

# **A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE DIVINE LITURGY**

Welcome! We are excited to have you with us today. Below is a brief explanation of various aspects of our worship service. Should you have any questions, feel free to ask your neighbor or a greeter located near the door of the church. We pray that, above all, you enter into the joy of the Lord!

## **WHAT IS THE DIVINE LITURGY AND HOW LONG IS IT?**

The word liturgy means “the work of the people” and is the original form of Christian worship. The Liturgy is the central and most important act in the Orthodox Church because we all stand before the throne of God participating together in prayer, teaching, worship, and finally receiving the Holy Communion, the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Divine Liturgy is normally three hours long on a typical Sunday and is meant to prepare us to receive the Body and Blood of our Savior.

## **FOLLOW ALONG**

There are monitors in the church to help guide you through the Divine Liturgy, but you are also welcome to download the app “Coptic Reader” onto your mobile devices. It may be confusing at first, so please do not hesitate to ask a greeter for help at any point in the service.

## **WHERE TO STAND**

You may notice that men and women stand on opposite sides of the church. This is an ancient practice dating back to the early church. Families with young children are welcome to stand together in the back near the cry room if the children need extra support.

## **WHEN TO STAND AND SIT**

The congregation stands for the majority of the liturgy out of reverence for God. Church visitors are encouraged to stand as much as possible, especially when the Gospel is read and during Holy Communion. It is appropriate to sit during the reading of certain biblical passages and the sermon. Please do not feel nervous if you do not know when to stand and sit.

## **HEAD COVERINGS**

Women are encouraged to wear a head covering while attending the liturgy based on the instructions of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 in which Saint Paul the Apostle explains that a woman who prays with her head uncovered dishonors her head. The head coverings are located on the table just outside the church door, near the candles.

## **HOLY KISS**

Shortly after the sermon, the deacon will call everyone to “Greet one another with a Holy Kiss.” This is meant to fulfill Matthew 5:24 where we are called to “First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Before we receive the gift of Holy Communion, we extend our hands to one another as a sign of peace. This is completed by holding out your hands straight hands, interlocking them with your neighbor’s as shown below, releasing, and then kissing your own hands.



## FACING EAST

You may notice that the priest and congregation all face the same direction—East—during the Divine Liturgy. This is intentionally done as we are all worshipping God together. Why East? One main reason is we look for the return of Jesus Christ, who will come again from the East as promised in Acts 1:11.

## HOLY COMMUNION

Near the end of the Divine Liturgy, the priest will distribute the Holy Communion. The Orthodox believe that during the Liturgy the bread and wine on the altar have been changed into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. To participate in this sacrament three things are required. You must be 1) baptized into the Orthodox Faith, 2) actively participating in the sacrament of confession, and 3) abstaining from food and water since midnight. Holy Communion is very precious and is treated with the utmost care. Saint Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:27, “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

## CHURCH ORIENTATION



- ❖ The Nave  
This is where the congregation stands. Men sit on the left and women sit on the right.
- ❖ The Chorus  
This is where the deacons, or the Chorus, stand. They wear white tunics and lead the congregation in the liturgical prayers. Some deacons assist the priest in the sanctuary.
- ❖ The Sanctuary  
This represents Heaven itself, the place of God’s residence. The priest prays the Liturgy from within the Sanctuary, the Eastern-most point of the church. It is the holiest place in the church, and only clergymen are allowed within it.
- ❖ The Altar  
The altar is located within the Sanctuary. It is derived from the Latin word “altare” which means “the place upon which sacrifices are slain.” In Greek, the word is “trapeza,” which means “The Lord’s Table.” The bread and wine are kept on the altar for the duration of the liturgy. The priest prays for the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ for Holy Communion, the culmination of the Liturgy.

We hope this guide has been helpful! Thank you for your interest in our church. Please be sure to introduce yourself to a greeter before you leave, and let us know if you have any questions.