

The Great Entrance

The Cherubic Hymn

Note: The bema doors are closed, and the kalimávchi is put on.

Following the Scripture Readings, after the Litanies and Prayers for the Faithful, the Priest exclaims:

PRIEST: That guarded always by Thy might, we may send up glory to Thee, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

PEOPLE: Amen. Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim (*Ezekiel 10:2; Hebrews 9:5*), and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside all earthly cares, that we may receive the King all... [*Deferred to after the Entrance: ...Who comes invisibly upborne (escorted) by the Angelic hosts. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.*]

Note: The bema doors are opened and the kalimávchi is removed.

Note: The Deacon returns to the Holy of Holies, and censes the Holy Table, the Holy of Holies, the iconostasion and the faithful while quietly reciting Psalm 50.

While the Cherubic Hymn is being sung, and the Deacon censes, the Priest prays in a low voice:

The Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn

PRIEST: No one who is bound with the desires and pleasures of the flesh (*Titus 3:3*) is worthy to approach or to draw near or to serve Thee, O King of glory (*Psalms 24:7-8*), for to minister to Thee is great and fearful even to the heavenly powers (*Daniel 4:35*).

Nevertheless through Thine unspeakable and boundless love for mankind, Thou didst become man without change or alteration, and didst become our High Priest (*Hebrews 4:14*), and, as Master of all (*Acts 10:36*), didst commit to us the ministry of this liturgical and bloodless sacrifice.

For Thou alone, O Lord our God, rulest over those in heaven and on earth (*1 Chronicles 29:11*), Who art borne on the throne of the Cherubim (*Psalms 98:1*), Who art the Lord of the Seraphim (*Isaiah 6:2*), and King of Israel (*Matthew 27:42*), Who alone art holy and dost rest in the saints.

Therefore, I entreat Thee, Who alone art good and ready to listen: Look down on me, Thy sinner and unprofitable servant (*Luke 17:10*, and cleanse my soul and my heart from an evil conscience (*cf. Hebrews 10:22*), and by the power of Thy Holy Spirit enable me (*Romans 15:15*), who am clothed with the grace of the priesthood, to stand before this Thy Holy Table (*cf. Exodus 25:23-30; 37:10-16*), and to perform the sacred Mystery of Thy holy and most-pure Body and precious Blood.

For I draw near to Thee, and bowing my neck I implore Thee: Do not turn Thy face away from me (*Psalms 142:7*), nor cast me out from among Thy children (*Wisdom 9:4*), but make me, Thy sinful and unworthy servant (*Luke 17:10*), worthy to offer these Gifts to Thee.

For Thou Thyself art He that offers and is offered, that accepts and is distributed, O Christ our God, and to Thee do we send up glory (*Psalms 96:8*), with Thy Father Who is without beginning, and Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit (*John 6:63*), now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen (*Ephesians 3:21*).

Note: If there is no Deacon, the Priest censes the Holy Table, the Holy of Holies, the iconostasion and the faithful while quietly reciting Psalm 50.

After the censing – by the Deacon or Priest – the Priest (and Deacon) stand before the Holy Altar, and recite in low voices:

PRIEST: Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim, and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside all earthly cares: (3)

DEACON (OR THE PRIEST CONCLUDES IF THERE IS NO DEACON): That we may receive the King all, Who comes invisibly upborne (escorted) by the Angelic hosts. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia. (3)

The Priest faces the faithful and says:

PRIEST: Brothers and sisters forgive me, the sinner.

The Priest goes to the Prothesis and censes the Holy Gifts thrice, saying:

PRIEST: O God, cleanse me the sinner. (3)

The Deacon says to the Priest in a low voice:

DEACON: Lift up, master.

PRIEST: Lift up your hands in the holy place, and bless the Lord (*Psalm 133:2*).

The Priest takes up the Holy Gifts and begins to exit the Holy of Holies, saying:

PRIEST: The Lord is ascended in jubilation, the Lord with the voice of the trumpet (*Psalm 46:6*).

The Great Entrance

The Priest and Deacon exit the Holy of Holies, and stand before the faithful; the Deacon and the Priest exclaim:

DEACON: The Most Blessed Tikhon, Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of all America and Canada; and the Most Reverend Benjamin, Archbishop of San Francisco and the West: may the Lord God remember in His Kingdom, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

PRIEST: This country, its President, all civil authorities, and those who serve in the Armed Forces: may the Lord God remember in His Kingdom, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

PRIEST: The sick, the suffering, those in captivity, and every adversity; those who travel by sea, land, and air: may the Lord God remember in His Kingdom, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

The blessed and ever-memorable most holy Orthodox Patriarchs, the founders of this holy church, [the founders of our holy monasteries and churches,] and for all our fathers and brethren, the Orthodox departed before us, who here and everywhere lie asleep in the Lord: may the Lord God remember in His Kingdom, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

You and all Orthodox Christians: may the Lord God remember in His Kingdom (*cf. Luke 23:42*), always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages (*Ephesians 3:21*).

PEOPLE: Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*). Who comes invisibly upborne (*escorted*) by the Angelic hosts (*cf. Psalm 148:2*). Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia (*Psalm 150:6*).

The priest places the holy gifts on the Holy Table (Altar), covering them and censuring them, sayings in a low voice:

PRIEST (REMOVING THE VEIL FROM THE PATEN): The noble Joseph, when he had taken down Thy most-pure Body from the tree, wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices and placed it in a new tomb.

PRIEST (REMOVING THE VEIL FROM THE CHALICE): In the tomb with the body, and in Hades with the soul as God, in paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and the Spirit, wast Thou, O boundless Christ, filling all things.

PRIEST (CENSING THE AERA [THE LARGE VEIL]): Bearing life and more fruitful than Paradise, brighter than any royal chamber: Thy tomb, O Christ, is the fountain of our resurrection.

PRIEST (COVERING THE PATEN AND CHALICE AND CENSING THE HOLY GIFTS): Do good, O Lord, to Sion in Thy good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then wilt Thou delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole-burnt offerings; then young bulls will be offered on Thine altar.

Why do the Orthodox Christians use incense in their worship? Because it is Biblical.

Incense and the Altar of Incense in the Old Testament (cf. Exodus 30):

“You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width—it shall be square—and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place them on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.” (Exodus 30:1-6)

“Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. (Exodus 30:7-8)

And the Lord said to Moses: “Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord.” (Exodus 30:34-37)

Note: Stacte is myrrh, the bitter gum-resin extracted from small, thorny tree species of the genus Commiphora. Myrrh resin has been used throughout history as a perfume, incense and medicine. Myrrh mixed with posca or wine was common across ancient cultures as an analgesic. Commiphora myrrha is native to Somalia, Oman, Yemen, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and parts of Saudi Arabia. In Greek, the related word μύρον (myron) is a general term for perfume.

Note: Onycha is the fingernail-like operculum, or trap door, of a snail-like mollusk found in the Red Sea. In antiquity the operculum was used as an ingredient in incense. The Babylonian Talmud recorded that onycha was rubbed with an alkali solution prepared from the bitter vetch to remove impurities, it was then soaked in the

fermented berry juice of the Caper shrub, or a strong white wine, in order to enhance its fragrance. The operculum was also commonly used as an ingredient in many East Asian incense.

*Note: Galbanum is an aromatic gum resin of the Persian plant species *Ferula gummosa*. Galbanum-yielding plants grow plentifully on the slopes of the mountain ranges of northern Iran. It occurs usually in hard or soft, irregular, more or less translucent and shining lumps, or occasionally in separate tears, of a light-brown, yellowish or greenish-yellow colour. Galbanum has a disagreeable, bitter taste, a peculiar, a somewhat musky odour, and an intense green scent. It is included in the incense as a reminder of deliberate and unrepentant sinners. Galbanum was highly treasured as a sacred substance by the ancient Egyptians known as “green” incense.*

Incense in Heavenly Worship around the Throne of the Lamb in eternity (cf. Revelation 5 & 8):

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Revelation 5:6-8)

Then another Angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the Angel’s hand. (Revelation 8:3-4)

Litany of Supplication (Completed Litany)

DEACON: Let us complete our prayer unto the Lord.

PEOPLE: Lord, have mercy (*cf. Matthew 15:22; 20:30*).

For the precious Gifts now offered, let us pray to the Lord. (*cf. Acts 8:24*)

For this holy house (*Psalm 93:5*) and for those who enter it with faith, reverence, and the fear of God (*2 Corinthians 7:1*), let us pray to the Lord (*cf. Acts 8:24*).

That we may be delivered from all affliction, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord. (*cf. Acts 8:24*)

Help us, save us (*Psalm 109:26*), have mercy upon us (*Psalm 51:1*), and us us (*Psalm 32:7; 40:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3*), O God, by Thy grace.

That the whole day may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us ask of the Lord. (*1John 5:14-15*)

PEOPLE: Grant this, O Lord.

An Angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies (*cf. Exodus 23:20; Psalm 91:11*), let us ask of the Lord (*cf. 1John 5:14-15*).

Commentary – Angels in the Bible and the Liturgy

“For an Angel of peace...” One of the things we pray for at every Liturgy is for an Angel to guard us and guide us. Each of us has been given a guardian Angel. It is about our guardian Angels that the Lord Jesus spoke of when He admonished His disciples not to “look down on children, for I

tell you that their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 18:10-11). And during Baptism, the celebrating priest prays specifically that an Angel of light be assigned to the child being baptized.

Mother Alexandra (1909-1991), known in the world as Princess Ileana of Romania, established the Convent of the Transfiguration in Pennsylvania in 1968. As a small child, she was given the privilege of seeing her guardian Angel: the Angel that would guide and guard her throughout her long and often difficult life. She recounted the event in her little book, *The Holy Angels*:

“It was early morning, when I was seven years old, that I saw the Angels. I am as sure of it now as I was then. I was not dreaming, nor seeing things. I just know they were there, plainly, clearly, distinctly. I was neither astonished nor afraid. I was not even awed, I was only terribly pleased. Our night nursery was lit by the dawn and I saw a group of Angels standing, as if chatting, around my brother’s bed. I was aware of this, although I could not hear their voices. They had no wings. At the foot of my brother Mircea’s bed stood one heavenly being, a little aside from the others taller he was, and extraordinarily beautiful, with great white wings. In his right hand he carried a lighted taper; he did not seem to belong to the group of Angels gathered around the bed. He clearly stood apart and on watch. I knew him to be the guardian Angel. I then became aware that at the foot of my own bed stood a similar celestial creature. He was tall and his robe was dark blue with wide, loose sleeves. His beauty was such as I cannot describe because it was comparable to nothing human. His wings swept high and out behind him. One hand was lifted to his breast, while in the other he carried a lighted taper. Love, kindness, understanding, and assurance flowed from him. Delighted, I crawled from under the bedcovers and, kneeling up against the end of the bed, I stretched out my hand with the ardent wish to touch my smiling guardian, but he took a step back, put out a warning hand, and gently shook his head. I was so close to him I could have reached him easily. ‘Oh, please don’t go,’ I cried; at which words all the other Angels looked toward me and then they vanished. I was but a child when I saw my guardian Angel. As time passed I still sporadically remembered and acknowledged his presence, but mostly, I ignored him.”

The Liturgy speaks over and over again about the reality of Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim. The Scriptures witness to the reality of Angels from beginning to end, from Genesis to the Book of Revelation.

What are Angels? The word “angel” is a Greek word that means “messenger.” Angels are purely spiritual beings that have often served as God’s messengers at critical times in human history. In the Old Testament, the Archangel Michael appears to the prophet Daniel (10:13) and is mentioned again in Jude 9 and the Book of Revelation (12:7).

In the New Testament, the Archangel Gabriel appears to both Zechariah to announce the birth of his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:10-20); and to Mary the Theotokos to announce the birth of her son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-37). An Angel comforts the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before His crucifixion (Luke 22:43); and Angels announce His resurrection to the women who come to His tomb and find it empty (Luke 24:4-7). At the Second Coming, the Gospel of Matthew (25:31) tells us that the Lord will be escorted by “all the Angels.”

The Scriptures mention many different kinds or ranks of Angels. The cherubim and the seraphim are mentioned throughout the Old Testament and are particularly associated with the Temple in Jerusalem and the Ark of the Covenant by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. In fact, the Angelic hymn that Isaiah (6:5) heard sung by the seraphim in the Temple, “*Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth: Heaven and earth are full of Your glory*” is still sung at every celebration of the Liturgy to this day.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul mentions other types of Angels such as thrones, powers and principalities (*Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21*).

The role of Angels has been significant in the history of our salvation as well as in our praise and worship of the living God during the Liturgy. We believe that if we listen carefully to the message of the Angels, we can often hear the voice of God in our lives.

Commentary – The Sign of the Cross

The Sign of the Cross is one of Christianity’s most ancient customs. It is a sign of blessing and commitment to the Crucified Lord. Tertullian (c. 160-240), an ancient Christian writer in North Africa first mentions the Sign of the Cross: “*We Christians wear out our foreheads with the Sign of the Cross.*”

A simple custom, it is a statement of Christian faith which incorporates the entire body. Like many ancient customs, it has been performed in a diversity of ways over the centuries. Current Orthodox Christian practice, used by all since the 17th century, involves combining the thumb, pointer and middle finger while placing the ring finger and the small finger against the palm.

The unity of the three fingers represents the unity of the undivided Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons but one God. The two fingers pressed against the palm represent the two natures of Christ: human and divine. It indicates our belief in Jesus, who is fully God and fully human. Our motion, of course, recalls the cross: forehead, stomach, right shoulder and left shoulder, but also the God who is Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As one moves through the sign, one recites, at the forehead, “*In the name of the Father;*” at the navel, “*and of the Son;*” and across the shoulders, “*and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*” It is as if to say “*I love you Lord with all of my mind (forehead), with all my soul (navel), with all my strength (right shoulder) and with all my heart (left shoulder).*”

Done at various times as a sign of reverence, it is traditionally made before kissing an icon or the Gospel book; and during the Liturgy, whenever the Holy Trinity or the Virgin Mary is mentioned; before and after the Gospel is read; when lighting candles and during the creed. In short, few actions are so simple and yet symbolize so much of our Christian life.

Commentary – Praise God! Alleluia!

One of several ancient Hebrew words found in the Liturgy, “Alleluia” literally means “Praise God” and in the Scriptures is found primarily in the Old Testament Book of Psalms, where it is used 24 times in Psalms 104, 111-117 and 145-150. It is also found four times in chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation where it is the word of praise and worship used by all creation “*for the wedding of the Lamb*” (*Revelation 19:7*).

A joyful, often spontaneous word of thanksgiving and praise, it is sung throughout the Liturgy: with verses from the Psalms after the Epistle reading; just before the Gospel is read; at the end of the Cherubic Hymn during the Great Entrance; and as part of the normal Sunday Communion hymn taken from Psalm 148:1. In our Church alleluia is also sung during Lent and Holy Week as well as at funerals and memorial services.

Commentary – Amen!

The word “*Amen*” is another ancient Hebrew word used throughout the Liturgy. It is always an affirmation of the certainty and truth of what has just been said and may be variously understood to mean “*Truly*”, “*So say we all*”, “*So be it*”, or “*Let it be so.*” Most simply, it means “*Yes!*” Amen is our “*Yes*” to God.

The Hebrew root means “*to be firm, confirmed, to be reliable, have faith, to believe.*” We find the word “*amen*” used by the apostle Paul to end two of his letters (*Romans 15:33; Galatians 6:18*); and it is the very last word of the Bible, closing it like a seal: “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!*” (*Revelation 22:21*).

Thus, when we say “*Amen,*” we are expressing our assent and confirming that which is said in the Scriptures and the Liturgy as being true and the foundation on which we build our lives. Father Lev Gillet writes that “*in saying ‘Amen!’ our whole life and being are engaged in an act of faith and ardent trust.*” To say this word is to make a commitment to Christ.

Litany of Supplication (Completed Litany) – Continued

Pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

All things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord (*cf. I John 5:14-15*).

That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, and peaceful, and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:10*), let us ask (*cf. I John 5:14-15*).

Commemorating our most-holy, most-pure, most-blessed (*Luke 1:46*) and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints (*Revelation 8:3*), let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

PEOPLE: To You, O Lord (*Psalm 25:1*).

While the Deacon intones the preceding Petitions, the Priest recites the Prayer of the Proskomide (*see commentary on page 10*) in a low voice:

PRIEST: O Lord, God almighty, Who alone art holy, Who acceptest the sacrifice of praise from those who call upon Thee with their whole heart: Accept also the prayer of us sinners, and bear it to Thy holy altar, enabling us to offer unto Thee gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our sins and for the ignorances of the people; and make us worthy to find grace in Thy sight, that our sacrifice may be acceptable unto Thee, and that the good Spirit of Thy grace may dwell upon us and upon these Gifts here offered, and upon all Thy people.

The Priest thereafter exclaims:

PRIEST: Through the compassions of Thine only-begotten Son with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Commentary – Remembering Death

“*For a Christian end to our lives...*,” is a petition prayed at every Liturgy. The Liturgy confronts us with the fact that death is something that awaits all of us. Yet, living in a secular culture we often wish to avoid thinking about it.

As Orthodox Christians, we understand earthly death to be an encounter with the Risen Christ and the door to what the Lord Jesus calls “*eternal life*” (*John 3:16*). For believers, death is not the end but a new beginning.

Because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, Christians – as St. Paul wrote – know that “*to die is gain*” (*Philippians 1:22*) and “*do not grieve as others do who have no hope*” (*1 Thessalonians 4:13*). Indeed, “*here we have no lasting city but are looking for the city that is to come*” (*Hebrews 13:14*).

One of the most striking things about Christians in the ancient Roman world that their non-Christian neighbors were startled by and frequently commented upon was the fact that they didn’t seem to be afraid to die. Christians who have died and risen with Christ in the waters of baptism (*Romans 6:3-5*) are to live their lives here and now in the light of eternity and that vantage point enables a person to see life from a completely new and different perspective, coloring how every relationship, task and circumstance will be dealt with.

Priorities change. What in monastic writers is called the “*remembrance of death*” is a spiritual discipline that is meant to give our lives focus and clarity of purpose.

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003) has written about the Christian attitude towards death: “*Death is the touchstone of our attitude to life. People who are afraid of death are afraid of life. It is impossible not to be afraid of life with all its complexity and dangers if one is afraid of death. This means that to solve the problem of death is not a luxury. If we are afraid of death we will never be prepared to take ultimate risks; we will spend our life in a cowardly, careful and timid manner. It is only if we can face death, make sense of it, and determine its place and our place in regard to it that we will be able to live in a fearless way and to the fullness of our ability. Too often we wait until the end of our life to face death, whereas we would have lived quite differently if only we had faced death at the outset.*”

Life in this world is temporary. What are you doing in your life that honors God? What will be your legacy as a believer?

Commentary – Calling the Virgin Mary the Theotokos or Mother of God

Why do we remember the Virgin Mary? The Virgin Mary is the Mother of the Messiah, our Savior and King, the Mother of the Lord Jesus, the Theotokos or Mother of God. The theological significance of this title lies in the fact that in the womb of this teen-aged Jewish girl the Word, who was with God and was God, through whom all things were created, became flesh and dwelt among us (*John 1:1-3, 14*).

That title for the Virgin Mary is found in ancient Christian writings dating back to the second and third centuries and is used for the first time in surviving documents by an early Christian scholar named Origen (AD 185-254). It was officially proclaimed as a title to be used by Christians to describe the Virgin Mary at the Third Ecumenical Council held in the city of Ephesus in AD 431.

Commentary – Remembering the Saints

Throughout the Liturgy we are asked to “*remember all the saints*” beginning with “*the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary*” and her “*yes*” to God’s plan for her life (*Luke 1:38*); and then, like all of them, to commit “*our whole life to Christ our God.*”

Who are the saints that we are asked to remember in these petitions? The saints are those men and women who, throughout the centuries and in every culture, have loved God and borne witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and remained faithful to Him to the end, often at the cost of their own lives.

They are people who have been transformed by their faith and truly are the “*real deal*” as Christians. They are men and women from every generation who have been canonized; i.e. set up as models of what it means to truly follow Christ and be faithful to Him, seeking and striving for His kingdom as their first priority in life (*Matthew 6:33*).

When we speak of Saints Peter and Paul and the apostles, Saints Katherine, Irene and Barbara the martyrs, Saints Basil, John Chrysostom and Nektarios the bishops, we are speaking of people who have been canonized by the Church in an official manner to serve as models of faithfulness and holiness for us to emulate. Canonization does not “*make*” anybody a saint. Canonization recognizes that someone already was, in his/her own lifetime, a saint.

The word canonization means that a Christian has been found worthy to have his/her name placed in the canon or official list of the saints of the Church. This canon is read during the various liturgical services of the Church, particularly Orthros or Matins. Every day of the year is dedicated to a number of saints whose names are remembered by the People of God.

When a Christian’s name has been included in the canon of saints, it is a sign that the Church encourages the faithful to ask that saint for his/her prayers before God. Liturgical services may be specially composed in the saint’s honor and celebrated by the Church.

For the first thousand years of the history of the Church saints were recognized without any formal rite of canonization. Local congregations of the faithful simply began to remember certain well-known Christians in their liturgical gatherings, to ask them for help in prayer, to visit their relics, which frequently remained vehicles of the Holy Spirit, curing the sick in soul and body, as they had during earthly life.

In the 10th century, in the west, the then-Orthodox Church of Rome began to insist that saints be formally and officially “registered” as such with the papal authorities. The first recorded canonization of this type was that of St. Ulrich of Augsburg, canonized in AD 993 by Pope John XV. For the next 600 years – during which time the Roman Catholic Church split off from the Orthodox community – the west developed a very precise (and some would say even legalistic) method of determining who were to be canonized as saints.

The Orthodox Church never developed any comparable methods for canonizing saints. As in the early Church, the situation has remained very much determined by local practices and local traditions. Holy men and women continue to be recognized as such during their own lifetimes; they continue to be venerated and honored after their death; and Christian people continue to ask for their prayers and to visit their shrines.

It is the Holy Spirit Who is the source of all holiness, all sanctity, in the life of the Church. Saints may be found in every country and every culture, ranging from Greece, Turkey and Russia to Serbia, Romania and America; from Palestine, Libya and Egypt to France, Ireland and Italy. Saints come from all walks of life: men and women, husbands and wives, kings and queens, soldiers, merchants, slaves, students, peasants and aristocrats, bishops and priests, monks and nuns. All were ordinary people who chose to live their lives in complete dedication to God, allowing Him to renew and transform them from the inside out.

The saints, no matter what country they were from, language they spoke or station in life, never betrayed their innermost beliefs about Christ and strove to live their lives in complete honesty and integrity, no matter the cost. They lived with courage and determination, love and humility, compassion, grace and joy. The saints reveal human potential at its finest and serve as role-models for us to follow today.

To know and understand the saints of the Church is to deepen our relationship with their Master and ours, our Lord Jesus Christ. However – and this is important! – the saints are not simply those men and women whose icons adorn the walls and windows of our Churches. St. Paul writes that we are “*all called to be saints*” (*Romans 1:7*). And the text of the Divine Liturgy refers to us, the congregation gathered for worship, as saints. Shortly before the body and blood of Christ are offered in communion, one of the things that the priest sings in the Liturgy is: “*Let us attend! The holy things for the holy (holy = saints).*”

This is a paraphrase of a much more compact sentence in the original Greek: “*Let us attend! The holy things for the holy,*” which may be more literally translated as “*Let us be attentive! The holy (Gifts: the Eucharistic Bread and Wine that are now the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ) for the saints.*” In the original Greek of the Liturgy, the word that is translated as both saint and holy is the same word: «Ἅγιος».

In other words, every Christian is called to be a saint, to be holy as God is holy, to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (*Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Peter 1:15; Matthew 5:48*). To become ever more Christ-like, to be holy, to be a saint: this is God’s will and plan for our life.

The Prayer of the Proskomede

While the Deacon intones the preceding Petitions, the Priest recites in a low voice:

PRIEST: O Lord, God almighty, Who alone art holy (*Revelation 15:3-4*), Who acceptest the sacrifice of praise (*Hebrews 13:15*) from those who call upon Thee with their whole heart (*Psalms 9:1*): Accept also the prayer of us sinners, and bear it to Thy holy altar (*cf. Exodus 29:37*), enabling us to offer unto Thee gifts and spiritual sacrifices (*Hebrews 5:1*) for our sins and for the ignorances of the people (*Hebrews 9:7*); and make us worthy to find grace in Thy sight, that our sacrifice may be acceptable unto Thee (*1 Peter 2:5*), and that the good Spirit of Thy grace may dwell upon us and upon these Gifts here offered, and upon all Thy people.

PRIEST: Through the compassions of Thine only-begotten (*John 1:18*) Son with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit (*Psalms 143:10; John 6:63*), now and ever and unto ages of ages (*Ephesians 3:21*).

PEOPLE: Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

This Prayer is, in fact, the conclusion of the *Proskomede* – the Service of Preparing the Bread and Wine – which takes place before the Divine Liturgy.

At the *Proskomede* petitions and prayers are offered for the living and the deceased, and the Priest reads the individual names of those he specifically intends to commemorate as well as the names of those whom individual parishioners have asked him to pray for.

It sometimes happens that names are received during the Divine Liturgy and are brought up to the Holy of Holies. In that case, the Priest may read these prior to exiting for the Great Entrance.

In any event, the Prayer of the Proskomide concludes the commemoration and concurrent preparation of bread and wine that will be offered and Consecrated on the Holy Altar.

The Kiss of Peace

PRIEST: Peace be with all (*John 20:26; 1 Peter 5:14; 3 John 15*).

PEOPLE: And with your spirit (*cf. Philippians 4:23; 2 Timothy 4:22*)

DEACON: Let us love one another (*John 13:34*) that with one mind (*Romans 15:6*) we may confess:

The Priest venerates (kisses) the holy Gifts saying:

PRIEST: I love You, Lord. You are my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer (*Psalms 18:1-2*).

At this time the clergy concelebrating at the Altar venerate the Holy Gifts in turn and then exchange the kiss of peace saying to each other:

PRIEST 1: Christ is in our midst.

PRIEST 2: He is and ever shall be.

Commentary – The Kiss of Peace

During Christ's time, the kiss was one of the preliminary courtesies to any ceremonial meal: its omission caused our Lord to admonish Simon the Pharisee in his own house (*Luke 7:45*). Moreover, the Kiss of Peace is one of the oldest liturgical customs of the Church, as St. Paul reveals in his letters: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (*Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12*).

Like any kiss, the kiss of peace signifies mutual love and friendship. Yet the Scriptures and the saints – like Cyril, the 4th century bishop of Jerusalem who discusses the exchange of the kiss of peace with the catechumens in his Catechetical Orations – make it clear that this kiss is not simply an ordinary kiss but a "kiss of love," and a "holy kiss" by which we demonstrate that the source of our love for one another is the love of God and that Christ and the Holy Spirit are the bonds of mutual love among Christians.

Historically, particularly up to the 6th century, the kiss of peace was exchanged at the Liturgy and at a variety of other liturgical services; yet over time the practice died out among the laity, although it has continued to be exchanged among the clergy to the present time. Today, some parishes have all members – clergy and laity – participating in the kiss of peace. The customary greeting is: “*Christ is in our midst!*” and the response is: “*He is and always will be!*”

Professing and Proclaiming the Faith

Prior to the Eucharistic Prayers, having brought in the Holy Gifts as well as Having offered prayers and Petitions – the congregation of the faithful is invited to profess and proclaim the Orthodox faith.

Confession of the basic Trinitarian Dogma

Most likely part of the Divine Liturgy from the earliest centuries, the fourth-century Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom includes the briefest form of a “Creed” – a concise expression of the most fundamental dogma of the Orthodox Christian Church – in the confession, “*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the Trinity One in essence, and undivided.*”

DEACON: Let us love one another (*John 13:34*) that with one mind (*Romans 15:6*) we may confess:

PEOPLE: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the Trinity One in essence, and undivided.

Clearly love and faith go hand in hand: two sides of the same coin. Prior to the seventh century the Kiss of Peace was exchanged by clergy and laity alike, men with men and women with women for obvious reason. Abuse of the practice, most particularly insincerity of intent to express fraternal love, led to its disuse among the laity. Most importantly, insincere love obviates sincerity of faith.

Confession of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Dogmas – The “Symbol of the Faith”

After the Kiss of Peace, the Deacon proclaims:

DEACON: The doors. The doors. In wisdom let us attend.

PEOPLE: I believe • in one God: the Father (*Ephesians 4:6*) Almighty, • Maker of heaven and earth (*Psalms 121:2; Matthew 11:25*), and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ (*Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 12:3*), the Son of God (*John 10:36; 1 John 5:5*), • the only-begotten (*John 1:18*), begotten of the Father before all ages: • Light of Light, true God of true God; • begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father (*cf. John 14: 9-11*), through Whom all things were made (*Colossians 1:16*);

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, • and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man;

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, • and suffered and was buried; • and the third day He rose according to the Scriptures (*1 Corinthians 15:4*),

And ascended into heaven (*Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-12*), and sits at the right hand of the Father (*Colossians 3:1*);

And He shall come again with glory (*Matthew 25: 31*) to judge the living and the dead (*Acts 10:42*); • Whose Kingdom shall have no end (*Luke 1:33*);

And in the Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 3:17*), the Lord, the Giver of life (*John 6:63*), Who proceeds from the Father (*John 15:26*);

Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; • Who spoke by the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I acknowledge one baptism (*Ephesians 4:5*) for the remission of sins (*Ephesians 1:7*).

I look for the resurrection of the dead (*Acts 24:15*), • and the life of the world to come (*Mark 8:10; Luke 18:30*). Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

Commentary – The doors! Guard the doors!

Around AD 112, a persecution against Christians broke out in what was then called Bithynia, a province of the ancient Roman Empire on the northwest coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Accused Christians – men, women and even children – were arrested and interrogated by Pliny, the local Roman governor, who officially charged them to renounce their faith, curse Christ and worship the emperor’s statue – or be executed.

What crime had they committed? Of what were they guilty? In Pliny’s own words, taken from his letter to the Emperor Trajan reporting on the whole matter, *“the whole of their guilt... was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before dawn and singing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god and binding themselves by a solemn oath not to do anything evil... never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to lie nor refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so.”*

Although their high morals were unquestioned by Pliny, Christians were being persecuted for gathering in the early morning to sing hymns to Christ – in other words, for gathering to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. The exclamation to guard the doors, in ancient times, was a direction to the doorkeepers to close the doors of the Church and guard them.

Father Lawrence Farley writes: *“In North America today, we can forget that the most dangerous thing the early Christians did was to celebrate the Liturgy. Every time they did so, they risked their lives. Roman law made it quite clear that Christianity should not exist and what defined a Christian in the eyes of the state as well as those of the Church was participation in the Eucharist. In those first three centuries after Christ, every Christian knew that he or she risked prison, exile and even death by attending Liturgy. They never knew when Roman soldiers would break in on them, gather them up and lead them away to be imprisoned and/or executed. Worshipping the one true God under such a shadow and such pressures left a mark on their liturgical practice, an abiding reminder of the separation of the Church and the world: the closing of the doors. And persecutions are not a thing of the past. Christians in Eastern Europe faced persecutions up until the latter part of the 20th century and Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere still live under constant threat of arrest and martyrdom.”*

In Russia alone, secret police archives that have been released since the fall of Communism document the fact that, between 1918 and 1940, under Lenin and Stalin, more than 40,000 Orthodox priests were executed.

Commentary – Confessing the Creed

Do you know what you believe? Every Sunday, millions of Orthodox Christians around the world recite the Creed. When we say the Creed, do we realize what a remarkable thing it is that we're doing? Do we realize how different this makes us from the world around us?

In a society that celebrates individuality above all else we are doing something together as a community; in an age where the avoidance of commitment has been elevated to a virtue, we are pledging ourselves to a very specific set of convictions and to one another; in a culture that celebrates novelty, we are using words written long ago; in a throwaway, consumerist world we preserve the tradition of the *"faith that was once for all delivered to the saints"* (*Jude 3*) for nearly two millennia; in a society where the accepted wisdom changes from minute to minute, we insist that some truths are so critical that they do not change and must be repeated over and over again. Reciting the Creed during the Liturgy is a counter cultural act and goes against the grain of many of the values espoused by contemporary American culture.

The Creed, which is also called the Symbol of Faith, is a brief summary of the essentials of the Christian faith written in the 4th century at the first two ecumenical councils: the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 and the First Council of Constantinople in AD 381. These councils, attended by bishops from all over the ancient Roman world, were called to clarify the Christian teaching about God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

In the ancient world – like today – many individuals and groups who claimed to be Christian – but were not – taught things about the Lord Jesus at odds with the authentic Christian faith. One such group, called the Arians, taught that Jesus Christ was not truly divine, not fully God; and another group, called the Strugglers against the Spirit, taught that the Holy Spirit was not divine and should not be worshipped.

These two councils, summarizing the experiences of the Apostles and the teaching of the Scriptures, proclaimed Jesus Christ to be both fully God and fully human, the Word of God made flesh (*John 1:1-14*), who was crucified, suffered and was buried at a particular point in history – under Pontius Pilate – and rose from the dead; and the Holy Spirit was also proclaimed to be fully divine, to be the Lord who is also worshipped together with the Father and the Son as one God in Trinity.

The Creed is a summary of how we as Christians view God, the world and ourselves. It is, in fact, a very specific view of the world, a worldview that constitutes the lens through which we are to see everything and the structure by which we frame our thoughts, experiences and ideas. What we believe about the relationship between God and humanity, sin, redemption and forgiveness, good and evil, heaven and hell, as well as our responsibilities in this life, will affect what we do and determine how we live.

For an Orthodox Christian to simply say the Creed by rote, without understanding what these words imply for our lives, is to stumble through life as if blindfolded, unable to see reality as it

truly is. When we say “*I believe*” we are affirming that we see things as they really are and that we have a personal responsibility to live the vision contained in the words of the Creed. In the end, we are what we believe.

We believe that our God is the one God revealed in the book of Genesis as the utterly transcendent creator of everything, both visible and invisible – from whales and stars to mountains and grasshoppers, from photons and quarks to black holes and Angelic hosts – and that in Jesus Christ we are able to address Him with intimacy as our Father.

We believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah (Greek: *Christ*, English: *Anointed One*) awaited by ancient Israel, the only-begotten and unique Son of God, of the same essence as the Father, being fully divine; and yet, in taking flesh from the Virgin Mary, becoming fully human.

We believe that in the Word of God becoming human and being crucified for our salvation, we have been set free from sin; and in His rising from the dead, death has been conquered by God and the possibility of eternal life in His kingdom “*that will have no end*” is now open to us.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is also divine and proceeds only from the Father and is to be worshipped by us together with the Father and the Son.

We believe in the Church, the community of believers that the apostle Paul says is the Body of Christ and which the Creed describes as one, holy, catholic and apostolic – as possessing the fullness of faith and open to all; as being rooted in the teaching of the apostles and sent out into the world to proclaim the truth of God’s love for the human race.

We believe in the necessity of the sacrament of baptism for the forgiveness of our sins and to fully participate in the death and resurrection of Christ (*Romans 6:3-11*).

We believe that Christ will come once again and that the entire human race – both those who are alive and those who are dead – will be under His judgment for how they have lived (*Matthew 25:31-46 and Romans 2:6*).

We look forward to that day when Christ will return in glory and eagerly await the resurrection of all the dead, and the life of the age to come, that time “*which no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has the human mind even conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him*” (*1 Corinthians 2:9*).

If we live with this faith as the prism through which we view the world and our lives, we shall become what God has called us to be: His saints, a chosen and holy people and a royal priesthood (*1 Peter 2:9*) that offers His love and the gift of immortality to a fallen world wrapped in evil and death.

The Holy Anaphora (Offering)

Having formally concluded the Proskomide – the commemoration of the living and the dead and the concurrent preparation of Bread and Wine – as well as having forgiven one another and committing ourselves to oneness in love and faith, we “offer” – literally “lift up” (in Greek, anaphéro) – the Holy Gifts with those commemorated and all the world to the Lord.

The Anaphora begins with an instruction from the Deacon:

DEACON: Let us stand aright. Let us stand with fear. Let us attend, that we may offer the holy Oblation in peace.

PEOPLE: A mercy of peace (*Titus 1:4*), a sacrifice of praise (*Hebrews 13:15*).

Let us be attentive! It is inevitable that at times during the Liturgy, our minds will wander. This is to be expected since we are human. This is one reason why the Deacon calls us back to attention by saying, “*Wisdom. Let us attend.*” at different points in the Liturgy: for example, before the Epistle and Gospel readings, the recitation of the Creed and here, just before the Prayer of Offering or Anaphora begins.

We are human beings and not robots and the level of concentration we can muster at any given time will be different at each Liturgy we attend. However, there is a general remedy.

The Liturgy is built, so to speak, to have many levels. For those who read their Bibles, who pray at home regularly, who take their faith seriously, the Liturgy has been found to be an unending source of spiritual wealth.

But to appreciate this takes a lot of work. One can liken it to watching football. Someone who doesn't know the rules of the game will inevitably dislike watching the sport. Yet the spectator who knows the rules, who has played the game, who knows the game from the inside out, can be endlessly involved in what is going on.

Thus, the first and most important way to combat mindless thoughts during Liturgy is to put the hard work of spiritual discipline in on the “off-days,” as difficult as that sounds.

A Practical Suggestion: The most saintly monk or nun has wandering thoughts during the Liturgy. When your mind begins to wander, stop, say the *Our Father* and try to follow along using the Liturgy book with the goal of better and better understanding the meaning of the text.

If you are not able to follow the text, focus on the altar, close your eyes and simply repeat the Jesus prayer: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*” (or, “*Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me*”). Then pray about those people, events and things for which you are truly thankful.

Caution: Remember that your mind has many tracks. The worst possible thing you can do is say to yourself, “*Don't think that.*” This inevitably leads us to think more about it! Rather, change your thoughts by doing something else like focusing on the text of the Liturgy, saying the *Our Father* or the *Jesus Prayer*. Don't worry: your mind will eventually follow.

Having recollected ourselves, and having renewed our intent to be attentive and to participate more and more fully in the Divine Liturgy – and thus in the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven – the Priest offers a Benediction.

This Benediction dates back to Apostolic era and are considered to have been the opening words of the “Agape Meal” or “Eucharistic Assembly,” perhaps following a Synagogue service or as a stand-alone Eucharistic celebration.

PRIEST: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all (*2 Corinthians 13:13*).

CHOIR: And with thy spirit (*cf. Philipians 4:23; 2 Timothy 4:22*).

Next, the Priest urges us to begin the Eucharist by lifting up our hearts to the Lord God Most High:

PRIEST: Let us lift up our hearts (*cf. Lamentations 3:41*).

CHOIR: We lift them up unto the Lord.

Then, the Priest introduces the specific meaning of “Eucharist” (Greek, *Thanksgiving*) the exact purpose of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist:

PRIEST: Let us give thanks unto the Lord (*Judith 8:25; Psalm 107:1*).

CHOIR: It is meet and right to worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity One in Essence and undivided.

Finally, the Priest reads the Prayer of the Anaphora in a low voice. In it we are offering two things, worship and thanksgiving. These precede the offering of the Bread and Wine and are, in actuality, precursors to the proper proffering of the Mysteriological (Sacramental) elements.

PRIEST (IN A LOW VOICE): It is meet and right to hymn Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee, and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion (*Psalm 102:22*), for Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible (*John 1:18*), incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same: Thou and Thine only-begotten Son (*John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9*) and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou it was Who brought us from non-existence into being (*cf. 2 Maccabees 7:28*), and when we had fallen away Thou didst raise us up again, and didst not cease to do all things until Thou hadst brought us up to heaven, and hadst endowed us with Thy Kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks to Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son (*John 3:16; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9*), and to Thy Holy Spirit; for all things of which we know and of which we know not, and for all the benefits bestowed upon us, whether manifest or unseen. And we thank Thee for this Liturgy which Thou hast deigned to accept at our hands, though there stand by Thee thousands of Archangels and hosts of Angels, the Cherubim (*Ezekiel 10:2*) and the Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their pinions,...(*Isaiah 6:2*),

PRIEST (EXCLAIMS): Singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming, and saying:

CHOIR: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory (*Isaiah 6:3*: Hosanna in the highest (*Matthew 21:9*). Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord (*Psalm 118:26*). Hosanna in the highest.

Commentary – “It is proper and right to... worship You”

What is worship? Why is it important? In English, the words “worship” and “worth” have the same root. We worship whatever is of ultimate value to us.

Orthodox Christians believe that worship of the one, true and living God is our highest calling as human beings and gives our lives meaning, purpose and direction. True worship, worship in the Holy Spirit, happens when – as the Lord Jesus commands in the Sermon on the Mount – we put God and the seeking of His Kingdom as our first priority, above anyone or anything else.

Worship is to love God with all of our mind, all our heart, all our strength and all our soul (*Mark 12:30*). For this reason, worship should not be thought of merely as a *part* of life. Real worship is the offering of the *whole* of our lives – everything that we are and everything that we have – to God. In this sense, worship is more than simply going to Church for Liturgy on Sunday mornings.

Worship is a *way of life* – a lifestyle of complete and total surrender to God, a burning desire to do His will in every facet of one’s life – that is nurtured by the Liturgy. Rick Warren has written in a best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, “*God is not interested in half-hearted commitment, partial obedience and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not just little bits and pieces of your life.*”

In ancient times, the Latin word *sacramentum*, from which we get the modern English word “sacrament,” had a very specific meaning in military contexts: it was the oath of loyalty unto death that a Roman soldier made to the Roman emperor when he first joined the army. Latin-speaking Christians soon began to apply this word to the liturgical rites of the Church, particularly Baptism and the Eucharist, which were seen as affirming one’s loyalty unto death to Christ, “*the King of kings and the Lord of lords*” (*Revelation 19:16*).

When we participate in the sacrament of the Eucharist by eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ at the Liturgy on Sunday mornings, we are committing ourselves to a sacramental – and therefore surrendered and obedient – way of life the rest of the week.

True worship, worship that is authentic and fully and deeply Orthodox, is a way of life that many modern Orthodox theologians and spiritual writers have called “*the liturgy after the Liturgy.*” We go to Church to participate in the Liturgy, setting apart a specific time each week to offer ourselves to God in love, gratitude and joy for what He has done for us; and in return, at each Liturgy we attend, the gift of the Holy Spirit is renewed in us and we receive the gifts of the Body and Blood of His beloved Son Jesus Christ to nurture His life in us, so that we can become more Christ-like: more loving, more compassionate towards others, more patient, more forgiving, more grateful, more peaceful, more faithful, more joyful.

As St. John the Evangelist and Theologian wrote in his First Letter, “*By this we may be sure that we are in Him: whoever says ‘I live in Him’ ought to walk just as He walked*” (*1 John 2:5-6*). It is in the Liturgy that we are to open the doors of our hearts to Christ in the Holy Spirit so that we can love our neighbors as ourselves (*Mark 12:31*). In other words, in the Liturgy, we are called to be transformed, to become like the God whom we worship. In our Tradition, this process is called *theosis*, a Greek word that means “becoming like God.” We are to become what we worship.