



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF DECEMBER 10, 2006



Service Schedule for the Year 2007

The parish website has the monthly service schedules for the entire 2007 calendar year. Check it out! Please remember though to check the Sunday bulletin for changes to the monthly calendar.

2007 Calendar and Pocket Planners

from St. Tikhon's Bookstore have arrived and may be picked up in the back of the church. If you did not order a calendar or pocket planner and would like one, please don't take one now but instead sign the list in the back of the church and we will order one for you. The total costs of the calendars and pocket planners, including shipping, are \$3.00 and \$2.00 respectively.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH

26TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST

8:40a.m. Hours

9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy

Coffee Hour

Parish Council Meeting

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH

SAINT SPYRIDON

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

9:00a.m. Akathist

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14TH

7:00p.m. Compline; Confessions

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16TH

6:00p.m. Vespers; Confessions

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17TH

HOLY FOREFATHERS OF CHRIST

8:40a.m. Hours

9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy

Coffee Hour

Question / Answer Period

Confessions may also heard by appointment, just speak with Fr. John.

Have Something You Would Like to Discuss?

Just let me know. I'd be happy to either meet with you, or speak with you over the phone whenever you would like. If you prefer email, that is okay too. I am not only available but I would also very much like to get to know each and every one of you, hear your thoughts and ideas, as well as try to help answer any questions you may have.



Bible Study on the Nativity of Christ

On Monday, December 18th, from 7:00 - 8:30pm, a Bible Study will be held at the church to consider the Nativity of Christ as told in Biblical Tradition and the film, "The Nativity Story". Participants are encouraged to view the movie in advance but this is not necessary. Light refreshments will be served. All are welcome! Bring your Bible and a friend!

Confession

was established by Christ as a means for us to overcome those sins which separate us from Him and each other. Confession allows us to once again live in purity of conscience and lightness of heart, free from the guilt and weight of sin. There is no sin which cannot be forgiven and washed away by the Blood of Christ – there is no burden which cannot be lifted. This is why the Lord says to us, "Come to Me all you who work and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"



ASK FATHER: 3 QUESTIONS / 3 ANSWERS

Q. Father, in last week's Gospel the Lord said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. What does this mean? And do I have to literally give up all my possessions to enter Heaven?

A. While some say that the Lord is speaking here about the physical impossibility of a camel passing through the eye of a sowing needle, the 11th century saint, Theophylact of Bulgaria, says that the Lord here was referring to a certain gate in Jerusalem called the Needle's Eye, that was built so low that a camel could only pass if it entered kneeling and unencumbered with baggage. The lesson would then be that an eternal inheritance awaits those who unburden themselves of sin, and in particular, the things of this world.



In the Old and New Testaments there have been many who had riches, yet attained the highest levels of sanctity. Their wealth was not an obstacle to their entrance into Heaven for five reasons: 1) they did not consider their possessions to be their own, instead they saw themselves simply as stewards of the Lord's goods, living only on what was necessary and using the rest to help those in need; 2) while they had wealth and possessions, they were able to use them dispassionately since they had given their heart entirely to the Lord and cared nothing for the world's deceits; 3) they, while grateful for the Lord's blessings, saw themselves unworthy due to their sins, and this allowed them to become "poor in spirit" even though they were given great wealth; 4) they trusted in the Lord alone, not their temporal riches or prosperity; 5) they were ever mindful of their death as the day in which they would have to give an account for what they had received.

Q. Why do the Church's guidelines say that we must go to Confession at least during the four fasting seasons in order to receive Holy Communion?

A. In answer to your question: the Church's guidelines concerning Confession before Communion are actually much stricter than four times a year, calling for frequent communicants to receive Confession at least once a month (see the OCA Guidelines for Clergy). These guidelines were put in place long ago to help prepare us for a joyful and untroubled union with God through the Body and Blood of Christ. However, as we have said earlier, guidelines are not unbendable rules which require legalistic fulfillment, rather they are meant to be applied in a manner helpful to our own personal circumstances. Guidelines are meant to "meet us where we are at" and help lead us up to heaven. For this reason, as your priest, and as one who must give an account for your souls (Heb. 13:17), I felt it pastorally necessary to modify the guidelines, lessening the "rule" to only four times a year, to fit the life of our parish. If this guideline is still too difficult, please speak with me and we can address your personal circumstances.

Q. What is the Prokeimenon? And why are there eight tones?

A. The name Prokeimenon (meaning "foremost", "principal", "chief") is given to a short verse, generally selected from the Holy Scriptures, which embodies the meaning of the entire service, and therefore, refers to the chief contents of the prayers, hymns, and lessons from the Scriptures for the day. Because of its importance the Prokeimenon is repeated three times and is emphatically singled out by the words, "Let us attend!" (From *A Manual of the Orthodox Church's Divine Services*)



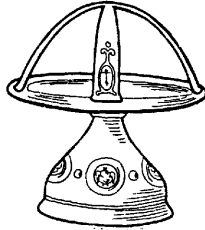
The eight musical tones used in the Orthodox Church have existed from the earliest times, probably originating in Jerusalem or Antioch. In the 8th century, Saint John of Damascus systematically organized these tones in the Octoechos or the Book of Eight Tones. Each tone, has its own unique set of melodic formulas, which could be arranged in a assortment of different combinations, providing both structure and diversity to the Church's hymns. This eight tone system allows hymnographers to convey specific spiritual feelings and emotions to the faithful, such as sorrow, peace, or joy. While all Orthodoxy uses the same division into eight tones, the way in which these tones are sung varies from one Orthodox Church to another. That is, for example, the Russians sing them quite differently from the Greeks.

THE PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy may be divided into two major parts: the Liturgy of the Catechumens and the Liturgy of the Faithful, which are preceded by the Service of Preparation. Although there are many symbolic interpretations of the Divine Liturgy, the most fundamental meaning is found in the actions and prayers.

The Service of Preparation

Prior to the beginning of the Liturgy, the priest prepares himself with prayer and then precedes to vest himself. The vestments express his priestly ministry as well as his office. Next, the priest goes to the Table of Oblation which is on the left side of the Altar Table in the Sanctuary. There, he prepares the offering of bread and wine for the Liturgy. Ideally, the leavened loaves of bread, and the wine from which the offering is taken, are prepared by members of the congregation. The elements are presented to the priest before the service, together with the names of those persons, living and dead, who are to be remembered during the Divine Liturgy. The offering symbolically represents the entire Church gathered about Christ, the Lamb of God.



The Liturgy of the Catechumens

The Divine Liturgy begins with the solemn declaration: "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit now and for ever more." With these words we are reminded that in the Divine Liturgy the Church becomes a real manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth.



Since the first part of the Liturgy was designed originally for the Catechumens, those being schooled in the faith, had a very instructive quality. The Eucharist also has elements which are in common with other Services. We gather as Christians who share a common faith in the Holy Trinity. We sing and pray as a people united in Christ, who are not bound by time, space, or social barriers.

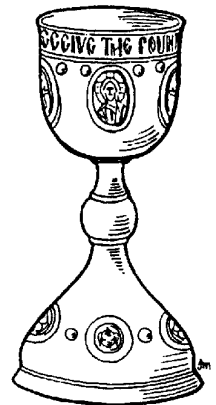
The Little Entrance is the central action of the first part of the Liturgy. A procession takes place in which the priest carries the Book of Gospels from the sanctuary into the nave. The procession directs our attention to the Scripture and to the presence

of Christ in the Gospel. The entrance leads to the Epistle lesson, the Gospel, and the Sermon.

The Liturgy of the Faithful

In the early Church, only those who were baptized and not in a state of sin were permitted to remain for this most solemn part of the Liturgy. With the Great Entrance marking the beginning of this part of the Liturgy, the offering of bread and wine is brought by the priest from the Preparation Table, through the nave, and to the Altar Table. Before the offering can proceed, however, we are called upon to love one another so that we may perfectly confess our faith. In the early Church, the Kiss of Peace was exchanged at this point. After the symbolic kiss of Peace, we join together in professing our Faith through the words of the Creed.

Only now can we properly offer our gifts of bread and wine to the Father as our Lord directed us to do in His memory. This offering is one of great joy, for through it we remember the mighty actions of God through which we have received the gift of salvation, and especially the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. We invoke the Holy Spirit upon ourselves and upon our offering, asking the Father that they become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. Through our thanking and remembering the Holy Spirit reveals the presence of the Risen Christ in our midst.



The priest comes from the altar with the Holy Gifts, inviting the congregation to draw near with reverence of God, with faith, and with love." Our sharing in the Eucharist Gifts not only expresses our fellowship with one another, but also our unity with the Father in His Kingdom. Individuals approach the Holy Gifts and receive the Eucharistic bread and wine from the common chalice. The priest distributes the Holy Gifts by means of a communion spoon. Since the Holy Communion is an expression of our Faith, reception of the Holy Gifts is open only to those who are baptized, chrismated, and practicing members of the Orthodox Church.

The Liturgy comes to an end with prayer of Thanksgiving and the Benediction. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, the congregation comes forward to receive a portion of the liturgical bread which was not used for the offering.

Taken from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

FROM THE PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

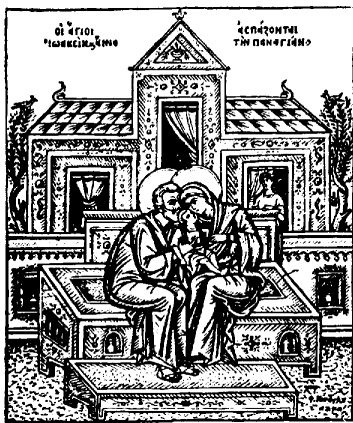
I thank Thee, O Lord my God, for Thou hast not rejected me, a sinner, but hast made me worthy to be a partaker of Thy Holy Things. I thank Thee, for Thou hast permitted me, the unworthy, to commune of Thy most pure and Heavenly, Gifts. But, O Master Who lovest mankind, Who for our sakes didst die and rise again, and gavest us these awesome and life-creating Mysteries for the good and sanctification of our souls and bodies; let them be for the healing of our soul and body, the repelling of every adversary, the illuminating of the eyes of my heart, the peace of my spiritual power, a faith unashamed, a love unfeigned, the fulfilling of wisdom, the observing of Thy commandments, the receiving of Thy divine grace, and the attaining of Thy Kingdom. Preserved by them in Thy holiness, may I always remember Thy grace and live not for myself alone, but for Thee, our Master and Benefactor. May I pass from this life in the hope of eternal life, and so attain to the everlasting rest, where the voice of those who feast is unceasing, and the gladness of those who behold the goodness of Thy countenance is unending. For Thou art the true desire and the ineffable joy of those who love Thee, O Christ our God, and all creation sings Thy praise forever. Amen.



THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

From the Synaxarion – December 9th

In accordance with the eternal purpose of God, who willed to prepare a most pure habitation for Himself in order to take flesh and dwell among men, Joachim and Anna were prevented from having children for many years. Their barren old age was symbolic of human nature itself, bowed down and dried up under the weight of sin and death, yet they never ceased begging God to take away their reproach. Now when the time of preparation determined by the Lord had been fulfilled, God sent an Angel to Joachim in solitude on a mountain, and to Anna in her affliction weeping in her



garden, to tell them that the ancient prophecies were soon to be fulfilled in them: a child would be born to them, who was destined to become the veritable Ark of the new Covenant, the divine Ladder, the unburnt Bush, the uncut Mountain, the living Temple where the Word of God would take up His abode. Through the conception of Saint Anna, the barrenness of human nature itself, separated from God by death, has on this day been brought to an end; and by the wondrous birth-giving of her who had remained childless until the age when women can no longer bear fruit, God announced and testified to the more astonishing miracle of the Conception without seed, and of the immaculate coming to birth of Christ

within the heart and womb of the Most Holy Virgin and Mother of God.

Even though the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary took place through a miraculous action of God, she was conceived by the union of man and woman in accordance with the laws of our human nature, which has fallen through Adam's transgression and became subject to sin and corruption. As the chosen Vessel and precious Shrine prepared by God since the beginning of time, she is indeed the most pure and the most perfect of mankind, but even so, she has not been set apart from our common inheritance nor from the consequences of the sin of our first parents. Just as it was fitting that Christ, in order to deliver us from death by His own voluntary death, should by His Incarnation be made like to men in all things except sin; so it was meet that His Mother, in whose womb the Word of God would unite with human nature, should be subject to death and corruption like every child of Adam, lest we be not fully included in Salvation and Redemption. The Mother of God has been chosen and preferred among all women, not arbitrarily, but because God foresaw that she would preserve her purity and keep it perfect: conceived and born like all of us, she has been worthy to become the Mother of the Son of God and the mother of us all. So in her tenderness and compassion she is able to intercede for us with her Son.

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ was the fruit of the virginity of the holy Mother of God, so she herself was the fruit of the chastity of Joachim and Anna. And by following the same path of chastity we too, monks and Christian married people, can bring Christ to be born and grow in us.