among others). However, the variable hymns are chanted in Church Slavonic, often according to Russian service books. The Orthodox Church in America actively incorporates elements of spoken English into its divine services.

It is worth noting that a liturgical language that is incomprehensible (or, more accurately, difficult for an unprepared person to understand) is not a feature unique to the Russian Orthodox Church. The language of Old Testament Temple worship among the Jews did not correspond to their spoken language. Similarly, the Greek language in Byzantine worship did not match the spoken tongue; moreover, it was further complicated by poetic "flourishes" — rhymes, meters, an exquisitely complex word order, and so on.

Our liturgical Church Slavonic language is no exception. Even at the dawn of Russian Christianity, it differed significantly from the Old Russian of that time, although it was, of course, closer to it than it is to modern Russian. Thus, the situation where the liturgical and spoken languages do not coincide is far from new.

What is the meaning of this divergence, and why is it necessary? Obviously, it is for the same reason that liturgical vestments differ from ordinary clothing, the interior of a church differs from that of a home or office, and the images of saints on icons differ from photographs or naturalistic paintings. The Divine Service is an icon of the Kingdom of Heaven; its task is to reveal the higher world to man and to uplift the human spirit toward God. Therefore, it looks and sounds precisely like an icon, not like a photograph.

> Let us recall the immense work done to explain the symbolism of icons in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Father Pavel Florensky, Prince Evgeny Trubetskoy, and other researchers. In art history, it has become generally accepted and well-known that reverse perspective, distorted proportions, and unusual color combinations are not the result of the iconographer's inability to depict the human world realistically. Rather, they are consciously applied artistic techniques with a very specific goal: to make the icon a symbol and a manifestation of a higher, heavenly reality, and to direct the spirit of the one praying toward that reality.
>
> A precise analogy to these artistic techniques used in icons can be seen in other aspects of the Divine Services: in chanting, in ritual gestures, and, finally, in language. A Divine Service conducted in the spoken language can be compared to an iconostasis composed exclusively of photographs, especially since, for many saints of recent times, such photographs already exist, such as Righteous John of Kronstadt, Righteous Alexey Mechev, Hieromartyr Patriarch Tikhon, and others.

CHURCH DISCUSSION ON LANGUAGE

An important question is the "measure" of divergence between the liturgical language and the vernacular, as well as the possibility and necessity of making the language of divine services more comprehensible. This is a matter of serious and very prolonged ecclesiastical debate, which became particularly acute starting in the mid-19th century when a rather fierce dispute flared up regarding the permissibility of translating Holy Scripture, rather than liturgical texts, into Russian. The proponents of translation, including Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (Drozdov), who was subsequently glorified as a saint, prevailed. Since then, the Synodal Translation of the Bible has been reprinted many times and remains the "official text" of the Bible in the Russian language, used not only by the Orthodox but also by Russian-speaking Christians of other confessions.

Towards the end of the 19th century, similar discussions took place regarding liturgical texts. Translations of liturgical texts into Russian began to appear, naturally, not for liturgical use, but to facilitate a better understanding of the divine services by the faithful.

In the early 20th century, a Synodal Commission headed by Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), who later, in 1943, became the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, produced corrected (or, more precisely, partially Russified) texts of certain liturgical books. In these editions, the words and expressions most difficult to comprehend were replaced with more intelligible ones. Furthermore, the syntax of particularly ponderous phrases was "untangled" and brought closer to modern understanding; the obscurity of these phrases in the Church Slavonic translation had been "inherited" from the stylistically complex poetic language of the Greek original.

> The Local Council of 1917–1918 considered the question of liturgical language, but due to the revolution, it was unable to complete its work on this matter or adopt any definitive ruling. The draft resolution, produced by the Council's Liturgical Department, contained, among other things, the following theses:
>
> 1. The Church Slavonic language in divine services is a great and sacred heritage of our native ecclesiastical past, and therefore, it must be preserved and maintained as the primary language of our worship.
> 2. For the purpose of making our church worship more accessible to the understanding of the common people, the rights of the Common Russian and Little Russian languages for liturgical use are recognized.
> 3. The immediate and universal replacement of the Church language in divine services with Common Russian and Little Russian is undesirable and unfeasible.
> 4. The partial use of the Common Russian or Little Russian language in divine services to achieve a more intelligible understanding of the service, subject to the approval of church authority, is desirable even at the present time.
>
> The draft further included points regarding the necessity of introducing certain changes and corrections to the Church Slavonic text of liturgical books, publishing translations of these books into Russian, and issuing editions with parallel Church Slavonic and Russian texts, among other measures.
>
> For obvious reasons, practically no work in this direction was conducted during the years of Soviet rule. Current traditional practice is as follows: excerpts from the Lives of the Saints, sermons, and didactic Homilies regarding the events being celebrated are read in Russian during the service. In some churches, with the bishop's blessing, the more significant parts of the service are translated into Russian or read in both languages (for example, the Gospel is read first in Church Slavonic, and then the same text is read in Russian). Services for ascetics recently canonized as saints are written in a Russified Church Slavonic, or rather, in Russian with a sprinkling of "Slavonicisms."
>
> Today, the position of many hierarchs of the Russian Church generally continues the line of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) and the Liturgical Department of the 1917 Local Council regarding the necessity of a certain Russification of liturgical texts to improve comprehension

and the possibility of using the Russian language at certain moments of the service while maintaining, however, Church Slavonic as the primary liturgical language.

The author's personal opinion on this matter is as follows: although work on the Russification of various elements of the liturgy will likely be completed sooner or later and adopted by the Church as general practice, the unintelligibility of the liturgical language is more often a result of indistinct reading and singing in church as well as a lack of knowledge of basic texts among churchgoers rather than a problem of the incomprehensibility of Church Slavonic itself. If one learns to understand Church Slavonic, which is quite simple for a Russian speaker, it will be difficult not to sense and fall in love with the marvelous poetry of the liturgical texts and the sublime structure and melody of the Church Slavonic language that perfectly reflect it.

HOW TO BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT IS SUNG AND READ

The Church is an exceptionally conservative institution, and there is a certain validity and purpose to this. Therefore, one should not expect the liturgical language to be adapted to conversational speech anytime soon. Consequently, the problem of the "language barrier" must be resolved on one's own. This is not at all difficult.

To clearly understand what is being read, sung, and proclaimed at any given moment, one must have a grasp of the general structure of the main services, the All-Night Vigil, and the Divine Liturgy. With rare festal exceptions, this structure is quite stable and predictable. Chapters 5 and 6 of this book will assist you in understanding the logic of the services.

It is also advisable to consult the *church calendar* before the service (regarding calendars, see Chapter 6). By knowing which events are being celebrated on which days, you will easily orient yourself as to whom the various hymns are addressed and what they signify.

It is extremely beneficial to carefully read (and regularly reread) the Psalter, the biblical Book of Psalms. It can be purchased at any church bookshop or found in digital format on the Internet. Orthodox divine services practically grew out of the Psalter; the reading and chanting of psalms, beginning from the first centuries of Christianity, was and remains one of the most important constituent parts of the service. Having mastered the text of the Psalter, which is not that large (150 psalms, each averaging 20–30 verses), you will immediately understand the psalms that, in various combinations, make up about 30–40% of the divine service.

Furthermore, you will be able to understand other hymns much better, many of which directly or indirectly refer to the text of the psalms. In addition, you will derive immense enjoyment from the poetry of the psalms, which expresses all the subtlest stirrings of the human soul; and this poetry is expressed much more vividly and with

greater depth in the Church Slavonic version of the Psalter than in the Russian translation.

Finally, it is exceptionally beneficial to read liturgical texts, either at home before going to church or right there during the divine service. Standing and looking into a book during the service is not forbidden at all; in fact, in the house churches of spiritual academies and seminaries, people sometimes even stand with lecture notes on Liturgics, checking theory against practice.

It is true, however, that a certain type of grandmother, one of those whom Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, an extremely famous and respected clergyman, preacher, and head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain, affectionately called "our Orthodox witches", might try to scold a person holding a book. At the same time, the author has happened to see these very same grandmothers standing with books themselves. So, in this matter, everything depends entirely on you!

All the necessary liturgical texts are now available on the Internet. It is worth noting that in some churches (unfortunately, not that many yet), there is a wonderful tradition of distributing the texts of the main hymns before the service, so that the worshippers can sing along or, at the very least, understand the text better.

It is best to begin your acquaintance with the texts by studying the so-called *fixed parts* of the divine service, which are the hymns that are always sung at Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy, forming the permanent foundation of the service. Then, proceed to the variable parts, which depend on the events being celebrated. First and foremost among these are the Sunday services from the book called "*Octoechos*" (in Russian: *Osmoglasnik*). There are eight of these services, corresponding to the eight *tones* (melodies) that alternate sequentially each week. Finally, in regard to the services for feasts and great saints, it is worth finding the text online and reading it before the feast-day service.

> Allow me to share a personal experience. My first "conscious" introduction to divine worship began with a booklet titled "All-Night Vigil. Liturgy", which contained the fixed texts of these services with brief commentary, and the "Liturgical Collection", which contained selected hymns for Sunday services and feasts with musical scores of the common chants of the Moscow Diocese. Both books were editions from the 1970s, and they provided invaluable assistance to people during the Soviet era, when not even every priest had the opportunity to obtain full liturgical books.
>
> Once I had sorted out the general logic of the service and the content of what was being sung and read, studying these books on public transport on my way to church, it wasn't just the degree of awareness and meaningfulness of my participation that changed. Even my physical sensations became completely different: the immense fatigue after 3–4 hours of a barely intelligible ritual was replaced by vigor and joy, thanks to the conscious realization and understanding of every moment of the service and the understanding of my own place in the common prayer.

The next step involved printouts of festal services, which were photocopies of pages from liturgical books that helped me understand the texts of the Festal and Lenten prayers during the service. Unlike the fixed and Sunday hymns, which are repeated quite often and are therefore easily understood, one hears a Festal service only once a year. Furthermore, the poetry of the Byzantine hymns for certain feasts is particularly complex. However, being familiar with the text brings a much greater and fuller sense of joy from a conscious encounter with the Feast from praying together with the great saints who reflected, in these hymns, their own perception and understanding of the celebrated event in their spiritual striving toward the Lord.

CHURCH SINGING: ANCIENT CHANTS

Contemporary church singing in Russia is extremely diverse, varying not only from church to church but also from service to service. To better navigate the church service and understand not only "what" is being sung, but also "how" and why exactly in that manner, let us familiarize ourselves with the main types of church singing.

A very conditional and simplified classification would appear as follows: *Znamenny chant*, *Obikhod* (common) singing, and *Concert singing.*

Znamenny Chant was the primary and statutory chant for Russian worship up to and including the 17th century, and remains so for *Old Believers* and *United Believers* (Russian: *Edinovertsy)*[7], even in our time. It is characterized by strictly unison, that is, single-voice, singing and a specific *hook notation system* (Russian: *kryuki*), unlike the linear staff notation familiar to us.

An approximate analogy to understand "how it sounds" might be the European medieval Gregorian chant actively featured in compositions by the groups Enigma and Gregorian. Practically all sections of Rachmaninoff's "All-Night Vigil" are also based on the melodic structure of Znamenny chant. In the kliros practice of our churches, variations that, to a greater or lesser degree, are related to Znamenny chant, such as Kievan, Greek, Valaam, Optina, and others, are also used.

In the majority of churches, Znamenny chant is used in services only sporadically, most often in arrangements for a polyphonic choir. However, over the last 10–20 years, Znamenny chant has increasingly been heard as the primary chant for divine services in certain monasteries as well as in parish churches. In this regard, in some churches it is sung from standard musical notation, while in others it is sung from the

[7] *Old Believers* are religious groups who separated from the official Russian Church in the mid-17th century, refusing to accept the liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon. Despite centuries of persecution, they have survived as distinct communities to the present day.
Edinoverie is a canonical arrangement established in the late 18th century that allows Old Believers to reunite with the official Russian Orthodox Church while retaining their traditional pre-Nikonian rites, books, and customs. Today, "Edinovertsy" (United Believers) parishes exist within both the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR).

original Old Russian notation, that is, "from hooks". In Moscow, Znamenny chant can be heard, for example, in the Cathedral of the Andronikov Monastery, at the Valaam Metochion, and at the Early Liturgy in the Trinity Cathedral of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra where the chant harmonizes particularly well with the church architecture and iconography of the same period. In St. Petersburg, it can be heard at the Valaam and Optina Metochia, in the house church of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and elsewhere.

The most "authentic" Znamenny chant, sung exclusively from hooks, can be heard in Old Believer and Old Ritualist churches. It is important to note that one must be more attentive to one's surroundings in these places, as Old Believers strictly observe church etiquette and rules of conduct (although they are usually quite friendly to "casual visitors" who behave respectfully).[8]

The opening verse of Psalm 103 at Vespers, in Znamenny chant and hook notation.

It should be noted that for the modern ear, accustomed to harmonic (polyphonic) music, the strict unison of classical Znamenny chant is initially extremely uncomfortable. This is precisely why harmonizations that bring it closer to modern standards, such as the arrangements of Valaam Monastery chants, are quite popular today. However, once one has become "immersed" in Znamenny chant, people usually fall in love with it for life, much like classical Old Russian iconography and the architecture of ancient Russian churches.

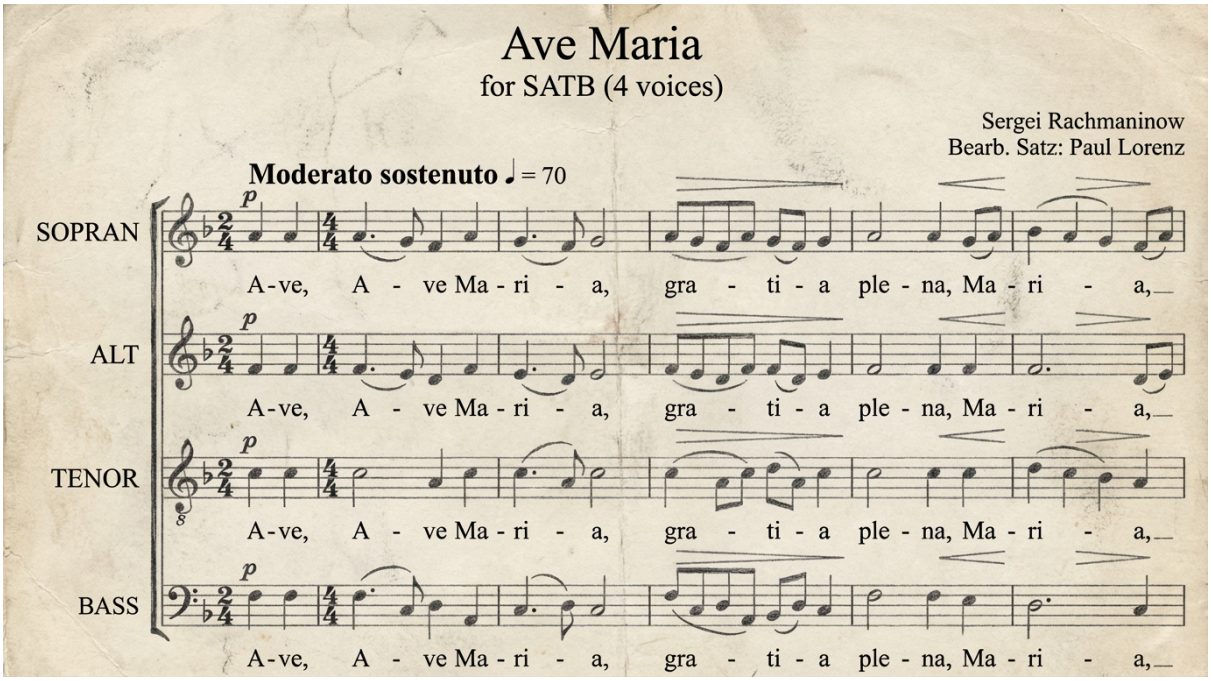
CHURCH SINGING: OBIKHOD AND "CONCERT" STYLES

At the end of the 17th century, the Kievan tradition began to enter Russian church singing. It was distinguished by two features: a harmonic, chordal structure (polyphony) and European five-line staff notation. These very factors became

[8] At any rate, this applies to Old Believers of the "Priested" confessions. With the "Priestless," the situation can be more complex.

foundational for a new type of church singing, which today is usually called "Obikhod."

Obikhod, or *"Obikhod singing,"* is, in a general sense, singing that is simple to perform, in contrast to the "non-standard" melodic structure of Znamenny chant or the virtuoso passages of concert singing, and is accessible to even the simplest composition of a small choir. It is also more dynamic, with one or two notes falling on a single word, without the long drawing out of individual words or syllables found in Znamenny chant or concert singing. Types of Obikhod singing vary. For example, the "Moscow Obikhod" and the "Bakhmetev Obikhod" (common in St. Petersburg and named after its author, N. I. Bakhmetev, the director of the Imperial Court Chapel).



An example of Obikhod singing

It is precisely this or that type of Obikhod singing that is used in the majority of churches for all variable hymns and a significant portion of the fixed hymns. Just as in Znamenny chant, the words in Obikhod singing are usually clearly distinguishable. This clarity, combined with its brevity and simplicity, is an undoubted merit of Obikhod melodies.

One specific variety of Obikhod singing worth noting is general (congregational) singing by all those praying at the service. As a rule, the most important fixed hymns are sung this way: "Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ" at the All-Night Vigil, and the "Creed" (Symbol of Faith) and "Our Father" at the Divine Liturgy. However, if you do not know the text, there is no need to be embarrassed, for singing along at these moments is not mandatory.

Concert singing is another type of church music that owes its emergence to Polish and Italian influence and, in particular, to the work of St. Petersburg court composers of the 18th and 19th centuries (we will name Dmitry Bortnyansky as the most famous to the general reader).

Concert singing is often criticized for its "operatic" nature, "secularity," and detachment from the norms of traditional, statutory church singing, specifically for the difficulty in perceiving and understanding the hymn text, the adequate transmission of which is the main task of church singing. One can hear examples of concert singing in large cathedrals, like in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow or the Transfiguration Cathedral in St. Petersburg. In parish worship, fixed parts of the service ("Gladsome Light," "Only Begotten Son," etc.) are sometimes performed in concert form, while variable parts are more often sung according to the Obikhod.

> In modern church life, there is a fairly lively discussion regarding the types of church singing that are permissible, optimal, or desirable in liturgical practice. Sometimes this escalates into fierce battles, with accusations that supporters of concert singing are turning the church into an opera house, while "Znamenny supporters" are accused of narrow-minded fanaticism and a desire to cross out 300 years of church music development.
> Within these factions, there are internal disagreements as well — for example, whether singing Znamenny hymns from [modern] notes rather than "hooks" is a profanation or simply a natural stage of development. However, in parish practice, a cultured and thoughtful regent (church choir director) usually finds a "golden mean" in combining various types of singing. They do this so that the music fulfills its main task: to adequately convey the text of the hymns to the consciousness of the parishioners and to create a genuine prayerful mood.

READING IN CHURCH

A significant portion of liturgical material is not sung, but read. Church reading possesses several varieties, and it is useful to know them in order to properly follow the service.

The primary type of reading in the temple is a distinctive form of recitative where the text is read in a single musical tone with slight modulations (raising or lowering of the voice) at the ends of phrases. The absence of theatrical intonation or "emotional expression" in reading is a quite ancient tradition. Since the very first centuries of Christianity, it has been held that the Reader should not impose his personal emotions upon the text. Instead, his duty is to convey the words adequately and intelligibly, while investing them with spiritual aspiration and a prayerful disposition is the task of the worshippers. Practically all the Psalms, as well as certain prayers, are read in this manner.

An exception is made only for the Lives of the Saints or homilies of praise for feast days, which are usually read at the Divine Liturgy during the interval when the clergy are receiving Communion in the Altar. These texts, being less "prayerful" and more "narrative" in nature, are read with normal speech intonation.

At certain moments, the reading is particularly solemn, specifically the reading of the "Apostle" (that is, the Apostolic Epistles) and the Gospel. It is easy to recognize these moments, as the reading itself is surrounded by a quite solemn ceremony. Usually, it is not a Reader who reads, but a Deacon or a Priest. Furthermore, a reverent silence prevails in the temple during the reading, corresponding to the significance accorded to the Word of God in the divine service.

CLERICAL VESTMENTS

The vestments of the clergy are an integral part of the overall concept of the temple as "heaven on earth." These vestments vary according to the rank of the minister.

The lowest clerical rank is that of the *Reader*. The duties of the Reader include the reading of the Psalms, prayers, and other texts during the divine service. In antiquity, the setting apart of a Reader was, just as for the ranks of priest and deacon, performed through the rite of episcopal *ordination* (laying on of hands), when, during the service, the Bishop lays his hands upon the head of the candidate being elevated to the sacred rank and reads special prayers. In our time, ordination to the rank of Reader occurs relatively rarely. Usually, laypeople who have received a blessing from the priest read and sing on the kliros.

The Reader is clad in a *sticharion*, a long garment with wide sleeves. The form of this vestment is quite ancient and traces its origins to Byzantine temple culture.

The first rank of the sacred ministry proper is the *Deacon*, Greek for "minister" or "servant". The Deacon assists the priest in the celebration of the Sacraments, though he does not perform them himself, and intones the *litanies* during the divine service, summoning the people to prayer. The Deacon’s vestment is the same sticharion, but with an important distinction. He wears *cuffs* on his wrists, and draped over his shoulder is the *orarion*, a wide band. By raising the end of the orarion, the Deacon invites the people to prayer.

> We find mention of the election of the first deacons, as well as ordination (laying on of hands) as the method of elevation to clerical rank, in the New Testament, in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6:
>
> 1. In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.
3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.
4. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.
5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:
6. Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Subsequently, the primary task of deacons became assisting the clergy in divine services rather than in practical affairs. However, the word "diakonia" continues to be used to this day specifically to designate church ministry dedicated to aiding the sick, the infirm, and the like.

The Deacon leads the congregational singing of the Creed at the Divine Liturgy (see Chapter 5).

The second rank of the clergy is the *Priest* (Greek: *Ierey*), known in common usage as *"Batyushka"* (*Father*). A priest may perform all the Church Sacraments (the Eucharist, Baptism, Marriage, etc.), except for the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood), the ordination or elevation of others to sacred rank.

During the divine service, the priest is vested in the *Phelonion*. This is a wide garment: a sleeveless cape with a high opening for the head. Over his chest, the priest

wears the *Epitrachelion*, the sign of his priestly authority and the instrument for performing the Sacraments, symbolizing the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is to the priest (and not to the deacon or reader) that one should approach for a blessing.

Finally, the highest sacred rank is the *Bishop* (or *Hierarch*). He possesses the authority to celebrate all the Sacraments, including the ordination (laying on of hands) of priests and deacons. The Bishop's vestments are the most solemn and elaborate. Their foundation is the *Sakkos*, a distinctive variation of the sticharion. Historically, its form traces back to the vestments of Byzantine emperors and high-ranking dignitaries. The defining mark of episcopal spiritual authority is the *Omophorion*, a wide band of cloth draped over the shoulders in a specific manner. Upon the Bishop's head rests the *Mitre*, which recalls the ritual head coverings of the Old Testament High Priests and Byzantine emperors. It is worth noting that a mitre may also be seen on a priest during divine services. However, for priests, it is not a mandatory attribute of their rank, but a special mark of distinction, a Church award. In such cases, the priest is referred to as "Mitred."

It is useful to know that the vestments of the clergy have their own color symbolism:

- On Sundays: as a rule, the color is yellow (gold).
- During Great Lent: black or violet.
- On the feast of Pascha and throughout the entire Paschal period (until Pentecost): red with gold, the most solemn.

- On the feasts of the Holy Trinity and the Transfiguration: green.
- On feasts of the Theotokos (Dormition, Nativity of the Theotokos, Entry into the Temple, Meeting of the Lord): blue.
- On the Nativity and Theophany: white.

These colors, to the extent of each specific church's capabilities, can usually also be found in the details of the church's decorations as well, such as the vestments of the analogia (stands for icons and liturgical books), the covers of the Holy Table in the altar, etc.[9]

CENSING

One of the significant elements of the divine service is *censing*. Censing is the pervading of the temple with the smoke of *frankincense*, an aromatic substance obtained in the Middle East from the resin of specific types of trees and shrubs—using a censer (Russian: *kadilnitsa*), a special vessel suspended on chains. Quite often, this vessel is commonly referred to as a *kadilo*, although strictly speaking, in Church Slavonic, *kadilo* refers not to the vessel used for censing, but to the aromatic smoke itself.

Until approximately the 17th century, the Russian Church used a katseya, a distinctive type of censer shaped like a ladle with a handle, for censing. This form of censer has been preserved to this day among the Old Believers.

The custom of using incense during divine services is very ancient and is well known even in Old Testament temple worship. The smoke of incense rising upwards symbolizes the ascent of our prayer to God.

During the censing of the whole church, the deacon or priest processes around the temple, censing the icons and the people. In this way, honor is rendered both to the saints glorified by the Church, depicted on the icons, and to the worshippers, each of whom bears the image of God. During censing in modern parish practice, it is customary to turn towards the clergyman censing and bow one's head. When censing is performed towards the worshippers from the *solea*, it is also customary to make a small bow.

[9] However, it is important to note that the canonical color for all church vestments (including for the Holy Table) has been white since ancient times.

The liturgical rule prescribes that the one censing approach each of the worshippers and cense them individually. However, since this norm originated in a context where there were many churches with few people in each, modern liturgical practice has developed a simpler form of censing the church and the people. It is worth noting that censing may be used not only in church services but also in the home, during the performance of services according to the *lay rite.*

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4:

- The church building is divided into the narthex, the main body (nave), and the altar (sanctuary). Located on the sides of the altar are the kliroi (choirs) for readers and singers. Sometimes churches also have side chapels "attached" or additional churches built onto the main structure.
- The altar, where the primary sacred actions take place, is separated from the main body by the iconostasis.
- The primary language of the divine service is Church Slavonic. In the most "discretionary" moments of the service (such as sermons or announcements), modern Russian is also used.
- To better understand the liturgical language, it is useful to read the texts of the services beforehand or follow along during the service. One should start with the fixed parts, then the variable parts, and especially the Psalter (the biblical Book of Psalms), as it lies at the foundation of many prayers.
- Liturgical singing can be tentatively divided into three categories:
    - Ancient Chants: Primarily Znamenny chant.
    - Obikhod (Common) Singing: The most customary and simple style.
    - Concert Singing: Appearing in Russian worship from the late 17th century, this is harmonic singing closer to secular musical art than to ancient chants.
- There is a special tradition of liturgical reading, akin to chanting on a single note, which emphatically excludes the personal emotions of the reader.
- Clerical vestments trace back to ancient Old Testament and Byzantine models. They possess specific symbolic meanings and allow one to distinguish the rank to which a clergyman belongs: reader, deacon, priest, or bishop.
- One of the most ancient elements of worship is censing, which symbolizes prayer directed upwards to God, much like the rising smoke of incense.

Chapter 5

Main Services: The All-Night Vigil and The Divine Liturgy

- **Services of the Daily Cycle**
- **The All-Night Vigil**
- **The Sacrament of the Eucharist**
- **The Divine Liturgy**
- **Confession**
- **Preparation for Holy Communion**
- **On the complexity of the “procedures for communion with God”**

SERVICES OF THE DAILY CYCLE

The liturgical Typikon distinguishes several types of services within the so-called *Daily Cycle of worship,* or services performed every day. These services are Vespers, Compline, the Midnight Office, Matins, and the Hours. The Typikon assigns all these services to specific times of the day, which is evident from their names. Ideally, the entire life of a monastery (upon which the Typikon is primarily based) is organized around the divine services and permeated by their rhythm.

In the evening, Vespers was celebrated, followed by the evening meal, after which came Compline. At night—the Midnight Office; in the early morning—Matins; and during the day, the so-called "Hours" (First, Third, Sixth, and Ninth)—short services named according to the ancient reckoning of the time of day at which they were performed. In the morning or in the evening, depending on feast days or fasting periods, the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

In parish practice, naturally, it would be impossible to adhere to the sufficiently detailed and complex logic of the daily services. Therefore, in an ordinary parish church, we most often encounter festal services on Great Feasts and on Sundays, each of which is also a feast of the Resurrection of Christ, a kind of Little Pascha.

On feast days and Sundays, the main services are the All-Night Vigil and the Divine Liturgy. The *All-Night Vigil*, colloquially referred to as the *"Vigil"*, is a service in which Vespers, Matins, and the First Hour are combined; moreover, they are richer

and more solemn in content than the weekday services. According to the Typikon (and in certain monasteries distinguished by their strict observance of it), the All-Night Vigil, in accordance with its name, is celebrated throughout the entire night. In ordinary parish practice, it is abbreviated to 2–4 hours and is served in the evening, on the eve of Sundays and feast days.

THE ALL-NIGHT VIGIL: VESPERS

Let us consider the most frequently celebrated All-Night Vigil—the Sunday Vigil. It is served on the eve of Sunday, on Saturday evening. The Vigil for most feast days is structurally very similar to the Sunday Vigil, with rare exceptions (for example, the Nativity of Christ and Theophany). This book is not a textbook on liturgics, so we will not analyze the entire order of the Vigil in detail, but will dwell only on the most striking moments of common prayer.[10]

Vespers begins with the censing of the Altar with the Royal Doors open. The deacon calls out, "Arise!" (the Typikon assumes that the worshippers were sitting in expectation of the start of the service); the priest pronounces the solemn exclamation glorifying the Holy Trinity. Psalm 103 is sung (in full or in excerpts)—one of the most beautiful in the Psalter, glorifying the perfection of the world—with the refrains: "Glory to Thee, O Lord, Who hast created all," "Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord," and "In wisdom hast Thou made them all." During this, the priest censes the entire church and the worshippers. This extremely solemn and beautiful part of Vespers is filled with gratitude to God for the miracle of the world created by Him.

> At one time, I had the opportunity to work as a tour guide at Valaam Monastery. Once, while walking from the Resurrection Skete, where the guides lived, to the central monastery complex for the Sunday All-Night Vigil, I understood why the Typikon prescribes that the Vigil begin "a little after the sun has set." The amazing beauty of nature—the trees, the clouds, the expanse of the water—against the backdrop of the sunset evidently inspired the ascetic fathers who composed the divine services. And that evening hymn, which nature sings to the Creator at sunset, was taken up in the most natural way by Psalm 103 at the beginning of Vespers in the church, which was still illuminated by the rays of the setting sun.

But in his free search for the "better," man fell away from God, preferring his own selfhood and "autonomy" to Him. Consequently, the Royal Doors are closed and the deacon intones the Great Litany, which is a sequence of petitions concerning various

[10] Likewise, we will not dwell on the discrepancies between modern parish practice and the directions of the Typikon (e.g., "why the Polyeleos is sung at Sunday Matins instead of 'The Blameless'; why the Canons are sung with refrains rather than with the Biblical Canticles," etc.). We will merely inform the reader that the most common practice is described here; in monasteries and parishes that strictly adhere to the directions of the Typikon, the sequence, quantity, and manner of chanting the various prayers and hymns may differ from what is described in this chapter.

needs. It begins with the words "In peace let us pray to the Lord" (meaning in a peaceful state of spirit, having reconciled with one another). To each petition, the choir (and in some churches, all the worshippers, as the Typikon actually envisions) responds, "Lord, have mercy" ("have compassion on us and help us!").

> For modern, proud, and freedom-loving (or in essence, "self-liberty-loving") man, the frequent repetitions of "Lord, have mercy" during the service are sometimes a source of confusion. But the divine service is realistic: it remembers that man is the highest and most beloved of God's creatures, to whom it is given to praise and thank God; yet at the same time, he is a sinful being who has fallen away from God—one who truly needs help, support, and mercy. Both of these moods are harmoniously combined and inseparable from one another—every litany necessarily concludes with a solemn, laudatory exclamation; while solemn festal hymns often, conversely, end with the words "have mercy on us."

After the Great Litany, certain psalms are read or sung, followed by stichera, which are New Testament hymns dedicated to the event being celebrated or the saint. During their chanting, the deacon (or the priest, if he is serving without a deacon) again censes the entire church. The smoke of the incense rises upward, to Heaven, together with the common evening prayer (for more details on censing, see above, at the end of Chapter 4).

The Small Entrance with the Censer

The Psalter, as has already been mentioned, permeates the entire divine service and constitutes its foundation. Among the sternest ascetics in the Palestinian deserts during the first centuries of Christianity, the solemn reading of this book constituted the greater part of their divine service. Some of them viewed the melodic and poetic hymns adopted in urban churches with disapproval, considering only the reading of psalms to be the necessary, sufficient, and most beneficial form of prayer. In particular, one of the most ancient and simplest "rules" for the All-Night Vigil consisted of reading the entire Psalter, from beginning to end. Our modern All-Night Vigil (in the sequence of the psalms used within it) retains traces of this practice as well.

After the singing of the stichera, the so-called *Small Entrance* is performed: the priest and deacon, preceded by servers bearing candles, exit the Sanctuary through the North Doors and, with special prayers and exclamations, enter through the Royal Doors. During this time, the hymn "O Gladsome Light" (Russian: *Svete Tikhiy*) is sung, dedicated to Christ, the Light of Truth.

The Litiya. The Blessing of the Loaves, Wheat, Wine, and Oil.

After the singing of the next few hymns, the *Litiya* is served. In monasteries, according to the Typikon, this occurs at every All-Night Vigil, whereas in parish practice, it is served only on Great Feasts. This is a special solemn procession involving the clergy exiting into the narthex (vestibule) while the festal stichera are sung, followed by the reading of special prayers and litanies, and the blessing of the loaves, wheat, wine, and oil.

During this rite, a prayer is read recalling how Christ fed thousands of people with five loaves, and the celebrant turns to the Lord with a request to multiply the bread "in this city and in all Thy world." These blessed loaves, dipped in wine, are usually distributed at the subsequent Matins during the anointing of the faithful with the oil that was blessed together with them at the Litiya.

The term "Litiya" means "fervent supplication." In ancient times, the worshippers, led by the clergy, would exit the church and go to the graves of the holy founders of the monastery, praying to them as well as commemorating all the brethren, both living and departed. Then the bread, wine, and oil were blessed, with which the worshippers strengthened themselves; after this, eating was no longer permitted, as the Divine Liturgy was served immediately following the All-Night Vigil. The modern Litiya serves as a reminder of this custom, one of the characteristic features of which is the detailed commemoration of saints by name, including those especially venerated in that particular country, city, etc.

After the singing of several stichera and the reading of prayers, another solemn moment arrives. At a Festal Vigil, with the Royal Doors open, the Troparion of the feast is sung—a short hymn expressing its essence. At a Sunday Vigil, the Troparion to the Theotokos is sung, which begins with “Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos” (in Russian: *Bogoroditse Devo, radujsya*). This reminds us of Her through Whom the Incarnation of Christ and the redemption of fallen humanity were accomplished. After the troparia, Psalm 33 ("I will bless the Lord at all times") is sung, the priest imparts a blessing to the entire assembly of worshippers from the ambo, and Vespers concludes.

So, in a very simplified form, the scheme of Festal Vespers in its most notable moments looks like this:

- Psalm 103 ("Bless the Lord, O my soul") and the censing of the entire church.
- The Great (Peace) Litany.
- Psalms (Kathisma) and stichera, censing.
- The Small Entrance, singing of the hymn "O Gladsome Light."
- The Solemn Procession — Litiya (occurs on the eve of a feast).
- Singing of stichera, then the Troparion (with the Royal Doors open).
- Singing of Psalm 33 and the priest's blessing.

THE ALL-NIGHT VIGIL: MATINS

The Typikon and monastic practice provide for a short rest between Vespers and Matins. Bread and wine, which were blessed at the Litya, are distributed to the brethren. During this interval, selections from the New Testament are read. These

include the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistles, depending on the season of the liturgical year, and the monks are permitted to sit during this reading. In some monasteries on the famous Greek Mount Athos, one may even partake of coffee and oriental sweets.

In parish worship, where the All-Night Vigil is shorter than in monastic practice, such a pause is not customary, and Matins begins immediately after Vespers.

A reader wearing a sticharion reads the Six Psalms in front of the festal icon.

It begins with the *Six Psalms*—the reading of six psalms that describe the condition of a sinful man and contain his prayer for salvation: “Many rise up against me, there is no salvation for my soul…” During the reading of the Six Psalms, candles are extinguished, and the general lighting is dimmed; moving about the church during this time is highly discouraged. This is a time of focused penitential prayer, a cry of the soul to God from the depths of the storm of passions and sin.

> One of the first readers of this book asked: “What should I do (or what should I think about) during the various moments of the service you describe? What relation does all this have to me, what is required of me at this moment, and what part of me is being addressed?”
> The most general and simplified answer would perhaps be this: try to hear and understand what is being sung and read, and to experience the same feelings and aspirations that the holy ascetics, inspired by the Holy Spirit, invested in the words of the psalms and prayers over the course of millennia. These spiritual aspirations during the Divine Service are extremely diverse: repentance, contrition for our sins against God and neighbor; prayer, supplication for our needs, for help and salvation in difficult situations; praise, thanksgiving

> to God for creating us and the entire universe, for every day and hour lived in well-being and health… At the same time, the centuries-old arrangement of psalms, prayers, litanies, hymns, and rites establishes a certain harmony within our soul and spirit. This restores our psychophysical wholeness, which has been "frayed" by current problems and cares.
>
> The central, dominant mood, however, can perhaps be called joy in the Lord, the joy of communion with Him. As the renowned liturgist Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann formulated in his diary: "Joy is so absolutely important because it is the undoubted fruit of the sensation of God's presence. One cannot know that God exists and not rejoice. The first, the main thing, the source of everything is—'My soul shall rejoice in the Lord'."

After the Great Litany (which, as at Vespers, is pronounced at the beginning of the service), the strict penitential mood of the Six Psalms gives way to a festive one. The deacon proclaims, "God is the Lord, and hath revealed Himself unto us; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord". He also intones several other verses from this same Psalm 117, while the choir sings the same refrain: "God is the Lord…" This is a psalm prophesying about Christ; it was with a verse from this psalm, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord," that Christ was greeted during His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. After the verses of the psalm, the Troparion is sung, briefly expressing the meaning of the event being celebrated: on Sundays, the Resurrectional Troparion; on feast days, the Troparion of the Feast. Next, the Kathisma (psalms) and certain hymns associated with them are read.

Polyeleos

One of the most solemn and brilliant moments of Matins arrives with the *Polyeleos*. Translated from Greek as "much mercy," this section features the singing of Psalms 134 and 135. These include the verse "Praise the name of the Lord, praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord," along with the refrain "Alleluia, for His mercy endureth forever." These psalms glorify the Lord's mercy toward Israel, and in a prophetic sense, the Lord's mercy through the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, Who led humanity out of the darkness of sin and death. In parish practice, usually selected verses from these psalms are sung; sometimes the psalms are read, and selected verses are sung. During the singing of the Polyeleos, all the lamps in the church are lit, the priests come out to the center of the church with candles in their hands, and the senior priest censes the entire church.

After the Polyeleos, special Troparia are sung glorifying the burial and Resurrection of Christ. These Troparia refer to the service of Great and Holy Saturday, before Pascha, when Christ rested in the tomb and the disciples mourned His death. Sometimes these Troparia are called the "Angelic Council" (in Russian: *Angelskiy Sobor*), based on the words of the first Troparion: "The Angelic Council [that is, the host of angels] was amazed, seeing Thee, O Christ, numbered among the dead, yet destroying the fortress of death, and raising up Adam with Thyself, and freeing all from Hades." The mood of these Troparia conveys with amazing precision the spirit of the last day before the Resurrection of Christ—sorrow over His death, faith in His Resurrection, and faith in our salvation through His Resurrection and victory over Hades and death.

After this, certain other hymns are read and sung, and the most solemn moment of the All-Night Vigil arrives—the reading of the Gospel. The deacon intones several verses from the psalms prophesying the Resurrection of Christ, as well as the verses "Let every breath praise the Lord." Then the priest reads the Resurrectional Gospel. There are eleven such Gospels in total, corresponding to the number of episodes in the New Testament describing various events after the Resurrection of Christ. These Gospels cycle in rotation, so that each subsequent Sunday we recall new precious details of the Risen Christ's first appearance to the disciples—the fishing on the Sea of Tiberias, the appearance of the Angel to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at the tomb, Christ's conversation with the two disciples walking to the village of Emmaus near Jerusalem...

The joy of the Risen Lord is also expressed in the solemn hymn following the Gospel reading, which is usually sung by all the worshippers: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless One..." And immediately, as is very characteristic of Orthodox worship, there is a counterbalance and equilibrium: Psalm 50 is read. This is the most penitential of psalms: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to

the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression...” The joy of the Risen Christ and our future general resurrection, combined with the consciousness of our own unworthiness of this great joy: these two feelings, as throughout the entire All-Night Vigil, organically combine at its highest point.

Next begins the *Canon*. According to the Typikon, it is to be sung, but in parish practice, it is usually read. This is the longest, and historically the most solemn, part of Matins, consisting of a complex combination of various festive hymns. At a Sunday All-Night Vigil, several canons are combined: the Resurrectional Canon; the Cross-Resurrectional Canon, that is, dedicated to Christ’s Cross and His Resurrection; the Canon to the Theotokos, glorifying the Mother of God; and the canon of the Saint commemorated on that day. At a Festal Vigil, usually one or two canons of the Feast are read.

Anointing with oil after the Veneration of the Gospel

During the Canon, the veneration of the Gospel and the anointing with oil take place. The worshippers approach the Gospel lying on the analogion one by one, make the sign of the cross, and kiss it, thereby expressing their personal gratitude to Christ, who brought us His Good News. The priest anoints the worshipper’s forehead in the sign of the cross with oil blessed during the recent Litya. After this, it is customary to kiss the priest’s hand (or more precisely, the image of the Cross on the epimanikion or cuff). This anointing with oil should not be confused with the *Sacrament of*

Chrismation; its significance is analogous to sprinkling with holy water. If a Litya was held and bread and wine were blessed, it is usually at this moment that pieces of the blessed bread, dipped in wine, are distributed.

After the 8th Ode of the Canon, the solemn Song of the Theotokos is sung: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior…" (Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1). It is sung with the refrain: "More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without corruption [that is, painlessly] Thou gavest birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify Thee." During this hymn, the deacon censes the church and all the worshippers.

After the Canon, the Praises (Psalms of Praise) and Stichera are sung and read. All creation is called to thanksgiving and praise, from mountains and hills to stars and moon, people and beasts, elders and youth. Together they fulfill the command: "Let every breath praise the Lord!" Finally, at the conclusion of this laudatory, joyful, and thankful part of Matins, comes the priest's exclamation: "Glory to Thee, Who hast shown us the light!" followed by the singing of the Great Doxology. It begins with the angelic hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," which the heavenly powers sang at the birth of Christ (Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2), and it concludes with the Trisagion (Thrice-Holy) Hymn: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us." Like many hymns, the Great Doxology combines both a mood of praise and a mood of repentance. After the Doxology and the Litanies, the priest, facing the people, pronounces the Dismissal, a brief prayer "dismissing" the worshippers. Matins is concluded.

Traditionally, the First Hour, a brief service consisting of three psalms and several prayers, is joined to the All-Night Vigil. The lights in the church are usually dimmed at this moment, and the quiet, ascetic service of the First Hour, devoid of singing or solemn rites, serves to conclude and balance the high Paschal joy of the Sunday Vigil.

Thus, here is the structure of Festal Matins according to its most notable moments:

- The Six Psalms — the reading of six psalms
- The Great Litany, "God is the Lord…" and the singing of the Troparion
- The singing of the Polyeleos, and the censing of the whole church
- The reading of the Sunday (Resurrectional) or Festal Gospel
- The reading of the Canon and anointing with oil
- The singing of the Song of the Most Holy Theotokos "My soul magnifies the Lord..."
- The Great Doxology
- Litanies and Dismissal
- The First Hour

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

We are now approaching the pinnacle of Christian worship, the Divine Liturgy. To properly understand its significance, it is necessary to dwell in detail on the central Christian Sacrament, the Sacrament of the Eucharist. To understand this Sacrament, however, it is essential to grasp the general logic of Christian doctrine, since liturgical worship is the direct expression and embodiment of the faith.

Christianity teaches the following regarding the world and mankind. The Lord created a beautiful world and man—the crown of creation, the highest and most perfect of God's works, distinguished by free will: that is, the capacity to accept God's love or to reject it, for without this freedom, human love could not be perfect. Man misused his freedom, fell away from God, betrayed His love, and thereby fell away from life in God and with God (was "cast out of Paradise"—see the Old Testament, Book of Genesis, chapters 1–3).

At that very time, God gave a promise to send a Savior, who would restore man's communion with Divine life. This promise, agreement, or "covenant" (the "Old Testament," that is, the old, former promise), was confirmed in various prophecies and events throughout the history of the lives of all the righteous who strove toward God even before the coming of Christ—Noah, Abraham, King David, and a multitude of others. All of them lived in the hope of the coming of the promised Savior—the Messiah, that is, the Christ.[11]

At the time preordained by God, this promise was fulfilled, and the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, became incarnate—that is, He was born as an earthly man (became the Son of Man) of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea, receiving the name Jesus. For thousands of years, Christian theologians have labored and contended, attempting to define and express in imperfect human words this incomprehensible mystery: how God, without ceasing to be God, became Man in order to save humanity from sin. Being sinless, Jesus Christ was unjustly condemned and executed, and by His sufferings on the Cross, His death, and His subsequent incomprehensible Resurrection, He redeemed the sins of men—one and all: the dead, the living, and the unborn. After the Resurrection, He established His Church—the assembly of all who believe in Him—united in a mysterious and grace-filled union of Love by the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Thus, everyone abiding

[11] "Messiah" is a Hebrew word meaning "Anointed One" (in Greek, Christos). Generally speaking, an anointed one is a person who has undergone the ritual of anointing for a specific ministry (prophetic, royal, priestly, judicial, etc.). However, among other messiahs (anointed ones)—prophets, kings, and high priests—in sacred history there is the one and only Messiah (Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee), anointed by God Himself for a threefold ministry in "this age": prophetic, royal, and high-priestly; and at the end of "this age," at His Second Coming for the impending Day of Judgment—also for the judicial ministry, for it is Jesus Christ, God the Word, Who is the coming Judge of all mankind.

in His Church is a partaker of the life of the Holy Trinity, a partaker of the Kingdom of Heaven, and a partaker of eternal life.

How, then, is abiding in the Church expressed, beyond the confession of faith in Christ as Savior and the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 7)? Here is how Christ Himself answers this (Gospel according to John, chapter 6, verses 47–60):

> 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
> 48 I am that bread of life.
> 49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.
> 50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.
> 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.
> 52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?
> 53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
> 54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
> 55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.
> 56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.
> 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.
> 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.
> 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.
> 60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?

These words have remained "strange," incomprehensible, a stumbling block, and alien to human logic ("common sense"), and they will remain so as long as the Church exists and the Sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated within it. In translation, "Eucharist" means "Thanksgiving." The form and manner of partaking of this Sacrament (in which we truly eat the Body of Christ and drink His Blood, and thereby become partakers of His death on the Cross, His Resurrection, and eternal life) were established by Christ Himself on the eve of His death on the Cross, at His last, Paschal supper with the disciples (Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 26, verses 26–28):

> 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
> 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;
> 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Furthermore, reading the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolic Epistles, we see that the very center of Christian life is the Eucharist—the common fraternal meal in which bread is the true Body of Christ and wine is His true Blood, uniting the faithful in the Church and making them partakers and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Apostle Paul explains the place of the Body and Blood of Christ in the New Testament, which God established with man, as follows (Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 9):

> 1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
> 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
> 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; (...)
> 6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
> 7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: (...)
> 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
> 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
> 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:
> 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
> 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

At every Divine Liturgy, which makes us participants in the Mystical Supper, the bread and wine, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the fraternal prayer of the faithful Christians, are mysteriously and incomprehensibly changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and the faithful become partakers of them, partakers of Divine life. Such is

the central place of the Divine Liturgy in worship and in Christian life, in God's plan for the salvation of man.

THE DIVINE LITURGY: LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS

The original form of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, or Communion, established by Christ and received by the apostles, has remained unchanged: the prayer of thanksgiving and the actual partaking of bread and wine—the Body and Blood of Christ. As the Church developed, this form became more complex, and new prayers were added, though they remained predominantly prayers of thanksgiving. Various historical epochs of Christianity have left their imprint on the contemporary order of the Divine Liturgy.

The Greek word "liturgy" means "common action," and the phrase "Divine Liturgy" means "a joint Divine and fraternal action." It is celebrated in the church by the gathered community of Christians, led by a presiding celebrant—a bishop or a priest. Practically all the prayers of the Divine Liturgy are offered up to God on behalf of all present Christians, who together constitute the mystical Body of Christ—His Church.[12]

The first part of the Liturgy is the Proskomedia ("offering"). In ancient times, Christians brought bread and wine to the churches, from which a portion was taken for the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, while the rest remained for the fraternal meal. Even now, it is precisely during the Proskomedia, performed by the priest in the altar, that the bread and wine are prepared for the celebration of the Sacrament, and during this preparation, a most important prayerful commemoration of the living and the departed takes place (it is described in detail in Chapter 3).

The second part of the Liturgy is the Liturgy of the Catechumens. *Catechumens* (from the root meaning "to announce," "to speak aloud," or "to instruct") are those preparing to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. In the first centuries of Christianity, this involved a rather lengthy preparation with the study of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, taught orally (as literacy was not yet universal at that time). During the Divine Liturgy, the catechumens were required to leave the church after the exclamation "Catechumens, depart." In our time, this rule is for the most part not observed, and an unbaptized person may be present throughout the entire Divine

[12] One must distinguish between two meanings of the phrase "Body of Christ": the first is the Body of Christ manifested in the mysterious, invisible action of the Holy Spirit and, at the same time, really visible and tangible in the Eucharistic Bread, which, together with the Eucharistic Wine (the Blood of Christ), constitutes the unity of the Holy Mysteries—the elements for the celebration of the Sacrament of Communion; the second is the entire fullness of the Church of Christ, the invisible and mysterious (mystical) unity of all Christ's faithful disciples and followers, both the living and the dead.

Liturgy, but the ecclesiastical division of those praying into catechumens and the faithful has been preserved to this day.

The Liturgy begins with the solemn exclamation of the clergyman: "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages." The Divine Liturgy is the fullest, most perfect opportunity for a person to be a participant in the Kingdom of God, in divine life, joy, and love. The affirmation of the Kingdom of God—which has drawn near, has become accessible to us, and into which we have been invited and led by Christ—will be repeated many times in the prayers and hymns of the Divine Liturgy.

Next follows the Great Litany, just as at the beginning of other services. It should be noted that in the Liturgy there are significantly fewer petitionary and penitential elements than in other services; it is entirely filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for the salvation given to us and the Kingdom revealed.

> The general mood and spirit of the Liturgy is perhaps best felt in the brief Gospel episode recalled by us on the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 17):
> 1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
> 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
> 3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
> 4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles (tents – *Author's note*) ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
> It is precisely this feeling of "it is good for us to be here" that is vividly expressed in the Liturgy—it is simply good for us to be here together with You, O Lord! We forget about our "affairs," our "problems," and the requests with which we have wearied You, and we understand that only together with You is there fullness of love, joy, and happiness, fullness of life, and no earthly difficulties or sorrows are capable of taking this joy away from us. The author felt this "it is good for us to be here" most acutely in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It was an exceptionally fortunate moment without tourists or guides—just silence, sunlight, and an amazing sense of the temple as a genuine place of God's presence, a place of the Kingdom where a person is absolutely happy, where his soul sings and thanks God for His wonderful gifts: the world that is created for us, the life that is given to us, and the Kingdom of Christ to which we are invited.

After the Great Litany, depending on the event being celebrated, various psalms or selected verses from them (here called *"antiphons"*) are sung. On Sundays, these are Psalm 102 ("Bless the Lord, O my soul...") and Psalm 145 ("Praise the Lord, O my soul..."). Among the psalms, the hymn to Christ "Only-begotten Son and Word of God..." is also sung. On Sundays, the Beatitudes (Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5) are

added to this, briefly singing the praises of examples of Christian struggle as a way of life.

These hymns conclude with the Small Entrance—the deacon with the Gospel, followed by the priests, exit the northern doors of the altar and, with solemn exclamations and prayers, enter the Royal Doors.

The Word of Christ opens the path to salvation for us—and so, after the entrance with the Gospel, we prepare to hear this Word. The Trisagion hymn is sung: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us," and on certain great feasts (Pascha, the Nativity of Christ, Theophany, Pentecost)—the hymn "As many as have been baptized into Christ..."—"Those who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In ancient times, the baptism of catechumens was usually performed during the Divine Liturgy on these feasts, so the Trisagion hymn is replaced by a hymn revealing the meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism.

Next, after the proclamation of selected verses from the psalms, the "Apostle" is read—that is, an excerpt from the Acts of the Apostles or the Apostolic Epistles. A solemn "Alleluia" is sung—translated from ancient Hebrew as "The Lord is coming, praise the Lord"—in anticipation of the Lord speaking to us through His Good News, the Gospel. The Gospel of the day or feast is read by the deacon or priest, preceded and concluded by the choir's exclamations: "Glory to Thee, O Lord." The Apostolic and Gospel readings correspond to the events being celebrated, so sometimes there may be two or three of them: for example, first the Gospel of the current Sunday is read, then the Gospel of the saint celebrated on that day. Which specific readings are prescribed for a certain day can easily be found using *the church calendar* (see Chapter 6).

After the Gospel reading, a sermon sometimes follows (this is its original place, but in modern practice, the sermon is more often moved to the end of the Liturgy); next, several litanies are pronounced, including the litany for those preparing for Baptism—"Faithful, let us pray for the catechumens." Then comes the exclamation "Catechumens, depart." This exclamation is very ancient; it signifies that the verbal, instructional part of the Divine Liturgy, accessible to the uninitiated, has ended. The time for the most important actions has arrived, the time of the Liturgy of the Faithful.

Thus, the brief structure of the Liturgy of the Catechumens is:

- Exclamation "Blessed is the Kingdom..." and the Great Litany
- Singing of psalms and the hymn "Only-begotten Son..."
- Small Entrance with the Gospel, singing of the hymn "Holy God..."
- Reading of the "Apostle" and the Gospel
- Litanies, including the one for the catechumens

THE DIVINE LITURGY: THE LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL

The Liturgy of the Faithful begins with the singing of the Cherubic Hymn: "We, who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the Thrice-Holy Hymn to the Life-Creating Trinity, let us now lay aside every earthly care, that we may receive the King of All, invisibly borne on spears by the angelic ranks" (this latter phrase refers to the Roman ritual of military triumph, when the celebrated victor stood upon a shield supported by spears carried by soldiers). The priest recites this same hymn thrice within the Altar, with hands uplifted as a sign of the particular solemnity of the moment. At the same time, the deacon performs the censing of the Altar and the iconostasis.

The Great Entrance

The *Great Entrance* takes place: the clergy exit from the North Doors of the Altar with the sacred vessels containing the bread and wine prepared during the Proskomedia. The Ruling Bishop, all those serving and singing in the temple, the worshippers present, and all Orthodox Christians are solemnly commemorated, thereby emphasizing the unity of the Church in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

After the Litany, all the faithful sing the *Creed*—the principal confession of the foundations of the Christian faith, formulated at the First and Second Ecumenical Councils. Only one who accepts these fundamental truths of Christianity may be a partaker of the Sacrament; and only unity of faith makes us the one Church in which this Sacrament is performed.

Finally, the culmination of the Liturgy of the Faithful arrives—a sequence of prayers and hymns called the "Eucharistic Canon." The celebrant invokes upon the faithful "The grace of God the Father, and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit," then exclaims "Let us lift up our hearts" (meaning "Let us raise our hearts to God"), to which the people respond "We lift them up unto the Lord" (meaning "Yes, our hearts are directed toward God").

"Let us give thanks unto the Lord!" exclaims the priest, for the Sacrament of the Eucharist is being performed—the Sacrament of mutual Thanksgiving: the faithful children thank the Father for all His gifts, and in this Sacrament, He grants them His highest good—eternal life in Himself. "It is meet and right to worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..." confirm the people. In the Kingdom of Heaven, there is no longer any place for petitions regarding earthly needs—it is meet and right only to praise and thank God. The solemn angelic hymn is sung: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna (salvation[13]) in the highest! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest."

During these and subsequent hymns, the priest reads the so-called "secret prayers" (or, in a more accurate translation, "mystical prayers"), in which he glorifies God for His good gifts to humanity and invokes the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the bread and wine on the Holy Table.

> Originally, these prayers were read aloud. Liturgists attribute their current silent recitation to the erosion of the early Christian consciousness of the Church community as celebrants of the Divine Service together with the clergy and on an equal footing with them[14]; and also to the infiltration into medieval theology of a formalistic perception of the clergy as "dispensers of grace" and the active principle in the service, and of the laity as passive "consumers."
>
> Over the last 80–100 years, a trend has been observed in most local Orthodox churches to restore to the church community its active role in the divine services. Some external signs of this include the encouragement of congregational singing during the service, as well as the reading of the "secret" prayers aloud—audibly, on behalf of all the worshippers—which is currently a subject of ecclesiastical discussion. In the Russian Orthodox Church, in a number of churches and with the blessing of the Ruling Hierarch, the secret prayers are read aloud. This should be acknowledged as the best practice from the perspective of the general spirit and meaning of the Divine Liturgy.

[13] Literally from the Hebrew: "Oh, save!"

[14] According to the word of the Chief Apostle Peter, faithful Christians are a "royal priesthood" [1 Peter 2:4–9]

> In any case, even if these prayers are not read aloud in your parish, it is beneficial to know their content. Even at the end of the 19th century, Saint John of Kronstadt, a fervent celebrant of the Divine Liturgy, lamented that these prayers were inaccessible to the ears of the worshippers, and he advised: "In the divine service, you hear only fragments, so to speak, of the Liturgy, because many prayers and doxologies are read secretly. It is far more beneficial and much more interesting for the mind and heart of a Christian to know the full composition of the Liturgy, all the prayers and praises to God the Almighty and Savior."

During these prayers, we pray that the Lord manifest the bread and wine lying on the Holy Table as His true Body and Blood, and unite us in partaking of them. Here also, all the saints are commemorated as members of the Church Triumphant, the glorified Church, and among them first and foremost—the Most Holy Theotokos as the pinnacle of holiness. A hymn in honor of the Theotokos is sung: "It is truly meet to bless (magnify) Thee, the Theotokos...", and on great feasts—one of the hymns from the festal canon dedicated to the Mother of God. After these hymns, the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father...", is sung (usually by all the worshippers)—the prayer of prayers, commanded to us by Christ (Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6).

The celebrant exclaims "Holy Things are for the Holy!" This means that the Holy Gifts lying on the Holy Table are for you, holy Christians; holy not so much by personal sanctity—for no one is worthy and no one is holy by themselves—but by their actual and active membership in the Holy Church of Christ.

The curtain of the Royal Doors is closed, the moment for the Communion of the clergy arrives, and the choir sings the "Communion Verse." In our time, due to the large number of people in the churches, this moment sometimes extends into a rather long pause. During this time, a sermon is usually delivered, the Life of the celebrated Saint or a eulogy for the celebrated event is read, or hymns related to the feast are sung, and so forth.

> The best practice, of course, is to minimize this pause as much as possible, since the communion of the clergy and the subsequent communion of the people constitute a single, inseparably linked supreme moment of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Generally speaking, the Rite of the Divine Liturgy presumes that this pause lasts no longer than the singing of the Communion Verse, which, in ancient chant books, possesses a very elaborate melody.

Finally, the Communion of the faithful arrives. The Royal Doors are opened, and the priest, holding the Chalice containing the Body and Blood of Christ, comes out to the people with the exclamation: "With the fear of God and faith, draw near!" and then reads the pre-Communion prayer. All those who are communing (usually children first) approach the Chalice. They hold their arms crossed over their chest, right over left; before the Chalice, they loudly state their full name received in the Sacrament of Baptism. The priest pronounces a short prayer: "The servant of God (Name) partakes

of the precious and holy Body and the precious and holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." Having received the Body and Blood of Christ from a special spoon (in Russian: *lzhitsa*), the communicant silently steps away from the Chalice and goes to a small table with *zapivka*—this is what the sweetened warm water diluted with wine is usually called. Washing down the Holy Gifts is necessary for their complete consumption. Given the holiness of the moment, it is important to remember that during Communion, no conversations—even brief or quiet ones—are permissible, out of respect for this greatest Sacrament.

When everyone has communed, the choir sings joyful and laudatory hymns: "We have seen the True Light, we have received the Heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith..." and "Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise, O Lord..." The priest blesses the people with the Chalice, at which point all communicants make a bow from the waist to the Holy Gifts (prostrations to the ground after Communion are suspended for the rest of the day).

The Thanksgiving Psalm 33, "I will bless the Lord at all times...", is sung (though sometimes omitted in parish practice). The Dismissal is pronounced, in which the celebrated event and the saints of the current day are mentioned. After this, the worshippers approach to venerate the Altar Cross held by the priest, rendering honor to the sign of our salvation—through which we became partakers of the Heavenly Kingdom—and also to receive a blessing and guidance before departing the temple. If there are many people in the church, it is not strictly necessary to kiss the cross specifically in the priest's hands; one may kiss the large image of the Crucifixion usually found in churches, or simply one's own pectoral cross.[15]

[15] It is worth noting that, according to the most ancient tradition, every Christian should always wear a pectoral cross on their chest as a sign of their participation in Christ's Church. It is recommended never to remove the

It must be acknowledged as a less-than-ideal practice, characteristic of some churches, to add a Moleben (Service of Intercession) to the Divine Liturgy. What else is there to ask and pray for, for what "needs," when the Lord has just revealed the Kingdom of Heaven to us and made us partakers of Eternal Life?

Thus, the structure of the Liturgy of the Faithful is as follows:

- The Hymn "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim..." (The Cherubic Hymn) and the Great Entrance.
- The singing of the Symbol of Faith (The Creed).
- The Eucharistic Canon (The Anaphora).
- The singing of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father."
- The Communion of the Clergy.
- The Communion of the Laity.
- Brief Thanksgiving Hymns and the Dismissal.

PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION AND CONFESSION

In the early centuries of Christianity, at every Divine Liturgy, all Christians communed, except for those who had been excommunicated from Communion as punishment for a specific sin. All the prayers of the Liturgy testify to this—for example, the petition: "And unite all of us who partake of the one Bread into one another in the communion of the one Spirit."

Gradually, the early Christian zeal of spirit weakened. Man increasingly felt himself infirm, not daring to approach the Sacrament. Participation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist ceased to be perceived as a vital need of the soul, turning at times into a kind of "obligation." In Imperial Russia, for example, it was impossible to resolve many personal matters or issues with state authorities without possessing not only a baptismal certificate but also a certificate from the church regarding Communion. Moreover, communing once or twice a year was considered sufficient.

In our time, those new to the faith often ask the question: "How often should one take Communion?" In essence, this means: how often should one converse with God, be with God, be in the Church, and unite with Christ in the sacraments? In early Christian times, daily Communion was not uncommon, and weekly Communion on the Lord's Day (Sunday) and all Church feasts was the generally accepted norm. During the

cross. It is a curious fact that in the old days, when visiting the bathhouse, people would remove their metal cross before entering the steam room to avoid getting burned, but would usually put on a wooden cross from a supply specially kept in the bathhouse for this purpose.

times of a general decline in the Christian spirit and Church unity (in the 18th–19th centuries), the accepted rule was to commune during each multi-day fast (i.e., four times a year), with once a year being the minimum permissible.

In modern practice, clergy usually recommend something less than the early Christian zeal, but more than the pre-revolutionary tradition; a rhythm of communing once or twice a month is considered more or less "generally accepted." In any case, regarding the question of how often to commune, it is advisable to consult with a priest.

The question of frequency is also linked to the question of preparation. While the initial tradition did not presume any special preparation for Communion other than the Divine Liturgy itself, subsequently—as the general Eucharistic mindset of Christians weakened—a "complex of requirements" for preparing to receive the Sacrament was developed.

Confession. The priest covers the penitent's head with the epitrachelion.

First and foremost, the Sacrament of Repentance (Confession) came to be associated with the Sacrament of Communion. Originally, Confession was intended only for moments when a Christian felt the need to confess a truly serious sin. In our time, it has become a practically universal tradition for those intending to commune to go to Confession either before the Divine Liturgy or on the eve, after, or during the All-Night Vigil. In most churches, Confession takes place specifically at these times.

Furthermore, before the Vigil and before the Liturgy, at the beginning of Confession, special prayers are read—the "Order of Confession".

Those confessing approach the priest individually and briefly confess their sins. It is important to remember that Confession is not a spiritual conversation (it is better to set that aside for another time), nor is it a story about one's sorrows and problems. Rather, it is precisely a brief and clear confession of sins—that is, of that which separates you from God. In its simplest form, it might look something like this: "I have sinned by such-and-such, such-and-such, and such-and-such," followed by your Christian name (which the priest will pronounce while reading the prayer for the remission of sins).

At the same time, it is important to understand that a person confesses not to the priest, but to Christ. As stated in one of the prayers read by the priest before specific confessions begin: "Do not be ashamed and do not be afraid... behold, Christ stands invisibly, receiving your confession of sins, while I am but a witness." After confessing their sins, the penitent states their name, the priest covers them with the epitrachelion, and reads the prayer for the remission of sins. The penitent then kisses the Gospel and the Cross lying on the analoy and receives the priest's blessing.

The Sacrament of Confession evokes perhaps the greatest fear and doubt among those coming to the Church. "Why voice my sins before a stranger? After all, the 'all-seeing and all-knowing' God already knows everything, and sees that I am repenting (in my soul)," and so on. The most illustrative analogy is this: the verbal (the very word "confession" implies "aloud"!) admission of one's sins in the presence of another person, and the undoubtedly beneficial feeling of shame associated with it, has, so to speak, a "surgical" purpose.

By pronouncing words of repentance aloud, you cut off the sin, leaving it in the past. And the presence of the priest during this act is a reflection of the nature of all Church sacraments performed in public prayer. It is a reminder of the indisputable fact: we can be saved from all evil only in the assembly of the faithful—in the Church—and not by ourselves.

> The ascetic fathers speak often of how important it is to overcome one's fear and shame, not to be afraid to confess one's sins for the sake of cleansing them, and not to put off confession "until later." Here is an example from the life of one of the ancient Palestinian monks.
>
> "Abba Daniel was famous for his gentleness and mercy toward sinners. Once, having come to a sick man to hear his confession, he saw that the man was hesitating.
> 'I do not insist that you confess,' said the Elder. 'I do not want you to make a hasty decision under the influence of fear. Go to sleep peacefully, and if you wake up tomorrow morning, call me.'"
>
> The humor is harsh, but very sober and truthful...

In addition to Confession, it is customary before Communion to adhere to a more intensified prayer rule for several days compared to one's usual routine (regarding domestic prayer, see Chapter 7). On the eve of Communion, the Canons and the Prayers of Preparation for Holy Communion (found in prayer books) are usually read. These Prayers of Preparation are also often read aloud in churches during the time when the clergy are receiving Communion. There is also a strict rule: the impermissibility of eating or drinking after midnight on the eve of Communion. Exceptions are made for small children, the very elderly, and cases requiring the intake of vital medications.

In any case, the overarching purpose of preparation—whether it be lengthy or brief—is to remember the "main thing": the Kingdom of Christ, our fall into sin, and our salvation. It is to detach oneself, at least for a short time, from the vanity and bustle of our earthly affairs, and to prepare one's soul for the closest possible union with God—the Sacrament of the Eucharist. One of the best means for this, considered so since ancient times, is reading the Gospel and reflecting on one's life in the light of evangelical truths during the preparation for the Sacrament.

WHY ARE SUCH COMPLEX "PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNING WITH GOD" NECESSARY?

Having described the structure of the services, it is worth asking one exceptionally important question—perhaps the central one of this book. This question was formulated by a reader of the book's first draft before it went to print:

> "I liked it very much; it reads easily and clearly, leaving practically no questions…
> Except for one… why?? — this is the main question that arises for such 'rotten intelligentsia' as myself!..
> For people who have not had FAITH in their blood from birth, a protest arises against such an 'unsubstantiated' and complex 'procedure of communing' with God… One wants very much to believe that the Almighty actually cares about you… And to receive some sort of 'feedback'… But looking at all the Orthodox rituals, one feels 'infinitely far from the people,' not understanding at all what exactly all of this provides… I myself am baptized—I was baptized at quite a mature age—but neither during the Sacrament of Baptism nor at any time later did I feel a 'divine trembling' during any Sacrament, which is, strictly speaking, what grants FAITH, if I understand correctly…
> In light of all that has been said, I have a proposal for you:
> Tell me, for what purpose (or why) should an adult, intellectual person—who is, of course, a believer somewhere in the depths of their soul, but who does not consider it mandatory or necessary to go to church for COMMUNING WITH GOD, because they believe that communication with the Creator should happen without intermediaries in the form of priests

> and rituals—regularly attend church…
> In short, I am interested in the Orthodox philosophy that is supposed to explain this necessity! Why does an adult, self-sufficient person need to receive Communion, or pray, or glorify God with hymns... or kiss icons, or bow 50 times…
> And what is the sacred meaning of 'The Creed'... What does it offer a thinking person?
> And what is the purpose of Morning and Evening Prayers—in such quantity???
> And why must they be read exactly as they are written in the prayer books..."

Let us summarize the question as follows: we speak a great deal about various *forms* of divine services, which prove to be quite complex. What is the role of these forms in the very purpose of their existence—in man's communion with God? Why can one not simply believe in God's existence, and simply converse and commune with Him on one's own?

There is a certain paradox in the relationship between man and God. After the Fall and man's alienation from God, man found himself in a situation where one who believes in God feels His presence in all of life's situations, feels His breath in the sunrise and sunset, in a flower and in a child. Yet, with equal clarity, the non-believer sees not a single *undeniable* sign or proof of God's presence. In other words, God reveals Himself to people exactly to the measure that they are capable of perceiving His presence. He never manifests His glory and power with the obviousness with which He could. The reason for this is that God seeks love from man, meaning a *free* acceptance of Him and communion with Him, rather than a submission compelled by obvious proofs of His power and glory.

The turning of the soul to God is always a mystery. As Christ says concerning this:

> All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. (Matthew 11:27)

> No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me… no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. (John 6:44-45, 65)

> I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

The entire life of the Church is a search for God, a thirst for God, a desire for ever closer communion with Him. The potential for the fullness of this communion is given to us by the Son of God, Who assumed human nature and granted us the possibility of the closest communion with Him in the Church and the Sacraments.

And here lies the second paradox: life in the Church, the acceptance of doctrinal dogmas (concerning the Fall of man, the salvation of the world through Christ's Resurrection...) is not an "agreement" with them or an "acceptance" of them by the intellect, but a certain inner conviction of their necessity and truth, of their life-giving, saving, and healing power for man and the world—or, simply put: faith. Faith itself is a gift of God, in answer to our cry to Him: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

This faith is granted and strengthened, among other things, thanks to participation in divine services, communal prayer, and the Sacraments of the Church. To truly participate in the divine service, one must believe in its healing and salvific power—yet the gift of this faith is given precisely through participation.

Why, then, are all these complex rites necessary for seeking God, for communing with Him? Let us draw an analogy. There is a good saying: "If you want to be happy, be happy." In principle, this is absolutely true, since happiness depends only on a person's inner attitude toward the circumstances of their life, and not on the circumstances themselves. But how does one actually "be" happy? Here begins a variety of advice, techniques, and methods—how to maintain one's physical and mental health (upon which the sensation of happiness depends), how to interact with people, how to view difficulties and problems, and so on. None of these methods guarantees happiness, but they help one move toward it, to feel it more truly and strongly.

Similarly, is it possible to "simply commune with God," without intermediaries, rituals, and the like? Of course! If you want to be with God, be with Him. Only how? What specifically must one do, feel, or experience to achieve this?[16]

First, due to the corruption of human nature by the Fall, wherein man rejected God and fell away from Him, man is *incapable* of overcoming his distorted nature without Jesus Christ as Savior, the Church established by Him, and the Sacraments. Only through these can he attain the fullness of communion with God.

[16] A comment from one of the priests who was among the first readers of the book: "All my experience tells me that for the average person, shifts toward real communion with God begin precisely when he starts regularly attending the Sunday Vigil and Liturgy. Perhaps it should be explained this way: In the church, everything—the architecture, iconography, melodies, texts, movements—speaks of God and turns one toward Him. And the one whose 'communion with God' is merely hidden self-admiration (alas) gets bored in this setting. But the one striving toward God feels in his very core that everything here reminds him of Him. And even if standing was unbearably difficult and prayer came only with great struggle, after the service the person is surprised to feel refreshed and strengthened. Three to four hours a week is not so much. But if we sum up the time spent in 'communion with God without intermediaries'—will we reach this total? It is unlikely. And besides, there is not really that much 'intermediation.' In all the prayers, the call is 'LET US PRAY'—together, not one person praying on behalf of everyone else."

And secondly, "if you want to be with God, be with Him" is very difficult for a person. He needs supports, steps, algorithms, techniques—in short, certain external organizing forms which, while not *guaranteeing* in themselves that a person will draw near to God, *assist* him in doing so.

Furthermore, since Jesus Christ saved the whole person consisting of spirit, soul, intellect, and body, and made him a partaker of divine life, these external forms exist on all levels. This includes the material level of candles, icons, and oil; the intellectual level of texts, logic, and meanings; the emotional and psychological level of rhythm, poetry, and melody; and the spiritual level found in the grace of the Holy Spirit bestowed in the Sacraments of the Church.

Finally, why are these external forms and rites so complex? Why is the Divine Liturgy not as simple as the Last Supper of Christ with His disciples described in the Gospel?[17] In this regard, worship can be compared to music. Music provides something very "simple," yet very rare and difficult to attain—harmony, joy, happiness, the elevation of the human soul. Yet at the same time, it is an extremely complex discipline, with its own history, theory, development, various schools, movements, and so on.

Of course, one can hum something while having neither a voice nor an ear for music; likewise, one can (and must!) commune with God in simple human words, without relying on ready-made church patterns, on complex prayers, psalms, and hymns. But one does not cancel out the other, and one reinforces the other—the complex forms developed over centuries, directing us to the heights of the spirit, and the simple, artless, yet sincere personal appeals to God.

Let us draw one more analogy. The pinnacle of human love and human communication is when people simply *feel good together*. When no words are needed, when nothing at all is needed—simply when "it is good for us to be here" together. But the path to this summit is not simple, and often, to reach it, certain external forms are needed—the setting, words, accepted ways of addressing one another, shared traditions, rituals... And also much knowledge, sensitivity, patience, experience, self-restraint, and the advice of experienced people who, in their time, walked the same path in search of this "good to be together."

So too, the sense of unity with God, of God's presence, is "simple." It is "simple," like communion with a loved one. It is simply "it is good for us to be here with You, Lord." But the path to this simplicity is not simple. And the divine service is an

[17] It is worth recalling, by the way, that the Last Supper, being a celebration of the Jewish Passover, was conducted according to a fairly complex ritual, while the Gospel accounts mention only the most important part of the Last Supper—the institution of the New Testament Sacrament.

exceptional, rarest gift to us from the Church, from her best representatives, true examples of life with God and in God. It is a gift of those very forms, supports, and ladders, which "guarantee" us nothing—but which, given a thoughtful and sincere attitude toward them, are capable of "leading" us. Leading us there and to Him, toward Whom the human soul strives by its very nature, and does not find rest until it finds Him.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5:

- The liturgical rule prescribes various services of the daily cycle, of which in parish practice we most often encounter Vespers and Matins, combined into the festive All-Night Vigil.
- Each Vigil includes both a general celebration of the world's salvation from evil and the darkness of sin, as well as hymns, prayers, and readings dedicated to the specific event being celebrated: Christ's Resurrection at the Sunday Vigil, and other events of sacred history at festive Vigils.
- The center of Christian worship and Christian teaching on salvation is the Sacrament of the Eucharist—instituted by Christ Himself at the Last Supper, when believers become partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ.
- The Divine Liturgy begins with the Proskomedia, the preparation of everything necessary for the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the Liturgy of the Catechumens, consisting of the singing of psalms and readings from the New Testament.
- The main part of the Divine Liturgy is the Liturgy of the Faithful, at the center of which the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is mystically performed, followed by the clergy and laity partaking of them.
- In modern practice, it is traditional to prepare for Communion by fulfilling a larger-than-usual prayer rule over the course of several days, reading special prayers before Communion on the eve, and going to confession beforehand.
- The complexity of church rites and hymns has been developed over centuries of prayerful experience as a way to best attune the human spirit, soul, and body, and to direct them toward God.

Chapter 6

Feasts and Fasts

- **The Logic of the Liturgical Year**
- **Church Calendars**
- **Navigating Liturgical Events**
- **Major Feasts**
- **Fasts: Liturgical Services and Dietary Rules**

Divine services are called to manifest the Kingdom of God on earth, to sanctify man and his entire life, and to make man a partaker of eternal life. It is therefore not surprising that liturgical worship permeates and sanctifies our earthly time, fills it with specific events, and unites earthly calendar rhythms with sacred rhythms.

As with the services of the daily cycle, the sequence of events of the liturgical year has its own moments of praise and joy, as well as moments of repentance and sorrow. Feasts and fasts help us not simply to "recall" a particular moment in the history of the salvation of the world and man, but to repeat and actualize this moment in our soul and in our life.

THE WEEKLY CYCLE OF DIVINE SERVICES

In the previous chapter, we discussed the services of the daily cycle: Vespers, Matins, the Midnight Office, and the Hours. Of these, in parish practice, we most often encounter Vespers and Matins combined into the festal All-Night Vigil. There also exist weekly and annual cycles of divine services.

We rarely encounter the weekly cycle in parish practice, since it is manifested mainly in weekday services that take place only in monastic churches and large city cathedrals. Each day of the weekly cycle is dedicated to the memory of one or several saints or to a specific event. Furthermore, during the course of the week, the entire Psalter is read at Matins and Vespers, for in the weekly cycle, just as in the daily one, the Psalter constitutes the foundation of the divine services.

Saturday, as the biblical day of rest and a "forefeast," that is, a prelude to the feast of Sunday, is dedicated to the memory of all saints and the entire host of Christian

ascetics. Inasmuch as the liturgical tradition does not strictly distinguish between "saints" in the sense of officially glorified ascetics, and "saints" in the sense of all Christians sanctified by their membership in the Church of Christ, Saturday is also a day of special commemoration of the departed. In common usage, certain Saturdays of the liturgical year are called "Parental Saturdays" because they are dedicated to the prayerful remembrance of our parents and forefathers. In particular, these include the first four Saturdays of Great Lent, Demetrius Saturday in the autumn (originally established as a day of special commemoration for the warriors who fought in the Battle of Kulikovo), and Trinity Saturday (on the eve of Holy Trinity Sunday, or Pentecost). This is why in many churches Memorial Services are served specifically on Saturdays.

THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF DIVINE SERVICES

The most prominent liturgical cycle for the layman is undoubtedly the annual one. It is precisely the feasts and fasts constituting this cycle that endow each day with its own liturgical distinctiveness and meaning.

Furthermore, within the annual cycle, the movable and fixed liturgical cycles, based on two different calendars, the lunar and the solar, are superimposed upon one another.

The fixed cycle of divine services is tied to the calendar we are accustomed to, that is, the solar calendar. All its feasts, such as the Nativity of Christ, Theophany, Transfiguration, the Exaltation of the Cross, and so on, have a specific, precisely fixed calendar date. Moreover, every day of the year has specific commemorations, including days of Great Feasts, feast days of saints, or notable events in the life of the Church (for example, the commemoration of one of the Ecumenical Councils or the days of the appearance of wonderworking icons).

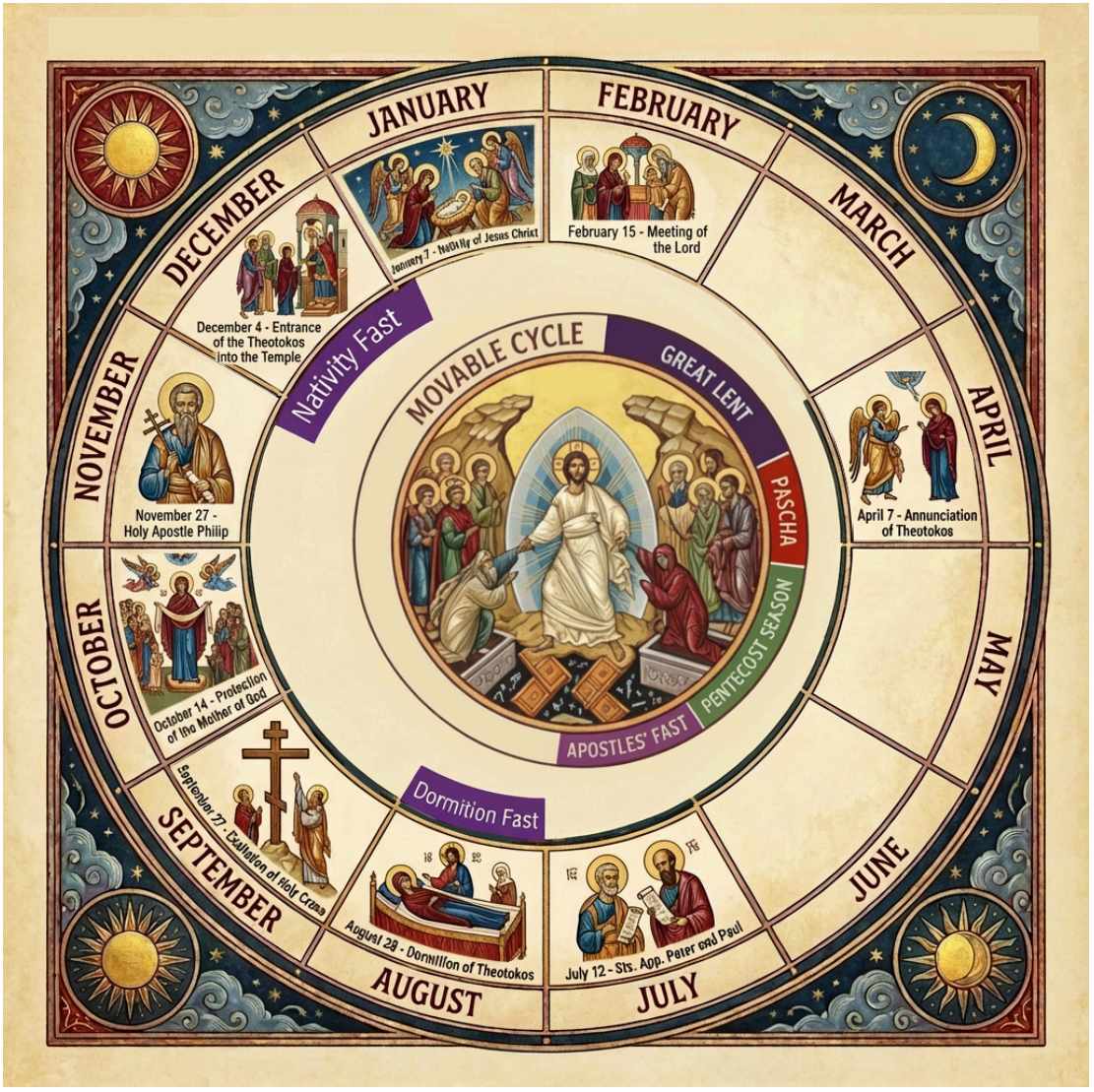
The movable cycle is determined by the main feast, Pascha. The date of Pascha, the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ, is calculated according to a rather complex algorithm linked to the lunar calendar. As a rule, the day of Pascha falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. The choice of this specific day holds a particular symbolic meaning connected with the history of the final days of Christ’s earthly life.

The commemorations of the preceding *Great Lent* are calculated from the date of Pascha, as are the festal days of the *Pentecost season*, the period from Pascha to the Feast of the Holy Trinity.

The hymns of all movable celebrations linked to Pascha are combined into two books: the *Lenten Triodion* (services of Great Lent) and the *Flowery Triodion* (services of the

period from Pascha to Pentecost). The word "Triodion" means "three odes"; precisely this genre of canon (shortened from nine odes to three) constitutes the distinctive feature of these books.

Furthermore, it is precisely from the day of Pascha that the reckoning of the sequence of Sunday services according to the Tones begins. While every feast has only one service (a set of stichera, troparia, canons, Gospel readings, etc.), there are eight Sunday services, and each of them has its own Tone (for example, "Sunday service of the 5th Tone").



The combination of the movable and fixed liturgical cycles

A *tone* is a specific melody, or more precisely, a system of modal organization for chanting. There are eight tones in total, and most liturgical hymns are composed in a specific tone (for example, "Troparion of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, tone 1"). The tonal system implies both a specific metrical structure of the poetic text and a specific method of chanting it. Naturally, in various types of church chanting (Znamenny chant, common chant, etc.), each tone possesses its own distinct

characteristics and melody. While festal services contain hymns of various tones, in every Sunday service, all constituent elements are composed in one specific tone. All Sunday services are compiled in the book called the *Octoechos* (the "Book of Eight Tones").

The cycle of Sunday services is one of the primary rhythms of the liturgical year, beginning with Pascha. Each subsequent Sunday, the service of the next tone is chanted until all eight have been performed, at which point the following Sunday begins a new cycle with the service of tone one. This rhythm of Sunday services continues throughout the year, concluding before the next Pascha.

CHURCH CALENDARS

A church calendar will help you navigate current feasts, fasts, commemorations of saints, and the entire rather complex logic of the liturgical year. A church calendar is a special annual publication (produced as wall calendars, booklets, or books in standard or pocket size) containing information for every day of the year regarding the feasts and commemorations falling on that day, as well as liturgical specifics, fasting rules, and so forth. Calendars are sold in practically any church shop.

More detailed calendars may also cite the Lives of the Saints corresponding to that day, excerpts from their writings, and similar material. Appendices often contain alphabetical indices of saints' names, venerated icons of the Theotokos, etc. Using the list of saints' names, you can determine, in particular, the date of your Name Day (or "Angel Day"). Knowing the name of your heavenly patron, you simply need to find it in this list, where the dates of that saint’s commemoration are usually indicated. Especially venerated saints may have several feast days; in such cases, the one closest to your birthday or day of baptism is usually chosen.

We will demonstrate how to use a calendar using the example of a single day from a page of a Moscow Patriarchate edition calendar, which features the simplest, "classic" content.

Sunday, December 8/21

27th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone two. Venerable Patapius of Thebes (7th c.)., New Martyr John (Kochurov), priest (1918), New Hieromartyr Sergius (1937)., Venerable Cyril, abbot of Chelma Hill (1367), Holy Apostles of the Seventy: Sosthenes, Apollos, Cephas, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Caesar, and Onesiphorus.
Matins: Luke, pericope 113, *XXIV 12–35 (5th Matins Gospel)*,
Liturgy: Ephes. *VI 10–17*. Luke *XVII 12–19*.

Sunday, December 8 Old Style, December 21 New Style. "27th Sunday after Pentecost" means this is the 27th Sunday counting from the feast of Pentecost.

Tone two — meaning the Sunday service of tone two is celebrated according to the Octoechos (see the previous section regarding the rotation of tones in Sunday services). Next, the saints celebrated on this day are listed, indicating the century or year of their repose[18]. The abbreviations next to the saints' names signify: "Venerable," "Hieromartyr," "Apostles," "Martyrs" (a list of these and other abbreviations can be found at the end or beginning of the calendar).

Next, the readings for this day are presented. At Matins, the fifth of the 11 Sunday Gospels is read, from Luke, pericope 113, chapter 24, verses 12–35. *Pericope* (Slavonic: *zachalo*) is the liturgical term for a passage from the New Testament read during the service; the division of the New Testament text into pericopes is more ancient than the chapters and verses we are accustomed to. Since you are unlikely to use a liturgical edition of the Gospel in home practice, it is more convenient to rely on chapters and verses. At the Divine Liturgy, the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians and the Gospel of Luke are read. If the feast of a specially venerated saint fell on this day, the Epistle and Gospel readings in honor of the saint would be additionally cited; at the Liturgy, these would be added to the Sunday readings.

It is important to remember that the liturgical day begins in the evening, on the eve of the feast's calendar date. Therefore, if a feast or commemoration of a saint is indicated in the calendar under a specific date, the first hymns of this feast will be chanted on the eve at Vespers (or the All-Night Vigil).

In addition to paper calendars, calendars are also available on various Orthodox websites; these often contain more detailed information, such as the Lives of the saints celebrated on that day, images of icons, texts of the Gospel readings for the current day, and so forth.

> It is worth noting that the Russian Orthodox Church, along with the Serbian, Georgian, and Jerusalem Churches, uses the Julian calendar (observes liturgical time according to the "Old Style"). This calendar, dating back to the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar (after whom it is named), was replaced in Europe by the reform of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 with a new one, also named after its creator, the "Gregorian" calendar ("New Style"). In our time, these calendars diverge by 13 days. Due to the difference in calendars and certain rules for determining the date of Pascha, the dates of fixed feasts differ, as does the date of the celebration of Pascha, which in Orthodox Churches usually does not coincide with the Catholic Easter. Only the Finnish Autonomous Orthodox Church celebrates Pascha according

[18] For the Church's commemoration, it is not the birthday that is significant, but specifically the day of a Christian's repose, as the day of his transition into Eternity, the moment of meeting Christ, and the time of the saint's heavenly glorification. Precisely for this reason, in early Christian antiquity, this day was a feast (and not a day of sorrow) for the relatives, loved ones, and brethren in the faith of the one who had "fallen asleep in the Lord."

to the new calendar. Other Orthodox Churches celebrate fixed feasts according to the new, Gregorian calendar, but Pascha and the moveable feasts associated with it according to the old, Julian calendar.

The calendar question is one of the "stumbling blocks" and subjects of fierce church discussion, extending even to mutual accusations of heresy and apostasy. The arguments of the sides are as follows: the Gregorian calendar more accurately aligns the Nativity of Christ with the winter solstice, which possesses a certain theological and liturgical meaning (the turning of the sun from the winter cycle to the summer one, and the time of the birth of Christ as the Sun of Righteousness). Supporters of the Julian calendar also have strong theological arguments, related mainly to Patristic institutions and canons regarding the date of the celebration of Pascha, as well as to the general liturgical logic of the church year, which is seriously disrupted when celebrating the "moveable" day of Pascha by the Old Style in combination with "fixed" feast days by the New Style, and so forth.

Overall, considering that in the first few centuries of Christianity different Local Churches also celebrated Pascha at different times, using different "algorithms" to calculate the day of Pascha, which generally did not hinder their love and communion (though it did occasionally cause fierce debates). The "calendar question" generally does not hinder the communion of Local Orthodox Churches, nor is it likely to be brought to any unified solution in the foreseeable future. But however important the question of the calendar may be, it is even more important to remember that a Christian is a citizen primarily not of the earthly kingdom with its spatial-temporal attributes, but of the Kingdom of Heaven, where there is no time measured by calendars, but everything is "here and now."

PASCHA

Just as the Divine Liturgy is the spiritual center of all the daily services, around which their logic is structured, so too is Pascha, the Feast of Christ’s Resurrection, the focal point and culmination of the entire liturgical year.

The word "Pascha" is derived from the Hebrew *pesach* (literally: "passed over"). This name is linked to the events on the eve of the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, when the Angel of Death struck down all the Egyptian firstborn but passed over the houses of the Hebrews, the doorposts of which had been anointed beforehand with the sacrificial blood of the lamb, the Paschal Lamb. Following the Exodus of the Hebrew people from Egypt, the Prophet Moses established the Feast of Pascha as a prefiguration of the future deliverance of mankind by Christ from darkness and the shadow of death. It was simultaneously a commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt and a day of special supplication for the coming of the future Messiah, the Savior. On this day, the people partook of the sacrificial lamb, which was a prefiguration of the sacrifice of Christ, who offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The Paschal divine services begin on Great Saturday, that is, on the eve of the day of Pascha itself. At Vespers and the Divine Liturgy (which are usually celebrated on Saturday morning), Old Testament prophecies concerning the Resurrection of Christ are read. Around 11:00 p.m. local time, the Midnight Office is celebrated in churches, a rare instance when this service is performed in parish practice. During this service, the Canon on the Burial of Christ is read, followed by the Procession, accompanied by the chanting of the Paschal sticheron: "Thy Resurrection, O Christ Savior..."

> The rubrics of the Typikon concerning the day of Pascha state that all those participating in the divine services are to remain in the church following the Liturgy of Great Saturday. The Cellarer (in modern language, the monastery's "steward") distributes to each person a "portion of bread and a measured cup of wine" for sustenance. No one leaves the church, and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is read, recounting the first months and years of the inspired ministry of Christ's disciples after His Resurrection. This custom of reading the Acts of the Apostles before the Paschal services has been preserved to this day, and they are usually read before the Midnight Office, at which time Confession is also customarily heard. This is, incidentally, a rare instance where in practically all churches Holy Scripture (the Acts) is read in Russian.

The Paschal Procession

Following the Procession, Paschal Matins, the Hours, and the Divine Liturgy are celebrated. From the usual order of Matins and the Hours, all penitential elements have been removed, including the usual psalms. Unlike other feasts, practically nothing is read; everything is exclusively chanted. The Royal Doors remain open throughout the service, symbolizing the Kingdom of Heaven, opened to us by Christ's Resurrection.

This manner of celebrating the divine services, consisting only of singing, festive vestments, extremely bright and joyful Paschal texts and melodies, and open Royal Doors, continues throughout the entire following week. This is called "Bright Week." It concludes with the Sunday called "Thomas Sunday," on which the disbelief of the Apostle Thomas in the Resurrection of Christ is commemorated (Gospel of John, chapter 20).[19]

PENTECOST

On the 50th day after Pascha, Pentecost (the Day of the Holy Trinity) is celebrated; like Pascha, it has a prefiguration in Old Testament worship (the Feast of Tabernacles). On this day, we commemorate how Christ sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, His disciples, giving them the strength and wisdom for the universal preaching of the Gospel.

In its significance, this Feast stands practically on a level with Pascha. Through Christ's death and Resurrection, the salvation of mankind was accomplished; through the help and sanctification of the Holy Spirit, it is actualized in the life of each of us personally. This Feast is also the manifestation of the great mystery of the Holy Trinity, the unity of the Godhead in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—incomprehensible to the human mind.

On Pentecost, the churches are traditionally adorned with green branches, partly reminiscent of the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles, and partly symbolizing the beauty of God's creation, renewed and filled by the Holy Spirit. After the Divine Liturgy, Great Vespers for the following day—the Monday of the Holy Spirit (Day of the Spirit)—is celebrated, during which special Kneeling Prayers are read, invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit. The following Sunday is the Sunday of All Saints, a logical continuation of Pentecost, demonstrating the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christian ascetics, the followers of Christ.

The entire period from Pascha to the Day of the Holy Trinity is also called Pentecost, referring to the number of days in this season. Each Sunday of this period has its own specific commemoration and title—the "Sunday of the Samaritan Woman," the "Sunday of the Blind Man," the "Sunday of the Paralytic"—during which the miraculous and grace-filled events performed by Christ are remembered. On the Thursday of the sixth week after Pascha, the Ascension is celebrated. This is one of the Great Feasts, commemorating how Christ, in His resurrected human flesh, ascended into Heaven to the Father (Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 1). Thus, as the

[19] We will not dwell in detail on the folk culinary traditions associated with Pascha (kulich, paskha), as they have no direct relation to the festal divine services.

service of the Feast theologizes, He raised human nature to an unprecedented height in all its fullness of body and soul.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST AND OTHER FIXED FEASTS

Among the feasts, the so-called *Twelve Great Feasts* are usually distinguished as the twelve most significant. Pascha, as the "Feast of Feasts and Triumph of Triumphs," is not included in their number. Of the feasts in the moveable cycle, the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, the Ascension, and Pentecost are counted among them. Let us now say a few words about each of the fixed feasts, meaning those not connected to the Paschal cycle.

Among the great fixed feasts, it is customary to distinguish the so-called "feasts of the Lord," primarily connected with events in the life of Christ, and "feasts of the Theotokos," dedicated chiefly to the Most Holy Theotokos. The arrangement of these feasts in the liturgical year does not follow a specific, rigid logic. The reasons why a particular event of sacred history is commemorated on a specific day of the year are sometimes unknown, and at other times constitute a subject of discussion in historical liturgics.

The most important and well-known of the fixed feasts is undoubtedly the Nativity of Christ (December 25 Old Style, January 7 New Style). On this day, we commemorate the great mystery of the humility and self-emptying of God, Who became Man to save all mankind. The service of the feast is distinguished by the fact that the All-Night Vigil consists not of Vespers and Matins, but of Great Compline and Matins. At this Great Compline, Old Testament prophecies concerning the birth of the Savior are read.

Closely linked to the Nativity is the feast of the Baptism (Theophany) of the Lord (January 6 Old Style, January 19 New Style). It commemorates the beginning of the Savior's ministry when, at the age of thirty, He came to John the Baptist (the Forerunner) and received baptism by water from him (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3). On the Eve of Theophany (when, as we recall, the feast has already begun in the liturgical sense), and on the day of the Baptism itself, the Great Blessing of Waters takes place. The liturgical texts of the feast speak of the nature of water which Christ sanctified by receiving baptism, thereby making the element of water a "laver of regeneration," washing away the sins of men and restoring the primordial perfection of the entire world.

The feasts of the Lord also include the Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6/19), the commemoration of the manifestation of Christ's Divine glory to the disciples (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 17), and the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord (September

14/27). The latter commemorates the finding of the Cross of the Lord in Jerusalem in the 4th century by Empress Helen, the mother of the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great.

The feasts of the Theotokos mark the most important events in the life of the Mother of Christ, which are part of the Divine plan for our salvation: the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8/21), Her Entry into the Old Testament Temple (November 21/December 4), and the Meeting of the Lord, that is, the meeting of Her and the Divine Infant Christ by the Prophet Simeon in the Temple (Gospel of Luke, chapter 2; celebrated February 2/15). Also included is the Dormition, which is the death of the Most Holy Theotokos (August 15/28). The Annunciation (March 25/April 7) deserves special mention as the day when the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and brought Her the glad tidings of the salvation of mankind and the Incarnation of the Savior, which was to be accomplished through Her (Gospel of Luke, chapter 1).

Unfortunately, in our small book, we cannot devote adequate space to the deep theology, beauty, and distinctiveness of the service of each feast. However, by reading the liturgical texts relevant to the feast beforehand, as well as the sermons and encomia of the saints for the feast, one can form a more complete idea of it. In doing so, one can become a partaker of everything that is as necessary as air to the human soul: repentance and joy, sorrow and praise, humility and thanksgiving...

GREAT LENT AND OTHER FASTS

Just as at Vespers and Matins, praise gives way to repentance, maintaining a general harmony and balance, so too in the annual cycle of divine services, exultation and perfect joy give way to repentance and abstinence. Therefore, the fasts in the annual cycle are closely linked to the feasts.

Usually, a distinction is made between "multi-day" fasts, of which there are four in the liturgical year, and individual fast days. These are, first and foremost, Wednesday and Friday, which in the weekly cycle of services are dedicated to the betrayal of Christ by Judas and to His crucifixion. Furthermore, a one-day fast is observed on feasts that bear a partly sorrowful character, such as the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord and the Beheading of John the Baptist.

The principal multi-day fast is Great Lent, which deserves this name due to its duration, its strictness, and the richness of its liturgical events. Each Sunday of Great Lent and of the preparatory weeks leading up to it is marked by special commemorations (expressed in what is read and sung at the divine services), which help one focus on one's inner disposition, attune the soul to repentance, and consciously renounce sin.

> The origin of Great Lent is associated with the tradition in the first centuries of Christianity of celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism for new converts primarily on the day of Pascha. During the preparation for baptism, future members of the Church observed a fast and underwent instruction in the basic tenets of the Christian faith. This fast, as a rule, lasted for 40 days, in memory of the 40-day fast of Jesus Christ before the beginning of His ministry (Gospel of Matthew, chapter 4).
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> The tradition of observing a 40-day fast was also extremely widespread in Palestinian monasteries, where the desert fathers usually departed from the monastery into the wilderness during this time so that no material cares would hinder their prayer, gathering again in the monasteries by the feast of Pascha.

The preparatory Sundays of Great Lent are the Sunday of the Publican (in modern language, a tax inspector), who sincerely repented of his crimes, and of the Pharisee, who hypocritically boasted of his righteousness (Luke 18:10-14); the Sunday of the Last Judgment, and the Sunday of the Expulsion of Adam from Paradise (Forgiveness Sunday). The fast proper begins on the Monday following this Sunday.

During the first week of Great Lent, a characteristic feature of the divine services is the reading of the penitential Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. Another feature of Great Lenten services is that, with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated, as it is a service of the highest praise and joy. Only on Wednesday and Friday is the so-called "Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts" celebrated, at which the consecration of the Gifts (that is, the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ) does not take place, but the faithful partake of the Gifts reserved from the Sunday Liturgy. On Sundays, however, the usual Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is not celebrated, but rather the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, which is distinguished by longer secret prayers.

On the first Sunday of Great Lent, we commemorate the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which affirmed the dogma of the veneration of icons; on the second, St. Gregory Palamas, one of the most revered Orthodox mystic theologians. The third Sunday is the "Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross," when special honor is rendered to the Cross of Christ as the instrument of our salvation. On the fourth Sunday, the memory of the Venerable John Climacus (of the Ladder) is celebrated; he is the author of one of the most famous textbooks on monastic life, The Ladder, that is, a "ladder leading up to heaven." On the fifth, we commemorate St. Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Thus, the commemorations of Great Lent devote sufficient attention to both the theological, dogmatic side of our salvation, and the practical, active side.

The sixth Sunday of Great Lent is the great feast of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. It commemorates Christ's solemn entry into Jerusalem on the eve of His death on the Cross and Resurrection (Gospel of John, chapter 12). This feast is also called "Willow Sunday" (Palm Sunday), because the churches are decorated with

pussy willows in memory of the palm branches with which the people greeted Christ as He entered Jerusalem.

Sundays of the Great Lent and the Passion Week.

The next day marks the beginning of Passion Week ("The Week of Christ's Passions"). Its divine services are extremely distinctive and are dedicated to the remembrance and theological contemplation of the final days Christ spent with His disciples. On Great Thursday, the Mystical Supper and Christ's final conversation with the disciples are commemorated, when Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist; on Great Friday, Christ's death on the Cross and His burial; on Great Saturday, sorrow for the buried Christ gives way to an ever-increasing joy regarding the Risen Christ. The events of these days are described in the greatest detail in the Gospel of John, beginning with chapter 12 and continuing to the end.

The other multi-day fasts, like Great Lent, are also connected to feast days. The Nativity Fast (November 15/28 — December 24/January 6) is somewhat similar to Great Lent in duration and liturgical character, preparing us for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ. The Dormition Fast (August 1/14 — 14/27) precedes the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos and is also close to Great Lent in strictness (incidentally, the Feast of the Dormition is popularly called the "Pascha of the Theotokos").

Finally, the Apostles' Fast begins a week after the Feast of Pentecost, on the Monday following the Sunday of All Saints, and ends on the eve of the day of the Holy Chief Apostles Peter and Paul, celebrated on June 29/July 12. Thus, this fast has a different duration each year, as it is reckoned from the moveable feast of the Sunday of All Saints but ends before an immoveable feast. The origin of this fast is linked to the tradition regarding the Apostles, who fasted for some time after receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and only then set out to preach.

SUMMARY TABLE OF FEASTS AND FASTS

Month	Feasts of the Fixed Cycle	Feasts of the Movable Cycle (dates reckoned from Pascha)
January	7 — The Nativity of Christ 19 — Theophany, or the Baptism of the Lord	
February	15 — The Meeting of the Lord	Great Lent, lasting 40 days until the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem
March		The Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), one week before Pascha Holy Week, the week before Pascha
April	7 — The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos	The Resurrection of Christ (Pascha), the date is calculated according to the lunar calendar
May		The Ascension of the Lord (40th day after Pascha)
June		The Feast of the Holy Trinity, Pentecost (50th day after Pascha)
July	12 — The Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul	The Apostles' Fast, from the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints (the Sunday following the Feast of the Holy Trinity) until July 11

Month	Feasts of the Fixed Cycle	Feasts of the Movable Cycle (dates reckoned from Pascha)
August	The Dormition Fast — from August 14 to 27 19 — The Transfiguration of the Lord 28 — The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos	
September	21 — The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos 27 — The Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord	
October		
November	The Nativity Fast, from November 28 to January 6	
December	4 — The Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple	

TYPIKON GUIDELINES REGARDING FOOD DURING THE FAST

A common misconception is confusing fasting with dieting. In the liturgical sense, the fast is primarily a time for fervent prayer, repentance, and deliverance from sin, rather than from excess weight. The specific dietary discipline during this time is connected to the general rule of abstinence from all kinds of excesses and serves an auxiliary function, because the spiritual, the soulish, and the bodily aspects of a human being are closely intertwined.[20]

On the other hand, for the Typikon, the meal is part of the general liturgical rhythm in which a monastery lives. Therefore, the instructions regarding food are quite detailed and directly linked to liturgical directions.

The general logic of the Typikon regarding the strictness of the fast, ascending from Lenten to "non-Lenten" foods, is as follows:

[20] Moreover, in some cases, fasting and dieting impose opposite requirements regarding food choices. For example, vegetable oil, which is one of the staple foods even during a strict fast, is highly caloric by dietary standards at 900 kcal. This is three times the caloric value of pork and 7–8 times that of chicken. The same applies to potatoes and various grains, which are quite caloric but are nonetheless considered Lenten foods.

1. Total Abstinence: This is prescribed by the Typikon on certain days of the liturgical year, for example, on Great Friday, the day commemorating Christ's death on the Cross.
2. Xerophagy (Dry Eating): Bread (grains), fruits (including dried fruits), and vegetables without oil, uncooked.
3. Cooked Food Without Oil: Boiled vegetables prepared without vegetable oil.
4. Wine and Oil: In addition to vegetables, vegetable oil and wine are permitted (the Typikon clarifies: "in countries that do not have wine, we drink beer").
5. Fish and its Equivalents: Seafood, roe, etc., with certain specifics mentioned below.
6. Dairy Products: Milk, cheese, butter, etc., as well as eggs.
7. Meat and Meat Products: These are not prescribed for monks by the Typikon.

All the specific details of the Typikon regarding fasting are usually observed only in monastic practice; in the world, naturally, the generally accepted practice differs, tending toward simplification and less severity. Regarding the strictness of the fast, in reality, the majority of the laity and non-monastic clergy most often guide themselves by the gradations from the 4th (sometimes the 3rd) to the 7th level.[21]

> The general logic of classifying foods as "more Lenten" or "less Lenten" likely evolved based on the degree of separation from food of animal origin. Ascetics of various eras unanimously recognized such food as less conducive to spiritual struggle, weighing down the human mind and soul.
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> This logic was not always or everywhere uniform. For instance, a source on the life of the Venerable Bede, an 8th-century English saint, indicates that during the Nativity Fast they drank milk but did not eat fish. In the rubrics of certain monasteries, eggs are considered Lenten food. Some medieval Byzantine sources distinguish between fish and "shellfish" (seafood such as crabs, shrimp, etc.) and allow the latter on the Sundays of Great Lent, reasoning that, unlike fish, they do not contain blood. This remains the contemporary "fasting" practice of the Greek Church.
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> In general, one of the best sayings regarding abstinence during the fast is traditionally considered to be the remark of a great Christian authority, St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople. He taught his flock: "Well, if you really long to eat meat during the fast, go ahead and eat it! The main thing is, do not eat PEOPLE." That is, do not "gnaw" at your neighbors with your hatred, envy, and irritation, for abstaining from this constitutes the best fast.

[21] In any case, regarding one's personal fasting discipline, it is desirable to obtain the advice and blessing of a priest.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FASTING AND LITURGICAL TIME

As previously mentioned, from the perspective of the Liturgical Rubrics, dietary discipline is an auxiliary aid for spiritual discipline and prayer. Therefore, the logic of eating during fasts fully reflects the logic of the divine services: the more solemn the feast, the lighter the fast (with the exception of the feasts of the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord and the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner, when a strict fast is observed due to the solemn nature of these events).

The general logic regarding the distribution of fasting "strictness" throughout the liturgical year is illustrated in the table found at the end of this chapter. It distinguishes between the average contemporary lay practice (which is not officially codified anywhere but is generally accepted) and the instructions of the Typikon, which serves not only as the Liturgical Rubric but also as the rule for monastic life. The Typikon contains very detailed instructions regarding the order of monastic life and is, naturally, quite strict regarding food. In general, practice in the world is more lenient than the Typikon by approximately "one step" on the scale of strictness described in the previous section.

There also exists a system of "relaxations" of the fast—not reflected in the Typikon but quite common in practice—which primarily concerns the sick, pregnant women, and travelers. There are no general rules here, only common sense, timely consultation with a priest to receive his blessing, and Christian love.

> In the Lives of the Saints and other historical sources, one can find various instances of breaking (or not breaking) the fast, where the main criterion is love and spiritual benefit. For example, the life of a certain Palestinian saint cites an incident where the saint and his disciple were walking past a pagan village during Holy Week of Great Lent. The residents invited them to a wedding. The saint blessed the newlyweds, ate meat at the festive table, and ordered his disciple to eat as well. However, when they left the village and the disciple became hungry, the saint did not permit him to eat even bread, explaining it thus: "In the village, we broke the fast out of love for the people who invited us to their celebration, who do not know our faith and do not know the fast. But now we are in the desert, and we must abstain from eating out of love for the Lord, who in these days endured death on the Cross for our sake."
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> Also of interest are the instructions of the famous Studite Typikon—the rule of the Studios Monastery in the capital, Constantinople. Unlike the Jerusalem Typikon (which forms the basis of our current Typikon and reflects the practice of monasteries in the Palestinian deserts), the metropolitan location of the Studios Monastery left its mark on its "policy" regarding fasting. For example, there are specific instructions stating that if a Christ-loving guest visits the monastery and brings fish as a gift during a fasting period, it should be set aside until a day when it is permitted to be eaten. However, if the fish cannot be preserved until that day, or if setting it aside would offend the guest, it is prescribed to eat the fish "with humility" on that very day.

In general, the attitude toward fasting in the Lives of the Saints can be characterized by the words of Christ: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." He gave this answer to the Pharisees who reproached His disciples for rubbing heads of grain and eating the raw kernels—that is, for **working** on the Sabbath—which, according to Old Testament norms of honoring the Sabbath as a day of complete rest, was not permitted.

SUMMARY TABLE OF FASTING INSTRUCTIONS

Period	Monastic Rule (Typikon)	Common Lay Practice
NON-FESTAL PERIODS		
Wednesdays and Fridays of ordinary weeks, outside fasting seasons	Wine and Oil (Vegetables with oil, wine permitted)	Fish (For stricter observance: Wine and Oil)
Wednesdays and Fridays during the Pentecostarion (The period from Pascha to the day of the Holy Trinity). Also, Wednesdays and Fridays during the ordinary period, if they coincide with: • The commemoration of a Great Saint (e.g., Ven. Sergius of Radonezh); • A Great Feast when a relaxation of the fast is permitted (e.g., the Nativity of the Theotokos).	Fish	Fish
FESTIVE PERIODS		
"Fast-free" weeks (so-called "continuous" weeks: no food restrictions, Wed & Fri are not fast days): • Bright Week (Paschal Week) • Week after Pentecost	Everything except meat (since the Typikon generally does not envision monks eating meat at all)	Everything, including meat

Period	Monastic Rule (Typikon)	Common Lay Practice
• Christmastide (Svyatki: 10 days from Nativity to Theophany) • Week of the Publican and Pharisee (2 weeks before Great Lent)		
Maslenitsa (Cheesefare Week: the week before the Great Lent)	Everything except meat	Everything except meat (All fish, dairy products, and eggs are permitted on all days of the week)
FASTING SEASONS		
Great Lent	Fish on two Great Feasts: • Annunciation • Palm Sunday (Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem) Saturdays and Sundays: "Wine and Oil" Weekdays: "Xerophagy" (Dry eating)	Fish on Saturdays and Sundays Weekdays (Mon, Tue, Thu): "Wine and Oil" Wednesdays and Fridays: "Cooked food without oil"
Dormition Fast	Fish: On the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Saturdays, Sundays, and weekdays: Same as Great Lent.	Fish: On the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Other days: same as Great Lent.
Nativity Fast and Apostles' (Peter's) Fast	Fish: On Saturdays, Sundays, and Great Feasts. "Cooked food without oil" on Wednesdays and Fridays, "Wine and Oil" on other days	Fish: On all days except Wednesday and Friday. Wednesdays and Fridays: "Wine and Oil".

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6:

- In the divine services, the daily, weekly, and annual liturgical "cycles" are distinguished.
- The annual cycle is divided into the movable cycle (feasts associated with Pascha) and the fixed cycle (feasts tied to specific calendar dates).
- Church calendars help one navigate the feasts, fasts, commemorations of saints, and the appointed daily New Testament readings.
- The center and summit of the liturgical year is the Feast of Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ.
- Associated with Pascha are the movable Great Feasts of Pentecost (the Day of the Holy Trinity), the Ascension of the Lord, and the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, as well as the seasons of the Pentecostarion and Great Lent. The rotation of the Sunday services of the "eight tones" also begins from the day of Pascha.
- The annual cycle includes twelve major feasts, collectively known as the "Twelve Great Feasts." Pascha is not included among them.
- The fixed Twelve Great Feasts are traditionally divided into the Feasts of the Lord (the Nativity of Christ, Theophany, Transfiguration, Exaltation of the Cross) and the Feasts of the Theotokos (the Nativity of the Theotokos, Entry into the Temple, Annunciation, Meeting of the Lord, Dormition).
- Fasts in the liturgical year are closely linked to feast days and serve primarily as preparation for them. The most significant of these is Great Lent, during which every Sunday and many other days are marked by specific liturgical features and commemorations. The most important period at the conclusion of Great Lent is Holy Week, the commemoration of the final days of Christ's earthly life.
- According to the logic of the Typikon, the dietary rules for fasts and feasts are closely tied to the character of the divine services. In lay practice, fasting is usually observed one or two degrees less strictly than prescribed by the Typikon, which is a monastic rule.

Chapter 7

Church and Home Prayer in Various Life Situations

- **Studies, career, success, illness, death…**
- **Prayer to the Saints, Patron Saint**
- **The Sacraments of Baptism and Marriage**
- **Commemoration of the Departed**
- **Service of Intercession (Moleben)**
- **Home Prayer**

We often encounter various life situations where we especially need God's help, support, the strengthening of our powers, consolation, and the granting of reason and will. There is an ancient wise saying: "The Lord will never give trials greater than a person can bear."

But let us add, He often does not give less either. That is, He places us in conditions where we walk on the edge, or almost on the edge, of our abilities, strength, endurance, and patience. From the perspective of our development and spiritual growth, this is entirely right. Iron is tempered by fire and cold, and one cannot learn to walk without falling at least once. However, this realization does not make our trials any easier.

There are a multitude of such situations. The illness or death of a loved one, difficulties in studies or career, arguments and conflicts at work and at home. Even joy and success are trials, often requiring no less support from above than sorrows do. For all these situations, the Church possesses traditions of home and corporate prayer that help us endure all trials with dignity.

PRAYER IN VARIOUS SITUATIONS

One of the most important features of Orthodox worship, both in church and at home, is prayer not only to God but also to the saints, Christians glorified by the Church who showed by their lives an example of fulfilling Christ's commandments. And it is

precisely in difficult life situations that prayer to the saints often becomes especially important.

At the same time, we must understand that by venerating the saints and praying to them, we do not make them into little pagan gods "responsible" for various aspects of our well-being (in the spirit of "who should I pray to for foot diseases?"). Such an approach to prayer to the saints is very common in everyday life, yet it does not make it any better.

By praying to the saints, we, firstly, honor their labor and spiritual struggle, paying them due tribute as a model we strive to follow in life. Secondly, we ask them, as the members of the Church closest to God who spent their whole lives in close prayerful communion with Him, to pray together with us for our needs.

How do we understand which specific saint to pray to in particular circumstances? No mechanical laws exist here. Reading the Lives (biographies) of the saints, or their own sermons, words, and sayings, a person usually feels a certain affinity, a spiritual closeness with a particular saint, based on similar life circumstances, similar trials, or similar thoughts.

> For the author, one of the most "kindred" of such saints is Righteous John of Kronstadt, our contemporary (who died on January 2, 1909). I feel an affinity for both the amazing capacity for work and the vigorous activity of Father John: a 15–20 hour workday throughout 50 years of ministry, maintained with unchanging vigor and energy of spirit. I am drawn to the several monasteries he founded, his many journeys across Russia, the vast number of books he wrote which were subsequently translated into dozens of languages, and his ardent love for divine services, especially the Divine Liturgy. I also admire his love not only for divine knowledge but also for human knowledge as one of the gifts of the Spirit. Here is what he writes at the beginning of his famous diary, My Life in Christ:
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> "Thou hast opened abundantly unto me, O Lord, Thy truth and Thy righteousness. Through my education in the sciences, Thou hast revealed to me all the richness of faith, of nature, and of the human mind. I have come to know Thy word—the word of love, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12); I have studied the laws of the human mind and its philosophy, the structure and beauty of speech; I have penetrated in part into the mysteries of nature and its laws, into the abysses of the universe and the laws of the revolution of the worlds; I know the population of the terrestrial globe, I have learned of separate peoples, of famous personages, and of their deeds which have passed in their turn in the world; I have come to know in part the great science of self-knowledge and of drawing near to Thee. In a word, I have learned much, so much that 'things greater than human understanding have been shown to me' (Sirach 3:23), and to this day I am still learning much. I have many books of various content, and I read and reread them, yet I am still not satisfied. My spirit still thirsts for knowledge, my heart is still not satisfied, not full, and from all the knowledge acquired by the mind, it cannot obtain full blessedness. When then shall it be satisfied? It shall be satisfied when I appear before Thy glory (Ps. 16:15)."

Let us cite just a few examples of a certain "logic" of prayer to particular saints.

HEALTH

For health, prayers are most often offered to the Holy Great Martyr Panteleimon the Healer. He was a physician, and after his conversion to Christianity, he continued to heal people both through medical skill and through prayer. At the end of his life, he suffered a martyr's death for Christ.

STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Contrary to a frequently encountered opinion, the Church has always highly valued education and knowledge, provided it does not become a source of pride and occupies the correct place in the hierarchy of human values. It suffices to mention St. Basil the Great, who received a brilliant secular education in Athens; the Apostle Paul, a citizen of the Roman Empire, who cited both Old Testament prophets and contemporary Greek poets in his epistles; St. Philaret of Moscow (Drozdov), a hierarch (that is, a bishop numbered among the saints), who was one of the initiators and authors of the translation of the Bible into the Russian language; St. Luke of Simferopol (Voyno-Yasenetsky), a Doctor of Medical Sciences and author of fundamental monographs in the field of surgery, and many, many others.

LEADERSHIP, POLITICS

Perhaps one of the most difficult things for a Christian is the art of compromise, cunning, and struggle, of negotiation, and the daily choice of the "lesser of evils"… Let us recall the Holy Right-Believing Prince Alexander Nevsky, who successfully resolved the most complex political tasks during the Mongol-Tatar Yoke—a time of universal betrayal, intrigue, fratricide, and hatred. Let us recall Venerable Sergius of Radonezh, one of the most revered Russian saints, who left his monastery and personally visited local princes to negotiate their union with Moscow against the Mongol-Tatars; and the multitude of right-believing princes numbered among the saints…

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Here, too, there are many examples to imitate. The Holy Right-Believing Prince Peter and Princess Fevronia, Wonderworkers of Murom (an example not simply of love, but of renouncing princely power for its sake). The Righteous Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna (parents of the Most Holy Theotokos), and the Holy Prophet Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth (parents of John the Baptist)—prayers are also offered to them in

cases of marital infertility, and to learn why, it suffices to read the first chapters of the Gospel of Luke.

Among the saints closer to our own time, an example of happiness in family life is the Holy Righteous Alexei Mechev, a Moscow priest (who died in 1923) and father of several children. In 1902, after the death of his beloved wife, he grieved deeply, but received consolation from Saint John of Kronstadt, who told him: "Be with the people, enter into others' sorrow, take it upon yourself, and then you will see that your misfortune is small, insignificant in comparison with the common grief, and you will feel lighter."

Finally, worthy of attention are the family relationships of Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich and Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who suffered a martyr's death together with their children and were numbered among the saints. They are sufficiently characterized by a short excerpt from one of the Empress's letters to her husband two years before their death: "On this day, the day of our engagement, all my tender thoughts are with you, filling my heart with infinite gratitude for that deep love and happiness with which you have always gifted me, since that memorable day—22 years ago. May God help to repay you a hundredfold for all your tenderness! Yes, I—I speak quite sincerely—doubt that there are many wives as happy as I—so much love, trust, and devotion have you shown me in these long years in happiness and in sorrow."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS, FINANCE

Examples for imitation here include Martyr Theodotus of Ancyra (who lived in the 3rd century in Asia Minor), an innkeeper who sheltered Christians from persecution in his inn. Also, Righteous Basil Gryaznov (Pavlovo-Posadsky), a Russian saint of the 19th century, who was a worker in his youth, then became a merchant and industrialist, and a co-founder of a factory, combining business management with extensive missionary and charitable activity.

Finally, Venerable Seraphim of Vyritsa (in the world Vasily Nikolaevich Muravyev), one of the most renowned Russian saints of the 20th century. In his youth, he asked for a blessing to enter monasticism from one of the elders of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra, but the elder advised him to live in the world first. The Lord granted him a happy family life and a successful commercial career—first as a senior clerk at the St. Petersburg Gostiny Dvor, then as the founder of a trading company, and a full member of the Society for the Dissemination of Commercial Knowledge in Russia.

After the October Revolution of 1917, Vasily Muravyev did not consider it possible for himself to transfer his capital and emigrate to one of the European capitals (which

he often visited on company business); instead, by mutual consent with his wife, he embraced monasticism and became a renowned elder, helping people find their path to God until his very death in 1949.

YOUR HEAVENLY PATRON

Undoubtedly, one saint to whom a Christian should turn most often in any situation is his heavenly patron—the saint whose name the Christian received in the Sacrament of Baptism. If you (or those present at your baptism) do not remember exactly which saint was invoked to be your heavenly patron, the custom is to choose the saint bearing the same name as your baptismal name whose memorial date is celebrated closest to the day of your baptism; or, if you do not know the day of your baptism, then closest to your birthday. You can determine which saints are commemorated on these days using a church calendar. Consequently, that same day will be celebrated as your Name Day (which is also called the "Day of the Angel"), a day of particularly earnest prayer to your heavenly patron.

How should one pray to the saints? A large number of prayers are available both on the Internet and in books, the most important of which, of course, are the liturgical hymns from the service to the saint. Detailed church calendars often publish brief prayers to saints on their feast days. And finally, as with any prayer, words of your own are always good—however imperfect or feeble, provided they are sincere.

In general, liturgical hymns often liken our relationship with the saints to relationships with friends—friends who are more experienced and more perfect, yet who perfectly understand all our difficulties, having experienced similar problems, and who are always ready to hasten to our aid, praying together with us to God, Who grants both strength and consolation. And just as in friendships—when we know more about a saint's life, read their sermons, diaries, or letters, and look at their icon—our connection becomes more "kindred," intimate, and joyful. The saints become for us a support, a model for imitation, and simply understanding people with whom it is good to be.

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Many of us were baptized in infancy and do not recall our first step into the Church. For some, the baptism of a friend’s or relative’s child becomes one of the few occasions to encounter Christian worship. Regardless, this event is relatively rare, yet exceptionally important.

Baptism by water, like the Eucharist, is one of the most important Sacraments of the Church instituted by Christ. Upon embarking on His public ministry, He received baptism from John the Baptist in the waters of the Jordan River (Mt 3:13–17). In the Acts of the Apostles, we find numerous references to baptism as a Sacrament through which a person becomes a member of Christ's Church and receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism requires a person to confess their faith in Christ as their personal Savior. Therefore, in most churches before baptism, the priest will ask several questions to determine whether the person approaches Baptism consciously and with understanding, ensuring they do not view it as a magical rite that simply "needs" to be done, but have made a truly conscious decision to become a member of Christ's Church.

This brief examination is, of course, far removed from the forty-day catechumenate—the instruction in the truths of the faith common in the Early Church—yet even this often stumps many people. It is worth noting that some churches are reviving the tradition of catechetical talks before Baptism, held as a series of meetings explaining the fundamental tenets of the Orthodox faith.

If a child is being baptized who cannot yet consciously confess faith in Christ, the Sacrament is performed according to the faith of the sponsor, the godparent. The questions verifying the conscious acceptance of Baptism will be directed to him. It

should be noted that the Rite of Baptism recognizes only one sponsor (of the same gender as the person being baptized), while having a second sponsor of the opposite gender is primarily a folk custom.

> In the Early Church, when mostly adults were baptized, the institution of sponsorship also existed but held a slightly different meaning. The sponsor acted as a guarantor for the candidate, testifying to the sincerity of his faith before the bishop. Just as in our time, he bore the responsibility of instructing the one being baptized in the foundations of the Christian faith.
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> There are many folk superstitions regarding sponsorship at baptism, such as "one cannot be a godparent to more than three people," "one cannot be a godparent if a previous godchild has died," and so forth. These forms of folk paganism are diverse and usually have no relation to the substance and meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism. There are specific canonical impediments regarding kinship in sponsorship. For instance, parents cannot be godparents to their own child, a sponsor cannot subsequently marry the godchild or the godchild's parent, and spouses cannot serve as sponsors for the same individual. In specific cases, one should consult a priest or refer to the Handbook for Church Servers by Archpriest S. V. Bulgakov, where this issue is examined in great detail.
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> The most important thing to remember is that becoming a sponsor does not mean simply paying tribute to tradition, but rather assuming a specific responsibility for the spiritual and religious future of one’s godchild. Having confessed the Christian faith on behalf of a minor child, the sponsor answers before God as to whether he truly helped his godchild live by this faith.

In many churches, the Sacrament of Baptism is performed free of charge once a week, or somewhat less frequently, for a group of the faithful at once. One can also arrange for a baptism at a specifically appointed time, in which case it is customary to make a donation to the church fund. As a rule, all that one needs to bring for the Sacrament is a baptismal cross, an icon of the patron saint with which the priest blesses the newly illumined, and a towel to dry oneself after the font. It is best to dress in festive white or light-colored clothing, symbolizing purity and sinlessness.

The most notable elements of the Rite of Baptism are the Great Blessing of Waters (similar to that which takes place on the Feast of Theophany) and the triple immersion of the candidate into the water with the words, "The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Next, the priest and the newly baptized process three times around the font while chanting the ancient hymn, "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ"—meaning those who were baptized into Christ have clothed themselves in Him and become part of His Body, the Church. Together with the Sacrament of Baptism, the Sacrament of Chrismation is usually performed—the anointing of the person with fragrant oil (Chrism) consecrated by the Patriarch. In this Sacrament, which traces back to the laying on of hands by the Apostles upon new converts, the Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon the baptized (see the New Testament, Book of Acts).

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

One of the most important steps in the life of a Christian, which the Church specially sanctifies, is the union of his destiny with the destiny of another person. Marriage brings not only joy but also trials, difficulties, and hardships, and the Church blesses this sacred moment, imparting through the Sacrament of Marriage the strength to overcome these trials.

The Sacrament of Marriage

In the first centuries of Christianity, the rite of crowning was extremely simple. During the Divine Liturgy, the bride and groom would declare before the Church, the gathered Christians, their desire to become husband and wife. The Church was witness to their vow of fidelity. At the Liturgy, both partook of the Body and Blood of Christ, and their marriage was sealed in the Sacrament of the Eucharist through this joint communion.

Over time, the crowning evolved into a distinct service with more complex prayers and rites. The Common Cup of wine serves as a reminder of that joint communion; the bride and groom drink from it three times in turn as a sign of the shared cup of future joys and sorrows.

The central part of the crowning rite is the placing of crowns upon the heads of the couple and the triple procession around the analogion, which closely resembles the

triple procession around the font in Baptism. This resemblance is not accidental, for the vow of mutual fidelity is rooted in the vow of fidelity to Christ that we make at Baptism.

> One of the common misconceptions regarding Christianity is that it regards sexual life as something filthy, unclean, and to be avoided if possible. A turn to the primary sources shows that this is not the case. One of the world's finest examples of love poetry is the biblical book "Song of Songs," and God's first commandment to newly created man was "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Book of Genesis). The Rite of Crowning speaks in great detail of the marital union as a joyful gift of God to man.
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> However, bodily pleasure, like all other manifestations of earthly life that were originally good and perfect—such as the joy of partaking of earthly fruits or the fruits of knowledge, the joy of possession, the joy of paternal authority, and filial trust in submission—was distorted in the Fall of man. Consequently, all measures of self-restriction offered by the Church to man in his spiritual and bodily discipline (asceticism), such as fidelity to one spouse, abstinence from food and marital relations during fasting, and the persistent recommendation not to strive for power or boast of knowledge, are intended not to denigrate or belittle what God has created but to help man restore the distorted and elevate it to the original, perfect Divine design. Therefore, the Sacrament of Marriage is both thanksgiving to God for the joy He has granted and a prayer that we might, to the best of our strength and with His help, elevate earthly existence and transform it into the heavenly.

COMMEMORATION OF THE DEAD

The death of a loved one is always a heavy trial. However, Christians possess one great advantage: they can not only "remember" the departed but also believe in an enduring closeness with them in God and the Church, feeling this bond as well as the possibility of seeing them face to face in the future eternal life.

In the final hours, the best help and consolation for a loved one is undoubtedly the Sacrament of the Eucharist. You may call the nearest church and ask a priest to visit your seriously ill or dying relative to administer the Holy Mysteries. The priest will perform the Sacrament of Confession and give the person communion with the so-called Reserved Gifts—the Body and Blood of Christ, which are specially preserved for this purpose after the Divine Liturgy on the Holy Table in the church altar. If the dying person is unconscious, the Sacrament of Unction (Holy Oil) is performed; in this case, it serves to alleviate the suffering of death, and through the prayers of the clergy and loved ones, the sufferer's unconscious or forgotten sins are remitted.

It is worth knowing that if your loved one is not baptized but wishes to accept Christianity before death, and circumstances do not allow for a priest to be summoned, the Sacrament of Baptism may be performed by any Orthodox Christian,

not necessarily a clergyman. In such cases, the Rite of Baptism is abbreviated to the minimum: the reading of the Creed (or, if the text is unknown, a free-form confession of Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior; see Acts 8:37) and the triple immersion of the person in water (or sprinkling with water) with the words: "The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." If the mortal danger passes, it is necessary to call a priest to perform the Sacrament of Chrismation, which a layperson cannot perform.[22]

After death, usually on the third day, the Funeral Service is performed—either in the church, at home, or directly at the place of burial by an invited priest. The Funeral Rite is a service for the departed during which prayers for repose are offered, followed by a special rite of farewell to the deceased, at the end of which earth is sprinkled crosswise upon the body. Sometimes, due to valid circumstances (for example, if a person died far from home, was killed in war, etc.), a so-called "funeral in absentia" is performed. This is the same service for the departed, but at the end, the earth is sprinkled crosswise onto a piece of paper. Relatives or loved ones then take this packet to the grave of the deceased and pour the earth out there, also in the form of a cross.

> The death of a human being is a situation in which, perhaps more than any other, the most ancient and dense paganism flourishes. Covering mirrors so that the "spirits of the dead" do not disturb the living; buying them off with a sacrifice (a piece of bread and a glass of vodka); placing items in the grave (just as horses, wives, and utensils were buried with Scythian princes in burial mounds); holding a rowdy funeral feast upon the mound, and so forth. Needless to say, all of this has nothing in common with Christian prayer for our loved one.

According to Christian understanding, for forty days the soul of the deceased has not yet lost its connection with our world and is in special need of our prayers. On the third, ninth, and fortieth days (counting the day of repose itself), particularly fervent prayer is customary: Panikhidas (memorial services) are requested, and commemoration slips for repose are submitted (see the chapter "Commemoration"). It is also customary to read the Psalter, accompanying it with special prayers for the departed. The choice of this specific biblical book is not accidental. In the wondrous prayerful verses of the Psalms—spoken on behalf of the Psalmists, on our behalf, and on behalf of the deceased—there resounds inspired praise to the Creator, sorrow for sins that distance one from Him, the soul’s cry for salvation from the abyss of evil and death, and pure joy for the created world and how truly beautiful it is...

> Christian teaching and liturgy regarding death are, of course, very far from the primitive, everyday notion of a "Christian afterlife" with harps and halos above, and cauldrons and hot frying pans below. However, it reminds us with all clarity of one important thing: contrary to abstract "universal" humanism, for the soul after the death of the body, not only eternal life

[22] In the same manner as a dying adult, one may baptize a newborn infant whose life is in danger if there is no certainty that there is time to call a priest.

> is possible, but also eternal death—estrangement from God. And no hellish cauldrons can compare with the horror and anguish that such a soul will experience. Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann, who led the seminary in New York for decades, speaks very well of this in his diary. He was an exceptionally educated and "modern" man (his son graduated from Harvard University, his wife was the headmistress of one of the best American private schools) and in no way inclined toward "obscurantism":
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> "People have ceased to believe not in God or gods, but in perdition, and eternal perdition at that; in its not only possibility, but inevitability, and therefore—in salvation. The 'seriousness' of religion lay primarily in the 'seriousness' of the choice, felt by man to be self-evident: between perdition and salvation. They say: it is good that the religion of fear has disappeared. As if this were merely psychology, a whim, and not the fundamental thing—the fundamental experience of life looking into death. Saints did not become saints out of fear, yet even in holiness they knew the fear of God. The cheapness of the modern understanding of religion as spiritual consumer goods, psychological self-improvement... They removed the devil, then hell, then sin—and now nothing remains except these consumer goods: either obvious fraud or vague humanism. However, there is much more fear, even religious fear, in the world than before, only it is not at all the fear of God."
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> The Apostle Paul writes: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face" (1 Cor 13:12). It is difficult for us to imagine both the bliss of a soul seeing God face to face, and the suffering of a soul that, during the life of the body, estranged itself from God and after death has no opportunity to change. Hundreds of years ago, people created images understandable to them (poetic, iconographic, musical...) of both future bliss and eternal death. Among modern examples, I would like to note as successful the scenes and images from the movie Constantine. Finding himself in hell, the main character (Keanu Reeves) ends up in a district of New York that is semi-destroyed, gloomy, and filled with thousands of souls rushing about in fire, confusion, and pain. Finding himself in heaven, he discovers himself in the very same place in New York, but filled with light and joy. And this transfiguration did not annul, did not "cross out" the earthly appearance of the city, but illuminated the best in it and preserved everything worthy of Eternity.

The Church teaches that we are not alone in Her; we are Her members, members of the Body of Christ. And just as the saints are close to us, responsive to our needs and requests, and pray together with us to God—so too are we close to the departed, and through our prayer and good deeds we can make up for the shortcomings and sins of their earthly life, being united with them in the Church and in Christ.

MOLEBEN IN TIMES OF NEED OR JOY

A form of prayer for various situations—comparatively rare in our time but very frequent in pre-revolutionary Russia—is the moleben (prayer service) for a specific occasion. For example: for a safe journey; at the founding of an institution; for someone's health; for success in studies; and finally, a thanksgiving moleben—when we do not ask for something, but thank God for His gifts and His help in a

successfully completed undertaking. A private and, as a rule, rather abbreviated instance of a moleben is the blessing of a home, an automobile, and the like.

A moleben may be requested in most churches. The essence of a moleben, as a joint corporate prayer for something or someone, implies the presence and prayer of all those concerned with the subject of the prayer (accordingly, it is necessary to arrange a specific time for the moleben with the priest in advance). It is less reasonable, from the standpoint of general liturgical logic, to submit the "topic" of the moleben to the priest and not be present at the prayer itself. This is akin to declaring one's feelings to a person in absentia, through an intermediary. Of course, one can always hope that your addressee will understand and appreciate everything correctly... Therefore, as with other services, the Church does not envision the "delegation" of your prayer to "professionals"; on the contrary, any divine service implies, as the norm, its performance by the entire church community: both laity and clergy.

Structurally, the moleben is a significantly abbreviated Matins service. Its most prominent parts are the Great Litany at the beginning, to which additional petitions "on the topic" of the moleben are usually added; the reading of the Gospel and the chanting of a canon suitable for the occasion (from which, in practice, usually only selected hymns are sung); and special, specific prayers. If the moleben is associated with the blessing of an object, then in some cases the rite of the so-called "Lesser Blessing of Waters" is added, with which the object being blessed is then sprinkled.

PRAYER AT HOME

The ideal of the Christian life is unceasing prayer, a constant sense of God's presence, and communion with Him. However, man is weak and imperfect; for spiritual growth, he needs certain patterns, standards, and other aids. Hence the need for a certain regularity and rhythm in prayer.

This rhythm, apart from the rhythm of public worship (Sundays, Feast days), is also established by a domestic "prayer rule." This is the name given to the specific set of prayers and the frequency of their recitation to which a person adheres in his life. Moreover, the ascetic fathers unanimously affirm that constancy and regularity in keeping a prayer rule are far more important than its length.

Prayer at home customarily includes Morning Prayers (immediately after waking), Evening Prayers (before sleep), prayers before and after meals, and prayer before beginning any work and upon its completion.

The simplest prayer rule is the Lord’s Prayer, "Our Father," given to us by Jesus Christ when the disciples asked Him how they should pray (Gospel of Matthew 6:9–13). It is

read in the morning, in the evening, and before meals. Before any work requiring God's blessing and guidance, it is customary to read the prayer "O Heavenly King...", a brief invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who gives us understanding and help in all deeds.

St. Seraphim of Sarov advised his disciples to follow a more extended daily prayer rule: the reading of the Creed, the reading of the "Our Father" three times, and the reading of the Troparion "O Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice..." three times.

Finally, all prayer books contain a daily prayer rule. It consists of the "Usual Beginning" ("O Heavenly King," the Trisagion, the Prayer to the Holy Trinity, "Our Father"), the penitential Psalm 50, the Creed, and Morning Prayers or Prayers "at the Coming of Sleep," that is, before going to bed. The following comparison is appropriate: the morning and evening rules are "scales" composed by the saints, with the help of which a person "warms up" in order to perform his own prayerful work. However, there is no doubt that the mere "reading through" of prayers is not yet prayer.

If it is impossible to be in church on a feast day, one can include in the domestic rule the reading of Vespers and Matins of the feast according to the order for laymen (either separately or combining them into the All-Night Vigil). Of all regular public services, only the Divine Liturgy cannot be performed by laypeople. The principles of the order for laymen are quite simple: all litanies are replaced by a corresponding number of "Lord, have mercy," and priestly exclamations are replaced by "Through the prayers of our holy fathers..." or "Glory..., Both now...". Otherwise, all psalms and hymns are read or sung just as they are during public worship.

> It is worth noting that for the modern religious mindset, accustomed to "delegating" its prayer needs "to professionals," the idea of celebrating a festal All-Night Vigil according to the order for laymen is unusual. However, as recently as 150–200 years ago, such a practice was quite frequent, as many laypeople were well-versed in the divine services and knew exactly what to read and chant, in what order, and what it all meant. Today, the practice of using the order for laymen is being revived. The author, for instance, once participated in Vespers served by the monks of the All Saints Skete on Valaam in the absence of a priest.

The reading of Holy Scripture is also quite often included in the daily prayer rule. For example, one may read the Epistle and Gospel readings indicated in the church calendar and appointed for the services of the current day. Alternatively, one may simply read a chapter from the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistles, a chapter from the Gospel, several psalms from the Psalter, or several chapters from the Old Testament books.

One may also include something from the Lives of the Saints or their writings, especially those commemorated on that day. In this way, the content of the domestic

rule becomes maximally reflective of the Church's divine services, sustaining the Christian's unity with the Church.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7:

- In various life situations, there is a good Church tradition of turning in prayer to saints whose lives or writings contain an affinity with your life and circumstances, including your patron saint.
- However, there are no mechanical rules regarding "who to pray to for what"; the saints are not vending machines for dispensing this or that form of aid, but are those who pray with us to God, Who gives us strength in difficult situations.
- In the Sacrament of Baptism, a person acknowledges Christ as his personal God and Savior, confesses the Christian faith, and becomes a member of the Church.
- In the Sacrament of Marriage, the Church gives a blessing to the union of people who love one another, who pledge fidelity and promise to be together in joy and in sorrow.
- At the death of a loved one, the Church offers various forms of prayers for the dying, as well as our private and Church prayers for the departed.
- In various events—such as a journey, illness, the beginning of an undertaking, or joy regarding something—it is appropriate to have a Molieben served as one of the forms of public worship.
- The Church recommends that a Christian adhere to a specific home prayer rule, even if it is brief, provided it is regular.
- If it is impossible to be in church on feast days or Sundays, the entire festal service, except for the Divine Liturgy (that is, Vespers and Matins separately, or combined into the All-Night Vigil), can be served as part of the home rule according to the "order for laymen."
- The home prayer rule can be either the simplest (the "Our Father" prayer) or more detailed, as set forth in prayer books, and may also contain readings from Holy Scripture and the Lives of the Saints.

Afterword

Dear reader,

I believe that in your own life, or in the lives of those close to you, you have had occasion to observe how a person "discovers" a particular area of culture.

This happens, for example, with music. A good friend of mine, who was completely indifferent to music and encountered it only as background noise from some "Pop Radio FM," once heard a Vivaldi concerto in my car. He became interested and asked to borrow the CD for a while.

Over the next six months, I had the pleasure of observing the rapid development of his musical taste. My friend could already distinguish a concerto from a symphony (and realized that he preferred symphonies to concertos). It also turned out that he loved solo guitar and the organ, but did not care for the solo violin... And most importantly, he receives immense joy from good music, that very joy which was previously completely inaccessible to him. It was inaccessible, in essence, for two reasons: partly due to ignorance, and partly due to an undeveloped ear and taste. The only thing he regrets now is those years of his life when the wonderful world of music was closed to him.

Something similar happens to many people regarding divine services. Even if a person believes in the existence of God and strives for communion with Him, the divine services often remain "closed" to him. And usually, this is for exactly the same reasons as the "closed nature" of music, architecture, painting, or any other sphere of the human spirit: out of complete ignorance, or because the opportunity never arose to "get a taste for it" and develop one's appreciation.

In this book, the author has attempted, to the best of his ability, to address the first reason: ignorance. At the same time, the goal of this book was not missionary work, that is, an attempt to convince you of anything (whether God exists, whether one needs to go to church, etc.). Rather, on the contrary, the author has tried to maintain the position of a "guidebook writer." "We do not know whether you will travel to this country, but if you do, know that the ancient sites are here, the hotels are there, and the languages spoken are Greek and English." I do not know, reader, whether you are a religious person or not, or whether you attend church, but I have tried to show exactly what "exists in this country," and have attempted to explain why it is the way it is.

And if you wish to continue discovering this country, you already possess the primary knowledge about it, and now you must overcome the second reason for its inaccessibility: you must work on developing your taste. To do this, one needs only come, listen, and listen intently, feeling what resonates in the soul and what does not... To take small steps, to seek your own path, and not to despair when things are difficult or incomprehensible. And in doing so, do not forget to ask for help from Him Who promised: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

The author cannot promise that this path will be easy for you. I can speak only for myself: for me, the path into the land of divine services was long and difficult, but having arrived here, I understand: here is life, here is living water, here is a world transfigured and permeated with the joy of communion with God. A joy which "no one will take from us" (Gospel of John 16:22).