

THE NARTHEX

*The believers were first called
Christians at Antioch*
ACTS. 9:26
**October-November
2009**

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan Poole-Bournemouth

The Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of The United Kingdom and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

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THE ASSEMBLY

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope...in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another...

Hebrews 10:23-25

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the word *to assemble* when referring to the coming together of the early Christian community. The Greek word he uses has the same root as the word *Synagogue* with which he would have been very familiar from his days in Judaism before he was baptised into Christ. In fact, the synagogue was a unique institution in the ancient world. Unlike the temples and oracles of the pagan world, the Jewish synagogue was a truly democratic institution - initially, a religious 'club' for men where they would study the Torah. It is thought to have begun in Babylon about two thousand, five hundred years ago, during the time of the Exile. The word means '*gathering place*' and the form of liturgy that developed, focusing on readings from the sacred text, had a profound influence on the development of the Orthodox Christian Liturgy that we know. The first Christians were, of course, Jews and naturally, they brought with them into the Church the ordered, liturgically structured worship of their forefathers. One has only to look, for example, at the Orthodox Christian wedding service to see its indebtedness to the Jewish rite of *Kiddushin* (literally, the 'sanctification' of a marriage). The first half of our

Divine Liturgy is the *Synaxis*, or gathering - the assembly. The basic purpose of this part of our assembly is to hear the Word of God proclaimed in the scriptural readings. As such, its origins go back (as liturgical scholars have pointed out) to the ancient form of the Synagogue service. To this has been attached the Mystical Supper: the rite for offering the sacred oblation and giving communion to the people. The principal elements of the Church's Eucharistic worship were settled in the main by the second century, if not earlier. What followed were changes associated with particular Church Fathers or important dioceses, so we have the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil or St. James; there is the Roman Rite (which went through many forms); The Gallican Rite; The Mozarabic Rite, the Milanese; rites linked to Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Byzantium and by the middle ages: Moscow, Salisbury, Exeter and so on. The Protestant Reformation also produced rites for the Lutheran and Anglican churches but all of them at heart trace their format back to the Synagogue worship that would have been known to the apostles themselves and, of course, Our Lord. I have often thought that Our Lord did not just leave an example in the Mystical Supper on the first Great Thursday. I can picture him also instructing his apostles, in the forty days following the resurrection, on how to worship in spirit and in truth in the assembly that was to be *his body*, the Church of the New

Jerusalem. The fact that they made such a radical break with their former Jewish practice by immediately abandoning the old Shabbat (Friday evening to Saturday evening) and celebrating instead the Lord's Day (Saturday evening to Sunday evening), demonstrates that they had learned something entirely new in Christ. Furthermore, the 'Breaking of Bread' became, immediately, the distinctive Christian rite and the signature event of the newly formed Christian community, following Pentecost. In the Acts of the Apostles we see the apostles gathered together with all the other believers [Acts 2:42] where:

'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.'

For us, as Orthodox Christians, who stand at the end of this long line of Apostolic Tradition, the situation is no different; we are engaged in exactly the same activity. Although there clearly are exceptions, Orthodox Christians do not lay tremendous stress on programmes and study courses, special extra-parochial organisations and societies, groups and separate associations. At the Parish level, the prime meeting for all is the Liturgy itself. It is central and if ever forced into a background activity, the community has lost its way. For a parish is nothing if it has not the Liturgy at its heart; it is not only its very reason for

existing in the first place, it is also the one thing that manifests the community for what it is: Christ's body and not a mere human association. In other words, we become what we are in Christ when we gather for the Liturgy. Like the ingredients for a recipe that must all be assembled together in the kitchen, so it is with the local Church - everyone, like every ingredient for a dish, must be there or we shall 'taste' that something is missing. But just as the heat of the oven cooks the meal, so our gathering is not fulfilled by our mere presence alone. It is the 'fire' of the Holy Spirit that makes us coalesce to form the Church. And this recipe depends not only on the ingredients being there, in the right quantities; each must also play his part, as the American Orthodox scholar, Fr. Stanley Harakas, makes clear in the following article...

Fr. Chrysostom



**Ten Ways to Participate in Worship,
Pay Attention, be Still and Pray**

by Fr. Stanley Harakas

1. We participate in worship through frequent communion. This is the most important way of participating in the Divine Liturgy. When the priest comes forward with the holy chalice and lifts it high, he says, "With Fear of God, with faith and love, draw near." Come close to commune with God. That's a command, an instruction. After all, what is the holy Eucharistic Liturgy all about? Simply, it's the way the Church prepares, consecrates, and administers the sacrament of Holy Communion. Receiving Holy Communion, receiving Christ, is the central act of the Divine Liturgy.

2. We participate in worship through faithful gathering together as the Church. The Divine Liturgy begins with the words, "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." What's a kingdom? The place where a king reigns. Who's the King? GOD. Who are the subjects? CHRISTIANS. Where does the king reign? Where God is present and the Christians are present. God's kingship is made manifest in us during worship. One cannot be manifesting the Kingdom liturgically if he he's not there. Being present is crucial to the liturgical life.

3. We participate in worship through entering into it responsively. The language of the Liturgy contains a number of dialogues in various parts of the service. For example, the priest says, "Let us lift up our heart." The words of the Liturgy in these dialogues invite us to involvement and participation. But because we are not taught to participate in worship, these dialogues often go unnoticed and unheeded, the commands they contain often are not obeyed in the people's hearts.

4. All Orthodox services include "litanies" as for an example "Let us pray unto the

Lord", in which the priest names a petition, and the choir responds - either "Lord, have mercy" or "Grant this, O Lord." The priest is not actually addressing himself to God in these petitions: he's addressing the whole congregation. He's saying (for another example), "For the peace from God and salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord." The choir sings the response, but they are not really praying either; they give the same response to all the petitions. It's really the congregation's role to pray these prayers. If the congregation does not enter in, then nobody is praying!

How does one pray the litany? Simply do what the priest says. The priest says, "Let us pray for the peace from God and for salvation of our souls." You can just say in your heart. "Dear Lord, grant us your peace from above and the salvation of our souls." You can also think of particular people and situations you want to pray for with each petition. Then the prayers are no longer just-words; you are now following the instruction of the litany.

5. We participate in worship through singing. Many Orthodox people are not accustomed to singing in Church, they are afraid of being conspicuous. But even in a parish where the Choir does all the singing, it's possible to sing along with the choir softly. You don't have to sing loud enough to be heard, but sing! The patristic tradition tells us that in the past they did sing. We need to revive this tradition in all our Churches.

6. There two places in the holy Divine Liturgy where we generally say the words, instead of singing or chanting them-the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. The people say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer as a body. In the Lord's Prayer it is clear that we are talking to God; our challenge is to make the prayer our own, so that it truly expresses our thoughts and feelings.

But the Creed is different. To make the Creed come alive, you must consider to whom you're confessing. I find if I think of talking to God, it really becomes personal. Because I'm telling God what I believe, it is a prayer and it touches my head and my soul.

7. We participate in worship through physical actions. Instructions such as "Let us bow our heads to the Lord" require you to worship with you body. There are many ways we use our bodies in worship in the holy Divine Liturgy. The most important way that we use our bodies in worship in the Orthodox Church is when we make the sign of the Cross. Making the sign of the Cross is one of the most profound things a Christian can do. To make this sign of the Cross is to mark ourselves, to identify ourselves as Christians.

8. We participate in worship through listening to the readings and the sermon. What are we told at the beginning of the readings? "Let us be attentive." Unfortunately we tend to make those words into mere ritual. But the words actually are saying to us. "Pay attention. Listen! There's something very important here." That's an instruction! Christians ought to really perk up and listen to what the holy Epistle, and the holy Gospel has to say.

9. We participate in worship through involvement in its structure. The holy Divine Liturgy as it exists today has an organization and pattern. That structure is revealed primarily in what we call the Little Litanies, if which we pray, "Again in peace let us pray to the Lord."

The Little Litanies come at the ends of the nine significant portions of the Liturgy. If you understand this structure, you're able to participate in it. 10. Finally, we participate in worship through personal devotion. The Liturgy can be understood in a literal sense, and it can also be understood as symbolic. Some of the things we do in the Liturgy today have no real meaning except as symbols. Take the Holy Great Entrance. The Holy Great Entrance (when the priest carries the gifts around the church, and if a deacon is serving he assist) originated in Constantinople where they would begin the Holy Divine Liturgy in one Church, then more to a special saint's Church or chapel to conclude it. In order to conduct the Liturgy, they had to move the bread and wine, the chalice and paten, to the new location. So it became a grand procession. Today, we do the whole Liturgy, in the same building, but we still have the great procession, the Great Entrance, when we sing, "Let us receive the invisible King."

What does it mean for us today? Not much, if all we do is remember the fifteen centuries ago they moved the elements of the Sacrament from one Church to another. But if you think of the procession (the Holy Great Entrance) as symbolizing Christ bearing His Cross on the day He was crucified for your salvation that act can become an act of personal worship and devotion."

SERVICES

OCTOBER

4th Sun 17th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
11th Sun 18th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
18th Sun 19th after Pentecost
St. Luke Ap Ev. Divine Liturgy
11.30am
25th Sun 20th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am

NOVEMBER

1ST Sun 21ST after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
8th Sun 22ND after Pentecost
St. Michael and All Bodiless
Powers Divine Liturgy 11.30am
15th Sun **Beginning of Nativity
Fast**
23rd after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
21st Sat Entry of the Theotokos
22nd Sun 24th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am
29th Sun 15th after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.30am