

Q. *I am visiting an Orthodox Church for the first time. What should I expect?*

A. It depends upon your own religious background. If you are Roman Catholic, Anglican, or, to a lesser extent, Lutheran, you will see and hear some familiar liturgics, as these churches draw their worship from the ancient liturgies celebrated in the Orthodox Church. The same clergy (bishop, priest, and deacon) celebrate, entrances with the Gospel and with the Chalice and Paten occur, the sign of the cross is used often, censing of God's Temple is performed, candles abound, and the Eucharist is always offered during the Divine Liturgy. All divine services are sung in their entirety, as the Early Church celebrated before God. Holy Images, called icons, cover the interior, reminding us of the presence of all God's holy people from all time at each service. Finally, the worship is antiphonal, that is, shared between the clergy, chanters, choir, and people, as one whole out of many parts, with Christ at the head. Even the word "liturgy" has its origins in a Greek word leitourgia, which means "work of the people."

Q. *So, how should I behave?*

A. The best form of etiquette when visiting any place of worship is to stand, sit, or kneel when the faithful do. Otherwise, you are not expected to do anything else except to pray and experience the Apostolic Church in its fullest.

Q. *What is the language used during Sunday worship?*

A. On a typical Sunday about 10% of the Liturgy will be in New Testament Greek and 80% in English. We are the only place in town where you can hear the language of the New Testament used in worship. Orthros is mainly in New Testament Greek. Saturday evening Great Vespers is usually all in English, with a little Greek.

Q. *Can I receive Holy Communion?*

A. Sadly, no, as the Christian Church is tragically divided and does not yet share the same One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith in Christ. Receiving Holy Communion is the paramount sign of the Oneness of the Faith, which is not a reality at present. Please pray for the unity of all Christians in both faith and love.

Q. *What about the architecture of an Orthodox church building?*

A. There are three divisions to a traditional Christian church: narthex, nave, and sanctuary. The narthex is the entrance hall, where the faithful greet God by making the sign of the cross, kissing the holy icons, and lighting a candle symbolizing prayer, sacrifice, and the Light of Christ. The nave is where the faithful gather to worship God. Nave comes from a Greek word, naos, meaning "ship." It signifies the fact that salvation is a life-long process of becoming God-like. It is a journey towards God. The sanctuary is the abode of God, the Holy of Holies. Hence, its name from the Latin sanctus, meaning "holy." It is where the clergy offer the Bloodless Sacrifice, the Holy Eucharist or Communion. It signifies Paradise or Heaven. It is demarcated from the nave by the iconostasis, or icon-screen, which does not separate the faithful from God, but rather, announces in holy images the presence of God. Notice that the sanctuary is higher and faces East, the direction from which the Star of Bethlehem came announcing the Advent of the Messiah and from which the Lord will appear in Glory at the Second Coming.

Q. *What services are celebrated on a typical Sunday?*

A. There are actually two separate services which occur: Orthros and the Divine Liturgy. Orthros, or Matins, is really a service of preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of Christ during the Liturgy. It's a time when the clergy and people set up the Lord's House. It begins at 10:00am and runs to approximately 11:00am, when the singing of the Great Doxology marks the transition to the Liturgy. During Orthros, the chanters sing many short hymns of Byzantine origin honoring the Mother of God (Theotokos) Mary, and the saints of the day, as well as celebrating the Resurrection of Christ. The clergy are busy setting up the Holy Table of the Lord. They conduct a preparatory service, called the Prothesis, quietly in the sanctuary during Orthros. In this service they prepare the bread and wine to be offered later as the Body and Blood of Christ. The faithful begin to gather during Orthros, in anticipation of greeting the Lord in the Holy Liturgy.

Q. *So, what about the Divine Liturgy?*

A. The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom begins when the deacon, who stands with the people before God, chants "Bless Master" (Evlogison, Despota!) and the priest raises the Holy Gospel and chants "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.," usually in Greek. The first part of the Liturgy is the Liturgy of the Catechumens (or of the Word). There are three Litanies, or prayers for the world's needs, chanted by the deacon, interspersed with short hymns to the Theotokos and Christ. This is followed by the Little Entrance with the Holy Gospel, the reading of the Epistle by the chanters or laity, and the reading of the Gospel by the priest and deacon. Finally, the sermon usually occurs, marking the end of the Liturgy of the Catechumens, the teaching part of the Liturgy. Then follows the Great Entrance, with the bread and wine, which announces the beginning of the Liturgy of the Faithful (or of the Sacrifice). Following the Kiss of Peace and the Creed, the Anaphora, the most sacred prayers of the Liturgy, are offered by the priest and deacon, to call down the Holy Spirit on the bread and wine, to make them into the Body and Blood of Christ. The prayers of the Anaphora also remember and offer thanks (Eucharist means "Thanksgiving" in Greek) for Creation, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, and his Second Coming in Glory, as well as repeat His words at the last supper. After this, the faithful partake of the Holy Communion and the Liturgy concludes with prayers of thanksgiving and remembrance. ([Download a pdf version of the liturgical word list.](#))

Q. *How is communion offered to the faithful in the Orthodox Church?*

A. It is offered by the priests and deacon by spoon from the Chalice in which are put both the Body and Blood of Christ.

Q. *What else can occur at the end of the Liturgy?*

A. Sometimes a Memorial for the Departed is chanted before the icon of Christ and other times newborn children are brought in and presented before Christ in their 40-day Churching.

Q. *What is the bread offered at the very end to everyone?*

A. It is called antidoron, the "after-gift," and is the bread left over that was not consecrated during the Liturgy. It is offered to all, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, as a sign of hope that someday we may again celebrate together in unity at the Common Table of the Lord.

Q. *What is Great Vespers?*

A. It is a Saturday evening service of preparation for the Sunday Liturgy. Its theme is completely resurrectional and sets the stage for the theme of the coming Liturgy. It is also celebrated on the eves of Great Feasts and of certain holy days. It begins at 5:30pm on Saturdays (6pm during weekdays) and is attended often by quests, as there is usually a half-hour discussion and question-and-answer time afterwards.

Q. *Are there other services?*

A. There are dozens of types of services offered throughout the year, especially during Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha (Easter). Orthodoxy is definitely not a Sunday only Christianity! Remember, we have been praising God for over 2000 years, plenty of time to expand the human repertoire!

Q. *What if I have questions after the service?*

A. Just remain in the church and ask to see the deacon or the priest. If you cannot do that, email the deacon, who is the Church Catechist, at assumptiongreekorthodoxchurch@gmail.com. He is always delighted to answer questions of any kind. He will lead tours of the church for any group, as well. Also, you might want to read