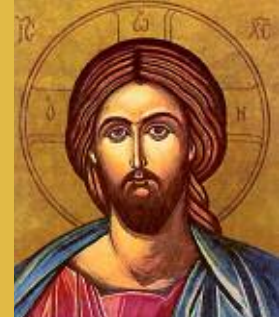


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Pastoral Cosmetology

"...holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power..." (2 Timothy 3:5)

I happen to live in Orange County, a place where my wife and one of our daughters can run into women from *The Real Housewives of Orange County* television show shopping at Target. Movies, television and therefore image creation are important matters here. We're about 50 miles south of Hollywood, a place where cosmetologists – perhaps better known to everyone else as make-up artists – thrive.

The use of cosmetics, generally speaking, has two basic purposes. The first is to hide what's ugly. Some people just paste on the makeup wherever the blemish is and hope it doesn't rain. The second purpose is to enhance beauty, drawing attention to the beauty that's already there: the bright eyes, the glowing smile. I'm no expert on makeup, but it seems to me that the second use is the better of the two. Bringing out beauty is much better than just trying to hide ugly.

I've come to believe that sometimes we as clergy have the same two sets of purposes when it comes to engaging the spiritual disciplines of the Church. Some of us hope that if we load enough of this stuff on in public – prayer, fasting, Liturgy – it will cover over the ugly in our lives and make us appear to be more mature and Christ-like than we actually are. There is a real danger in this that the saints have always warned us about. The spiritual disciplines are not about hiding ugly. Writing in the late 19th century to one of his spiritual children, St. Theophan the Recluse said: "Cold obedience and legalistic behavior based on

calculated reason, even punctuality, sobriety and honest behavior, are not in themselves evidence that our life has a truly Christian quality. All of these things are good, but as long as they are not informed by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, they have no value in the eyes of God; these acts are then like lifeless idols."

The real purpose of the spiritual disciplines of the Church is to bring out the beauty of the image of Christ that's already present within us. It's the shaping of our outward lives and practices that allows the beauty of Christ in us to be clearly seen. Pursuing the spiritual disciplines, then, is an exercise in authenticity. The goal is the steeping of our souls in the pure, clear light of uncreated glory so that the true image of Jesus can be seen in us without all of the distortion we bring to our lives. The brighter and clearer the light, the more Christ can shine through us and our ministry. The saints are men and women who are transparent to this light of Love incarnate, allowing it to shine into the dark world around them.

We priests often spend a lot of time hiding the reality of our spiritual lives. We layer on the pretense of the daily practice of spirituality, but in reality often do little more than hide a dark, empty and anemic soul that we fill up with arrogance and the desire for power and control. We live in constant worry that it might rain, that something might wash away our façade and our real ugliness would be exposed for the entire world to see. However, the strength of a person's spiritual life does not depend on the amount of ascetic gymnastics we can perform but on the interior virtues such disciplines engender: humility, maturity, compassion, generosity, courage in the face of adversity, kindness, endurance, a genuine desire to serve others, and above all love. These are the goals of the priestly life; indeed, these are the goals of the Christian life. And the goal of all of the disciplines of the spiritual life can be summed up in that stark but sage advice given by Abba Paul the Great in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: "Keep close to Jesus!"



—Rev. Steven P. Tsichlis - President, APC
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Some Perspectives on Liturgical Renewal: The American Context

By Fr. Alkiviadis C. Calivas

I. Is the liturgy changeless?

1. Distinguishing between the essential and instrumental elements of worship

There are some among the Eastern Orthodox clergy who are especially fond of promoting the idea that the liturgy – the rites of the Church – is changeless. In times of rapid and constant change, like the ones we live in, when the unexpected surprises no one and nothing seems to be predictable, the ‘changeless’ liturgy of a ‘changeless’ Orthodox Church, with its promise of permanence and stability is especially appealing and attractive. But is the liturgy of the Church really changeless?

To be certain, in all of the essentials the Church is indeed changeless. She is the same today as she was yesterday and will be tomorrow. Her beliefs and essential practices are rooted in and reflect the teachings of the Lord and his Apostles. She lives in a state of unbroken unity and dynamic continuity with the past. Faithfulness to the uninterrupted historical, theological, and liturgical life of the Church, however, does not mean blind servility to the expressions, forms, and styles of the past. Authentic Orthodox theology is about the entry into the unapproachable glory of God and about the pursuit of

truth – objective, constant truth. Authentic theology struggles to distinguish the genuine Tradition of the Church from all alien and non-essential accretions. Authentic theology is also constituted by the continuous formulation of the Tradition in the idiom of the people that the Church is called to evangelize and serve in every age and place. Theological creativity is not a departure from tradition. It is, rather, the very manifestation of the true character of Tradition. Tradition, in the Orthodox understanding of it, is the continuity of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church; it is the continuity of divine guidance and illumination.

The Church in her institutional and charismatic life is not a grand museum, in which exotic objects and lifeless relics of the past – however lovely or fascinating – are on display. Keeping the faith, “which was once delivered to the saints,” whole and unadulterated does not mean that the Church – her theology, liturgy, and praxis – remains still or aloof from the demands, the problems, and the challenges of each age. When the Church does not converse with the world and does not understand the world’s anxieties and difficulties she cannot adequately fulfill her mission.

2. The permanent and the relative things

Theologians and pastors who are fixated on a non-existent ideal past, who like to repeat ancient solutions, who take pleasure in quaint but irrelevant customs, or who remain oblivious to the complexities and dilemmas of modern life are out of touch with the needs and concerns of real people. On the other hand, pastors and theologians who negate the past and denigrate tradition in the name of modernity and relevancy are equally irresponsible and run the risk of blurring and compromising Christian identity. Responsible theological and pastoral work requires of us to continually relate the empirical life of the Church to the sources of her faith, evaluating and judging the ‘empirical’ by the light of the truth, taking care not to confuse the secondary things with the essential ones or the relative things with the permanent.

What is permanent in the Church is the one, constant, and changeless truth of salvation and not the institutional structures, disciplinary practices, or forms of worship that the Church has developed through the centuries. While the essential elements and basic structures of Orthodox worship are rooted in the liturgical tradition of the early Church, everyone knows

that rituals and texts developed over the course of many centuries. As the study of the liturgy bears out, the rites of the Church have expanded and contracted and changed through the centuries, sometimes deliberately, at other times accidentally, on occasion abruptly, but most often gradually and imperceptibly.

The Church is a living organism, animated and guided by the Holy Spirit. She takes on the flesh, the contours, and the colors of particular life-contexts. She implants and unites herself with the traditions and cultures of various peoples imparting to them the truths of the Gospel. The Church, as well as her theology, liturgy and pastoral praxis which express her, are inevitably culturally conditioned. Hence, all liturgical expressions must be seen, understood and evaluated not only against the dogmas and doctrines that express the experience and the faith of the Church but also against the particular historical, socio-cultural, political, and psychological life-situations in which they were first formed and developed.

The Church is a living organism, animated and guided by the Holy Spirit

In the remarks that follow, I shall identify a number of problems in our liturgy that beg for resolution. However, before embarking on this endeavor, I believe that a few brief words on the significance and meaning of the Church's liturgical rites would be in order.

II. The significance of liturgical rites

1. Liturgy: celebrating and the appropriating of the gifts of redemption

Through her sacred rites the Church keeps vigil before God, in order to celebrate in faith and enter into the glorious mysteries of His plan of salvation. The liturgy – in its setting, content, and ritual action – becomes the gateway to heaven, a place of mystery, flooded with the presence of God. In and through the sacred rites earth encounters heaven and God embraces His creation.

In our ecclesial identity, we exist not as we are but as that which we will become

Through the liturgy we appropriate the gifts of redemption and are continually transformed into a new creation. In the liturgy, the Holy Spirit is always present to supply us with a new interior principle, a new mode of existence, a new identity: the ecclesial. In our ecclesial identity, we exist not as we are but as that which we will become as a result of Christ's victory over sin, corruption, and death. Through the liturgy we experience in faith the eschaton, the age to come. Indeed, in and out of the liturgy, Christians live – or ought to live – in the eschaton, in a mode of existence inaugurated by Christ that constitutes an intimate union with God hitherto unknown, which will find its perfection in the Parousia, in Christ's Second Coming.

2. The Church is primarily a worshipping community

The Church, as Father Georges Florovsky observed, "is ultimately real precisely as a worshipping community, a community or congregation of worshipping members-persons. She grows in her fullness in the process of worship." The Church finds her fullest expression and realization through the liturgy. In worship, the community of believers is continually formed to be the mystical Body of Christ and each of its faithful members to be a dwelling place of the Holy Trinity. The liturgy is the face and voice of the Church, the very expression of her inner self, her essence and her conscience; the manifestation of her being the Body of Christ. Through the liturgy the Church expresses her self-identity, preserves her traditions, and manifests the mystery of unity in diversity of her members. The sacred rites not only define us as the People of God but also allow us to stand before God with filial devotion and boldness in joyful-sadness (*χαρμολυπη*), in watchfulness (*νηψις*), and in expectation (*προσδοκια*).

True worship draws its power from the Spirit of God, who teaches us how to pray properly and empowers everyone (Romans 8:26-27), according to his/her order, to exercise the priestly office and to carry out their varied duties, distinct responsibilities, and different ministries. In fact, the complex ritual splendor of the divine services points to the communal character of



Orthodox worship and brings to the fore both the particularity as well as the interdependence of the various orders and the unity of the community. Through the sacred rites we discover the dynamic complementarity of the institutional and charismatic aspects of Church life, its hierarchical and synodal nature and structure, as well as the requirements that are essential for the building up of authentic community life. If we look carefully and attentively, the liturgy reveals how the faith community is intended by God to look and to behave. The sacred rites provide the community with its most distinguishing characteristics and shape as well its tasks, activities, and mission to the world.

The saving work of the Church is actively pursued and enacted especially in the parish, which,

above all else, is the fundamental Eucharistic cell of the Church. The parish exists for one essential purpose to bring salvation to the world through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. Everything that a parish is and does emanates essentially from worship and most especially from the weekly celebration of the Divine Liturgy. For this reason, we are obliged to pay close attention to the essential elements of worship and provide for the People of God good, effective, and meaningful liturgical experiences that are capable of inducing their inner and exterior involvement in the act of worship; helping them perfect their devotion to the principles and values of the Gospel; and inspiring them to apply the lessons of the liturgy to the everyday experiences and the unexpected circumstances of life.

3. The liturgy is a dynamic event and the school for Christian living

The liturgy is a dynamic event, implying a sense of action and a mission to the world by a people who have experienced the love of God as a movement from death to life, from injustice to justice, from violence to peace, from hatred to love, from vengeance to love, from selfishness to sharing, and from division to unity. As St. Augustine noted, the heart of every person remains restless until it rests in God. To be complete, to be an authentic embodied personal existence, a human being must choose "to bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Cor. 15: 49) and thus become, by grace, an epiphany of God's rule on earth.

The mystery of Christ, of God's creative and redeeming love, is permanently embodied in the Church's liturgy, in the sacraments, especially in Baptism and the Eucharist, in the Daily Office, and in the feasts of the liturgical year. As a result, the liturgy helps to bring clarity of purpose to one's thoughts, emotions, motivations, decisions, and actions. For this reason, it has been said correctly that the liturgy is the Church's primary spiritual guide and teacher – the school for Christian living – inasmuch as the liturgy provides the worshipper with the essential meanings of the Scriptures and the fundamental truths of the Orthodox faith. Within the liturgy we come to know God, the world, and ourselves, because the liturgy communicates the meaning and purpose of life and helps us to understand and internalize both the tragedy of the human condition in its fallen state as well as the limitless expanse and potential of the new life in Christ offered freely to all.

III. The necessity for liturgical renewal

1. Engaging the worshipper: some basic questions

The divine services are celebrated essentially with two purposes in mind, namely, to praise and thank God for the seen and unseen blessings He bestows upon us and upon the world through His providential salvific activity, and second that we may enter into the mystery of salvation and learn to incorporate its transforming power into our everyday thoughts and activities.

It is essential that the liturgical life of the Church be constantly renewed

Because of the central role of worship in the life of the Orthodox people, it is essential that the liturgical life of the Church be constantly renewed, lest it be devitalized, lest it fall into the deadening malaise of ritual formalism and unfocused, false piety. The liturgy sinks into ritual formalism when a serious disconnection occurs between what is accomplished in the divine services and how it is perceived, understood and lived by the faith community and its members. Thus, in every generation the Church is obliged to ponder prayerfully and gauge carefully the effectiveness of the sacred rites to engage actively both the individual person and the community as a whole in an act of authentic worship.

We may ask, for example, what effect does baptism have on the family and the community doing it? Or, for that matter, what effect does any liturgical act have on the people who enact it? If there is a problem with any service, where do we look for the cause and also for the solution? Do we look at the service, the people, or both? Do the various components of the received rites, such as texts, music, symbols, and rituals, carry meaning for the contemporary worshipper; and if they do, what should we do to enhance their effectiveness? But if they do not, what should be done to rectify the problem? Are the people adequately catechized? Are they sufficiently literate liturgically? How do the people receive, understand, and make use of the meanings the services convey? Do the people's perceptions of the liturgy correspond to the teachings of the Church? Are the people applying the lessons of the liturgy to their everyday life? Does the parish community itself enfold the implications of the liturgy in its life and activities? What must the clergy do to make the prayer of the Church alive, meaningful and relevant, an integral part of peoples' lives? What must the clergy and the people do to create meaningful liturgical experiences? What must the Church do to help the people acquire a liturgical mind and a prayerful spirit, so that liturgical formalism and false piety – wherever and in whatever form they exist – may be overcome and held at bay? It seems to me that these and other similar questions have to be seriously considered, if the liturgy is going to be compelling and relevant in every generation.

2. The two basic requirements for effective renewal

To be effective liturgical renewal requires two basic things of the clergy and the people: an awareness of the spiritual, aesthetic, logical, and mystical dimensions of Orthodox worship but also an appreciation for the rich and complex history of liturgy. Without this awareness and appreciation any attempt at liturgical renewal and adaptability will falter and fail. In their times, the great Fathers of the Church were passionately interested in the liturgy and were keenly aware of its role in the everyday life of the Church and of her members. That is why they strove to make the liturgical life of the Church vibrant and relevant to life. Are we not called to do the same in our times? Should we not also be willing to provide the substantive responses to the emerging needs of the Church through carefully researched, judiciously considered, and well-planned liturgical reforms that will allow us to be in creative continuity with the past and simultaneously true to the dynamic nature of the Church and of the liturgy?

The invitation to examine the history and the inner meanings of worship, however, entails a certain risk as well as a challenge. Some favored ideas, widely accepted notions and explanations and familiar customs do not now - or may not in the future - stand up well under the scrutiny of historical research and sound theological reflection. What should we do,

for example, when the facts reveal that a particular praxis, text, or custom is obscure, ambiguous, or inadequate? Do we do nothing, because it is safer not to offend the vocal adherents who defend fiercely the 'changelessness' of the received texts and the inherited structures of the sacred rites? Or, do we allow the facts to become a catalyst for the release of new power and energy in the body of the Church?

With these things in mind, let us now turn our attention to some problems in our liturgical tradition in the hope that we will be challenged to spare no effort to revitalize our liturgy and reverse any and all tendencies towards ritual formalism that compromises the vitality and the beauty of the Orthodox worship.

IV. Examples of Liturgical Problems

1. Troublesome Clerical Attitudes

The liturgy suffers badly from questionable practices that range from the sloppy habits and careless mannerisms of clerics to the ineffective recitation of the assigned readings in the liturgical assembly; from inadequate translations, inferior music, and weak singing to bad architecture, awful iconography, and untidy temples; from unclean vestments and vessels to irrelevant customs that come from other times and different places that have little bearing on the hearts and minds of today's worshipper.

As bad as these things are, however, nothing is more damaging to worship than an aloof, detached, or cynical clergyman whose heart is no longer aflame with the Spirit. His services are no longer joyful celebrations of faith but empty routines. His homilies carry no conviction and his pastoral ministry is tired, banal, inane, and ineffective, full of frustrations and angry denials and denouncements.

Also troublesome are the clergy who place themselves above the Church, who act as supreme monarchs and expect unqualified obedience. They evade accountability and take all manner of liberties. With regards to worship, under the cover of piety, they create their own *ordo* and experiment with the divine services. Some, whom I call antiquarians, hold on to a world that once was, or may have been, but no longer is. Others, whom I call the futurists, conceive of a world that is not and perhaps can never be. The former, full of nostalgia, are turned on by fanciful archaisms, while the latter lack all sense of tradition and delight in thoughtless experimentations. Both the antiquarians and the futurists forget that the liturgy is an act of the Church, not of an individual cleric or congregation. Thus it is that the *Typikon* is meant to provide continuity in liturgical practice and ethos, secure recognizable standards and good liturgical order, and maintain a healthy, balanced tension between tradition and life, protecting the liturgy from whimsical experimentations, fanciful archaisms, and arbitrary decisions.

Equally problematic are the clergy, who, as one observer put it, confuse austere asceticism with Orthodoxy. Among these zealots one finds both recent converts as well as "re-born" cradle Orthodox.

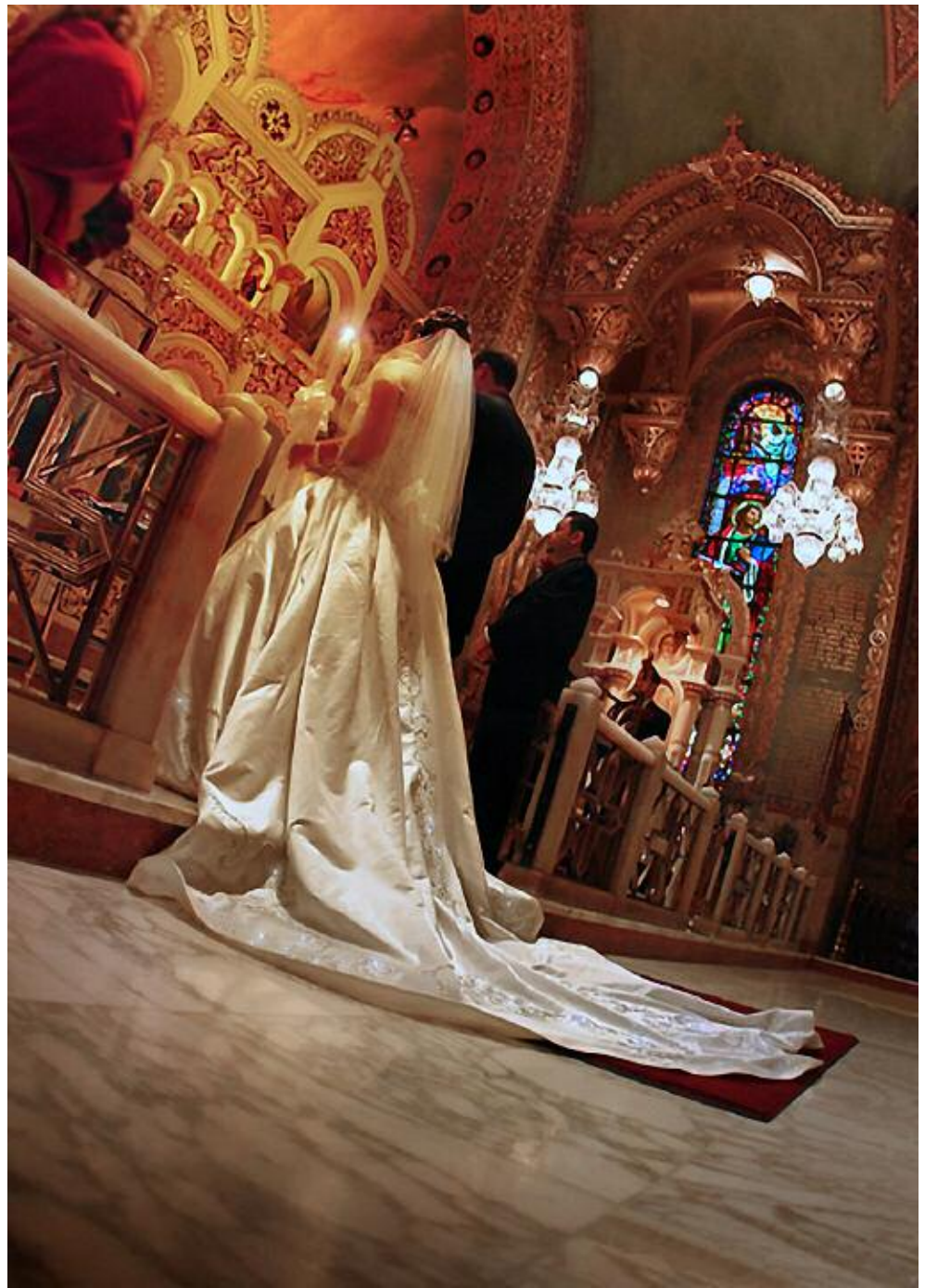
Tradition, after all, is not only a conserving and protective principle but also a principle of regeneration and growth in the perception of the one constant Truth who is Christ.

Their zeal for the tradition knows no bounds as they seek to impose their fervor on the community. The problem is that more often than not, the "traditions" these clerics espouse and are enamored with are probably no older than the nineteenth century. In their struggle for identity some denigrate sexuality and in some extreme cases some even relinquish bathing. Some disparage the ethnic identities of the people they serve in the name of Orthodoxy, as if ethnicity is not part of one's biological existence, while others abandon their own identity to become culturally more Arab, or Greek, or Russian than the ethnic Arabs, Greeks or Russians. Again, in the name of "pure" Orthodoxy, some are eager to isolate the Church from the mainstreams of societal life, lest the people be polluted, thus inadvertently turning the Church into a sect.

As Father Alexander Schmemmann reminded us long ago, we are bound to accept the fact that we cannot answer the problems facing the Church today by adopting an attitude of either surrender or escape. The message of the Gospel, of theology, and of the liturgy is salvation and joy. Hence, constructive theological and liturgical work must always be God-centered, incarnational, and prophetic but also demanding, self-critical, dynamic, challenging, open, involved, and philanthropic. Authentic Tradition, after all, is not only a conserving and protective principle but also a principle of regeneration and growth in the perception of the one constant Truth who is Christ.

2. The Decline in Liturgical Life and the Worshipping Community

A perplexing problem, at least for most Orthodox parishes in North America, is the fact that the rich liturgical tradition of the Church in many instances has been reduced, as Paul Meyendorff observes, to the Sunday morning Eucharistic liturgy. He bemoans the fact that “we have become a ‘Sunday Church,’ peopled by Sunday Christians.” Professor Meyendorff is correct to lament the fact that we have radically reduced our liturgical experiences to a Sunday morning liturgy, and to baptisms, weddings, and funerals. However, the greater problem – if not sin – is that in many places even these few experiences are less than lofty and less than adequate to meet the needs of the people, let alone to sustain the vibrancy of their faith.



One could point to the changing cultural and socio-economic realities of Church life for the decline in liturgical life, especially among the younger members of the community and the intellectuals. The social mobility of vast numbers of Orthodox people has made the neighborhood urban parish almost a thing of the past. New suburban parishes have taken their place. But for many people who live in the suburbs

Faith and worship are inseparable

going to church has become a chore due to distance, work habits, social commitments, and school activities. The parish church is no longer the foremost place for social gathering and interaction as it was for our immigrant forebears and their children.

However, as significant as these external factors may be, there is another deeper reason for the decline in liturgical life: the secularization of society. A secular society, as Metropolitan Anthony Bloom said, is marked by two characteristics. In a secular society people have a blurred or an anemic sense of God. They also develop an acute awareness of the temporal world. In such circumstances people tend to see life more in material terms. They are, therefore, more prone to reject the sacramentality of creation, its transparency to the divine Presence. Christians are not immune to the secular influences of our society; they can also lose sight of God and ignore Him. As God ceases to be relevant in the lives of people, the need for worship fades away and vanishes.

The parish is a living organism

Faith and worship are inseparable; when one withers and dies so does the other. The crisis in worship is in reality the product of the crisis of faith. Therefore, we must not be fooled to inaction because people still come to church, marry, baptize their children, and bury their dead. The statistics are alarming. The trend is towards declining numbers and casual church membership. Casual church membership and occasional church-going often leads to a movement away from the Church, not so much in a sense of renunciation or joining another body, but in the sense that Orthodox Christianity no longer is the prime definer of one's identity.

The Church delivers the message of faith most especially through the liturgy

In these circumstances, we have no choice but to reacquire an evangelistic spirit in order to facilitate and effect the transformation of naïve religiosity into conscious Orthodox belief, practice, and piety. In this endeavor the parish must accept the challenge and the responsibility to provide for its people excellent liturgical experiences, persuasive preaching, effective educational opportunities, significant philanthropic activities, resourceful outreach programs, competent governance, and a bold and effectual pastoral ministry. Care, however, must be given not to turn the parish into a monastery, or into a laboratory, or for that matter into some ideal church frozen in time. The parish is not a monastic community. Any attempt to impose upon it monastic standards and a monastic liturgical regimen is doomed to failure. On the other hand the parish is not a laboratory where subjective liturgical experiments are carried out. Such experiments usually produce trivial liturgy and result in the making of trivial Christians. Neither is the parish a museum, a place that attempts to replicate an idealized past that never was. The parish is a living organism. It pulsates with life. Like any living person, it carries a history but it lives in the present and anticipates and works for a better tomorrow.

3. The Need for Textual Reforms

The Church delivers the message of faith through various forms, but most especially through the liturgy. Therefore, liturgical homilies must be thoughtful and persuasive, liturgical rituals must be dignified and inspiring, and liturgical texts must be elegant, clear, and unambiguous given that they transmit official meanings. Lucid and intelligible texts invite attention. They allow the truths of the faith to nestle in people's hearts and in their way of thinking, thereby challenging their outlook on life, so that sluggish faith may be rekindled and active faith may be strengthened. It is no secret that that the prayers, rituals, and rubrics of our sacred rites were shaped in years long past and in cultural contexts very different from our own.

Liturgy must pulsate with life, be relevant to the lives of people, and responsive to their deepest needs and aspirations

To avoid the pitfalls of liturgical formalism and the dangers of misguided piety, liturgy must pulsate with life, be relevant to the lives of people, and responsive to their deepest needs and aspirations. In other words, the Church, through her pastors and theologians, is obliged to probe the texts and ritual actions of the received liturgical tradition to see how convincingly they speak to the hearts and minds of the people of today.

A number of liturgical texts, at least in the opinion of some, are open to question and debate. Let me illustrate this point by making reference to the prayers for a woman who has miscarried. A miscarriage, like stillbirth, produces physical pain, emotional stress, mental anguish, and spiritual suffering. A woman who has experienced a miscarriage or a stillbirth ought to be comforted, strengthened, and encouraged by the prayer of the Church; not chided. A miscarriage should not be confused with an abortion, which is a willful act to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. The prayer for miscarriage in the printed Greek Euchologion is replete with language that is strident and accusatory, when in fact a miscarriage is a natural phenomenon, an uncontrolled spontaneous expulsion of the fetus before it is viable. Here, the harsh and judgmental language drowns out the few positive elements in the prayer.

The reform of texts can also lead us to recover older useful elements that were once part of a given rite but have disappeared over the course of time for one reason or another. The rites of burial, for example, present us with just such a case. The motifs of the funeral prayers in the manuscripts represent ancient Christian ideas revolving around the concepts of life, resurrection, light, peace, rest, refreshment, forgiveness, divine love and mercy, and particularly repose in the "bosom of Abraham." The hymns, on the other hand, derived mostly from the funeral



hymns of the Oktoechos or Parakletike, which are of monastic origin and address the stark realities of death and the vanity of human endeavor. In addition to the prayers and hymnody, the burial service contains two Scripture lessons, one from the Apostolos and another from the Evangelion. In addition to the prescribed readings in the printed Euchologion, the Evangelion and the Apostolos also list several alternate readings. The several passages reflect the Church's belief in the reality of Christ's death and resurrection and of the benefits that we derive from them, namely, the resurrection of our body on the last day, incorruption, and immortality. They speak also of Christ's two activities, judging and giving life.

Of the several prayers that are contained in the ancient manuscripts, one, which is the oldest, "God of spirits and of all flesh," is found in all the manuscripts and entered into the printed Euchologia.

However, another prayer of great significance and value was eliminated from the burial service in the printed Euchologia. It is a prayer of inclination that was said for the mourners just prior to the conclusion of the service. The usefulness of such a prayer is clearly obvious and should be restored to the funeral service. The Church is concerned not only for the deceased but also for the bereaved who are in need of God's consolation and help.

4. *Questionable Practices*

Customs and practices that no longer carry meaning can be troubling. Take for example, the churching of infants on the fortieth day after birth. In current liturgical practice male infants only are brought into the sanctuary while female infants are brought before the holy doors. In fact, this practice is relatively new. In his time, St. Symeon of Thessalonike (+1429) tells us that baptism and not the gender of the infant determined entrance into the sanctuary.

During his time, due to the dangers of infant mortality, most infants were baptized by the fortieth day after birth. Hence, at the time of 'churching,' all baptized infants regardless of sex, were admitted to the sanctuary, while infants who were not yet baptized were brought to the holy doors. There is absolutely no reason to exclude female infants from the sanctuary. Either all infants, regardless of gender, are brought into the sanctuary, or all should be excluded. Gender should not be counted as an obstacle, inasmuch as males and females are equal in honor and grace; both have been created in the image of God; and both are endowed with the same Holy Spirit.

Retaining irrelevant forms and offices gives rise to ritual formalism

Speaking of children, what are we to make of the practice in some churches today when the parish priest proudly presents to the bishop a small cadre of young boys who have barely finished elementary school to make them Readers of the Church? What does this say about the honored office of Reader, who according to tradition must not only be a mature person, capable of reading the Psalms and the Scripture lessons with clarity and conviction, but also understand the Scriptures and be competent to instruct others in their meaning?

The same could be said of the office of sub-deacon. The office is usually bestowed on the same day on which a person is to be ordained to the diaconate.

Thus, one becomes a sub-deacon for an hour or two only to execute a symbolic function, the washing of the presider-bishop's hands at the Great Entrance. If this is the only function of a sub-deacon, why have them? Is the office necessary in today's Church? When minor orders cease to have a real purpose in the life of the Church, they either have to be laid to pious rest or their purpose and ministry has to be redefined and modified to meet new needs. Retaining irrelevant forms and offices gives rise to ritual formalism. On the other hand, the Church, as she did in the past, may decide to create new minor orders to benefit the Church and the People of God.

These two questionable practices raise two other issues. The first is that all orders and ministries in the Church are bestowed for the edification of the Body of Christ. They are not given as a token of honor. The second is that every ministry is full in itself and not a steppingstone to another higher office. Grace is not doled out in smaller and larger quantities.

5. Other Problematic Practices

One could easily multiply the examples of problematic liturgical practices that need the Church's attention. I have mentioned only a few. I did not touch upon those that pertain to the Divine Liturgy, such as the inaudible recitation of the priestly prayers, the manner by which Holy Communion is distributed, the suppression of Psalmody, the needless repetitions and gestures, textual difficulties, the loss of the significance of the Small Entrance, and other matters

that unduly burden the celebration. Also, I made no mention of the liturgical problems that pertain to Holy Week and Pascha, such as the dislocation of the divine services and the deconstruction of the Paschal Vigil, the many repetitions, and the pastoral concerns for maintaining the full cycle of services in smaller parishes where adequate qualified personnel is sorely lacking. Closely related to Pascha are the issues of the two calendars, the refinement of the Paschalia or Paschal Tables, and the search for a common date for Easter.

I also made no mention of the Lectionary and of the significance of the preaching ministry and of the challenges of our techno-culture. We are well aware of the fact that the public reading of Scripture plays a central role in our worship and we are aware as well of the unfortunate fact that many people of the Church do not read the Bible in any sustained way. The revision of the lectionary would help bring the Scriptures to the people and provide for a more serious and dynamic preaching ministry.

It is no secret that technology has become the primary force that shapes the context within which contemporary people search for meanings and for a relationship with God. We have yet to tackle seriously the ideological framework and the pragmatic ends of technology as it bears on worship and the other three constituent activities of the Church, proclaiming the Gospel, teaching the faith, and doing works of philanthropy.

6. *Who has the authority to enact liturgical changes?*

While many qualified theologians and pastors may propose changes and work diligently to achieve them, when all is said and done, the local Church acting judiciously is the final arbiter and the responsible agent of liturgical change. Were it to be otherwise, chaos would prevail and the liturgy of the Church would lose its authenticity and its catholicity and be robbed of its dignity and vitality. Hence, every diocese or archdiocese is obliged to regulate and guard the liturgy, but it is also equally obliged to continuously evaluate its effectiveness and to develop its shape and expression to meet the needs and demands of the times without betraying the essential traditions and faith of the Church.

We have to admit that not every single component of the divine services that were shaped by the needs and ideas of another time and place can speak with the same adequacy and force to the people of the cultures in which they are celebrated today. Modern liturgical scholarship has raised and continues to raise a variety of questions that require consideration. If the liturgy is to remain vibrant and relevant, we are obliged to explore the history, uncover the meaning, and weigh the effectiveness of each of its components. It is not enough to simply talk about defective practices or about recovering lost and displaced elements of the liturgy. It is more important that the Church be determined to act on these things.

As the Orthodox Churches in America move to accomplish their organic unity, matters pertaining to legal and organizational structures but also liturgical practices, customs, and usages are of special importance. That is why, I believe, that the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) has a special responsibility to establish several commissions to study in depth all matters that affect the unity of the jurisdictions. One such commission should be the Commission on Liturgy to deal with all liturgical matters.

Liturgy is changeless and changing, ageless but also adaptable, traditional but also relevant.

The task of the Commission would be to conduct a systematic analysis and a comprehensive study of the received ritual data, followed by a number of recommendations for the renewal of the liturgy in response to the realities and needs of the Church in America. An organically united Orthodox Church of America will be obliged, in due course, to authorize the publication of its own official version of the Euchologion and the other liturgical books. Over time, the Church of America will inevitably reflect in her Euchologion a rich liturgical praxis that is consistent with her needs, basically uniform, based on the most authentic traditions, and marked by the very best of customs and practices of the jurisdictions.

As the Church is something given historically but also constantly realized through the divine action of the Holy Spirit, so also the Church's liturgy, is constant and traditional, but also alive and dynamic. While its remarkably rich core remains constant, its forms and expressions are inescapably conditioned by the realities of history and culture. Thus, authentic liturgy is changeless and changing, ageless but also adaptable, traditional but also relevant.

Because we value our origins and our traditions, it is both essential and proper to probe the received tradition, if we are to show the relationship between worship and the realities of the life of faith. The insightful words of Fr. John Meyendorff are especially pertinent in matters pertaining to the liturgy. "Living tradition," he wrote, "involves that kind of change and adaptability that preserves its continuous relevance; otherwise the Church becomes a museum of pomposity and ritualism, quite acceptable in the framework of a pluralistic and basically superficial society but actually unfaithful to Orthodoxy itself."



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Last Things First: The Eschatological Community of the Parish

By Fr. Stelyios Muksuris

A danger all of us face as priests of God is to approach our liturgical ministry in our parishes with a lukewarm and disinterested disposition. Working long hours and late nights in the service of God's people, accompanied by the stresses these situations typically bring, may often incapacitate us spiritually, even physically at times. This may lead to a mechanical, unconscious execution of the Divine Liturgy and our ecclesiastical services, the likes of which is not merely perceived by our flocks in attendance but, sadly, is also emulated by them and labeled as the norm for Orthodox liturgical life. We often urge our parishioners to participate meaningfully in the Holy Liturgy; however, the underlying question is: do we do as much?

Meaningful participation on both sides of the altar screen presupposes certain factors, chief of which I submit is how we perceive the local Eucharistic community of the parish and what we understand the overall celebration of the Divine Liturgy to signify. When the periodic act of "going to church" becomes habitual, without a proper cognizance of who we are as a community of faith and what we hope to achieve in our worship, the liturgical experience can seem tiresome if not irrelevant. And like anything in life, one only reaps as much as he sows (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6). Thankfully, the reapers in our

communities are both plentiful and faithful; however, the question is what seeds do they have at their disposal to sow and make their spiritual harvest an abundant one? A refreshingly new look at the liturgical commentaries of St. Symeon of Thessalonike may help.

Symeon of Thessalonike (+1429 A.D.), a staunch hesychast within the Palamite tradition and an even more faithful adherent to the Areopagitical corpus of writings by Pseudo-Dionysios, is arguably the most underestimated of all patristic commentators on the Divine Liturgy. Sadly, his important contribution *On the Sacred Liturgy*, which appears as a chapter in his *Treatise on the Sacraments*, and his stand-alone *Interpretation of the Divine Temple and Liturgy*, have not been translated into English. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, the former text presents the most unique vision ever recorded of the completed prothesis rite, an image that answers who we are as the Church and what we should be accomplishing when we gather for worship together.

The hallowed Archbishop of Thessalonike, more so than his contemporary St. Nicholas Cabasilas, is the only Byzantine liturgical commentator who engages in such a lengthy description of the prothesis rite,



quite simply because by the fifteenth century, the rite had reached the degree of intricacy it more or less possesses today. What originally began as a simple eucharistic offering of bread and wine has by this time developed a profound theology that has elevated the completed prothesis into a vivid icon of the Lord flanked on all sides by His Holy Church. This is what Symeon has to say:

But let us also see how through this divine model and the work of the holy proskomide we perceive as one Jesus and His Church, in the middle Him the true light, from whom the Church requests life eternal, illumined by Him and ongoing. While He is in the middle through the bread, His mother [is present] through the particle on the right, the saints and the angels on the left, and below everyone who has believed in Him, the pious gathering. And this is the great mystery: God among men and God in the

midst of gods, observed by Him who is God by nature and who was truly incarnated for them. And this is the future kingdom and the commonwealth of eternal life: God with us, both seen and partaken of. (On the Sacred Liturgy 94; PG 155.285B; translation mine)

St. Symeon presents a resplendently powerful cosmic image of the Kingdom of God, the united Church of heaven and earth. The centrality of Christ in history and in the Kingdom, which is manifested fully in the local parish, is abundantly clear. What is also vividly evident is the special place occupied by the faithful, who join the celestial orders in their worship of God. The characterization “God in the midst of gods” builds upon the Eastern theology of theosis, or deification, developed in the fourth century by St. Athanasios of Alexandria in his renowned treatise *On the Incarnation*. The local community of faith then, every time it gathers together for the periodic celebration of the Eucharist, realizes itself to be what it already is in the eyes of God – the redeemed Kingdom (cf. Luke 23:42-43), the banquet hall (cf. Luke 14:23-24), the family reunited once again to its Father (cf. Luke 15:32) and to one another. In this “pious gathering,” the walls of discord and separation are torn down indefinitely; there is complete transparency, total accessibility to God, and full comprehension of one’s place in the *economia* of salvation. Judgment and criticism are seized from man and redirected to the One who alone possesses this prerogative. And in Symeon’s vision, equality is of

paramount importance between the living and deceased, with the hierarchy of progression stemming from the Lamb to the orders of saints and angels, and through them to the members of the *ecclesia militante* and *triumphante*.

Symeon’s vision of the *ecclesia* at prayer is predominantly eschatological. It is a miniaturization of the Holy Liturgy, which in turn is the inchoate celebration of the eternal liturgy of God’s Kingdom. The continual partaking of the fullness of Christ through the consecrated elements mirrors the complete permeation of God in man and man’s full participation in the life of God at the eschaton. And it is this eschatological Kingdom to which all Orthodox Christians belong from holy baptism and to which they draw closer at each Eucharist, not to mention at every moment throughout their lives.

All these considerations are helpful in assisting us servants of God’s holy altar with attaining an eschatological orientation not only in our celebration of the Divine Liturgy, but also in daily life. The eventual formalization of the prothesis rite into a privatized and “clericalized” service, however, has not helped matters, as over the centuries our faithful have been excluded from such a wealth of mystical theology. Perhaps consideration may be given though to an occasional “public” execution of this once very public act, with the only difference being the exposure of our people to the heightened liturgical mystagogy that began developing by the first quarter of the seventh century, as evidenced

in the writings of St. Maximos the Confessor. The contemplative value of the prothesis rite has always belonged to the clergy; perhaps it may be time for it to be shared by our laity as well.

Symeon’s eschatological vision of the redeemed Kingdom can guide each of us, clergy and laity, to a deeper appreciation of what the Church at prayer is and does. We are the universal and local eschatological community, made up of eschatological beings, living the eschaton in the present and preparing for it at the end of history. In our own day-to-day routines and in those of the members of our faith communities, it behooves all of us to prioritize the eschatological Kingdom (cf. Matthew 6:33), to place the last things first and to structure our lives – our words and our behavior – in accordance with future expectations. Perhaps here lies the key that unlocks the mystery to a blessed, tranquil, and fulfilled life. Needless to say, however, such a disposition is required of everyone.

It has been said that older generations, deep-seated in tradition, have always hailed the past, while today’s fast-paced, hedonistic society bases its *savoir vivre* on the here and now. St. Symeon reminds us that for the Orthodox Christian, one’s orientation can only come from the eschatological future.

—Fr. Stelyios Muksuris, Ph.D.
serves as Assistant to
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the Priesthood

Contemporary and Classic Excerpts

The Priest at the Altar

The Christian priest is first of all the one who performs a sacrifice; but he is such only by virtue of his participation in the sacerdotal act of our unique and sovereign High Priest, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Gifts prepared at the prothesis and consecrated at the altar are “offered.” This means that Jesus Christ Himself is offered, or rather offers Himself through the act of the priest, to His Father for the life and salvation of the world. When the priest raises the Holy Gifts and declares: “Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all,” he reaches the central moment of his vocation. At this moment he manifests the ultimate purpose of his vocation and of his service on behalf of the world as a whole. He offers the Victim who saves mankind. Blessed is the priest who, at that moment, is aware that he has fulfilled his own personal destiny and reached the very goal of his life!

*—Father Lev Gillet (1893-1980)
who wrote under the pseudonym,
a Monk of the Eastern Church.*

At that moment, we are all spiritually plunged into the Blood of Christ. We become, through the Liturgy, participants in his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Every Eucharist, in some sense, represents both for the priest and for those who take part in it, an act of “suicide.” The old, sinful Adam is immolated, sacrificed. The New Man in Jesus Christ replaces him. The egotistical person we were before ceases to exist. Thus it should be, in any event, if we truly participate in the Divine Liturgy. When we leave the Church after the service, we should be other than we were when we entered. Tragically, most Christians don’t know what the Liturgy demands of them. The priest should be more aware than they. He, at least, should know, if he accomplishes the offering in Spirit and in Truth, that each time he approaches the altar to offer the sacrifice of Christ, he himself will die in order to be born anew



2008 Clergy-Laity



You are invited
to attend
the APC/NSP
Clergy Marriage
Enrichment
Workshops

Tuesday & Wednesday
July 15th and 16, 2008
2—5PM

Attend all four sessions to be
eligible to win a fantastic prize!

Topics and Speakers:

Slip Sliding Away from Marital Unity : Father Charles Joannides

Balancing Family and Ministry : Dr. Philip Mamalakis

Living the Images of Marriage Given to Us : Presvytera Kerry Pappas

*Moving Beyond Conflicts, Disconnections & Disappointments :
Dr. George Stavros*

*Prize drawing to be held at the Clergy Family Appreciation Dinner on
Wednesday evening, July 16th. Winner need not be present at drawing to win.*

You are invited to the
**Clergy Family Appreciation Dinner with His
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Wednesday, July 16, 2008 • 6:00 - 8:00PM
Please join us for a lovely evening

39th BIENNIAL
CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS



WASHINGTON, DC
SUNDAY, JULY 13th - THURSDAY, JULY 17th 2008

**SPECIAL CLERGY EVENTS AT
CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS**

The Clergy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America will gather at the 39th biennial Clergy Laity Congress July 14-18 at the Marriot Wardman Park Hotel in Washington DC. The APC/NSP planning committee has developed a wonderful week filled with quality programs based on the general Clergy Laity theme Gather My People to My Home.

The week's events will include Clergy Marriage Workshops on the afternoons of Tuesday, July 15 and Wednesday, July 16; a Clergy Family Appreciation Dinner on Wednesday evening, July 16; and a Clergy breakfast with His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios on Friday, July 18. The breakfast will feature the introduction of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council and members of the Archdiocesan Benefits Committee to the attendees. The week will also include Clergy Benefits Information sessions, Clergy Syndesmos Meetings, and special events and reunions for the Retired Clergy.

The overall theme of the Clergy Marriage Workshops is "Attending to our Marriages as Clergy Couples." The titles of the presentations and the speakers are: "Slip-Sliding Away from Marital Oneness" presented by Fr. Charles Joannides; "Love's Container: Understanding and Moving Beyond Inevitable Conflicts, Disconnections, and Disappointments in Marriage" presented by Dr. George Stavros; "Balancing Family and Ministry" presented by Dr. Philip Mamalakis; and "Sacred Image, Sacred Marriage: Living the Images of Marriage Given to Us" presented by Presvytera Kerry Pappas.

All clergy family members are invited to the Clergy Family Appreciation Dinner on Wednesday evening, whether registered or not.

The Clergy Family Child Care program is available for clergy family children from 5-12 years old. The weekly fee per child is \$100 per if booked before June 11; \$200 if booked from June 12-June 20; and \$300 if booked after June 21 and for walk ins. For additional information and a registration form please visit the NSP website or contact Flora Moraitis at (631) 470-1374 or PresFloraM@oponline.net.



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