

Cycle of Services in the Eastern Orthodox Church
Compiled By Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes

Introduction by Father Nektarios Serfes:

Nothing is so spiritually uplifting, and so rewarding then prayer before God in the Church. The Orthodox Church has a cycle of services, and all of us should make every means to attend these services. It's not really how long are these services, but what we put into them that is spiritually rewarding.

When the Church calls us to prayer, we should rush with great Christian love to go to these services, and give our Lord God due honor and worship, at the same time we should think about our spiritual relationship with our God, and our path to our salvation. During these cycle of services we begin to realize how much our Lord God loves us, and wants us to be a part of His Kingdom. We can participate in His Kingdom in prayer, and we can behold His great spiritual beauty as we gaze around the Church and behold Him, as well as the opening arms of the Mother of God, the saints, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs all surrounding us with their prayers and intercession on our behalf, what a blessing!

Then again preparations before the Divine Liturgy are spiritually necessary, and that is if when we will go to Holy Communion, we should consider speaking to our priest about going to Holy Confession. We also should fast from certain foods anticipation of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, i.e. at the least, fast from meats on Wednesday and Friday, and all foods and liquids the morning of the liturgy unless these are deemed necessary for medical reasons.

We also have prayers to be read before taking Holy Communion, they are called Prayers in Preparation for Holy Communion, or prayers before Holy Communion, should speak to our parish priest about these prayers. Some of the faithful begin reading these prayers on Thursday, so that we do not have to wait to the last minute. Then again we have prayers of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion, eventually throughout the day we should read these prayers of thanksgiving, some parishes read these prayers of Thanksgiving at the end of the Divine Liturgy, as well as the faithful who took Holy Communion remain in the church until these prayers are finished.

Attend these services with your children, and rush with great love to the Church and pray. Let us make every effort to go to the Church in prayer, and let us realize when we come to late, we miss many blessings, after we leave we shall be spiritually rewarded.

Love to pray in the Temple of our Lord God His Church, and when we pray, let us pray with all our heart, mind, and soul! Well aware of the work at hand, we should attend services prepared to labor as unique members of the body of Christ. Ultimately, each of us, that is every man, woman, and child, should be ready to "put aside all the cares of life, and receive the King of all..."

I am humbly presenting to you the Cycle of Services that are celebrated in the Orthodox Church, which by understanding these services we begin to realize how important these services are in our Church, and how rewarding spiritually they can be for us all!

May our Lord God bless you!

Humbly In Christ Our Lord,

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes

Who prays for you and with you!

The Cycle of Services in the Orthodox Church

The First Hour

The Third Hour

The Sixth Hour

The Ninth Hour

Small Compline & Great Compline

Small & Great Vespers: two types of Vespers - Small Vespers celebrated during evening weekdays, and Great Vespers celebrated Saturday evenings, and for Feast Days. Vespers are in preparation for the next day Divine Liturgy.

Artokolasia Service celebrated on special occasions at the end of Vespers, or at the end of Matins or even at the end of the Liturgy

Midnight Services

Matins (Gr. Orthros) In the Greek Orthodox tradition on a parish level this service is celebrated in the morning preceded by the Doxology and the Divine Liturgy.

The Doxology: The Great Doxology and the Small Doxology.

Prayers for entrance and Liturgical vesting of the priest Proskomedia

Divine Liturgy

The Hierarchal Divine Liturgy (Divine Liturgy celebrated by a bishop).

In the Greek, Albanian, Romanian, Syrian, and Bulgarian Orthodox Church's the tradition (on a parish level) Vespers are held in the evenings, and during the morning hours Matins followed by the Great Doxology, and the Divine Liturgy. In the Russian Carpatho Russian, and Serbian Orthodox tradition (on a parish level) both Vespers and Matins, and the Great Doxology are normally held in the evenings, followed by the first hour, then in the morning the third, sixth, and ninth hours are read, followed by the Divine Liturgy.

In the monastic communities the cycle of services are different then on a parish level. In the Greek Orthodox tradition for example the following services are observed at St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, Arizona, which follows the Athonite tradition of Mt. Athos the daily schedule of services is as follows:

- ✓ 3:30 AM–7 AM - Midnight Hour, Matins-Orthros, Divine Liturgy
- ✓ 5:00 PM–6:15 PM - Ninth Hour, Vespers, Small Compline

Authors of the Divine Liturgies celebrated in the Orthodox Church:

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: celebrated on most Sundays and weekdays.

Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: author St. Gregory the Dialogos (celebrated during Holy Great Lent, during the weekdays). Others attributed to this service see notes.

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great: celebrated ten times a year, namely, the first five Sundays of the Great Lent before Pascha-Easter, on Thursday and Saturday of the Holy week, Christmas Day, St. Basil's feast (January 1) and Theophany-Epiphany Day (January 6).

Divine Liturgy of St. James the Apostle: (celebrated October 23rd the feast day of St. James the Apostle).

The Hours

In Orthodox monasteries, monks maintain special services for the hours of the day. The Royal Hours are also observed on a parish level in the Orthodox Church for the Forefeast of our Lord's Holy Nativity and Holy Theophany. The Ninth Hour is observed before the celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy. Each hour commemorates a special event, as follows:

1. First hour (6:00 A.M.): Thanksgiving for the new morning and Prayers for sinless day.
2. Third hour (9:00 A.M.): the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.
3. Sixth hour (12:00 noon): the nailing of Christ to the Cross.
4. Ninth hour (3:00 P.M.): the death of Christ on the Cross.

The First Hour

The first hour (hour one after the rise of the sun or 7 a.m., has as its central theme the coming of light in the dawn of a new day. The coming of the physical light remind the Christian of the coming of Him Who is the Light of the World. The physical light is but an icon or image of Christ. Thus, the Christian begins the day by praising God for the dawn of the physical light as well as the Light of the World which shines brightly in the face of Jesus. We pray that His light may guide us and show us the way for the day, blessing also the works of our hands, which begin daily at this hour.

O Christ the true light, enlightening and Sanctifying ever man who comes into The world; Let the light of Your countenance shine on us, that in it we may behold the Ineffable light. Guide our footsteps aright in keeping Your Commandments. Through the intercessions of you're all pure Mother and of all the saints. Amen. -From the Prayers of the First Hour

The Third Hour

The third hour (three hours after sunrise 9 a.m.), was the exact time the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:15). This single theme dominates the third hour. One of the three psalms that are read is the 51st which contains petitions for the sending of the Holy Spirit: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me...take not Thy holy Spirit from me...and upon me with Thy free spirit." (Psalm 51: 10-12).

Special prayers are said to thank God for sending the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, beseeching Him also to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit's presence upon us for the works of that day. The third hour is a daily reminder that the life of the faithful Christian remains empty without the inner presence of the Spirit. He is the One who provides inner peace and power. He is the One "in Whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

O Lord, You sent down Your Most Holy Spirit upon Your apostles at the Third Hour. Take Him not from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us who pray to You. -From the Prayers of the Third Hour.

The Sixth Hour

The sixth hour (six hours following sunrise – noon), reminds us of the crucifixion (Matthew 27:45, Luke 23:44 and John 19:14). Each day at noon the Church tries to focus our attention of this great event in the history of our salvation. We offer God prayers of gratitude for so loving each one of us that He gave his only begotten Son so that we who believe in Him may not perish but have life everlasting (John 3:16). Our noontime prayers (sixth hour) include petitions that He save us from the sins and temptations of that day.

O Christ God, on the sixth day and hour, You nailed to the Cross the sin which rebellious Adam committed in paradise. Tear asunder also the bond of our iniquities, and save us! You have wrought salvation in the midst of the earth, O Christ God. You stretched out Your all-pure hands upon the Cross; You gathered together all the nations that cry aloud to You: Glory to You, O Lord! -From the Prayers of the Sixth Hour

The Ninth Hour

The ninth hour, nine hours following sunrise (3 p.m.), is the time when Jesus died on the cross. “And at about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?” That is to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”... When He cried again with a loud voice (Jesus) yielded up the ghost” (Matthew 27:46, 50). At this time prayers of thanksgiving are offered to Him Who by His death-destroyed death for each one of us. The prayers of the ninth hour conclude with a petition that we put to death the old sinful nature with us to enable us to live the new life in Christ Jesus with Whom we were not only crucified but also resurrected through baptism.

O Master, Lord Jesus Christ our God, You have led us to the present hour, in which as you hung upon the life-giving Tree, You made a way into Paradise for the penitent thief, and by death destroyed death: Cleanse us; you're unworthy servants, for we fall into sin continuously and are not worthy to lift up our eyes and look upon the heights of heaven. Forgive us for departing from the path of righteousness and following the desires of our own hearts. -From the Prayers of the Ninth Hour

Small & Great Compline (Gr. Apodeipnon)

A worship service performed after dusk. It is often combined with Vespers, to form an all-night vigil. There is a Great Compline and its abridgement, known as Small Compline. Great Compline is celebrated during Great Lent, whereas Little or also known as Small Compline can be celebrated daily when it's not Great Lent.

Small & Great Vespers (Gr. Espermos)

Morning and evening were always considered to be proper times for prayer. Worship services were held every morning and evening in the Temple of Jerusalem and were continued by the early Christians even after they separated themselves from the worship of the Temple. The old Jewish forms are still used. The theme of Vespers takes us through creation, sin and salvation in Christ. It includes thanksgiving for the day now coming to an end and God's protection for the evening.

In the Orthodox Church the liturgical day begins in the evening with the setting of the sun. One the great themes of Vespers is the coming of Christ, the Light to dispel the darkness. The coming of evening darkness reminds us of the darkness of sin and death. In that darkness Jesus is praised

as “the gladsome light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father” and “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” Vesper services are offered daily in monasteries and usually only on Saturday evenings in some parishes. Orthodox Christians daily may offer evening prayers in private by praying the Psalter and the other Vesper prayers at home. It should be noted in the Greek Orthodox tradition on a parish level Vespers are held in the evenings, Matins-Orthros service held in the mornings, followed by the Doxology and the Divine Liturgy.

O Gladsome Light: O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal, Heavenly, Holy Father: Blessed Jesus Christ! Now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and see the light of evening, we praise God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For it is right at all times to worship you with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of life. Therefore all the world glorifies You! -
From the Prayers of Vespers

Aktoklasia Service

The artoklasia service held at the end of Vespers or at the end of Matins, or even at the end of the Liturgy. Five round loaves of bread are offered by individual faithful as a sign of devotion for personal or family anniversaries such as name days and other occasions bearing close connection with the experience of the Orthodox. The five loaves are reminiscent of the five loaves that Jesus Christ blessed in the desert by which five thousand of His bearers were fed. The artoklasia also symbolizes and brings into practice the Agape meals of the very early Christian communities. Then, after the faithful received the Body and Blood of Christ, they would gather in a common meal, thus signifying the brotherly association established between them by their common faith and by their receiving the same sacramental Lord. Also, the Agape meals served a charitable purpose by providing meals to the poorer from among them.

The significance behind the Orthodox artoklasia includes also the fact that, among the Orthodox, bread continues to be highly valued not only as a basic food but also as the supreme symbol of the Body of Christ; for it is the bread which changed by consecration in the Liturgy into the Body of Christ. Christ has been repeatedly designated as the Bread of Life, and also as ‘the Bread which came from heaven.’ Bread does also symbolize the Church of Christ, which has spread all over “as the wheat on the mountains and which was gathered by Christ into one body’. (see DIDACHE.) Thus, bread has been given a mystical meaning according to which it constitutes the essence of the spiritual life of the Christian.

The blessed bread of the Orthodox artoklasia has been from ancient times considered to effect personal sanctification and to help the individual against bodily infirmities and illness ‘if taken with faith’. The Greek term ‘artoklasia’ derives from the very words used by the Evangelists in describing the Mystical Supper at which Christ ‘broke bread’ and offered it to His disciples as His own Body. Also, ‘bread is broken’ in the Orthodox artoklasia, signifying not only an identity in terms but a far more significant affinity between the Lord’s and His Church’s breaking of bread.

Midnight

The hour of midnight was designated as a time for prayer for three reasons. First, the Jewish people were led out of Egypt at midnight (Exodus 12:29). In remembrance of this even, the Messiah at the time of Jesus was expected to come at midnight. This expectation was fulfilled when Jesus was resurrected in the early morning while it was still dark (Matthew 28:1). Midnight also became associated in early Christian thought with the hour of the Second Coming of Jesus

(Mark 13:35). He was expected to come “as a thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5:2,4). See Matthew 25:6 and Mark 13:35. This hour of prayer is kept today only in certain monasteries where monks rise at midnight, as if from the grave of death, to meet the risen Lord in prayer. The prayers offered at this hour remember those who have died in Christ and also invoke God’s mercy upon us for the coming judgment. Although we do not live in monasteries, we may use midnight as an hour of prayer if we happen to waken during the night. Instead of counting sheep, we can use the time to speak and pray to the Shepherd of our souls.

O Lord our God, through your Holy Spirit You gave us an example in David, Inspiring him to sing psalms and even at this hour of the night to say: ‘At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws’; make us worthy to offer you from the bottom of our hearts our grateful confession of faith; in your goodness look with compassion on our wretched state and at your dreadful day of judgment let us too be like the faithful and wise servants; we ask it through the mediation of the holy Mother of God and all your saints – From the Prayers of the Midnight Office

Matins (Gr. Orthros)

This is a morning service that can be heard by it self or be followed by the Liturgy on Sundays and other feast days. It begins with the reading of the well known Six-Psalms (Exaspсалms), includes the reading of a Matins Gospel and hymns pertaining to the day, and ends with the small Doxology (if not to be followed by the Liturgy), or by great Doxology if the Liturgy is to follow. When Matins is celebrated on Sunday morning hymns are sung for the Resurrection of our Lord.

The Doxology: The Great Doxology and the Small Doxology

The Theological Emphases of the Doxology

Both the Orthros (Matins) and the Vespers – which comprise the two most important corporate prayer times in the daily cycle of worship – are more than times of prayer. They are a place of Theophany, where we glimpse and experience the presence of the eternal Triune God.

At the core of this revelation are the four great theological themes; creation, the fall, salvation, and eschaton. Special emphasis is given to Christ and to his redemptive work and to the Kingdom which He established and which is here now and yet to come in fullness.

Light and Darkness

The theme of light and darkness as related to Christ is of particular significance, forming the fundamental symbolism of the two services.

It is recorded in many of their fixed prayers and hymns, as well as in several liturgical actions that accompany these hymns and prayers. For example, the lighting of the evening lamp while the hymn O joyful Light, blessed Jesus Christ, is chanted at Vespers. Or when the lamps or lights are lit at the beginning of Orthros when we sing the Theos Kyrios – God is the Lord and has revealed himself to us.

The Doxology is a glorious triumphant song of praise that completes the Orthros. It is filled with references to light and to the day, to Christ, the true Light and Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and to the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who is the refuge, the salvation, the source of life and revealer of the light to all who accept and live by the divine precepts.

The Structure of the Doxology

The Doxology is comprised of three parts. Many of the fifteen verses of the Doxology contain direct or indirect quotes from the Psalms and other phrases of the Scripture. The Doxology is an ancient prayer of the Church, whose composer(s) remain anonymous, that has two forms, one that is sung (Great Doxology) and another that is recited (Small Doxology).

The first part of the Doxology begins with the words of the Hymn, which the Angels sang at the Nativity of Christ, "Glory to God in the highest..." The second part begins with the verse, "Every day I will bless you and will praise your name..." The third section begins with the words, "Let your mercy come upon us." A part of the read Doxology also comprises a fixed element in the Vesper service ("Kataxioson Kyrie" – Grant Lord to keep us without sin...").

The first part is a song of praise to the Holy Trinity and to the Lord Christ, the Son and Lamb of God, who is entreated to accept our prayers and to show mercy on us. The second section is a prayer of praise for God, whose name is blessed and a prayer of hope that the day will be completed without sin. In their third section, God is blessed and recognized as the source of life and light and the refuge of the just. He is implored to teach us his precepts, by which we ought to live our lives, and to extend his mercy upon those who know Him.

The sung Doxology, is "flanked," at the beginning with the verse "Glory to You who has shown us Your light" and at the end with the repeated singing of "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."

The Introductory Verse

The introductory verse "Glory be to You who has shown us Your light" is not based on any passage from the Scriptures. It must be understood rather in relation to the position of the Doxology in the Orthros. In the monastic tradition, the end of the Orthros coincides with the sunrise, which is greeted with the Doxology. The phrase "Doxa soi tw deixanti to phos," is related to the appearance of the physical light, itself a part of God's wondrous creation – "Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw how good the light was" (Gen. 1:3). The phrase also has a metaphorical meaning and is related to the appearance of the true Light, Jesus Christ.

The Great Doxology

Introductory Verse

(+ means to make the sign of the cross)

Glory to You who has shown us your light.

Part One: A Song of Praise to the Holy Trinity

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.

We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, and we offer thanks to You for Your great glory.

Lord King, heavenly God: + Father almighty; Lord, only-begotten Son Jesus Christ; and Holy Spirit.

Lord God, Lamb of God, the Son of the Father Who takes away the sin of the world: have mercy on us You who take away the sins of the world.

Accept our prayer, You Who sit at the right hand of the Father, and have on us.

You only are holy; You only are Lord: Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Part Two: Prayer of Praise and Protection from sin

Every evening will I bless You, and praise Your name to the ages, and to the ages of ages.

Lord, You are our refuge from generation to generation. I said: "Lord have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."

In You, Lord, I take refuge: teach me to do Your will, do You are my God.

For in You is the fountain of life, in Your light shall we see light.

Extend Your mercy to those who know You.

Make us worthy, O Lord, to be kept without sin this night.

Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your name to the ages. Amen.

Part Three: Prayer of Praise and Dependence upon God

May Your mercy, Lord be upon us, as we have hoped in You.

+Blessed are You, Lord: teach me Your statutes.

+Blessed are You, Master: make me understand Your statutes.

+Blessed are You, Holy One: enlighten me with Your statutes.

Lord, Your mercy is to the ages; do not disregard the words of Your hands.

Lord, I flee to You, teach me to Your will; for You are my God.

You are the fountain life, and in Your light we shall see light.

Extend Your mercy to them that know You.

Concluding Verses: The Trisagion

+Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us (three times)

+Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us.

+Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us. Amen.

Prayers of entrance and Liturgical vesting of the priest

Before the priest serves the Divine Liturgy he arrives to first say the prescribed prayers in the middle of the church before entering the holy Altar. After the priest has finished with the entrance prayers, he then puts on his Liturgical vestments, and putting on each liturgical vestment he says certain prayers. At the conclusion of vesting the priest washes his hands and prepares the Proskomedia.

The Greek, Syrian, and Bulgarian, Orthodox traditions for a bishop during Matins when the local diocesan bishop serves a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, he says entrance prayer in the middle of the church, and before the Doxology begins the bishop is vested in the altar and comes out of the altar goes to the bishop throne, he remains until the Small Entrance. In the Russian and Serbian

Orthodox traditions the bishop also says his entrance prayers, as he enters the Church, and vests in the middle of the Church, and remains until the Small Entrance.

Proskomedie

Proskomedie is the service of preparation of the bread and wine for the Eucharist taking place during the Matins-Orthros at the table (within the Holy Altar) known as the Prothesis. The priest extracts from the seal of the Prospophora the lamb, the portion of Theotokos, the portions of the nine orders of angels and saints, and portions of living and dead and arranges them on the diskarion as prescribed. Then, wine and water are ceremoniously poured into the Chalice, diskarion and chalice is both covered (with prayers), and both veiled with a larger vestment called the Aer. After the end of the ceremony, the prepared Gifts are conserved and prayer is said for these to be accepted to God's heavenly altar. The Proskomedie is sometimes signified by the term Prothesis that, actually, is the table, or conch, to the left of the altar on which Proskomedie takes place.

Liturgy also known as the Divine Liturgy

The institution of the Eucharist, that is, of the Mystic Supper by the Lord, is recorded by St. Matthew 26:26-28; St. Mark 14:22-24; St. Luke 22:19-20, and the Apostle Paul, I Corinthians. 11:23-25. What was created at the Eucharist the gathering of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles was for our Lord, "to create the Holy Eucharist and leave His own Being to the Church."

The term (Liturgy) originally signified a public duty of any kind, including religious assignments. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, the term is used for the first time to denote services in the Temple. In its Orthodox usage the term denotes the Eucharist as the chief act of public Christian worship. In a derived sense, the term also denotes the text containing the words and order of the Eucharist. There are three main Orthodox Liturgies; St. Chrysostom's, St. Basil's, and Presanctified. Another Liturgy, that of St. James, the Brother of the Lord.

Liturgy of St. James

This is a very ancient Liturgy existing in a Greek and Syriac form. It is traditionally ascribed to St. James, the Lord's brother and first bishop of Jerusalem. It bears many common elements with the Liturgy known to St. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem who died about the year 386, and contains an apparent reference to the discovery of the Cross of Christ in Jerusalem in the year 326. It was mostly used in the Syriac, Armenian, and Georgian speaking provinces of the Church. The fact that the Syrian Jacobites, separated from Orthodoxy in 451, as well as by the Orthodox themselves, used it proves that the Liturgy cannot have been composed later than the middle of the 5th century. It is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on the anniversary of the death of St. James (October 23) and at Jerusalem on Sunday after Christmas. The Liturgy of St. James is important specimen of liturgical antiquity reflecting the liturgical practices of the 4th century, if not earlier. There is little doubt that the rite of St. Cyril of Jerusalem was describing in the famous Catechetical Sermon was the Liturgy of St. James in the form of that time. But around the 13th to 14th century this Liturgy was faded out in favor of the Byzantine rite that included the other three Liturgies-St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, and the Presanctified.

Liturgy of St. Basil

The origin of the Liturgy of St. Basil is Antiochian, specifically from Cappadocia where St. Basil was bishop. In all probability, St. Basil was the celebrant, if not in its present form, at least in its

essentials. And through we have ancient documents ascribing to St. Basil a specific liturgical formula in the form of 'Anaphora', the liturgy in its present form is obviously the collective work of many composers. But still, most of the important prayers in it are the work of St. Basil on the strength of style, vocabulary and ideas.

St. Basil's Liturgy appears to be older than St. Chrysostom's perhaps by two centuries. The Liturgy of St. Basil is celebrated ten times a year, namely, the first five Sundays of the Great Lent, before Pascha-Easter, on Thursday and Saturday of Holy Week, the Nativity feast of our Lord, St. Basil's day (January 1) and Theophany-Epiphany Day (January 6).

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom Liturgy is well known and very common in the Eastern Orthodox Church. It may be celebrated every day of the year except the ones of St. Basil and those of the Presanctified Gifts, and on Good Friday. It is shorter than that of St. Basil and much reduced compared to St. James'. St. Chrysostom Liturgy put an end to the free prayers and hymns in the officiating of the Holy Eucharist. The Liturgy placed a seal on the free forms of the re-enactment of the Mystic Supper of the Lord, depicting it in its finest form with a destiny of enduring far into the future. Despite the addition of hymns at later times, the St. Chrysostom Liturgy remains the same majestic religious masterpiece with grandeur and dramatic appeal matching the human expression and the divine act. St. Chrysostom (345-407A.D.) was an eloquent preacher, writer and one of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, whose writings have been translated into many languages and have nourished the Christian Church throughout the centuries.

Presanctified Liturgy

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is in reality a religious service composed of elements drawn from Hesperinos, the Vespers service, and from the first part of the Divine Liturgy beginning with 'Blessed be the kingdom...' and ending just before the Cherubic hymn begins. It includes no Consecration, but prepared believers can receive Communion from the Consecrated Elements reserved from the Liturgy of the previous Sunday. A service of the nature of the Presanctified can be traced back to pre-Nicene times. St. Sophronios at Jerusalem calls the Presanctified in 646 an 'Apostolic' institution. The Presanctified is attested as a Lenten substitute for the Eucharist is Canon 52 of the Trullan Synod (Quinisext) in 692. One should bear in mind, however, that the Councils hardly introduced anything new; either in faith or in the liturgical practice of the Church; rather, they verified and vested with universal authority teachings or practices that the conscience of the Church had in sufficient measure already accepted. This means that the Trullan canon in reality aimed at safeguarding an established practice within the Church at large.

The Presanctified Liturgy is attributed to St. Gregory Dialogos (540-604), but also to St. Epiphanius (315-403), St. Germanos, Patriarch of Constantinople (about 663-733), and even to St. James, St. Peter; and in Sinai it was ascribed to St. Basil and St. Chrysostom. Obviously, the pre-Byzantine core of the Presanctified goes deeply back into the beginnings and only a little later than the 'Synaxes' of the primitive Church. Its present Byzantine form appears to be the work of more than one composer. Parts obviously added to the ancient core are of different dates and different hands.

Hierarchal Liturgy

Service celebrated by a bishop.

Cycle of Services in the Eastern Orthodox Church
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When we gather as an Orthodox family for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy we gather as unique individuals with unique responsibilities in the life of the Church. Each of us, by the virtue of our role in the Church, is a member of the Eucharistic community. In this light, each of us is an invaluable steward to the Church, offering much with his/her ministry.

Early in the history, each community had a presiding bishop who was assisted in the services with the presbyters and deacons. After the churches began to increase to meet the needs of growing number of faithful within a particular diocese, the presbyter was appointed by the bishop as the chief celebrant in a local community, the parish. Even so the concept of the Church is understood not in terms of the presbyter, but in terms of his diocesan bishop.

When the bishop is in our midst, celebrating the Divine Liturgy it then becomes a Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, he is the chief celebrant of the assembly of the faithful. On account of his presence we add seemingly unique phrases and hymns making the service hierarchal.

In the hierarchal Divine Liturgy, we commemorate the hierarch as celebrant. Additionally, the celebrating hierarch commemorates his presiding bishop, demonstrating the local parishes unity to the greater Orthodox community. And, ultimately as stewards with unique ministries, the presbyter(s) and the laity under the direction of the bishop, offer up glory to God.

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Glory Be To God For All Things

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