

Liturgy of the Catechumens

Liturgy of Catechumens

- ✦ Opening Blessing and litany of peace
- ✦ Antiphons, small entrance, apolytikia and trisagion.
- ✦ Scripture readings and homily



Divine Liturgy

- How does it begin?
- *"**Blessed is the Kingdom** of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* (p 10)
- What is the Kingdom?
 - Presence of Christ.
 - All of God's Creation - Spiritual extends into the material
 - Liturgy is doorway to Kingdom with faith in the Holy Trinity.
Begin a journey to His presence.
- Priest makes cross with Gospel over Altar.



Sign of Cross

- What is significance of sign of Cross?
 - Before Christ was a sign of a death sentence.
 - With Christ, through Cross we find the way to heaven.
 - On the Cross Christ defeated the devil and by His subsequent resurrection, claimed victory over death.
 - Through the Cross gates opened to Paradise and eternal life.
- Why do we make the sign of the cross?
 - Showing our sincere belief in the Christ and the Trinitarian God.



Holy Trinity



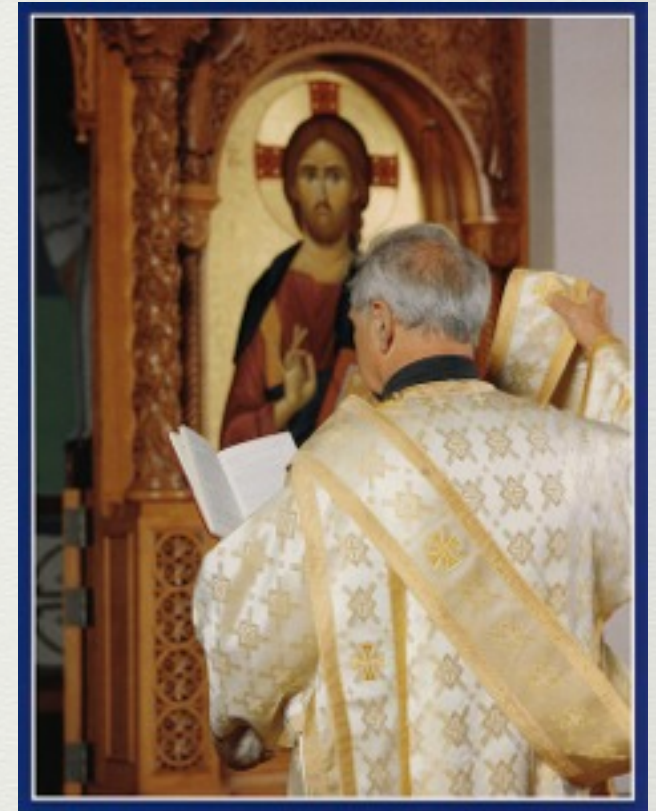
- Do you find Trinity difficult to believe?
- Saint Augustine also doubted and sought to understand.
 - Went for long walk on the sea shore
 - Saw child digging hole and pouring water into it.
 - Asks, *“What are you doing?”*
 - Responds, *“Do you see all that water in the sea? I am going to pour all it into this hole.”*
 - Augustine pauses, *“That’s impossible!”*
 - Child responds, *“If this is impossible how much more impossible it is to do what you are trying to do, to comprehend the mystery of the Holy Trinity.”*
- The Child was obviously an angel bringing his an important message. Embrace the Mystery!



Litany of Peace

Great Litany

- Immediately deacon calls us us to pray.
"In peace, let us pray to the Lord".
 - What is meant by "**peace**"?
 - It's peace of soul.
Essential for participation in Liturgy.
 - W/o tranquility of thoughts, stillness of mind, cannot explore hidden mysteries.
 - It is a peace Christ brings gained through repentance.
- St. Basil says, *"Seek peace... Acquire a calm mind and a state of soul untroubled and in disturbed...that you may acquire 'the peace of God which passes all understanding' (Phil 4:7) as the guard of your heart."*



“In Peace”

- We are to come to Liturgy with a peaceful heart.
- Christ says in Sermon on the Mount, *If you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar and go at once to make peace with your brother; then come back and offer your gift to God.* (Matt 5:23-24)
- We pray that our hearts will not be disturbed during the Divine Liturgy by any feelings of revenge or hate.



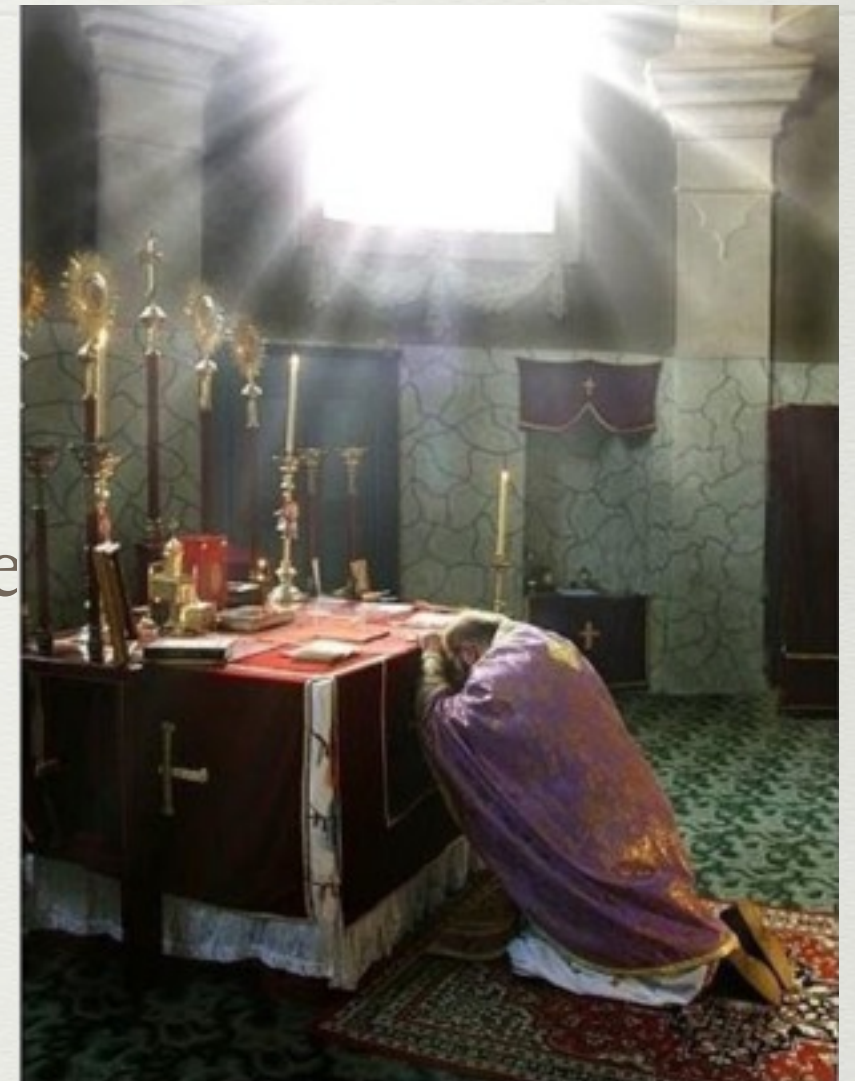
Our Response

- How do we respond?
 - **“Lord have mercy”**
- We know God to be a most merciful God.
- Where do we hear this prayer in Scripture?
 - This is the prayer of Anna when she gave birth to child, the cry of Canaanite woman before her child was cured, the ten lepers before they were cured, the publican....
- Mercy of God is grace of Holy Spirit which we as sinners must ask from God
- A wonderworking prayer of the earliest church.
- Too often only choir or cantor says this wonderful prayer. Should be said by **everyone with vigor** after each petition.



“Peace from Above”

- Next prayer says,
*"For the **peace from above** and for the **salvation of our souls**, let us pray to the Lord"* (p 10)
- First we are shown how to pray (In Peace then what we should ask for in prayer.
- What is “**Peace from above**” ?
 - righteousness
- Christ said,
"seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mat 6:33)
- *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:27)



“Salvation of our Souls”

- What is the “*Salvation of our souls*”?
 - Our soul seeks to be reunited with God to be in command of the temple, the body.
- Does one gain anything if he wins all the riches of the world but loses his soul?
 - Of course not!



There is nothing a man can give to win back this soul (Mark 8:36-37)

- Salvation of our soul is **most important** thing we can ask of God.

If it is not saved what is consequence?

- Eternal damnation - separation from God forever.

“Salvation of our Soul”

- Paul says,
*Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For **He Himself is our peace**, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, [between Jew & Gentile]...so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might **reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross**, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.* (Eph 2:13-17)
- We seek **union with God**, this is salvation of our soul and source of peace.



“Peace in Whole World”

- Next we ask for “*peace in the whole world.*” (p11)
- What kind of peace is this?
 - Union with Spirit (Eph 4:3), to be united in Christ as one soul.
 - Peace in our own soul unites us with others.
 - Ripple Effect



Stability and Unity

- Also we pray for the “*stability of the Holy Churches of God*” and the “**unity of all mankind**”
- Remember difficulty many churches face in world and how they are often destroyed by evil empires.
- Wars taking place everywhere because there is no unity of mankind.
- Church is often like a ship at sea caught in a fierce storm being tossed about with horrid persecutions. But it cannot sink.
- Pray for churches around the world who exist in persecution today.



“Unity of All”

- Pray for the “*unity of all*” - meaning?
- Think of how our differences divide us and cause great strife.
- Factions that hate each other and who then try to dominate by use of deceit.
- We live in a multi-cultural world filled with distrust and fear of other. Pray for unity only God can bring.
- Pray for unity among our members of this congregation whether Greek or American, white or black, Ukrainian or Romanian.



“This Holy House”

- Next we pray: *"for this holy house, and for those who enter it, with faith, reverence and the fear of God"*
 - As we enter church must remember we are entering a holy place.
 - The Temple is **heaven on earth**.
It faces east to turn our gaze towards Paradise.
- What are some of the things we do when entering the Church helping us to enter with faith and reverence and fear of God?
- We are about to partake of Holy Communion where we also become a Christ bearing temple.



House of God



- God created in us the temple of God - Why go to church?
- Christ taught us to pray at all times and all places but also to pray together as people congregated in one place.
- What is unique about the church?
 - Dedicated solely to prayer
Distinguished from all other places .
 - Where we are lifted to throne of God during Liturgy
where faithful are invited to receive Holy Communion.
- Church becomes heaven with all saints and angels joining in worship with us and we have a real union with God.



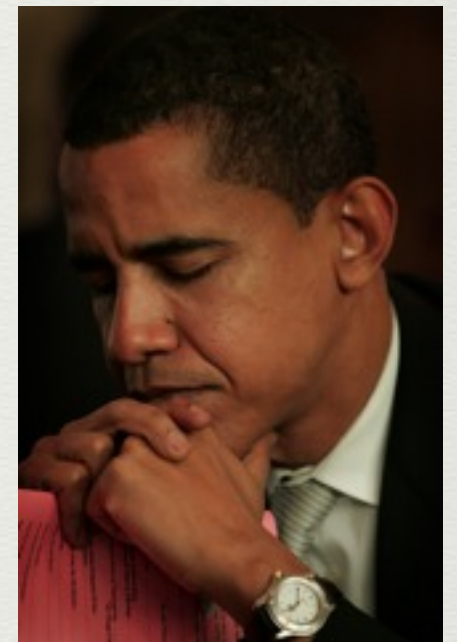
The Congregation

- *“for those who enter with faith, reverence, and the fear of God.”*
- What does this mean ?
- How do you enter Church and prepare for your entrance?
- Not enough just to **go to Church**. Requires **faith, reverence and fear of God!**



Orderliness

- Next we pray for:
 - Our bishop, clergy and laity
 - For president, civil authorities, armed forces
 - For this city, country, and all faithful
- For all that provides for order in the Church and society.



Great Litany

- Next we pray for
 - favorable climate and productive earth
 - for peaceful times.
 - those heavy laden and weary from travel, sickness, or as captives.
 - deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger and distress.
- What do we need for earthly well being?
 - Food, shelter, protection from danger, comforting in times of difficulty and sickness.



God's Help and Mercy

- Then, ***“Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God by thy grace.”***
- Keep in mind that we are always on edge of death. It takes only one artery to break, a single drop of blood in the brain and we can suffer heart attack or stroke and die in a few minutes.
- We are in danger always physically but even more so spiritually due to sin.
- God is merciful and will save us if we have humility, always repent and trust in God with love.



Commemorating all the saints

- Finally, "*Commemorating our most holy, pure, most blessed and glorious lady, Theotokos and ever virgin Mary with all the saints, let us entrust ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.*"
- We call on all the saints where first among them is the most holy Theotokos. Why?



Commemorating all the saints

- What is a saint?
 - One who is clean of sin.
 - Like pure gold. How is gold purified?
 - Born with ancestral sin, We too need to be purified like Gold.
A lifelong battle.
- Is this our priority to become a saint?
How about our wishes for our children?
- Many mock life of saints and those who dedicate themselves to the Church.
Saints come from all walks of life and ages.



Great Litany

- *Let us entrust ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.*

- What is the implication of this prayer?

- Entrust means we promise to God something which belongs to us and - we cannot take it back.

- Surrender is path to true security

- God asks for no less than our **whole being and life**, Meaning what?

- Can use it **only** for doing His will.

- He gave us this commandment:

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matt 22:37)



All Glory

- Priest concludes the Litany of prayers with
*“For **to Thee belong all glory**, honor, and worship, to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and to the ages of ages.”*
- An exclamation of **faith in Holy Trinity**.
God who created the world, reformed and saved man.
- Hear this over and over -
shining like a spiritual sun on the whole Liturgy from beginning to end.
- These words should move our hearts
drawing our boundless reverence.
- Three persons, one is essence - what a mystery! Glory to you!



Antiphons

Antiphons

- To nurture the soul we sing sacred hymns, we read prayers, intone petitions and readings.
- Traditionally, do not use musical instruments. Use ourselves as instruments, our soul and body. Why?
 - From our heart comes sacred music. Everyone must contribute.
- In early Church **all** sang. Church was divided into two parts and chanters would start the psalmody and give signal for others to sing. Sing back forth between the two sections (antiphonically).
- Not done today commonly. What happens as result?
 - Passiveness, boredom, inattention....
A practice Baptist and other Protestant Churches have not given up.



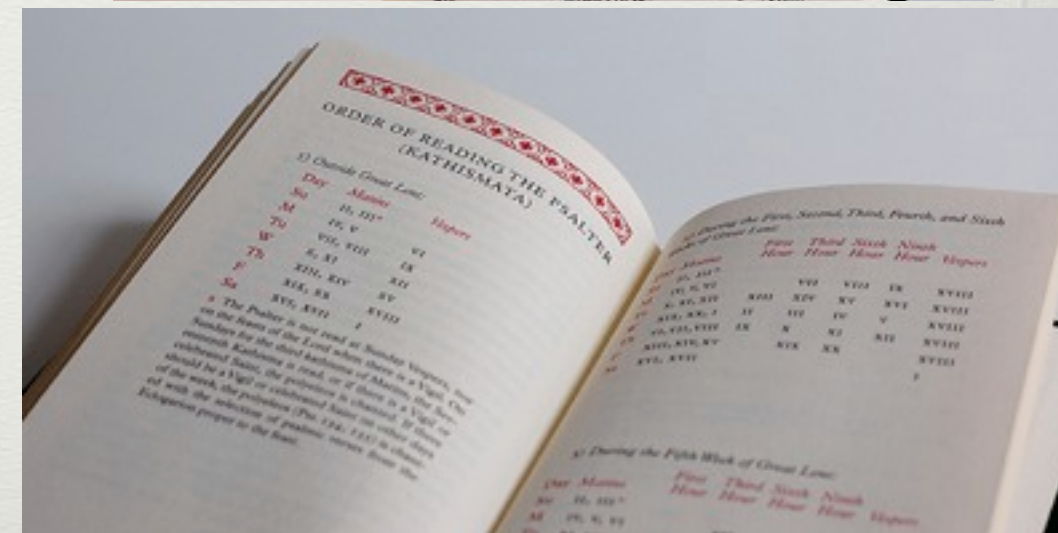
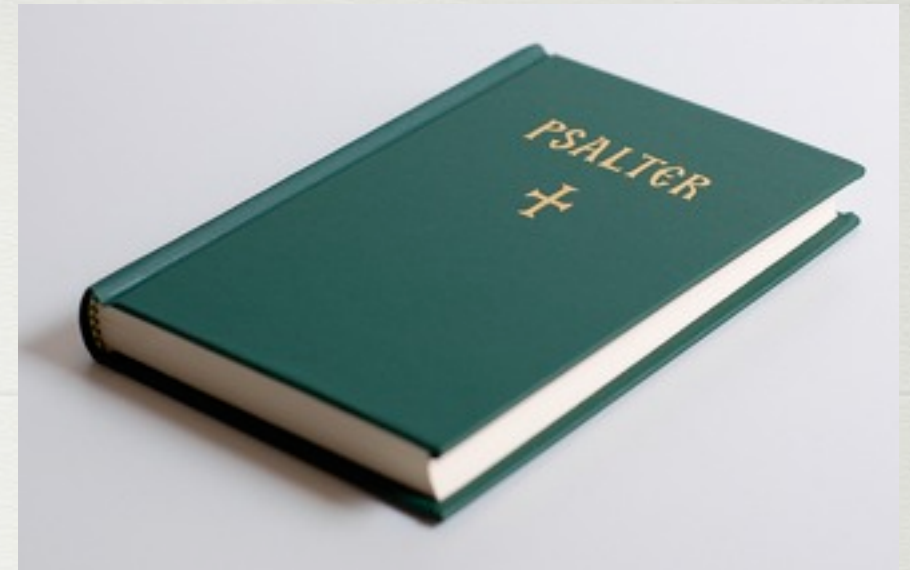
Antiphons

- **Three Antiphons**
- **First Antiphon** has refrain, *through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us. (p 12)*
 - The verses are taken from Psalter
1st about God's benefactions as Creator
- **Second antiphon** has refrain "*Save us, O Son of God who rose from the dead, to You we sing: Alleluia.*" (p 13)
 - 2nd is praise to God extolling His care for us
- **Third Antiphon** is Beatitudes but is omitted in Greek Church, but maintained in slavic churches and many monasteries.



Book of Psalms - Psalter

- Ancient hymn Book mostly ascribed to David.
- Consists of 150 spiritual hymns - 20 Kathismas
- In Past was book Christians knew from childhood. Many known by heart and frequently quoted from. Various verses are found throughout liturgy and psalms are read at other services.



1st Antiphon (p12)

- 1st antiphon references **Psalm 102**:
“Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy name.”
- Response is, *By the intercessions of the Theotokos, O savior, save us.*
- This psalm reminds us of all of God’s benefactions.
- He calls us to look within and marvel at our own creation and thank God for this wonder.



102nd Psalm

*Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name! **

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—**

who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from corruption and crowns you with mercy and compassion,

who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's....

*The Lord has prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all....**

*Praise the Lord, all His works; in all places of His dominion, bless the Lord, O my soul.**

1st Antiphon

- While the first antiphon is being sung the priest offers a prayer:
- *Lord our God, save Your people and bless Your inheritance; protect the whole body of your church; **sanctify those who love the beauty of your house***; glorify them in return by Your divine power; and do not forsake us who hope in you.*
 - *Words found written across back of sanctuary.
- What is inheritance?
 - Those who believe in Jesus. The Church is now the Israel of God, those who strive with God. (Gal 6:16)
Originally Jews but now Christians are new people of God with whom God made a new covenant.



Antiphons

- The antiphons are followed by what is called the small supplication. (p 13)
- Deacon proclaims:
*Again and again in peace let us prayer to the Lord.
Help us save us have mercy on us and keep us by Your Grace.
Commemorating most holy Theotokos with all the saints...
Let us commit our whole life to Christ our God.
Priest concludes: For to You the belongs all honor, Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit...*
- Our prayers are purposefully repetitive as this is what the Lord Himself teaches us (Lk 18:7)
- One of Deacon's roles is to exhort us to pray "again and again" and we respond with our prayer, *Lord have mercy.*



2nd Antiphon (p 13)

- Second is **Psalm 145**: A hymn of praise for His help.
- *“Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life, I will chant unto my God for as long as I have my being...”*
- *Blessed are those whose helper is the God of Jacob; whose hope is in the Lord their God...*
- *The God who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them....*
- *The Lord will be king for ever: your God, O Sion, will reign throughout all generations....*
- Response is, *"Save us, O Son of God who rose from the dead, to You we sing: Alleluia."*



“O Only- Begotten Son of God”

- Following is Hymn: *O Only-begotten Son of God.* (p 14)
- *O only begotten Son and Word of God, although You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and without change, becoming man. Christ, our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death. You are the one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit—save us.*
- Like a short creed. This hymn came from emperor Justinian in 6th century.
- Incarnation is central dogma of Church. “*God made flesh.*”
 - “*Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.*” (1John 4:3) Was fully God and fully Man.

2nd Antiphon

- Priest prays silently while 2nd antiphon is sung:
- *Lord You have given us grace to offer these common prayers with one heart. You have promised to grant the requests of two or three gathered in Your name. Fulfill now the petitions of Your servants for our benefit, giving us the knowledge of Your truth in this world, and granting us eternal life in the world to come.*
- Deacon calls out, *Again and Again let us pray in peace...*
- Concluded with Priest's prayer, *For you are a Good and loving God and to you we give glory, to the Father, Son.....*



Little Entrance

Little Entrance (p 15-16)

- Until 7th Century Liturgy began with entrance of Bishop and Gospel book.
- When Church under persecution had to hide Gospel book and bring it to church.
- Today book kept on altar -
- What does this book symbolize?
 - Christ - the Word
- What does the Entrance symbolize?
 - Coming of Christ and his public teaching.



Small Entrance

- Deacon takes Gospel from Priest with reverence, holds it high with great devotion
 - like scrolls of Jewish antiquity
 - walks around holy table and exits through north door preceded by a candle.
- We sing beginning with verse:
This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it,
followed by appropriate Apolytikian.
 - On Sunday normally one of eight Resurrectional hymns. (p 44)



- Why is there a candle that precedes the Gospel?
 - Symbolizes the Forerunner who is "the burning and shining lamp."Book is carried before the face so the face shown is Christ.



- Priest prays (p15)
Master and Lord our God, You have established in heaven the orders and hosts of angels and archangels to minister to Your glory. Grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance of Holy angels, serving with us and glorifying Thy goodness...



Angels

- What are angels?
- Scripture tells us -
beings without bodies,
move about easily,
messengers and instruments of God.
Prime function is to glorify God.



Angels

- Book of Isaiah: *Saw angels and archangels around the throne of God. Saw Seraphim with six wings, two to cover their faces, two their feet and the other two they used to fly.*

*They sang a hymn “**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.**”* (Is 6)



- Daniel also describes the throne as a “*flame of fire.*” with countless spirits, angels and archangels serving the Lord (Dan 7)

- Luke described the night Christ was born saying “*a great army of heaven’s angels*” were praising God saying, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” (Lk 2:13-14)



Hierarchy of Angels

- Nine Celestial Orders of Angels
- Seraphims ~ Cherubims ~ Thrones
- Dominions ~ Virtues ~ Powers
- Principalities ~ Archangels ~ Angels



Angles

- At the time of the small entrance the angels join us and fill the church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

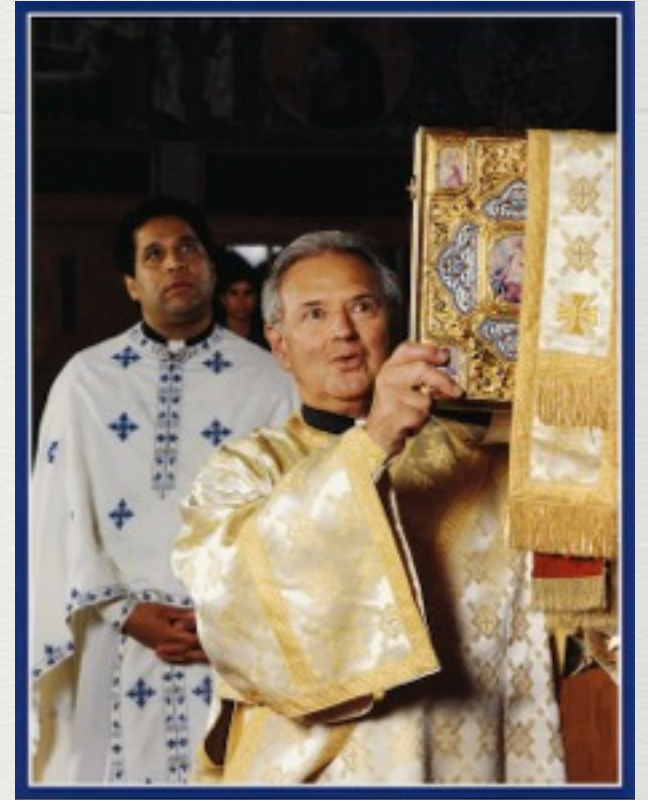


Saint Spyridon wrote, when he celebrated liturgy he saw angels appear next to him and chant divine hymns. Numerous stories of this nature.



Small Entrance

- Early Church was beginning of Service.
People arrived in a procession.
- Completion of entrance hymn
Deacon: ***Wisdom (Sophia), Let us rise!***
- What is meant by Wisdom?
 - Good news - “wisdom” - has arrived
 - Not just knowledge but secrets of everything including everything spiritual.
 - Sophia was associated in Scripture as associated with The Word. Paul calls Christ, *the Power of God and the Wisdom (Sophia) of God.* (1 Cor 1:24)
- Why is it held high and proclaimed as Wisdom?.
- True wisdom in divine matters - brought world out of sin and error. Superior to all other books.



Small Entrance

- Gospel, Christ Himself, is placed on Altar. We stand focused on our Master ready to run and serve Him.



- We chant:

Come let us worship and bow down unto Christ. O Son of God, who didst rise from the dead, save us who sing unto thee: Alleluia.

- From Psalm (94:6) LXX

“Come let us worship and bow down before Him.”



Small Entrance

- We sing Apolytikia and Kontakion recognizing season, and feasts of day.
- First resurrectional hymn from eight modes. (pg 44)
- Then hymn for saint of day or feast.
- Hymn to Saint George
- Kontakion which changes with liturgical season.
- These hymns remind us of those who practiced what is taught in this great book of Wisdom.
- Liturgy honors saints and extolls them in hymns so we might imitate them and live in accordance with Gospel teachings.



Prayer of the Trisagion

- Deacon calls us to prayer and priest reads following prayer:

Holy God, Who rest among the holy ones, praised by the Seraphim with the thrice holy hymn, glorified by the Cherubim and worshiped by the heavenly powers; who brought all things out of non-existence into being and created man in Your image and likeness, adorning him with all Your gifts; Who gives wisdom and understanding to those who ask, and does not reject the sinner, but has established repentance for our salvation... Accept the thrice holy hymn from the lips of sinners and visit us in your goodness. Forgive every offense... sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may worship You in holiness all the days of our lives...



Prayer of the Trisagion

- Historically this prayer was read aloud before singing of Trisagion hymn.
- The doxology followed this prayer to signal beginning of hymn.
- Trisagion Hymn: Hymn of angels
"Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."
As we sing, we join choir of angels. (p 17)
- Was originally an entrance hymn as it is still used in the funeral services.

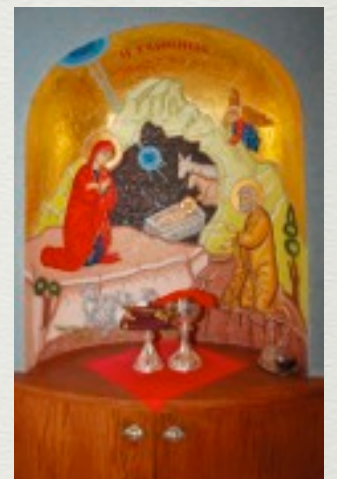


Trisagion Hymn

- **Holy God:** Source of holiness and sanctification. Brought all out of nothingness into being. created man in his likeness and image. Renews mankind in His Church.
- **Holy Mighty:** From God comes all power and energy in the world.
- **Holy Immortal:** God is unaltered, imperishable, eternal, immortal
- The hymn is repeated three times - then a fourth with power (Dynamis!)
Raise your voices to forcefully express devotion to God.

Blessing of Throne on High

- Priest turns towards the Prothesis, where the Gifts await to be consecrated, bowing head says, *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”* Reminding us of Birth in Bethlehem as well as His entrance to Jerusalem.
- The priest prays, *“accept from the mouth of us sinners, the Thrice Holy Hymn, and visit us in Thy righteousness; forgive us all our transgressions... sanctify our souls and bodies and grant that we may worship Thee in holiness all the days of our life.”* (p18)
- At this point we have humbly identified ourselves with angelic hosts in glorifying God.



Readings

Readings

- Following Tradition we have the Scripture readings
- *And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these fine examples. – Justin Martyr (AD 165)*



- Deacon announces reading of Epistle (p 18)
Let us be attentive - Wisdom
- Draws our attention and asks all to listen carefully.
- Why?



Scripture, manifests the precepts and will of God, according to which everyone is required to trained and live by - Maximos the Confessor



Epistle

- Reads from a book called **Apostolos** - contains sections from Acts, Epistles of Paul, Peter, James and John.
- First is read the **Prokeimenon's** verse from Psalms
 - Symbolizes revelation of the divine mysteries by prophets foretelling the coming of Christ using verses from Psalms.



Alleluia

- At conclusion reader is blessed and we sing Alleluia. Why?
 - Means “*praise God*”.Expresses joy of receiving Word of God which is about to be read.
- Christ alone brought true joy to the world.
Joined with Angels & sing praise to Him.



Gospel

- The Word, the Gospel, was brought into church closed and is now opened to reveal His teachings. Symbolism?
 - Manifestation of the Lord as it came gradually after He entered public life.
 - Lord's epiphany when He was Baptized in the Jordan



Gospel

- Before the reading of the Gospel priest reads the following prayer. (p 19)
- *"Shine in our hearts, O Master, Who lovest mankind, the pure light of Thy Divine Knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Thy Gospel teachings; implant in us also the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all desires of the flesh, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing the things which are well-pleasing unto Thee; for Thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine Eternal Father, and Thine All-Holy, Good, and life-giving Spirit, now and for ever, and from all Ages to all Ages. Amen."*
- Provides proper context to hear the Holy Scripture.



Gospel

- Why do we seek Divine Knowledge?
 - Because we now He is the Sun of righteousness who brings this to our souls.
 - We pray that the Gospel reading will give us a ray of light that will open open the eyes of our soul so we can truly understand the divine words.
 - Called light because it is provided by the light of divine Grace.



The God who said “Let light shine out of darkness” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2Cor 4:6)

Gospel



- Receive divine knowledge two ways
 - Inherent in fact God knows us as His own and are partakers in His grace.
"you have known God, or rather you are known by God" (Gal 4:9)
 - Imparted by what God reveals to us.
- It engenders life. Solomon says, *"To know You is the root of immortality"* (WidSol 15:3)
- It is the power that enables us to obtain incorruptible life.
"This is eternal life: to know You who alone are the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (Jn 17:3)
- In Divine Liturgy we look for this Trinitarian God which we are offered as food and drink.

Gospel



- The Gospel lifts us above earthly concerns
- Prepares us to enter into the sacred act about to follow.
We need to set aside our carnal desires, all the sensuality of this world.
- Our minds need to be enlightened with divine knowledge, illuminating our souls and bodies.
- This is what the priest is praying for.
- Deacon, he asks for a blessing to proclaim the Word of God as Priest hands him the Gospel book.
- Then proceeds, led by candles signifying the illumined thoughts that will shine within each of us as we hear His Word, bringing light into our darkened souls.

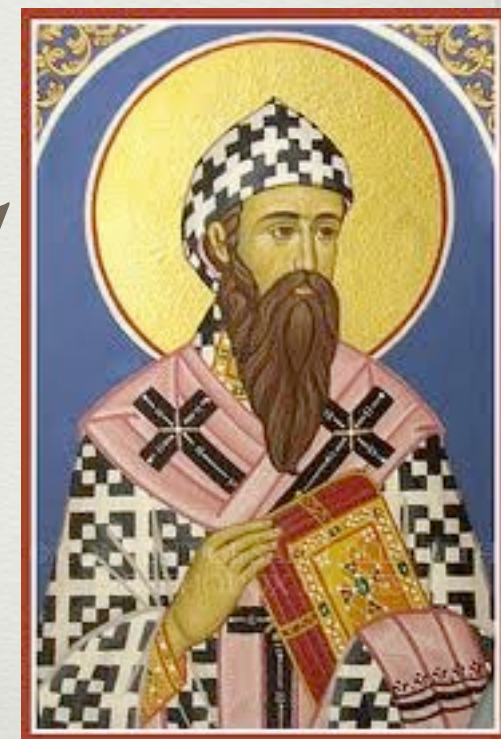
Gospel



- What is the Gospel?
- His Word, the presence of the Son of God.
- Priest then says: “*Wisdom, Let us **stand** to listen to the Holy Gospel.*”
- Word used of listen is ἀκούειν (Akouein) which is related to the word for to obey. So we are being also asked to obey what is to be read.
- Time to make our bodies attentive. We stand.
We lift our minds above all our earthly concerns, and seek to understand what God teaches us through His Word.

Gospel

- Priest says, *“Peace be to All.”*
- The blessing of the priest here is actually the blessing of Christ Himself that is given through the hand and mouth of the priest.
- Christ said, *“My peace I give to you”* (John 14:27)
- Grace of dispassion that God offers to all in return for our labors in virtue.
- Saint Cyril of Alexandria comments: *“I will be with you again, even though I am absent in the body....and I will lift you above every disturbance... A divine power will rise within you; while your minds will be free from care and your hearts at peace, it will guide you to the revelation of things more exalted than the human mind.”*



Gospel

- Congregation replies: *“And to Your spirit”*
 - We wish the same peace to priest - our shepherd and spiritual father.
- Though God’s teachings we prepare our minds in such a way that we can endure any and all sorrows with ease.
- For this coming moment we want our minds to rest in this peace, this stillness, opening our hearts to His Word.



Gospel



- The Good News is proclaimed by the Deacon
- *Evangelion*, means Good News.
- Joyful news that God came from heaven for our salvation.
- Scripture says, *The Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the world...and then the end will come* (Matt 24:14)
- If there is a Bishop it is at this time that he descends from his throne, the catechumens are dismissed along with those who are unworthy to receive the divine mysteries.
- No one is to enter the Church at this time.
- After the reading there is the Homily to help us understand how to apply this to our lives.

Catechumens

Dismissal of Catechumens

- In many Orthodox Churches around the world Catechumens will be asked to leave at this time
- What is a catechumen?
 - One who desires to become baptized.
 - Once one has such a desire then there is a period of instruction. Catechesis or catechism.
 - In Apostolic times this was usually a short time period
 - After Apostolic times became much longer.
 - Apostolic Constitutions speak of a three year period.



Catechumens

- Why do we pray for them?
 - Since they do yet have the boldness before God they need support and intercession of the faithful.
- Liturgy includes series of prayers for them before they are dismissed.
- Why are they dismissed?
 - Dismissed as it is known that those who are not properly indoctrinated or prepared can be harmed by the Mysteries.
 - This for their benefit. An act of Love.
- Those who remain are only those who have received the seal of the Holy Spirit and prepared to take a seat at that wedding feast of the Kingdom, to delight in contemplation of God, and the communion of the Holy Mysteries.

Now Prepared

- Do you see the flow of the Liturgy?
- like a river - from an endless fountain
 - Gateway is *"Blessed is the Kingdom of the father...."*
 - We offer prayers.
 - Hear the Antiphons vices of Prophets and saints.
 - Joined by Angels and we hear their voices in thrice holy hymn
 - Then we heard voices of Apostles and finally voice of Christ himself.
- Now prepared to begin most important part of Liturgy. Will experience the Passion, the sacrifice and ultimate Gift of God himself.

