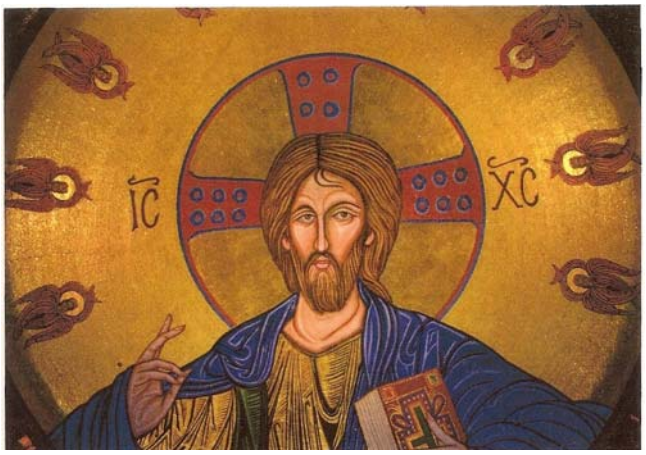
A Companion to the Divine Liturgy



Holy Trinity

Greek Orthodox Church

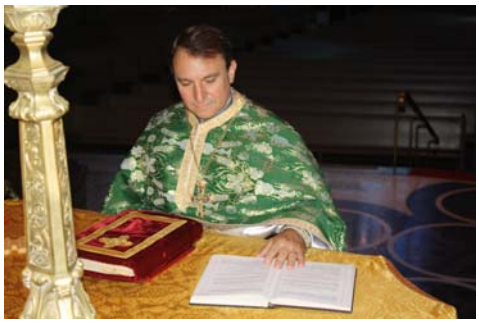
San Francisco

Please use this booklet in conjunction with the black covered "The Divine Liturgy" book in the pews, beginning on page 1.

Orthodox Christians believe that we are able to taste the Kingdom of God in this life. The beauty and other-worldliness of the Divine Liturgy serves to remind us that God's Kingdom is all around us. The Divine Liturgy ("liturgy" comes from two Greek words meaning "work of the people") begins on Page 1 of the black book found in the pews, with the words "Blessed is the Kingdom…"

Immediately after the invocation "Blessed is the Kingdom. . ." the Priest chants a series of petitions (prayers that make specific requests), beginning with "In peace let us pray to the Lord." These prayers, called the **Great Litany,** are part of many Orthodox Christian services. As you follow along on Pages 1-4, you will notice that these petitions articulate many of the concerns common to all persons.

Pages 4-7 contain the **Antiphons.** This section is a vestige from the ancient days of Christianity when the Faithful would sing as they entered church for the Liturgy. They are called "antiphons" because they are meant to be sung alternately by two choirs.



On Page 7, the Priest makes the **Small Entrance.** He takes the Gospel Book from the Holy Table, brings it outside the Altar before the congregation, and after the singing of a short hymn, returns the Gospel to the Table. This act of presenting the Gospel has its origins in ancient Christian liturgical practice: the Gospel Book was kept in a building or space separate from the church proper and would be presented to the congregation at the beginning of the service. Today, the Small Entrance reminds us that the Gospel ("Good News") of Jesus Christ constitutes the essence of our beliefs and the basis of our lives. During the Small Entrance and after the Gospel has been placed back on the Holy Table, various hymns are chanted. These hymns change as dictated by the calendar of the Church.

On Page 9, the hymn "Holy God . . ." is chanted. (At certain times throughout the year it is replaced by one of two other hymns.) In the early Church this **Thrice Holy Hymn** (or "Trisagion") was sung immediately after the Faithful had assembled inside the church for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

"Dynamis!" (page 9)

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (page 10)

"Blessed are You on the throne..." (page 10)

On Page 10, the appointed **Epistle** is read. These readings are determined by the Church calendar and are drawn from the Acts of the Apostles or one of the Letters of the New Testament.

The Priest censes on Page 11 prior to reading the appointed **Gospel passage of the day,** praying that the Good News that is about to be proclaimed will take root and find fertile soil in our hearts.

Reading of the Gospel

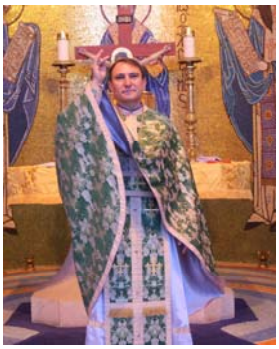
The Epistle and Gospel readings constitute two-thirds of the essential elements of this part of the Divine Liturgy referred to as the **Liturgy of the Word.** Traditionally, the sermon should be preached at this point; however, in modern practice the sermon is often moved to later in the Liturgy.

On Page 13 the Liturgy shifts its focus away from the practical needs stated in the Great Litany, the lessons of the Epistle and Gospel, and the instruction of the sermon to the **transcendence of Holy Communion.** Most of the remainder of the Divine Liturgy concerns itself with the presentation, preparation, and distribution of the bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Called "The Lord's Supper" by early Christians, Holy Communion or the Eucharist (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving"), is the essential and defining act of the Church. We partake of the real Body and Blood of our Lord so that we might live in His Kingdom, have the power to resist the temptation to sin, and obtain eternal life. The hymn on Page 13 reminds us to "set aside all worldly care that we may receive the King of all."

The Priest makes a great **censing of the church** building and the Faithful. At this point it is worth noting two important aspects of the use of incense: First, incense represents our prayers as they ascend to heaven, whose use has its roots in the Old Testament, was continued in the ancient Church, and will, according to Scripture, be part of the Kingdom to come. Second, we cense not just icons and the Holy Table, but the people themselves. It has been speculated that the censing of *everyone* was a direct response to the offering of incense to the emperor in pagan times. From the perspective of Christianity, all humans are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore of immeasurable value. As such, all are worthy of being blessed with incense.

The Priest exits the altar with the bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Jesus. This **Great Entrance** has its origins in the early Church, when the bread and wine were prepared in a room or building separate from the church proper and had to be brought into church at the appointed time. Today the bread and wine are prepared on a side table inside the altar. They are brought out and presented in order to emphasize that the focus of the remainder of the Divine Liturgy will be the consecration and distribution of Holy Communion.

The Priest reenters the altar, places the bread and wine on the Holy Table, and begins the **Completion Litany** on Page 17. Like the Great Litany, this series of prayers or petitions is found in one form or another in many Orthodox services. Please note that the content of this litany deals less with earthly concerns and more with eternal matters directly affecting our salvation.



On Page 20, the Priest blesses the people and says **"Peace be to all."** Whenever we are being blessed, whether by incense or with the hand, the proper response is to bow slightly. It is neither necessary nor desirable to make the sign of the cross when being blessed.

Next the Priest exclaims, **"Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess."** In the ancient Church, congregants then kissed one another, with men greeting men and women greeting women. Some local parishes have taken it upon themselves to reinstitute this practice unilaterally. At present, it is the preference of our presiding hierarch that parishes in the Metropolis of San Francisco adhere to the generally held practice throughout the Orthodox world in which the "Kiss of Peace" is exchanged only by the clergy.

At the top of Page 21 the words **"The doors! The doors! In wisdom let us be attentive"** are proclaimed. In the ancient Church, just prior to the congregation's public confession of faith, there was a check of the outside doors to make certain that they were secure and that only baptized Faithful remained inside the church.

The congregation recites the **Creed,** following the standard Archdiocesan translation found on the cards in the pews. Having its roots in the Scripture and the faith of the Apostles, the Creed was written in the Fourth Century and continues to be recited by Orthodox Christians everywhere during the celebration of every Divine Liturgy.

The **Anaphora** begins on page 22 and concludes at the bottom of page 26. "Anaphora" means "bringing (sending) up." It is during this period of the Divine Liturgy that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. There is no one moment during the Anaphora that this change happens—the entire Anaphora is essential to the consecration of Holy Communion. The Anaphora ends when the congregation stands up after the kneeling which begins on Page 25.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all." (Page 22)

"Let us lift up our hearts." (Page 23)

"Let us give thanks to the Lord." (Page 23)

"Singing, proclaiming, shouting the victory hymn and saying." (Page 23)

Take, eat, this is my body…" (Page 24)

"Drink of this all of you, this is my blood of the New Covenant…"

(Page 24)

"Offering You these gifts from Your own gifts, in all and for all." (Page 25)

"And make this bread…" (Page 25)

"And that which is in this cup…"

(Page 26)

"Changing them by Your Holy Spirit." (Page 26)

"So that to those who partake of them…" (Page 26)

The segment of the Liturgy prior to the Lord's Prayer (Pages 27-30) allows us to "catch our breath" liturgically after the intensity of the Anaphora.

"Especially for our most holy…" (Page 27)

"For Saint John the Prophet…" (Page 27)

We pray the **Lord's Prayer** together on Page 30. As we say this prayer, we would do well to remember that Christians have been praying it together at every Eucharistic celebration since before the words of the New Testament were penned.

"Peace be to all." (Page 31)

"Let us bow our heads...

...unto the Lord." (Page 31)

From Page 32-36 the **Priest receives Communion and prepares the gifts for distribution to the Faithful.** Participation in Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who are living in accordance with the teachings of the Church. Not having "open Communion" is not a sign of superiority, but a public reminder that Christianity is broken. Orthodox Christians proclaim their belief in "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" and lament the existence of denominationalism. Orthodoxy holds firm to the understanding that inter-communion will be the sign of unity among Christians, not the means to that unity.

"Let us be attentive! The holy Gifts for the holy people of God." (Page 32

"The Lamb of God is broken and shared, broken but not divided...

...forever eaten yet never consumed...

...but sanctifying those who partake of Him." (Page 33)

"The fullness of the cup, of faith in the Holy Spirit" (Page 33)

"Blessed is the fervor of Your Saints…" (Page 33)

"The fervor of faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Amen" (Page 33)

At every Divine Liturgy we partake of the *Risen* Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Our Lord was crucified once and for all for our salvation. In the Eucharist, He sacrifices Himself as "the Offered and the Offerer" so that we might have "remission of our sins and eternal life."

"This has touched my lips...

...the Lord takes away all my guilt and my sin is forgiven." (Page 35)

"Wash away, Lord, the offenses of those here commemorated in Your precious Blood, through the prayers of the Theotokos and of all Your Saints." (Page 37)

Prior to receiving Communion we recite together the prayers on Page 34. While these prayers are not part of the Divine Liturgy, their insertion at this point has become widely practiced both in America and elsewhere.

The Priest calls the Faithful to come forward to partake of the Eucharist on Page 37.

"With the fear of God…" (Page 37)

After Holy Communion...

"God, save Your people…" (Page 37)

"Be exalted, O God…" (Page 37)

...the Priest returns the gifts to the Altar...

"Always, now and forever... " (Page 38)

…and places the Holy Table back in order.

"Let us be attentive…" (Page 38)

"For You are our sanctification…" (Page 39)

The final prayers of the Divine Liturgy begin on page 39 with the prayer known as the **Prayer behind the Pulpit** ("Lord, bless those who praise You . . ."). In the early Church, to emphasize that teaching and preaching are essential, the pulpit was placed in the center front of the Church. We must never forget our vocation to proclaim the Good News to all.

"As the fulfillment of the law…" (Page 40)

If there are any additional services or prayers, they are inserted here. Additionally, it has become the custom at Holy Trinity to preach the **sermon** at this point in the Liturgy.

"May the blessing of the Lord…" (Page 40)

"Through the prayers…" (Page 41)

After the conclusion of the Liturgy on Page 41, **blessed bread is distributed to all,** as a reminder that the Christians of the New Testament always shared in fellowship after the Lord's Supper.