



ALTAR SERVER'S MANUAL
ACCORDING TO THE TRADITION
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
VOLUME I: THE DIVINE LITURGY



FIRST DRAFT

JUNE 24th/JULY 7th 2021 – NATIVITY OF THE PROPHET, FORERUNNER AND
BAPTIST JOHN

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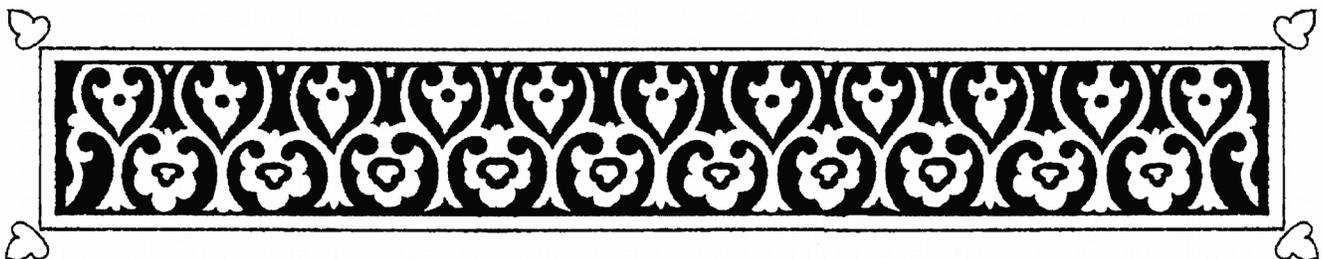


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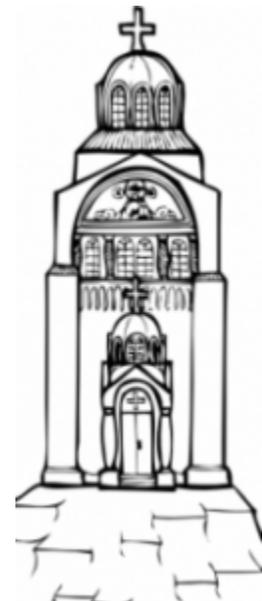
**‘To Serve in My Father’s House’:
Reflections on the Service of the Holy Altar
By Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe**

*I will wash mine hands in innocence:
so will I go round about Thine Altar, O Lord:
that I may hear the voice of Thy praise
and tell of all Thy wondrous works.
O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy House,
and the place where Thine honour doth dwell.*

(Psalm 25.6-8)

1. To serve in our Father’s house (cf. John 14.2) is above all else a great and wonderful gift: a divine blessing and heavenly mercy. It is not a worldly act, as if we were coming into any other place to do any other task. Though some actions of divine service may be comparable to those we perform in the world (for example, reading a book, lighting a candle), within the Temple of the living Lord these acts take on utterly new dimensions. We stand, move and act, here, around the throne of the eternal God. The tasks set before us are ordained not by men or even angels, but by the Word of the Lord Himself, who came unto His people to reveal to them the way in which they should worship.¹We make ready His dwelling place, that being ‘glorified in His saints’ (2 Thessalonians 1.10) the eternal King may be approached by His people.

2. Service in the holy Temple of the Orthodox Church is a direct continuation of service within the ancient Temple that once stood upon Mount Sion. Where at one time, appointed men lit the lamps upon their stands, offered the showbread upon the table, saw to incense offerings and enabled the work of the priesthood, so now the true and fuller Temple of the Body of our Lord is enthroned within the earthly Temple of His Churches, and men are yet appointed to tend to the affairs of these divine dwelling places of the Holy Trinity. As in ancient times, such service is not a right or a thing to be presumed, but a calling from God, a reality of being ‘set aside’ for this duty. And, like in those ancient times, those called to such service are charged to serve the eternal God through tending to the needs of His priests within His holy House; to stand round about the Holy Table as angels round the heavenly Throne, ministering to the needs of those whom God has charged to be His earthly ministers, pastors and shepherds.



¹ On the divine revelation of true worship, see Exodus 12-13, 25-31; Apocalypse 4-5; etc.

3. This is the heart of our calling as servants in the House of our God: to *serve His servants*, that in fulfilling the due order that God has established, true heavenly worship may be offered here on earth, as He commanded. For it is God Himself Who ordained that the Church be entrusted to His apostles, the bishops, leading as High Priests that sacred clerical hierarchy by which the bloodless sacrifice is made ever present amongst us — and so until the Lord shall come again. It is God, not man, Who has ordained our threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, and Who has called those in these offices to celebrate the divine mysteries, to offer the bloodless sacrifice, to pray for the life and salvation of the whole world.

4. To enable this ministry, the Church has also seen fit to establish orders of those who serve the *ministers of her mysteries*. Altar servers, readers and subdeacons each fulfil a sacred role in the ministrations of the Church, enabling by their selfless service, rendered unto the priests and the people, that true and right worship by which the heavenly is made known to man.²

5. Our hearts, then, are to be shaped by this charge to *serve*. When we stand within the Holy Altar, our whole attention, our every thought, the entirety of our focus must be on fulfilling this calling. How might we offer ourselves so that the Divine Service might be celebrated peacefully, properly, with due reverence and piety? How might we relieve the practical burden of the bishop, priests and deacons so that their hearts may be allowed the quiet and focus required to fulfil their divine charge of prayer for the people? What might we do so that ‘the works of God may be revealed’ (cf. John 9.3) in the service to hand?

6. From the moment we set foot into the Holy Temple as those called to serve in this way, there is placed upon our shoulders that yoke of Christ which is ‘easy, and light to bear’ (Matthew 11.30). In that moment, we should call to mind the words of Scripture, which proclaim it better to be ‘a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sin’ (Psalm 83.10), and henceforth embrace the role of servant with deep love and the true fear of God that makes all men wise. In our service, we draw near to Christ, Who in the fearful hours before His most divine Passion, yet girded Himself with a towel, stooped down and washed the feet of His Apostles (cf. John 13.1-11). The Lord Himself became a servant. In the same way, in our service we draw near to the Bodiless Hosts, who minister day and night at the throne of God (cf. Apocalypse 7.11). It is this very host whom the servers of the Holy Altar represent

² For the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers are clear that the worship we have been instructed to offer has its origin in heaven and manifests in the world the heavenly worship of the Lord. So again Exodus 12-13, 25-31; Apocalypse 4-5; as well as Daniel 7, etc.

in the divine services; and when a man serves with piety and true devotion, the faithful see round about the earthly Table, angels who attend to the will and wisdom of the true God. Angels! Let us not think of such servers merely in the shallow terms of ‘acolytes’ or ‘helpers’, but realise that he who serves is called to be a living icon of the angelic hosts, through whom the priests are served and the people edified. In this way, in due order, we rightly and piously serve Him who ordered all creation, from the great to the small, to the accomplishment and revelation of His glory.

7. The guidance set out in this small text is not meant to be a practical handbook on *how* to serve (e.g. how to ready a censer for a priest, how to make a procession, etc.), for such matters are detailed and vary depending on one’s rank of service, the specific Divine Service to hand, and local practice. Our remarks here are focussed, instead, on the *general demeanour and attitude of reverent service that ought to prevail in the Temple*. It is a sad fact of our weak piety today that a certain casualness and lack of reverence is all too frequent amongst some who serve in the Holy Altar, and in all cases such an attitude diminishes the richness of both our service and the ordered manifestation of God’s grace within His Temple. Our beloved Orthodox Church expects of us due reverence, right piety, and the careful carrying-out of our sacred duties — not laxity, irreverent casualness or the importing of worldly behaviours into divine places. She has given us clear instruction on how to behave, speak and move within the Holy Altar, and this instruction has been carefully handed down to us by our Fathers and Forefathers in the faith. How great a spiritual joy it becomes, then, to attend closely and carefully to that which we have been given, that by unrelenting attentiveness we may better and more rightly serve God’s Throne and minister His love to the Church and the world!

GENERAL GUIDANCE

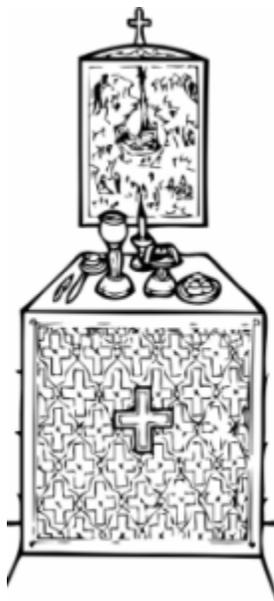
8. The general attitude in the Holy Altar should always be one of *intimate formality*. What do we mean by this? We mean that there must be a closeness and intimacy, for we draw near to serve the God Who has fashioned us and called us by name (cf. Isaias 43.1), Who calls us not servants but friends (cf. John 15.15); yet our intimacy is always formal, for the same One Who draws us close is the King and Ruler of All, Who fashioned the heavens and the earth (cf. Acts 17.24; Genesis 1.1). He has inscribed our very name in the palm of His hand (cf. Isaias 49.16), even as He commands the heavens with His Word. It is this mixture of intimacy and formality that must define our demeanour in the holy places. Though in the Divine Services we come to know God intimately as Father, and though we — by His grace — come to feel a certain warmth of heart and joy in serving round about His Holy Table, we must always

remember that as servants of the Lord's sacred Altar we are the inheritors of the ancient calling of the tribe of Levi; for when God established the sacred priesthood among His people through the tribe of Aaron (cf. Exodus 28.1-5; 40.12-16; Numbers 3.10), which was singularly blessed with the privilege of serving in the Sanctuary and most sacred Temple, God called also the tribe of Levi to assist Aaron with the care, maintenance and good estate of the holy Temple, saying, 'Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him; they are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the Tent of Meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle. They are to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the Tabernacle' (Numbers 3.6-8). In the Altar, inheriting this charge and calling, we stand in the presence of God in a unique way, set apart to minister to the needs of the worship He has appointed for His people. Standing as we do, therefore, in the innermost sanctum of the heavenly King, we must at all times comport ourselves with utmost dignity, seriousness and such intimate formality. The Altar is never a place for casual conversations, informal posture, or any behaviours that are not fitting for the sacred dwelling place of the Most High God.

9. Within the Holy Altar, servers represent, and indeed are, living icons of the holy angels and bodiless hosts who serve round about God's heavenly Throne. It is important, therefore, at all times to remember this calling and to act, speak and move accordingly.

ON PRAYER THROUGH SERVICE

10. We are to remember that our role in the Holy Altar is to *serve*, and that in this role *our service is our prayer*. The Holy Altar is never a place for private devotional prayer, nor is any other place in the Temple when we are vested for divine service.



11. The servers must therefore always be at attention, their eyes towards the celebrating priest so that they can anticipate his needs, and that he might be able to draw their attention by means of a small gesture, without having to call out a server's name, etc. It is not appropriate at any time for a server to have his eyes closed in prayer, to have his gaze upon the holy icons rather than the serving clergy, etc.

12. Our service is rightly rendered in maintaining the due order of God's holy will. Just as in the ancient times both Aaron and Levi were called to duties related to the Sanctuary, yet

only Aaron and his descendants (the priests) were to offer sacrifices and prayers for the people, so too are we to maintain the right and distinct duties of those who today serve in God's Temple.

- a. The servers follow the priest with respect to making the sign of the Cross and bowing, for it is he who leads the prayer of the Altar. When the priest makes the sign of the Cross or bows, all servers should do likewise (unless at that moment engaged in some task that prevents it); and similarly, such movements should not be made apart from the clergy. We do not make the sign of the Cross or bows of our own volition as acts of personal piety within the Holy Altar.
- b. Following the ancient rule that only the tribe of Aaron spoke prayers within the Sanctuary, only tonsured and ordained clergy (readers, subdeacons, deacons, priests and bishops) sing within the Holy Altar. Servers do not sing along with the clergy in the Altar, or utter prayers along with them — for our task in serving is to *enable the priests more readily to pray for us*, not to take that yoke upon ourselves!³
- c. When the priest so instructs, the servers depart the Holy Altar to stand amongst the faithful, to bear the sacred duty of leading them in prayer by example. In the Russian Church Abroad, this customarily happens at the singing of the Creed and of the Our Father. We are to remember that these moments are not merely excursions, but times of unique and precious service. It is essential that we commit to memory the Creed and Our Father in whichever languages it will be sung, so that we can stand amongst the faithful and raise our voices — and theirs — in these solemn and sacred words.
- d. At other times, the priest may dismiss from the Altar all servers, leaving only the clergy around the Holy Table. This oftentimes happens at the clergy's receiving of Holy Communion, so that there may be no distractions. We must in such moments remember that our being sent out of the Holy Altar is not a dismissal from our service; rather, we *are actively serving* the clergy by removing ourselves from the Altar at such times — and additionally we edify the faithful, in showing them by our standing outside the iconostasis that certain actions are of unique reverence and holiness, worthy of different behaviour.

³ An exception to this rule may be made if the priest blesses servers to sing at certain moments—which sometimes happens, for example, at the kontakion after 'Both now...' before the Trisagion in the Divine Liturgy; or at the singing of 'Christ is Risen...' during Pascha.

ON STILLNESS AND MOVEMENT WITHIN THE ALTAR AND TEMPLE

13. We should be *still* in the Holy Altar, and elsewhere in the Temple, unless actively engaged in some task of service — for stillness is the birthing-place of the true knowledge of God (cf. Psalm 45.10), and in our stillness we enable others' minds and hearts to remain in quiet prayer, thus ministering to them in their spiritual need. When still, we should stand upright, our stance erect, our hands at our sides. We do not lean against walls, slouch, fold our hands in front of us, cross our legs, etc., for these are all signs of an informality that does not befit our service in the heavenly courts.

- a. Our posture and our stillness join us to the symbolism of the Temple as a whole. We should remember the guidance of Bishop Anthony of Smolensk: 'Stand in church silently, peacefully and quietly, taking as your example the candles lit by you, and how they stand before the icons: they do not move from place to place, they do not make noise; they burn with a flame that strives not below, not to the side, but above, to heaven. So should you also stand, striving with hearts aflame with love and prayer toward God.'
- b. And, lest we think that our composure and presence is merely a matter of formality, let us call to mind the words of the Hierarch Niphont: 'A reverent presence at the divine services is not only rewarded by the general prayer of the Church, but is saving unto the souls of Christians as well.' That is, our composure and conduct either leads or distracts the faithful from prayer, and thus our truly pious service leads them towards salvation.

14. Such movement as is required must never be rushed, whether within the Altar itself, or in the Nave when seeing to tasks there. There should on no account be running, or even fast walking, in the Temple: movement should be calm and deliberate.

- a. When moving about in the holy Temple, motions should be graceful, strides calm and gentle and all movements made with due comportment and grace. Even the motions of basic labour (for example, walking to get a jug of water; taking something to the narthex) are seen by the faithful, and in these and every



action we must exemplify by our bodily posture the grace and calm of the presence of God.

- b. If called upon by a priest or bishop, the server should move to his father's side *without* lurching out of his own stillness with a sudden motion. When called, we move calmly to the side of the clergyman, inclining our head slightly so that we may be spoken to in a soft voice.

15. Whenever passing behind the Holy Table, before the High Place, to cross from one side of the Altar to the other, the sign of the precious Cross should be made (while *continuing to walk* and *without bows or turns*), with the sole exception to this rule being if one's hands are occupied carrying a holy item (e.g. the censer). We do not stop to make the sign of the Cross in a protracted way as we pass by the High Place, as this serves to draw attention to ourselves and away from the divine focus of the people's worship.

- a. When the Royal Gates are open (or the curtain drawn), movements from one side of the Altar to the other should be kept to a minimum, and only made when *necessary* — for each crossing draws the attention of the faithful and distracts from their prayer. We do not cross from one side the Altar to the other idly, simply for a better place to stand; nor do we do so in order to attend to some minor item that could as easily be seen to later; nor yet do we cross back and forth multiple times to accomplish some task, when suitable forethought would have allowed us to complete it with only a single crossing. We cross behind the Holy Table only to attend to some matter of direct, immediate importance that cannot await another moment.

16. At certain times we do not move at all: during the Six Psalms (during which we stand perfectly still, not even making the sign of the Cross — for in this moment we hear the words that portend our standing before the Throne at the Last Judgement); during the reading of the Gospel (i.e. if we have not gone out into the Nave with the procession), and during the Anaphora (from 'Mercy of Peace...' to the blessing after the commemoration of the Hierarchy).

ON SILENCE AND APPROPRIATE SPEECH

17. There must be no speaking in the Holy Altar unless for a purpose directly related to the Divine Service being celebrated, and such words should be kept to a necessary minimum — for we are about God’s Altar not for our personal fellowship or fraternal conversation, but to serve the Throne of the Most High God in reverence and wise fear.

- a. We should remember at all times the words of our venerable Father, St Ephrem the Syrian, who said: ‘Imagine that someone, while standing before a king and conversing with him, at the summons of a servant like unto himself leaves the king and begins to converse with that servant; such also is he who engages in conversation and gives himself over to distraction during the Divine Service.’
- b. Likewise, we should remember the admonition of St Tikhon of Zadonsk: ‘More than anything else, beware of laughter and conversations, for whoever laughs or converses while standing in church does not render honour to the holy place, and tempts others and prevents them from praying.’

18. As all conversations within the Holy Temple, and the Altar in particular, should be words exchanged in the ministry of divine worship, they should always be exchanged with the due formality of Church order. We do not begin a comment to a priest without prefacing it, ‘Father, ...’ or ‘Forgive me, Father, ...’; nor do we answer merely with ‘Yes’, or ‘No’, but ‘Yes, Father’, and ‘No, Father’, etc.

19. Similarly, our words, when necessary, should be orderly and formal, as befits conversation in the sacred Temple. We should always avoid informality: for example, we answer, ‘Yes, Father’, not ‘Alright, I see’, or ‘Aha, okay! I understand!’

20. Silence is always preferable to words, unless the latter are required. We must think *before* we speak: are the words I am preparing to utter necessary? Is now an opportune time to ask my question? Does it really need to be asked? Similarly, when spoken to, we should keep our answers brief and to the point.

- a. If it is not necessary to speak in response to a query, favour silence! For example, if we are asked to bring a certain book to a priest, or to ready a candle, we can simply incline our head gently and slightly in affirmation, and then go about our requested

task without the need for any words in reply, which might further interrupt the silence of the Altar.

- b. Apart from an inclining of the head in affirmation, as described above, our spoken words should not otherwise be accompanied by gestures — for example: vigorous nods, movements of the hands, etc. — unless these are required to convey a point. We should remain standing calmly and still, even when speaking.

21. We never speak across the Holy Table, across the Temple, or from without the iconostasis to those within, or vice-versa: in all cases, we approach directly the person to whom we must speak and address him quietly. We never speak through the doors of the iconostasis: we speak either within or without, on the same side as our interlocutor.

22. If we require to interrupt a deacon, priest or bishop from his service to ask a question, we must first ensure it is an opportune moment; then we should approach, close by and to one side, in silence, and wait for him to turn to us. If we are not noticed after a moment, we may ask for attention by saying, ‘Forgive me, Father’ [or ‘Master’], and waiting for him to turn to us. If still the priest does not answer, we should not repeat our interruption, but assume that this is not an opportune moment and step away, waiting for the priest to call us to him when he is ready. Only in the case of emergencies or truly urgent matters should we repeat our interruption of the clergy’s focus, remembering that the priests are called to pray for the people, and at times may suffer in that prayer if interrupted from it — and so they may wish to speak at a more opportune moment.

- a. There are certain periods during which it is never appropriate to interrupt or speak to a serving deacon or priest, including to ask for a blessing: during the entry prayers or while a priest is vesting (for he says prayers silently with the donning of each portion of his vestments); during the proskomedie, until after the particles have been removed from the fourth and fifth prosphora for the living and the departed; whenever he is censuring, within the Altar or without; during his consuming the Holy Gifts; during the Six Psalms; etc. During such times we do not stand close by the priest, waiting for him to finish and speak to us or bless us; rather, we stand apart, or go about other tasks as may be appropriate, until the priest is finished with his work, and then we approach him.

ON THE RIGHT FULFILLMENT OF OUR DUTIES

23. When a deacon, priest or bishop instructs us to do something, this is thereafter our task and responsibility, which we must fulfil diligently and completely. If a task is asked of us, we must not expect another server to do it, nor should we pass along to another server a task that has been assigned to us.

24. Similarly, when a priest asks another server for something (e.g. to make ready a censer), we should not interject ourselves into that task which has been assigned to another. We should remain still, allowing other servers to go about their requested duties and attentively awaiting our own instructions.

ON ENTERING THE HOLY TEMPLE AND ALTAR (WITHOUT A STIKHAR)

25. Our entrance into the Holy Temple — and most especially the Altar — must be made with deep reverence, piety and order, in accordance with the admonition of St Philaret of Moscow: ‘If on coming to the house of a king thou wouldst be apprehensive and concerned not to do anything incompatible with the dignity of the place, then with what reverence oughtest thou to enter into the house of the King of Heaven!’

26. When entering the Holy Temple, our first action should be the veneration of the principal icons of the church. If it is the season of Great Lent, three prostrations are to be made immediately on entering the Temple, in the narthex. Entering the holy Temple should be preceded by the making of the sign of the Cross three times, with bows, outside the door.

27. After venerating the main icons of the Nave, those who wish to serve should enter the Holy Altar. Before entering through one of the Deacon’s Doors, one should make the sign of the precious Cross at the door and kiss the icon of the Archangel on the door itself, then enter. We must enter the Altar suitably attired, having already removed any jackets or coats, ties, hats, etc., and already set aside in the Nave any personal items (briefcases, bags, and so on), which should not be brought into the Altar. (It should be noted that only black or dark brown shoes should be worn in the Altar, not trainers/sneakers.)



28. Immediately on entering the holy Altar, the Holy Table must be venerated — before greeting any clergy (including a bishop) or taking any blessings — for this is the Throne of the King on which there always resides the true Body and precious Blood of the Lord. On Saturdays, Sundays, Great Feasts and at other appointed times, this is done without prostrations: we make the sign of the Precious Cross three times, facing the Holy Table, each time with a bow from the waist and touching our right hand to the floor. On weekdays or at other appointed times, we venerate the Holy Table with three full prostrations. There must be nothing in our hands when we venerate with prostrations. On no account are we to touch the Holy Table, for we remember the sacredness of the Ark which none could touch and live, save those whom God had appointed (cf. 1 Paralipomenon 13.10).⁴

- a. With each bow or prostration, we say, ‘O God, cleanse me, a sinner’, or ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner’, quietly to ourselves.

29. Following our veneration of the Holy Table, we at once take the divine blessing from the senior-most cleric in the Altar. We take a blessing *only* from the most senior priest, not from all priests.

- a. If some priests are vested and others are not, we take the blessing of the most senior *vested* priest, even if he is junior to another priest who is not vested. If for some reason a junior vested priest has been given the blessing to be the chief celebrant at the Holy Table, ahead of other vested priests who are his senior, we take our blessing of this chief celebrant.
- b. If a bishop is present in the Holy Altar, we take our blessing from him, whether he is vested or not. If two or more bishops are present in the Altar, we take our blessing from the senior hierarch, and then by widespread local custom we *also* take a blessing from the other bishop(s). This order remains, irrespective of which hierarchs may be vested. We do not take a blessing from the priest(s) if a bishop is present, for the priests by office bestow the bishop’s blessing, and if he is present there is no reason to take from another what the Chief Pastor can bestow himself.

⁴ Similarly, servers must never touch the Table of Oblation (*proskomedie*), as this too is a table specifically blessed and set apart for the work of the clergy. Only subdeacons, deacons, priests and bishops may rightly touch the Table of Oblation or the items placed upon it; though in certain instances a priest may bless a server to touch certain items on the Table of Oblation if there are not ample clergy in the higher ranks to perform required tasks (e.g. the laying out of *zapivka* for the serving bishop)—but such blessings are to be specific, and do not constitute a general ‘rule’ allowing servers to touch the Table of Oblation. Under no circumstances should anyone but the deacon or priest touch the holy vessels which reside upon this table (e.g. the chalice, diskos, spoons, spears, etc.).

- c. If a bishop is present in the Temple, but not in the Altar, we take a blessing from the priest in the Altar on entering therein, and then from the bishop when he enters.

30. Once we have received the divine blessing and received permission to serve, we go to collect our stikhar or go about our other business.

**ON ENTERING THE HOLY ALTAR (WITH A STIKHAR
ALREADY IN HAND)**

31. If we already have our stikhar in hand before entering the Holy Altar, we follow the same procedure as above, carrying our stikhar with us in our left hand.

- a. The stikhar must be folded neatly, with the cross visible on the top and the yoke (the shoulders and opening for the head and neck) facing our body, for we make ready to place upon our shoulders the yoke of Christ, and to bear it in His service (cf. Matthew 11.30).

32. We continue to hold the stikhar in our left hand as we make our three bows in veneration of the Holy Table. If it is a day on which we make prostrations, the stikhar should be handed to another server or set aside so that our hands are empty for the prostrations. We do not, however, set our stikhar down upon a stool or seat, as this is not fitting for holy vestments.

33. Once we have venerated the Holy Table, we approach the senior-most priest (as described above) to take the divine blessing. With the folded stikhar in our left hand and our right hand laid upon it, open and palm up, we say, ‘Master, bless the stikhar’. After he has blessed, the priest will lay his hand upon ours: we kiss his hand and then the cross of our stikhar.

34. We then remove ourselves to the vestry to don our stikhar. We do not put on our vestments in the Holy Altar (which is rightly the vesting place only of the priests).⁵

⁵ In point of fact, the Altar is not the appointed vesting place for anyone at all, and all vesting is to be done in the vestry (save for the bishop, who is vested on his cathedra in the centre of the Temple). However, by widespread custom (and as is particularly necessary in smaller parishes without a separate vestry), clergy vest in the Altar, to either the north or south side of the Holy Table—and if a parish Temple is so designed that there is no vestry or side area at all, even servers may don their stikhar in the Altar. Where it is possible to avoid this, however, we should always favour the more dignified custom of vesting separately from the Altar itself.

ON ENTERING THE HOLY ALTAR WITH NO PRIEST PRESENT

35. The Holy Altar should only be entered without a priest present *if we have previously received a blessing* to enter the Altar on a given occasion without him — for example, if we have been blessed to arrive before a service to light the lamps, or to arrive at an appointed time to clean. No matter how often we may otherwise serve in a given Temple, we are nonetheless never to enter the Holy Altar without a priest present, *unless we have been specifically blessed to do so*.

36. If, having received such a blessing, we enter the Holy Altar and there is not yet any priest present, we follow precisely the same procedure as above, save that we await taking a blessing until the arrival of a priest. All other steps (e.g. the veneration of the icons, Holy Table, etc.) remain the same.

37. Once we have completed those tasks which we have been assigned to do in the Altar without the priest being present, we depart the Altar and remain in the Nave. We do not remain idly in the Holy Altar.

ON TAKING LEAVE OF THE HOLY ALTAR

38. When our service has ended and the time has come for us to take our leave of the Holy Altar and depart, we first approach the senior-most priest with our hands before us, and ask his blessing to divest (saying simply, 'Father, bless').

39. We remove our stikhar in the vestry, not in the Altar proper.

40. Once our stikhar has been removed, hung tidily and we are ready to depart, we venerate the Holy Table with three low bows or three prostrations (according to the day and season), and then depart in peace.



ON THE GENERAL LIFE AND CONDUCT OF AN ALTAR SERVER

41. Those who serve in the Holy Altar are expected to be present for the Divine Services, whether or not they are serving. Like the priests, whom the law of the Church requires ‘must serve the Divine Liturgy every Sunday and feast day’,⁶ so servers are expected to attend services every Sunday and Feast Day, unless absent for a reason worthy of a blessing. In this way our hearts and minds are shaped by the divine ministrations of the Liturgy, and we are strengthened for our service and the whole of our lives. Similarly, in this way the faithful see that those who serve round about God’s Holy Table maintain a full devotion to Him, even on those occasions when they are not serving — and so by our way of life, the Body of Christ is edified.

42. The tradition of the Church, from the time of the Holy Apostles, has always been for service to be attached to a *place*, and in our service that place is our *parish*. Just as from the first rank of tonsure — i.e., to the rank of Reader — one is blessed to serve not generally but in a specific Temple,⁷ so the server is expected to worship, pray and serve *at his home parish* unless given a specific blessing to go elsewhere. We are not to jaunt about between parishes as our mood so inclines us, but to attend all services at our home parish unless given a blessing by our priest or bishop to serve him elsewhere, or otherwise attend another Temple for a given reason.

- a. Similarly, we are to remember that we serve God through the office of His priests — we do not serve or become attached to personalities. If our usual priest is called away to another place by his bishop and replacement clergy are provided for a divine service, weekend or season, we are not entitled to skip the services or worship elsewhere on grounds that ‘our priest’ is away. This is a debasement of our calling to serve, and a scandal to the faithful who see a man more attached to worldly relationships than the service of the living God.

43. Though our specific service at the Holy Table ends when we leave the Altar, nevertheless those who serve in the Altar carry about with them their ministerial calling at all times. Servers must live upright lives in accordance with the Church canons, customs and commandments, regularly confessing to their spiritual father and struggling with faith and love to live the virtues.

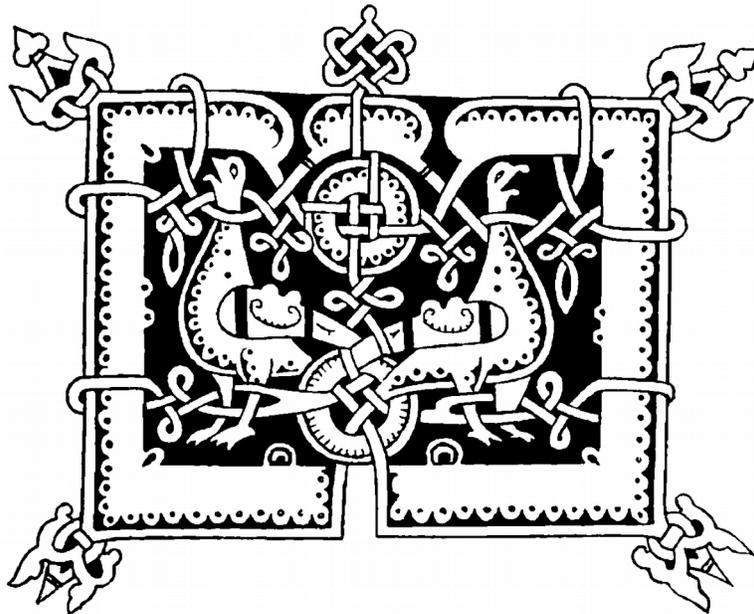
⁶ That is, according to the regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (Руководственные правила для Священнослужителей [1956 года], Пар. 17).

⁷ See the Rite of the Tonsure of a Reader, in which the bishop offers the following benediction: ‘Blessed is the Lord! Lo, the servant of God, N., is become a Reader of the most holy Church of [Dedication and Place]...’.

SERVING WITH THE FULLNESS OF JOY

44. Above all else, let us remember that to serve in our Father's house is first and foremost a divine gift, and one which should stir in our hearts the greatest joy. If God were to take account of our sins, who would be able to stand — not only in the holy places, but even upon the bare earth? Yet through His mercy and love, we are raised up from our sin and despite our unworthiness are placed in His holy Temple, where we are able to say with the psalmist, *'I will wash mine hands in innocence: so will I go round about Thine Altar, O Lord, that I may hear the voice of Thy praise and tell of all Thy wondrous works'* (Psalm 25.6-8). Let our hearts be filled with love, therefore! Let us cry out with the same psalm, *'O Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy House, and the place where Thine honour doth dwell'* (ibid.).

45. May God reward your service, and may His Church rejoice in your labours, and may our hearts be lifted up by your prayers!



Twenty Rules for Altar Servers

by St. John of San Francisco

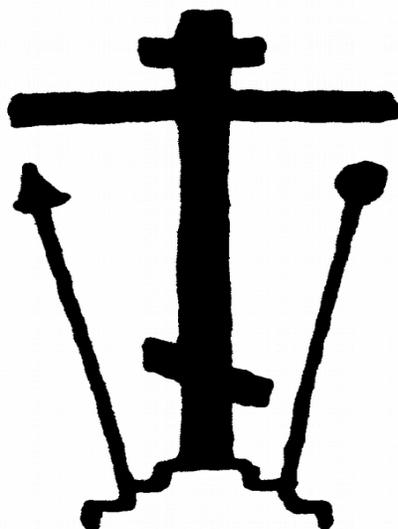
- 1) To serve in the sanctuary, it is necessary to take the blessing of the priest, or at an hierarchical service, the Hierarch.
- 2) One must come to church before the beginning of the service.
- 3) On entering the sanctuary, one must face the Holy Table and, on weekdays, make three full prostrations to the ground, or, on Sundays and the feasts of the Lord, three profound bows from the waist.
- 4) Those persons who are not serving are not permitted to enter the sanctuary.
- 5) Only those who have gathered to serve may enter the sanctuary.
- 6) When vesting in their stikharions [servers' robes], servers should remove their ties [Ties, or neckties as the Americans call them, are considered to be an unnecessary adornment. One often finds in Russian parishes that even laymen in the congregation do not wear them—ed.]
- 7) When taking off the stikharion, it must be neatly folded or hung in its place.
- 8) In the sanctuary one should not engage in conversations, nor laugh, nor should one walk about the church, and particularly is this so during the Divine service itself.
- 9) All readers and altar-servers must be in stikharions. One must also obtain a blessing from the priest, or in an hierarchical service the Hierarch, to take off one's stikharion.
- 10) For communion of the Holy Mysteries, the servers, with the exception of the readers, take off their stikharions.
- 11) They should not touch the Holy Table nor the Table of Oblation (proskomidi).
- 12) They should not walk about in church during the reading of the Gospel, the Apostle or between the exclamations "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." and "And the mercies of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ be with you all."
- 13) Even before putting on the stikharion, their hands must be clean.
- 14) In the sanctuary and sacristy, nothing should be brought that is not used in the Divine services.



- 15) Sitting down, while wearing the stikharion, is not permitted.
- 16) Before taking candles or the liturgical fans out, the server should cross himself before the icon in the High Place and bow to the Hierarch or priest, who stands before the Holy Table. On returning, they should repeat this.
- 17) One must bear in mind that the sanctuary is the most holy place, and that it is required that one stand therein with the utmost reverence; in passing the High Place one must cross oneself, and one must always follow the service with attention.
- 18) During the “I believe” and the “Our Father, ” all the servers go out onto the ambon to join in the general singing. [In the Russian practice, the creed and the Lord’s Prayer are sung and not recited].
- 19) At the time when the clergy are receiving Holy Communion, the servers should stand reverently within the sanctuary; and during the sermon they should leave to stand on the ambon to listen to it.
- 20) Those who break the Church Rule for Servers, should stand on the left kliros [choir place] until the end of the service.

N.B. These disciplines are not kept in exactly this way in every church, but they do indicate the seriousness with which such a great saint of our times as St John took the duties of the altarservers, and should remind us of the importance of this ministry, and the good order which should be observed.

From “The Shepherd”, Vol. XX, No. 11 (July 2000), pp. 8-9



PREPARING FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY

PREPARATION

An altar server should arrive before the reading of the Third and Sixth Hour, ideally before the priest begins his entrance prayers and the Proskomide service. He should prepare himself for service in the Holy Altar through prayer at the evening service before, having made a recent confession and prepared to receive Holy Communion by fulfilling his given rule, being at peace with all, and in a mindset conducive to prayer and obedience to the priest in his offering of the Holy and Bloodless Sacrifice upon the Altar. If an altar server is not able to receive Holy Communion, he should still refrain from eating or drinking anything in the morning except for a small amount of prosfora and Holy Water and still prayerfully prepare for his service in the Altar of the Lord.

When arriving at the Church, he should be aware of the feast day, its rank in the Church calendar, and make his entrance into the temple – keeping in mind that this, according to the practice and tradition of the Church, will be important to knowing when to bow and prostrate.

According to the practice of Holy Trinity Monastery, this is the order for when prostrations are done:

SUNDAYS AND GREAT FEASTS, AND THEIR VIGILS:

Upon entering the temple and within the temple itself: Bows from the waist, or small *poklon*.

Upon entering and within the altar: Bows from the waist.

SATURDAY MORNINGS:

Upon entering the temple and within the temple itself: Bows from the waist, or small *poklon*.

Upon entering and within the altar: Prostrations.

WEEKDAY SERVICES:

Upon entering the temple and within the temple itself: Prostrations.

Upon entering and within the altar: Prostrations.

Prostrations are not done after receiving Holy Communion until the *Prokimenon* at Vespers of the day, or the evening after the Divine Service.

All bows from the waist should be made **all the way to the ground** upon entering the Temple or the Holy Altar.

THE MORNING OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

1. The altar server should arrive with ample time to spiritually and mentally prepare himself for prayerful service in the altar, and to assist to the priest with any tasks in preparation for the day or any services following the Divine Liturgy. A good time to arrive is some time before the priest reads his Entrance Prayers before the Proskomide service, which usually takes place around 30 minutes before the reading of the Hours. The server should arrive, at the bare minimum, 15 minutes before the beginning of the service itself.
2. Having prepared to serve in the Holy Altar and to receive the Holy Mysteries, the altar server should enter the Church by making three reverences at the entrance of the Church, to the principal festal icon, to the icon of the patron of the temple, and the icons of Our Lord and the Mother of God. He should also make sure his hands are clean, that he appears neat and presentable, and is aware of his usual tasks in the preparation for the Divine Liturgy.
3. Upon entering the Holy Altar, the server makes three reverences towards the Holy Altar, saying the Jesus Prayer or “O God, cleanse me a sinner and have mercy on me.” Another good prayer (said silently) upon entry into the Holy Altar comes from the Psalms of David, read by the priest in his entrance prayers and during the First Hour: “I will come into Thy house, in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.” or of another Psalm, “I shall go into the altar of God, unto God Who giveth joy to my youth.”.
4. Taking a blessing from the priest, he should begin with tasks such as lighting the lamps upon the Proskomide table, the seven-branched lamps behind the altar, the lamps or candles in the nave, and preparing charcoal for the censer.
5. Making sure his hands are clean as to not stain or ruin the vestments, he should find a stichar of appropriate size and for the color used for the feast day. It should be folded neatly, under the server’s chin and *absolutely not placed on the floor* as this is akin to the disregard for our own garment of salvation, which the stichar represents. In some places, this even requires the priest to bless the stichar again with Holy Water. If it must be set aside, it should be hung up, held by another server, or placed neatly on a table. The cross on the back of the stichar should be on the top, and held in both hands when asking for the priest’s blessing. Is one is to read the Epistle, he should prepare the Apostol by finding the Prokimen, Reading, and Alleuia verses for the day.

6. He should approach the priest and receive his blessing, only then donning the stichar and beginning his service in the altar. An appropriate prayer from the Psalms is “My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He hath clothed me in the garment of salvation.”
7. When all the preparatory tasks are completed, the server should stand quietly and prayerfully in the altar, not going about the temple to socialize. Once the stichar is donned, it is important to remember that we should only leave the altar with a blessing of the priest, or in an emergency, the most senior subdeacon, reader, or server. We should return to the altar quickly, as we are accountable to God for our promise to obediently serve Him and His priests.
8. Altar serving is not a right, but a high and lofty honor and privilege. We should not be despondent over not being allowed to serve due to a large number of visiting clergy or if there is a rotation, but remain diligently and prayerfully in the temple if we are not called upon to serve.

THE PROSKOMIDE

THE VESTING OF THE PRIEST

A server should assist the priest in donning his vestments, holding them out with the Cross facing the priest in order to bless and venerate, in this order:

1. Priest’s Sticharion.
2. Epitrachelion.
3. (If the priest is awarded it, the Nabedrinnik (square-shaped vestment).
4. (If the priest is awarded it, the Palitza (diamond-shaped vestment).
5. The belt.
6. The cuffs.
7. And the phelonion, holding it with the cross facing the priest to bless it, and kissing the priest right hand as he kisses the Cross on its back.

After this, the servers should prepare for the washing of the priest’s hands, ideally, with a server each holding the bowl, water, and towel. If only one server is available, the server should hold the bowl in his left hand and the water in his right.

PROSKOMIDE

The server should prepare a small amount of water (room temperature) for the priest during his entrance prayers.

When the priest reaches the point in the service where nine particles in commemoration for the saints (beginning with the prayer *Of the glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John...* to *Of our father among the saints, John Chrysostom/Basil the*

Great...) the charcoal in the censer is lit. This gives enough time for the censer to warm up for the censuring at the conclusion of the Proskomide and the censuring of the Church during the Sixth Hour.

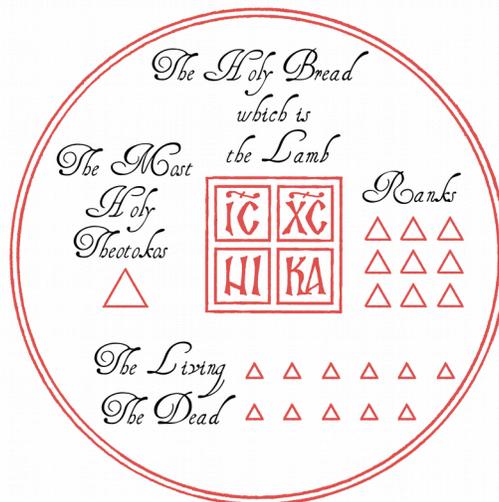
The censer is then handed to the deacon, and in the absence of a deacon, the most senior server or the server called upon by the priest, for the covering of the Holy Gifts. The censer should be held up high enough for the priest to bless it with the Prayer of the Incense: *Incense do we offer unto Thee, O Christ our God, as an odor of spiritual fragrance; accepting it upon Thy most heavenly altar, do Thou send down upon the grace of Thy Most Holy Spirit.*

If one is called upon for the covering, he should hold the censer by its base with the charcoal and incense exposed for the prayers *And the star came... The Lord is King... and Thy virtue hath covered the Heavens.* It should be held up in the usual manner when the priest wraps the aer around it at the prayer *Shelter us under the shelter of Thy wings...*

The priest, or deacon, censures the Church. Upon returning to the altar, the server takes the censer (kissing the priest’s hand each time, but does not kiss his hand if it is received from a deacon), crosses himself and bows to the High Place, and returns the censer to its place.

At the beginning of the reading of the Sixth Hour, at “O come let us worship...” the curtain is drawn open.

During the service, the servers should cross, bow, and prostrate himself along with the priest.



READING COMMEMORATION SLIPS

During and after the Proskomide service, many will send up small prosфора with books or slips with names to be commemorated. When many are sent up, a blessing is given to the priest to assign the reading of names to mature altar servers.

These names are in commemoration for friends, family, and the departed ones close to the faithful. The priest takes out a particle for each name, which stands with the choir of saints at on the diskos and is poured into the chalice after Holy Communion with a prayer asking for God to remit their sins through the Blood of Our Lord. The reading of names is an important spiritual exercise – which must be done quietly, carefully, and without hurry. If a server is unable to make out a name that is illegible or in a language he does not understand, he should simply say to himself “Servant of God”. Names commemorated **must** be Orthodox, and their Christian, baptismal name. Names such as “Jack”, “Dave”, “Misha”, or “Sascha” are not to be read – but “John”, “David”, “Michael”, or “Alexander”. If a name is totally unorthodox, it should not be read at all and the priest made aware to instruct the faithful on the proper way of submitting names to be read in the altar.



In one requests to be named at the Litany for the sick or the departed, it should be given to the priest or deacon before Liturgy.

From the *Liturgical Handbook*:

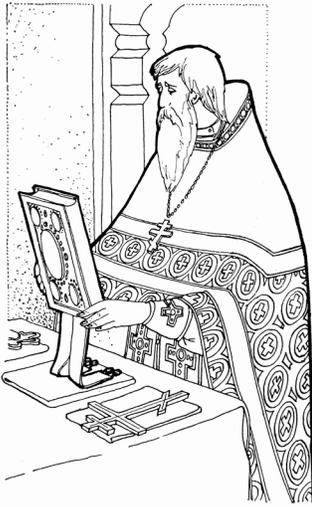


In smaller parishes, where the number of names sent into the Altar by the faithful via commemoration lists and books makes it possible, the Priest will commemorate all the names himself: reading each name and removing a particle from the prosфора for each (see the entry on how this is to be done properly). In larger parishes or monasteries, where it is entirely conceivable that the names presented for commemoration will run into the many hundreds or even many thousands, it is the custom of the Church Abroad that pious Altar servers so blessed by the Priest to do so, may join him in th reading of the names of the living and departed from the commemoration lists, while the Priest removes particles from the prosфора. This is a longstanding practice and part of the tradition throughout the whole of the Orthodox world.

Altar servers selected by the Priest to aid him in this way will be so chosen based on his observance of their piety and comprehension of the spiritual work being undertaken — and thus he will first educate them fully, so that they understand what they are doing in so reading these names. The Priest is not to select small boys for this labour, but the more mature amongst his Altar servers.

Those reading names for commemoration do so while standing near the table of oblation whilst the Priest removes particles from the loaves. They do not begin reading names before the Proskomedia has been served, nor do they continue reading any names that may be sent into the Altar after the Great Entrance (these are instead saved for the next celebration of the Divine Liturgy).

THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS



At the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, the priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the antimins with the Gospel, exclaiming “*Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.*” And the choir responds, “Amen.”

Some priests are awarded the right to leave the Royal Doors open for this initial blessing, or until some other point later into the service. Your priest will make you aware of this if he is awarded this honor by his bishop. Typically, an archpriest with a jewelled cross is given the award to keep the doors opened until the end of this exclamation, when the doors are shut again. Otherwise, the doors remain closed until the small

entrance.

The priest or deacon then says the Great Litany.

Usually commemoration slips, books, and prosfora are sent between this time and the Third Antiphon to be read.

After the Great Litany, the First Antiphon is sung, which is usually “*Bless the Lord, O my Soul*” or another festal or weekday antiphon.

The small litany follows.

The second antiphon, usually “*Glory to the Father... Praise the Lord O my soul... Both now...*”, or another festal antiphon, before “*O Only-Begotten Son...*”.

The small litany follows, again.

After this Litany, the Holy Doors are opened, the servers should line up and prepare for the small entry with the Gospel.



THE SMALL ENTRY

The servers prepare for the small entry by crossing themselves, bowing to the High Place, and turning around and bowing to the priest.



If there is one server, he should take the large candle and stand in front of the doors and clergy during the entrance.

If there are two servers, they should take two candles or the fans, standing either in front of the clergy and doors or to their sides slightly to the side of the icons on the Iconostasis (of the Lord and the Mother of God) as not to obscure them, keeping the fans above the Gospel.

If there are three or more servers, two senior servers to go out with fans with junior servers with candles standing as described above.

Exiting the altar, the first fan should exit first, followed by those holding candles, then the second fan, followed by the deacon and the priest.

The servers remain in front of the iconostasis until the priest turns to bless the people between his veneration of the smaller icons on the iconostasis. The doors remain open.

The servers then return to the altar, put away their items, cross themselves and bow to the high place, and then take their usual place. Now is a good time to prepare the censer for the censuring during the Epistle Reading.



THE TRISAGION AND EPISTLE READING

If a deacon serves, before the Trisagion, he goes out of the doors and says *O Lord, save the pious...* and, during the priest's prayer of the Trisagion, the servers cross and bow along with the priest. A server hands the censer to the priest or deacon after their completion of the Trisagion and ascending of the high place towards the far-eastern end of the altar.



If a server or reader is to read the Epistle, he takes the Epistle book in both hands, and goes to the priest for a blessing to read. The priest places his hands on the top of the Epistle book. During the singing of *Glory to the Father...* during the Trisagion, the reader exits the altar with the book held up on both hands. He finds his place in the center of the Church, crossing himself and bowing to the altar, to the right, and to the left, and then opens the book to read.

For those in the altar, the censuring usually takes place during the reading or the singing of the Alleluia. The reader, having completed his reading, crosses himself again and bows to the altar and to the right and left as before, and holds up the Epistle in both hands as before and re-enters the altar to receive another blessing from the priest as before.

THE GOSPEL READING

During the singing of the Alleluia, the servers should prepare the candles as fans as before to stand before and beside the Gospel as it is read. A server should prepare an analoy, set towards the people for a priest or towards the altar for a deacon.

They should cross themselves, bow, take their items with half exiting towards the North door and half exiting from the South door. The candles should remain in the center in front of the clergy, as before, and the fans held above the Gospel as it is read. All return to altar when the priest says "*Peace be unto thee who bringest good tidings...*" or blesses the people with the Gospel book, reverencing the High place and bowing to the priest in the same manner as an entry. The analoy is returned to its place.



The Litany of Fervent Supplication, “*Let us all say with our whole mind...*”, usually with special petitions added for the sick, and then depending on the day, a litany for the departed.

The Litany of the Catechumens is said, which is an appropriate time to ensure the censer is still hot. Add another charcoal, if needed, and incense for the Censing and Great Entry.

THE LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL

After the departure of the Catechumens, the two Litanies of the Faithful are said. The Holy Doors are opened at the priest’s exclamation “*That always being guarded under Thy dominion...*”.

THE GREAT ENTRANCE

The censer is handed to the deacon or priest after the prayer of the Cherubic Hymn is read, and the entire Church censured. The priest and deacon then say the Cherubic Hymn to themselves while it is sung, in a similar manner to the Trisagion.

The censer is returned to a server, crossing himself and bowing the High Place, and then taking it to the priest and deacon at the Proskomide table where the Holy Gifts are removed. The servers should be lined up at the South door at this time.

The servers reverence the high place and take their places as usual, and if the number of servers permits, one should exit with the censer after it is used and stands in the center if a deacon does not server or the deacon does not carry it during the Great Entrance. They line up in a similar manner to the Small Entry, with the fan first, and then the candles (with the server, if there be one, carrying the censer in the middle) followed by the second fan and then the Priest and deacon.

The servers take their usual place, with the fans above the Holy Gifts, and return to the Holy Altar after the Priest blesses the Faithful with the Holy Chalice saying “*And all you Orthodox Christians...*”.

After the servers return to the altar, the censer is given to the priest to cense the Holy Gifts and the aer (much like the censing of the aer at the Proskomide) and then returned to its place. **The doors and curtain are closed.**



THE ANAPHORA

The Litany “*Let us complete our prayer...*” is said. The choir sings “*The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...*” during this Litany is a good time to first heat up the hot water, and make sure it is done and not making any noise following the priest’s exclamation noted later. The priest, bowing thrice, says “*I will love Thee, O Lord...*”. The curtain is opened at the exclamation, “*The doors! The doors!*”, and the servers exit the altar and stand in the center of the temple for the singing of the Creed. They return to the Holy Altar.



After the singing of “*A mercy of peace...*” and the priest’s exclamation “*The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ...*”, **absolutely no unnecessary movement, talking, or tasks are to be done. This is the holiest point in the Divine Liturgy, where the Holy Gifts are transformed mysteriously into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. At this point in the Liturgy, all the saints and angels are joined with us and present mystically. This means no handling of the censer, cutting up of antidoron, or moving about, etc., as we should stand with great reverence and fear at this great miracle worked through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is, truly, at this moment where the Heavenly and Earthly Liturgies are united and we exist in a place and moment outside of time itself!**

Bows or prostrations while crossing oneself are made with the priest at this time. After the priest says **CHANGING THEM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**, a server gives the censer to the priest or deacon for the exclamation “*Especially for our most holy...*” and a hymn to the Mother of God is sung.

After the priest makes the exclamation, “*And may the mercies...*”, the servers may resume moving about the altar, turning on the kettle for hot water, or cutting antidoron. The Litany before the Our Father is said. A server, or enough needed, remain in the altar for the priest’s washing of hands as done at the Proskomide service above. The remaining servers exit the altar and stand in the center of the Church to sing the Our Father, as at the Creed, at the exclamation “*And vouchsafe us, O master...*” The servers return to the altar, and pour the hot water into a cup for the use after “*Holy Things...*”.

After handing the hot water to the priest, a server lights the large candle and places it in front of the Holy Doors while the clergy commune. The servers take out the wine and antidoron for *zapifka*, remove their sticharions, and **remain outside of the altar while the clergy partake of Holy Communion. This is the completion of the Sacrifice by the priest and a solemn point of the Liturgy.** They should not return until after the priest returns to the altar and putting back on their stichar unless called to open the doors after the Communion of the Clergy.

HOLY COMMUNION

The curtain and doors are opened.

The servers should remain unvested (unless they are readers or subdeacons) at the front of the order to receive Holy Communion. Servers receive Holy Communion first, in the order of Subdeacons, Readers, and then altar servers. If there are visitors, such as monastics, they would commune before the altar servers but after the readers and subdeacons depending on their rank.



Two servers, or one server to the left of the deacon, should hold the cloth in front of the chalice. There should be no gaps between the chalice and the mouth of the communicant. The deacon or server on the right must be sure to wipe the mouth of the communicant (if someone objects to this, make the priest aware and the priest will correct them on what is the correct way to receive Holy Communion) while the server on the left makes a careful count of the number of faithful which have communed. The faithful should **not** grab the cloth from the servers, or the make the Sign of the Cross directly in front of the chalice, as this poses a risk to the chalice tipping. However, if one does grab the cloth or wipes their own mouth, do not argue with them but leave it to the priest to correct them.

The servers holding the cloth should be the most senior, and receive first as to not disrupt the good order of the Church.

After receiving Holy Communion, the servers should take *zapifka* and put the sticharion back on. This does not require another blessing to unvest or revest while receiving.

Upon returning to the Holy Altar, prepare the censer for the final time.

After the censuring of the gifts, a server should take the censer to the right/north side of the Proskomide table. The priest blesses the faithful with the Holy Chalice, saying “*Always, now and ever...*” and he or the deacon takes the Chalice and Diskos to the Proskomide table. All servers should make a deep bow, with reverence towards the Eucharist remaining in the Holy Chalice, as this movement represents the Ascension of Our Lord and still contains His Body and Blood.

CONCLUSION OF THE DIVINE LITURGY



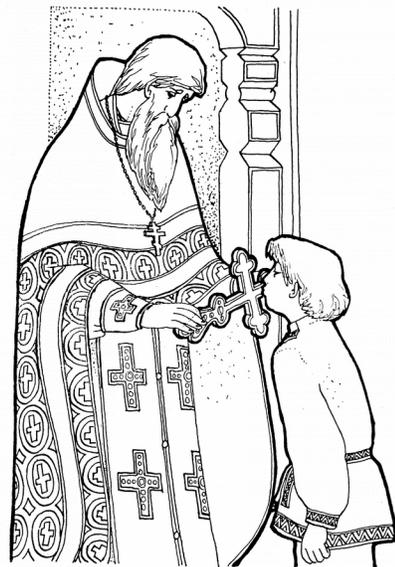
Zapifka should be prepared for all serving deacons and priests, and offered to them by rank. The priest or deacon consuming what is left in the chalice cannot partake until after the chalice is fully consumed, so it best left on a small place and handed to him afterwards.

Servers should stand on the ambo, or quietly in the altar, while the priest preaches his homily. Sitting down while vested is not encouraged unless the priest blesses it.

One should quietly listen to the prayers after Holy Communion, attentively, avoiding extraneous talking or noise while thanking God for the great gift of His Body and Blood.

After the dismissal, the clergy kiss the cross by rank, then the altar servers, then the people. A server should remain to the priest's left holding a bowl of antidoron for the people. The doors and curtain are shut.

The server then receives a blessing to take off his sticharion, folding it and putting it away neatly. After this, the candles should be blown out unless a service is to follow the Divine Liturgy. All take a blessing again from the serving priest or bishop and depart, giving thanks to God for His great mercy and gifts to receive Holy Communion and to serve Him in the Holy Altar.



DEPARTING THE TEMPLE

Offering his thanks to God, the server leaves the altar with three bows to the ground. Even if prostrations were made during the Liturgy, they are not to be made after receiving Holy Communion, as we have Christ truly abiding in us. Another pious custom is to not kiss the icons within the temple, as we ourselves become Living Icons of Christ Our Savior. If we have no further duties, we depart from the church giving thanks to God for this great privilege. The day should be completed with great prayer and thanksgiving, mindful of our service in the Altar and our Communion of the Holy Things.

**THE END
AND GLORY TO GOD!**



APPENDIX I: SELECTIONS FROM THE LITURGICAL HANDBOOK BY BISHOP IRENEI

When crossing from one side of the Altar to the other by way of the High Place (i.e. behind the Holy Table), what actions / gestures should be taken as we walk directly behind the Holy Table?

While in general we try to keep to a minimum the times we cross back and forth from one side of the Holy Altar to the other, so as not to distract the faithful by constant movement, there are of course legitimate times when servers and clerics do need to move from one side to the other. On these occasions, it is fitting that we reverence the High Place as we pass it by, which is done in the following manner: As we walk behind the Holy Table, we make the sign of the Cross over ourself as we pass by the Holy Place, slightly inclining our head as we keep walking. We do not stop, nor slow ourselves, at the High Place to make the sign of the Cross, nor do we make a protracted bow; nor yet do we bow to the celebrant cleric or Bishop (this is a misappropriation of the formally-appointed times when it is called for in the rubrics for bows to be made to the High Place, and from there to the celebrant). We simply make a pious sign of the Cross over ourselves as we walk, and continue to our destination.

If, when we are crossing to the other side of the Altar, we are carrying something that requires both hands, we simply walk piously across without making the sign of the Cross.

When is it appropriate to take photographs or utilise mobile phones in the Holy Altar?

While not technically a liturgical question, lax practice on this matter is so widespread that we include it here.

It is categorically forbidden for any person, of any rank, to take photographs within the Holy Altar without express, advance permission from the Bishop (whether or not the Bishop is present at the Divine Service), and which will only be granted for a single occasion at a time, and only for extraordinary circumstances (e.g. an ordination).

It has become too commonplace in our day and age to ‘live’ so extensively through and in our technology that we lose sight of the need to be wholly, undistractedly, piously present in important moments of life. Service within the Holy Altar is a work of the highest spiritual significance, and it is belittled by the over-use of photography in this most sacred of spaces. Moreover, that which takes place in the Holy Altar is meant to be experienced by the Christian faithful in a liturgical setting, through the opening and closing of the Royal Doors, the processions and exclamations, etc. — none of which is maintained when the sacred activities of the Altar are simply laid bare in photographs, outside of that sacred experience.

One must strive to do better! While there are legitimate moments when the Bishop might bless a few photographs to be taken in the Altar as memorials of significant occasions (e.g. once again, an ordination or a consecration of a temple, or some other significant event in the life of a parish), on all other occasions the Holy Altar should be a place wholly devoted to Divine Service, without the worldly distraction of photography.

It should go without saying — but again, widespread laxity requires that we say it — that this likewise means that the use of mobile telephones within the Altar is also categorically forbidden for all persons, of any rank, including the checking of text messages or other ‘silent’ activities. Mobile phones should not even be brought into the Altar; but if they are, they must be switched completely off before entering in, and not switched back on until after one has left the Altar.

(The only exception to this rule might be a Priest who is monitoring a life-or-death situation of a parishioner, and wishes to check on his/her status if the person is near death, so that s/he can be prayed for appropriately; but apart from this exception, this rule applies to Priests as much as it applies to everyone else.)

Outside the Altar: In general, the same sentiment should be applied to the Nave as to the Altar; namely, that the temple is not the place for mobile telephones, cameras or video recorders in the church without the special blessing from the clergy, given to an individual for a specific service. The faithful of the parish need to be educated about this spiritual principle and rule, so that they do not bring out their telephones or cameras during the Divine Services in order to photograph or record portions of the service without a blessing, which is inappropriate. Sermons likewise should not be filmed or recorded without a blessing. Such blessings are not to be given routinely, as cameras within the temple should be the rarest of sights, reserved for particularly significant occasions alone.

A word regarding ‘live streaming’ of Divine Services: In general, it is not our custom to broadcast the Divine Services, whether by Internet or other means, for reasons similar to those articulated above. However, in certain circumstances the Diocesan Bishop may bless a Parish Rector to arrange for the broadcasting / ‘live streaming’ of certain Divine Services from his parish, based on special needs or circumstances. This must always be discussed with the Bishop prior to putting such arrangements in place.

Do we kneel or make prostrations in the Altar on Sundays? (We see in some places that clergy make prostrations during the anaphora of the Liturgy on Sundays, etc.)

While in other jurisdictions and parts of the Church, differing interpretations of the ecumenical canon against kneeling on Sundays are applied and differing practices result, in the Church Abroad this injunction is applied universally and

categorically. There are absolutely no prostrations made on Sundays (including their eves), during any portion of the Divine Liturgy. Where a prostration might be made on another day, on Sundays a low bow from the waist is made instead.

This explicitly includes during the anaphora and prayers of the epiclesis / consecration of the Holy Gifts. On Sundays, no prostration is made at these moments. Similarly, during a weekday Hierarchical Liturgy the Bishop will normally kneel before the Holy Table, beneath the aer, during the Creed; but on Sundays he does not, instead bowing from the waist and laying his head upon his hands on the Table.

The sole exception to this rule is when the Precious Cross is in the centre of the temple (e.g. during the Feast and afterfeast of the Exaltation of the Cross); before the Cross, when it is thus 'elevated' to the central position in the church, we make three prostrations, even if it be a Sunday.

On weekday celebrations of the Divine Liturgy, at what points in the service do we make a prostration?

In our customary parish practice, at a weekday Liturgy we make a single 'great prostration' (i.e. sign of the Cross with a full prostration to the ground) at the following moments:

After 'We give thanks unto the Lord' at the beginning of Eucharistic Canon (милость мира); that is, at the conclusion of the third exchange at the beginning of the Canon.
At the threefold 'Amen' at the conclusion of the epiclesis.
At the end of the hymn to the Theotokos, 'It is truly meet...' (or its replacement).
At the beginning of singing 'Our Father'.
When the chalice is brought out before the Communion of the faithful and the Deacon intones 'With the fear of God...'.
When the chalice is presented after Holy Communion, by the Priest, with the words 'Always, now and ever...'.
In each of the above cases, a single full prostration is made, and as soon as it is made we immediately rise from it. This applies to all those in the Holy Altar (including the celebrating clergy), as well as the faithful in the Nave.

(Note: In some monasteries there is a practice to prostrate and remain prostrate for longer periods — e.g. during the whole of the Our Father, or during the Canon — but this is not to be done as normal practice in parishes).

Do we make the customary prostrations during a Divine Liturgy for a Great Feast, if it falls on a weekday?

In many places prostrations are not done during Liturgies for Feasts, as if they were Sundays. While this is not prescribed in the Holy Canons (as the prohibition for

Sundays is, and which in the ROCOR, unlike in some other jurisdictions, is absolute), it is more or less commonplace throughout our Dioceses that on the twelve Great Feasts we do not normally make the customary weekday prostrations (though again, this falls under widespread 'local custom' rather than a rule).

Why do we not make a prostration before the Cross on Great Friday of Holy Week, given that normally we always make prostrations before the Cross?

As we have noted elsewhere, when the Precious Cross is in the centre of the temple (e.g. for the Feast of the Exaltation and its afterfeast) we always prostrate ourselves before it, even if it be a Sunday (an exception to the otherwise strict injunction against prostrations on Sundays).

The one occasion on which we categorically do not prostrate ourselves before the Cross is on Great Friday of Holy Week, when the Cross (generally a very large, upright wooden one) is in the centre of the temple at the service of the Twelve Passion Gospels. On this sole occasion of the whole year, we do not make a prostration before it, out of memory of the event recorded in the Gospel for this day: that the soldiers mockingly bowed / prostrated before Christ. On this lone occasion we only make the sign of the cross over ourselves before it, and kiss the Cross, so that we do not mimic the false-devotion of the soldiers.

(As a Holy Week guide: once we make the last prostration of the final Prayer of St Ephrem during Great Wednesday's Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, we make no more prostrations at all until Pentecost, except for before the Holy Shroud.)

When do we kneel, rather than make a prostration?

Kneeling (i.e. standing on one's knees) is not a traditional posture of prayer for the Divine Services in Orthodoxy. The only occasion on which we kneel in the temple, rather than prostrate ourselves, is during the 'Kneeling prayers' on the Vespers of Holy Pentecost.

At all other times we are either standing, or we make a full prostration to the ground.

Should the clergy and servers in the Altar 'half-bow', or incline their heads / upper body, during the consecration of the Holy Gifts?

A custom has emerged in some places, which is in fact an adoption of heterodox customs, of clergy and servers in the Altar 'half bowing', or inclining their heads or upper bodies forwards, at various moments in the Divine Liturgy (e.g. the 'words of institution', the epiclesis, and so on). This is not a practice of our Church and must not be done.

In the Altar, we always stand fully upright and attentive; and at the appointed solemn moments we cross ourselves and make either a bow or prostration (as prescribed). Other postures of what amount to expressions of personal piety are not appropriate within the Altar, or elsewhere in the temple.

At what points do Altar servers (including Subdeacons and Readers) bow to each other when serving?

As a general rule, Altar Servers (whether lay servers or tonsured Readers and Subdeacons) do not bow to each other as a liturgical movement when serving. That is to say, when approaching the High Place in a pair to retrieve fans, or candles, etc., at points in the Divine Services where it is appointed to bow to the High Place and then to the Priest, the servers do not then bow to each other. This is a custom that has emerged from other traditions, but it is not part of our practice.

The occasion when servers do bow to each other is at the All-Night Vigil, during the anointing after the Gospel. After the Priests and Deacons have gone forward in their ranks, the servers do so in theirs (Subdeacons together first as a group, then Readers as a group, then lay servers); each group stands in a single row before the Gospel Book (or icon, if it is a feastday) and they make the sign of the Cross and bow twice, together; then they approach the Gospel / icon in rank (seniors first) to kiss it, approach the celebrant Priest (or Bishop) to be anointed, then return to their row before the Gospel. Once the whole group has been anointed and is again in file, facing the Gospel, they all make the sign of the Cross and bow to the Gospel once more, then turn and bow to the Priest / Bishop, and then turn to the side and bow to each other, and then return to their places behind the clergy in order for the next group of servers to approach.

This same pattern applies whenever an object is in the centre of the Temple and is approached for veneration by all the ranks of the serving clergy (e.g. the Shroud in Holy Week).

Apart from this, servers do not bow to each other. To be explicit, this means that servers do not bow to each other at the following places (as is sometimes seen in other traditions):

When approaching or leaving the High Place in pairs or groups.

When standing on the amvon holding the Trikirion and Dikirion for the Bishop.

When departing the Altar to the centre of the temple as a pair, to read the Apostle or other assigned readings (no bows at all are performed outside the Altar for readings: the Reader simply takes a blessing inside the Altar with the book, then exits by the north door, walks to his place in the centre of the temple, and stands ready to read — he neither bows nor crosses himself there).

How does the reader take his blessing and stand in the Temple to read?

At the reading of the Holy Apostle during the Divine Liturgy:

The Reader approaches the Priest or Bishop at the High Place during the time of the Trisagion, with the Apostol in his hands. Liturgical books are, when being used in the Divine Services, carried upright in both hands, the front cover facing away from the Reader as he walks; they are never carried at one's side, under an arm, etc. (As a reminder, tonsured Readers or ordained Subdeacons must always be vested to read during a Divine Service: that is, in their cassock and stichar).

The book is presented to the Priest, who blesses the Reader and lays his hand atop the book, which the Reader in turn kisses. He then proceeds out one of the side doors into the Nave, and walks directly to the place appointed for the reading. If he arrives before the choir has finished singing, he stands with the book before him, closed, until the time comes to begin the prokeimenon, etc., at which point he opens the book and holds it always in both hands (never simply in one).

When the Reader is in the centre of the church for his reading and for the exchanges that preface it and follow it (i.e. the exchange of peace with the Priest, the prokeimenon, the alleluia), he always stands completely upright; he never makes bows during his words, nor does he make the sign of the Cross at any point there (since both hands are on the book). Similarly, he does not make a bow or any other inflection at the conclusion of his reading, but remains standing straight.

After the alleluia is complete, the Reader re-enters the Altar. If there are sufficient servers that others may take care of the affairs leading to the Gospel (the candles, etc.), the proper full practice is for the Reader to stand on the right (south) side of the Holy Table, facing it, the book held closed before him, and remain there as the introduction of the Gospel Reading takes place; only when the Deacon says 'Let us attend...' and the Gospel reading begins does the Reader then approach the Priest at the High Place, presenting him the book and taking a blessing once again, then stepping aside to listen solemnly to the Gospel. If, however, there are insufficient servers for this and the Reader is required also to carry a candle or perform some other service in the course of the Gospel reading, then immediately upon re-entering the Altar he may present the book to the Priest, receive his blessing, then set the book aside and carry out his additional duties.

The reading of the Old Testament:

When Old Testament or other readings are appointed (e.g. at festal Vespers), readers (whether tonsured or lay) should bring the service book into the Altar and present it

to the Priest before their reading(s), then go out into the Nave to read. At the conclusion of their reading, they return to the Altar to receive another blessing.

In what tones / styles should readings be read?

The work of the reader during the Divine Services (whether a tonsured Reader or a layman blessed to read) is to convey the sacred words of Holy Scripture, as well as the prayers and texts of the Divine Services, in a manner fitting for the comprehension and sanctification of the faithful gathered there for prayer. He must read soberly, without emotiveness or any attempt at 'interpreting' the text by altering the intensity, pitch, or pace of his reading at certain words or phases, bearing in mind that he is called not to interpret the text for the faithful, but diligently to deliver it to them such that the Holy Spirit Himself may cause the faithful to be touched by those words they most need to hear, interpreted not by any man's intellect, but by God's Will.

The reader should chant the text on a single note, at a steady pace, loudly enough to be clearly audible by all (and thus the size of the temple must be taken into consideration) but not so loud as to be shouting. The text must be read exactly as printed in the service book, without any alterations of phrasing or vocabulary, all proper names pronounced as per the standard forms used throughout the Diocese (e.g. we say 'Jesus' with a 'J', not 'Iesus'); when reading in Church Slavonic, special care must be taken to pronounce terms properly in Slavonic pronunciation, not modern Russian (e.g. 'Господь' with two long 'o' sounds, not the short opening vowel as in contemporary spoken Russian). The pitch of the reader's voice should not alter greatly throughout the reading, beyond gentle inflections of tone that come naturally with breath: the aim should be to retain the main note throughout the reading – with the exception of a clear inflection to mark the conclusion of the reading (which is essential, so that the Deacon knows the reading is concluded and can announce the next, or issue the appropriate response). The purpose of this single-tone chanting when we read is to remove the possibility of the reader emotionalising or interpreting the text, but to deliver it 'as it is' to the faithful.

Throughout the reading, the pace should be brisk but never overly speedy or racing. The pace of reading derives from the Church's conviction that in the temple we do not intellectually 'dwell on' the readings via a slow reflection, but rather have the words delivered into our heart without extended intellectual deliberation: the Divine Services in which they are read are themselves the reflections upon and explanation of the texts' meaning. This being said, at no time should a reading ever be so fast that words are clipped or improperly pronounced.

The 'resurrectional style' of ascending tones: There is a longstanding tradition within the Russian Orthodox Church of some readings being read on an ascending tone, the reader beginning on a low note and, as the reading progresses, increasing the pitch

by small steps, so that by its conclusion he is reading in a louder and higher tone. This is sometimes referred to as the 'resurrectional' tone, as the ascending pitch is iconic of the ascent from depths to heights, and is most often reserved for the reading of the Holy Apostle and a few other texts. This is an authentic part of our tradition; however, it should never be undertaken until a reader has been trained to do it properly, with a blessing.

**EXCERPTS FROM THE HANDBOOK FOR CHURCH SERVERS BY ARCHPRIEST SERGIUS
V. BULGAKOV**

Church Servers

In the Orthodox Church this title designates persons of the lowest degree of the clergy, who, while not having the grace of the priesthood, are devoted to one or another service in the Church. These are the Sub-deacon, the Reader, and the Singer, and the sacristan.

The Sub-Deacon

Sub-deacons serve with the church servers. Various scholars have various opinions on the establishment of the position of the Sub-deacon. One attributes its establishment to Jesus Christ, another to the Apostles and, finally, a third holds its establishment by the end of the first century. Undoubtedly this position must have ancient roots. A clear mention of it is found in the letters of St. Cyprian and in the Apostolic Constitutions. According to the ancient canons the Sub-deacon prepared the washing of hands of the priestly celebrants, which he already did during his ordination. Also his duty was to lead the catechumens out after the Deacon intones: "all catechumens, depart". He also secured the Royal Doors, so that the unauthorized do not enter the sanctuary. Today Sub-deacons participate only at a hierarchical service to serve the bishop: they vest him, protect and support him, give him the lamps and to hold these lamps. For the most part Sub-deacons at the present time are in the order of the deaconate, but do not possess the order of the deaconate but only as Sub-deacons. They have the right of wearing only the sticharion and the orarion, which they always gird themselves crosswise.

Readers and Singers

By its title Readers are called clergy, on whom the duty is laid and lays the reading of the Holy Scriptures, with the exception of the Gospel, during the divine services. Since ancient times they were the keepers of the sacred books as well. They were also assigned the duty to light the lamps in the sanctuary and to carry forth the lamps during the performance of the divine services in the presence of the celebrating clergy as required (1). The Singers, or Psalmists, in the ancient Church were the lowest degree of Readers. As is known, in the earliest period of the Church

all the people present were permitted to sing during the divine services. Irrespective of the performance of the people the ancient Church established separate singers for performance of singing the divine services. This establishment goes back to deep antiquity: singers (Psalti) as a special ecclesiastical rank are mentioned in the liturgies of the Apostle James and the Evangelist Mark. During the Fourth Century the decision to have separate Psalti was already pretty much accepted. In the ancient Church singers were required to lead a strictly pious life. Their main function was to lead the singing in the temple and to direct it; for the singers usually begin the singing elevated on the ambo, where those not set apart as clergy had any right to go, according to the canons of the church (Council of Laodicia canon 15; Fourth Ecumenical Council canon 33; Seventh Ecumenical Council canon 14). The assembly of singers was referred to as "the chorus", "the choir" or "singing clerics" In the Eastern Church there were always two choruses: the "right" and the "left".

Note (1): For the first three centuries the position of readers was entrusted by privilege to those Christians who confessed their faith before the pagans. In the ancient Church this position was highly respected, because it is apparent that people of known origin often accepted it. Thus, the Emperor Julian the Apostate in his youth was the reader in the church of Nicomedia. In accordance with the importance of the purpose of the position the ancient Church already applied caution that readers were not only skilful in reading with understanding but also learned, for which special schools were organized.

The Sexton

The sexton designates a warden or a gatekeeper. The name sexton (ponomar) is derived from guardian (Gr. paramonarios, Ru. paramonar). Their duty in the ancient Church was mainly to be continually present at the holy places (Bethlehem - birthplace of the Savior, Golgotha and so forth), both for protecting them, and for the convenience of tourists. They also looked after the accessories of the temple: the utensils, the sacred vestments and other church property, they lit and put out the lamps at the divine services. With the passage of time their duties included reading and singing during the divine services, bringing into the sanctuary altar-breads, wine, water, incense and flint, the preparation and giving the censer and the hot water to the priest-server, the cleaning of the church and the porch, the cleaning of the icons, the walls and the ceiling from dust and cobwebs, and finally, the calling of the believers to the divine services by ringing the bells from the middle of the bell-tower.

The Canonarchs and the Paraecclesiarchs

The Canonarch and the Paraecclesiarch are still mentioned in the liturgical books. In monastery churches the loud-voiced exclamation usually comes before the singing of the stichera in order to sing what follows. For this purpose certain people are selected, who exclaim both the tone of the chant and the refrains before the

stichera, and the same stichera in parts, and the singers sing the stichera with their words also in parts. Such exclamatory stichera are called "canonarchical" and those who exclaim them are called "Canonarchs" (1).

The Paraecclesiarch, "namely the Candle-lighter", according to the church rules, asks the blessing of the Rector at the beginning of services to ring the bell for the Divine services, lights the candles, hands him the censer, carries the candlesticks at the entrances with a censer and the Gospel and in other cases.

Note (1). In view of the special chapter in the Typikon (Chapter 27) "about the Canonarchs", indicating their special role mainly in monasteries, it follows that it is desirable and even obligatory to sing the stichera with the Canonarch in all monasteries including the female ones. In some parish churches, for example in Moscow, during the antiphonal singing at the All Night Vigil it also is acceptable to sing the stichera with the Canonarch (Church Messenger 1892, 19). As this way of singing the stichera gives a special elegance to the Divine Services, its greater propagation in parish churches is desirable wherever that opportunity exists. By the way, the summoning of those who are studying in parochial schools to participate in the reading and singing at the Divine Services grants a full opportunity to sing the stichera with the Canonarch.

The Psalm-Reader

At the present time in parish churches all the duties of those differentiated church servers that were previously designated "Cantors (diaks)" and "Sextons (ponomars)" are fulfilled by the Psalm-readers. Existing before the separation of Sacristans into Psalm-readers and the exercising of his duty as Psalm-reader is suppressed, even the calling of the Psalm-reader is limited for everything attached to the churches belongs to the Sacristans (Supreme declaration of 16 February 1885, Decisions of the Holy Synod). The duties of the Psalm-readers under the supervision of the Priest to whom they are assigned are: a) the performance of the reading and singing from the Kliros, b) the support of the priest during the visitation of parishioners for spiritual direction, and c) all the secretarial work for the church and the parish (2) (Supreme declaration of 16 April 1869, Zhurnal Presutstviya (Contemporary Journal) on the works of the Orthodox Clergy, item 4). It is not possible for the Psalm-reader under any view to enter into the role as an independent director of this or that church service (Manual for Village Pastors 1886, 6). Each Psalm-reader should perform his duties on the first demand of the Priest, and all Psalm-readers (if a few of them are at church) should be present during all Divine Services, even those on weekdays (3); in general, if there are no special orders of the local Eparch. First of all, the Psalm-readers have no right to refuse to fulfill their church duties on the established days set by the Church for general Divine Services (4) (see Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News) 1895, 34; Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1892, 24; 1895, 5). See note 1 on page 680 and page 681.

Notes: (2) All these duties (unless they do not exist because of special local rules) are distributed among the Psalm-readers equally, supervised by the priest (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1895, 33). The non-uniform distribution of these duties can only be allowed by voluntary agreement among the psalm-readers. In reference to this the church secretariat is considered important observing that due to the decree of the Holy Synod of the 6th of September 1889 No. 3441, the Orel Theological Consistory Circular proclaimed to the diocese that agreeing with the note for article 43 on other blessings, regular Deacons are obligated to follow the secretariat for the church and parish equally with the other members of the church clergy (Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News) 1870, 7). (3) There are no rules about the Psalm-readers taking a rest within the five-member structure of the clergy; but the practice supposes the fulfillment of the weekly church services by the Psalm-readers. This depends on the consent of the gathered clergy (Tserkovniya Vestnik, (Church News), 1897, 5.). In many dioceses with two or more-regular clergy the Psalm-readers have the same turns as the Priests (Tserkovniya Vedomosti, (Church News), 1896, 12-13.). The Psalm-reader-teacher in any case is not free from his performance of the services of need and every day Divine Services performed outside of class time. (Tserkovnyi Vestnik, (Church Messenger), 1892, 24.). (4) Psalm-readers have no right to refuse to be the keepers of the keys of the church, and if not the keys, then in any case after receiving the blessing of the priest their duty is to the bells, even though they were not brought forth for them (Tserkovnyi Vestnik 1895, 20). In some dioceses, for example, in the Kostromsky and Nizhegorod Dioceses, there is a certain order, in which the Psalm-reader when it is his turn must unlock and lock the church in the presence of the church Ponomar (Watchman) and he, the Psalm-reader, then must send the keys to the Priest whose turn it is (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'sk. Pastyrei Kiev (Manual for Village Pastors), 1889, 35; Nizhegorod Eparchial Vestnik 1892, 52). The duty of the preparation of vestments before the Divine Services and to help the Priest with the vestments lies with the Psalm-readers (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1895, 44); the excuse of reading and singing is not valid, and any way should not begin before the vesting of the Priest (Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News) 1896, 17). It is necessary for Deacons to abide by Canon 20 of the Council of Laodicea that "he ranks over Sub-deacons and all altar servers", following which makes it impossible to reconcile the unwillingness of Psalm-readers to carry bundles of church accessories, including the Deacon's vestments for cross processions and other church services of need, for to serve is an honor and not a service or duty (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1895, 34) According to the Supreme declaration of 16 April 1869 in the Zhurnal Presutstviya (Contemporary Journal) on the duties of Orthodox clergy, Psalm-readers are not assigned the duties to maintain the church in cleanliness and neatness (for example: to sweep away dust even in the sanctuary, to air out the church vestments and so on), to light the lampadas and prepare the censer, to ring the bell for the Divine Services (both for the gatherings and during the time of winter snow storms); and everything that belongs to the duties, under sole or joint supervision of the Priest and the Church Wardens, of the church Ponomars (see Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1894, 7; 1895, 5; 1896, 50). In view of this in one of the journals of the Cherson Theological Consistory concerning the duties of the psalmreaders, the ever-memorable Most Reverend Nicanorus (Nicanor) resolves this as follows: "Any work in the church that is not beneath the duties of the Psalm-readers, and are such that I myself do, being in the rank of Archimandrite, and even of Bishop belongs to the

Psalm-reader. Nevertheless to require the Psalm-readers to do the inferior work of the church: like ringing the bells in the bell-tower, sweeping the floors, lighting the fire and so forth is without foundation. The performance of such departures from church duties should be by special persons, supplied by the Church Warden with the consent of the clergy, such as the Ponomar (watchman) and other volunteers, or inferior persons to do this work of the church for the sake of the Lord ". (Rukovodstvo dlia seljskikh Pastyrei (Manual for Village Pastors), 1889, 47). For this reason there are special canons in some dioceses. For example, the Orel Diocesan Authorities (in view of this that some of the Psalm-readers recognizing their duty only to read and to sing in church evaded other duties, did not consider themselves obligated to the Priest for the church keys and for the blessing to ring the bells for the Divine Services, and even on their own time to be at Divine Services, and the Priests, after the arriving in church, were compelled to wait for the Parish Psalm-readers), pointed out to the Psalm-readers the letter of the document, to which they were tonsured "to keep the beauty of the temple of the Lord and to respect the Priest". The circular decree explained to the clergy that Psalm-readers are obligated: a) to carry from the temple the items needed for the support of the Priest to perform the service of needs, and all the necessities belonging to these Divine Service needs (certainly, excepting those things which only ordained church servers may touch); b) to watch for the cleanliness of the temple, and also to administer the church bells for the Divine Service and to observe their proper fulfillment; c) to respect the parish Priest and to render him obedience to all his orders, which come from him for the work of the church and the parish (Tserkovniya Vedomosti (Church News), 1888, 4). In those dioceses where a venerable tradition of rules exists, they are obligatory for the clergy. And if there are dioceses where there are no such rules, the Priests of these dioceses have no right to require the Psalm-readers to do any inferior duties, but in accordance with this the Psalm-readers, with the training they have received, are required to not shirk from any kind of duty, that "according to the church any work is not humiliating" and that many Psalm-readers voluntarily carry out the majority of the inferior duties of the church "for the sake of the Lord".

Cycles of Church Services

Into the structure of the common Divine services are included a triple set of prayers, singing and readings: one set of prayers, singing and readings are devoted by the Church to the events belonging to the known hours of the day, another is by the day of the week and the third is by the day of the year. From here the church services, usually, are subdivided: 1) by the day of the week (otherwise called daily), 2) weekly and 3) yearly. The order of each kind of these services makes a so-called cycle. The cycle of weekday services is made within the week and with the approach of each of the following days it again goes in the same order.

The cycle of weekday services is made during a week and with the approach of each following week it again repeats; the cycle of annual services lasts throughout the year and in each of the following years again follows the same order. The essential difference of all these services may be expressed briefly in this way: the daily services are unchanging and constitute the basis of the common divine service; the weekly services are changed in its prayers, church chanting and readings with

each day of the week, and yearly, with each day of the year, in compliance with those commemorations, which the Church will assign to each day of the week and year. The daily, weekly and yearly services are not made separately from each others, but all are together, and namely: the weekly and yearly services are united to the weekday service cycle; therefore in the same service there are prayers, readings and singing relating to the sacred commemorations either 1) with the known hour of the day, or 2) with the days of the week, or finally 3) with the days of the year.

DAILY DIVINE SERVICES

There are nine church services: the 9th Hour, Vespers, Compline, the Midnight Office, Matins, 1st Hour, 3rd Hour, 6th Hour and the Liturgy (on those days when there is no liturgy, the "Office of the Typical Psalms" is served after the 6th Hour).⁸ As the structure of the weekday services includes the services of the weekly and yearly cycles, then the higher commemorative services are not always equally served on the different days of a week or on the different days of year, but they change with reference to the sacred commemorative weekly and annual cycles. Therefore each service, as will be shown below, will not always be equal in its aspect and unity to the services among themselves. The cycle of the daily church services begins in the evening, and this evening is for the following instead of the previous day; because at the creation of the world the evening preceded the day (Gn. 1:5). In that way the Old Testament Church had its Divine service; following these laws the New Testament Church also begins the order of daily services from the evening

⁸ The First Hour usually is united to Matins; the Liturgy is "higher than the other services" and is "a special sacrifice"; therefore the total number of all church services comes to seven. The Holy Spirit descends during each of these services, and the Holy Church, imitating the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety and awe (Is. 11:2, 3), also has seven services or prayers. The Prophet David speaks about seven being the number of prayers: "I praise You seven times a day for the judgments of Your righteousness" (Ps. 118:164), where the day is understood as a whole day, i.e. day and night, as it is said in Genesis: "and there was evening and morning, one day" (Gn. 1:5). The Prophet David in particular says: about the Midnight Office (Ps. 118:62), about Matins and 1st Hour", (Ps. 62:2, 5:4), about the 3rd and 6th Hours and Vespers (Ps. 54:18) and about Compline (Ps. 6:7). Each of the church services served today should be done separately, at its time. But as this could generate something like despondency and laziness, especially in souls that are not as reverential, then the most divine Fathers, moved by the Divine Spirit, strictly protecting also the order of all doxologies and averting a pretext for laziness and despondency, have defined not seven times, but only three times for those services in honor and glory of the All holy Trinity to be served: from midnight to morning the Midnight Office, Matins and the First Hour are served (although it is incorporated into Matins as was said earlier, however it is a separate and independent service); at the 3rd hour of the day (i.e. 9 in the morning) the 3rd and 6th hours and the Office of the Typical Psalms (although it is sung together with the 6th Hour, but it is a separate and independent service) are served; at the end of day the 9th Hour, Vespers and Compline are served. These three times of services (all together and each separately) describe the All- Holy Trinity. Services served three times a day and at each time three services are also in imitation of the Prophet Daniel, who prayed three times every day. Besides this, in serving three services by three each time, we imitate the nine angelic ranks, who number three times three and which loudly sing of God in Trinity. (For details see Novaia Skrizhal [New Tablet], 78, 80-8 1, 83 p.).

MORNING DIVINE SERVICES

The Midnight Office, Matins and the First Hour go into structure of the morning Divine services.

Midnight Office

The Midnight Office designates a church service which is served at midnight or at any hour from night to the morning. The Christian custom to consecrate midnight with a Divine service or in general the night time, undoubtedly, is based on the example of Jesus Christ Himself (Lk. 6:12; Mt. 26:30) Whom the Apostles imitated (Acts. 16:25) and through them contemporary Christians (1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16). During the persecutions this custom developed because the night time was safest for the Divine services in general. At the same time the Holy Church always had in view that midnight is mainly the convenient time, in its quietude, for prayerful conversations with God and for reflection on sins and their correction. In this way St. Basil the Great looks at the establishment of the midnight Divine services (2nd letter to Gregory Nazianzus). According to the opinion of commentators on the divine services, the Holy Church established the Midnight Office. According to 1) it was in order to remind believers of the prayerful midnight ordeal of Jesus Christ before His departure to His voluntary suffering. According to the 2) it is for the constant reminder to the believers about the terrible day of the second coming of Christ and following that, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment, and in this way the second coming of Christ, in the general belief of the Holy Church based on the parable of the Savior about the ten virgins, needs to be at midnight. According to the 3), finally, it was to call believers even at the midnight hour in imitation of the angels, who openly glorify the Lord.

There are Daily, Saturday and Sunday Midnight Offices. The rules for them are found in the Horologion and the Augmented Psalter. Besides this, there are rules in the Typikon about the daily (Monday of the first week of Great Lent) and the Sunday (chapter 7) Midnight Office. This or the other Midnight Office is served in accordance with the day of the week and the rules of the Ustav. The Midnight Office is not needed if an All Night Vigil is served, but also in some other cases (see Ustav ch. 2, 7; Friday and Saturday of the 5th week of Great Lent, Wednesday of Passion Week).

Sometimes the Midnight Office is served not in the temple but in the kellia (see pp. 524, 537, 585).

Matins

Matins received its name from the time when it is served. According to its content it is divided into three parts. In the first part we confess our sins and we ask the mercy of God for the coming day. In the second part we glorify the persons or

events agreeing with the commemoration of the day. In the third part we glorify the Lord Himself.

It is undoubtedly an ancient custom to enlighten the dawn of the day with hymns corresponding to its time. Eusebius names the psalms and songs, by which the divinity of Jesus Christ is glorified in the morning Divine Services and since ancient times were established and composed (Book V, chapter 28). St. Basil the Great mentions a way of reading or singing the psalms, distinguishing them from Prayers and Psalms of repentance (Letter 204). The main content of the Matins Divine Services consisted of the Psalms of Praise from which the service was also called the Office of Praises (Lauds). We find the instructions on the use of the Great Doxology in the Apostolic Regulations, equally with those by St. Athanasius the Great. In the process of the development of Christian hymns, the structure of the Matins Divine Services was expanded. Especially in this respect are the remarkable works of St. John of Damascus as the composer of canons.

Matins exists: without a Polyeleon and Great Doxology (non-festal Matins), i.e. when the latter is read, but not sung;⁹ with the Great Doxology which is sung, but not read, with the Polyeleon and the Paschal Matins. The rules of non-festal Matins¹⁰ are found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, in chapter 9 and other places in the Typikon. The rules of festal Matins are found in some editions of the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter, and the Octoechos and in chapters 2, 3, 4.2 and other places in the Typikon. One or the other Matins is served in accordance with the instructions of the Typikon.

The First Hour

The service of this hour corresponds to 7, 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning in our notation. This service is mentioned as a morning prayer or a prayer at dawn by the Apostolic Regulations (Book VIII, 4) and St. Basil the Great. The exact mention of the service of the First Hour belongs to 5th century. For Christians this hour received special meaning in the power of the memory of how during this hour Jesus Christ was led from Caiaphas to Pilate, was slandered by enemies and condemned. According to

9 However, sometimes the Great Doxology is sung even during a non-festal Matins: "It is possible", it is said in the Typikon and as the Ustav expresses, "to even sing the words for the sung Osmoglasnik [Music book of the eight tones] and for the Lord and to also do (i.e. to sing instead of read) the Great Doxology" (see Ustav [Typikon] for Sept. 23).

10 In this Matins we either sing "God is the Lord" or "Alleluia" after the Six Psalms. Often met in the Ustav [Typikon] are the expressions: "God is the Lord" and "when the Alleluia is sung" but also "an Alleluia or Troparion" is specified not only as a particular feature in Matins, but also in other church services. The Ustav [Typikon] speaks about these features: in the 9th ch., in the 48th ch. (mainly for Nov. 14) and in the Offices of Cheesefare week and the first week of Great Lent (see about this and the Saturday Divine Services below). In general the Ustav [Typikon] designation that on a given day "Alleluia" is sung designates a mournful and penitential character of the church services served that day. If the Ustav [Typikon] appoints to sing "God is the Lord" it designates that the church services that day carry, compared to the first sort of services (i.e. when the "Alleluia" is sung) a more joyful and solemn character".

the Ustav [Typikon] the First Hour is served either in the temple or in the narthex. The First Hour is served in the temple: on a non-festal weekday, on Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare week and during the Holy Forty Day Fast. The departure to the narthex on these days is prescribed after the First Hour (Ustav [Typikon], Chapter 9, the Order for Cheesefare Wednesday and Monday of the first week of Great Lent). The First Hour is served in the narthex: a) on the Resurrection days (Ustav [Typikon] ch. 2, 3, 4 and 5); b) on feasts with signs: and when the Ustav [Typikon] either says directly to serve a Vigil, or says: "the Vigil is served, as the rector directs" (Jan. 1, 17, 20, 25, 27, Feb. 12, 24, Apr. 23, May 8, 9, Jun. 24, 29, Aug. 26, Sep. 26, Oct. 26, Nov. 13 or Dec. 6); c) o the major Lord's and Theotokos feasts, on whatever days they fall on (Ustav [Typikon], Jan. 6, Sep. 8, Dec. 26)

THE EVENING DIVINE SERVICES

The Ninth Hour, Vespers, and Compline comprise this structure of the Divine Services.

The Ninth Hour

In our notation the ninth hour corresponds to 4, 5 and 6 o'clock in the afternoon.¹¹ In this hour the Lord Jesus Christ, hanging on a tree and having exclaimed, yielded up His spirit to God (Mt. 27:46-50). The service of the 9th Hour is established in commemoration of the great agonizing suffering and death of the Savior. The commandment to pray at the 9th Hour in commemoration of the humility of the Lord is clearly stated in decisions of the Apostles. St. Basil the Great attributes an apostolic establishment to the service (Refer to Acts. 3:1). St. Pachomius the Great selected the psalms for this service, and St. Basil the Great wrote the troparia and the prayer in the Ninth Hour. The ninth hour is usually sung before Vespers.¹² In Great Lent the 3rd and 6th Hours are done together, and then the 9th Hour follows, after which the Typical Psalms and Vespers are sung. In the Compline of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany the 9th hour is done together with all the other hours (The Royal Hours). The 9th Hour is done between 3 and 6 o'clock (and separately from Vespers) on Wednesday and Friday of Cheese Fare Week if there is a Prefeast of the Meeting or a feast day of the temple on these days (Ustav [Typikon] for Feb. 1; ch. 28 on the temple). See pp. 697-698. Chapters 1 and 9 of the Ustav [Typikon] clearly states that

11 Judea during the life of the Savior divided the night into 4 parts, or watches, the first watch (from sunset) is the evening, the second is the midnight, the third is the cockcrow, the fourth is the morning; the day is also divided into 4 parts: first, third, sixth and ninth hours.

12 Though, according to the Ustav [Typikon], one must read the 9th Hour together with Vespers, but it concerns the Divine service of the coming rather than the passing day, as Vespers. But that is why where daily Divine services are not done, when they wish to serve a liturgy on some kind of day, before which there was no service, the Divine service on the eve of this liturgy usually does not begin with the 9th Hour, but directly with Vespers and consists only of Vespers and Compline. The 9th Hour is already read the next day before the liturgy itself after the 6th Hour. In such order the daily services are also listed in the Uchitelnoye Izvestiye [Teacher News] (Nikolayev, p. 75)

the Ninth Hour is sometimes done in the temple, sometimes in the Narthex. On the days of the Fast the 9th Hour is done in the temple (Ustav [Typikon] Nov. 14; Mon. of the first week of Great Lent). See more below.

Vespers

As in the beginning the creation of the world began with evening, so the Holy Church in the Divine service of Vespers first of all glorifies God as the Creator and Providence for the good of creation and providence for man. Moreover, remindful of the fall of the forefathers, she guides and raises believers to consciousness of sin and prayer before the Lord for their healing. Finally, pulling together the evening of the day with evening of our life, she reminds us about having death overtake us.

The present order and structure of the Vesper Divine service mainly carries in itself the stamp of extreme antiquity. Already the apostolic regulations (book II, 59, VIII, 35) lays out the Vesper Divine Service in lines rather similar to the present order. Here the bishop is commanded to gather the people at the approach of evening. St. Basil the Great mentions a custom of the fathers to offer thanksgiving at the approach of the evening light as an old custom, and confirms that although his is the name of the creator of those praises which are read during the time of the Prayers of the Light, many remain as unknown authors, however the people, uplifting them, repeat an ancient voice. Thus, already at the time of St. Basil the Great the main parts of the present Vesper Divine Services were old. There are three types of Vespers: daily, little and great.

Daily Vespers is done on those days when there is no holiday with a Polyeleon or Vigil. On the eve of feasts it may be only done when they fall during Cheese fare week or during the weeks of Great Lent (e.g. Jan. 30, Feb. 24, Mar. 9 and Ustav [Typikon] on the temple ch. 35, 36). The Ustav [Typikon] on Daily Vespers, not served in Great Lent, is found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter and the Typikon ch. 9. The Ustav [Typikon] on Daily Vespers served in Great Lent is found in the order of the evening of Cheesefare Sunday and Monday of the 1st week of Great Lent, maintained in the Typikon (see also "the order of Vespers" in the Horologion and Augmented Psalter and being met in this order of instructions: "if it is lent").

Little Vespers is served only before the Vigil beginning with Vespers. There is no Little Vespers before the Vigil beginning with Compline. Little Vespers is understood as being a shortened Daily Vespers. In it there are no Prayers of the Light, Great Litany, verses of the Psalter, Little Litany sung with no more than 4 stichera, the Aposticha is not sung, in the Litany: "Have mercy on us, O God" are only three petitions, the Litany "Let us complete our evening prayer" is dropped and there is a little Dismissal instead of the great Dismissal (Ustav [Typikon], chapters 1 and 9). The

Ustav [Typikon] on Little Vespers is found in the Priest's Service Book (in some editions), in the Octoechos and in chapter one of the Typikon.

Great Vespers is a festal vespers. It is served on the eve of the feast and sometimes on the feast itself. Great Vespers, served on the eve of feasts, or served separately from Matins,¹³ or in combination with Matins (All Night Vigil), in compliance with the instructions of the Ustav [Typikon], which thus gives freedom to the rector (see ch. 6 of the Ustav [Typikon]), sometimes made with the remarks: "If the rector wishes, we serve a vigil".¹⁴ Great Vespers is always prescribed in a Vigil, except in those cases, when it begins with Great Compline.¹⁵ The Ustav [Typikon] about the Great Vespers served separately from Matins is found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, and the Augmented Psalter and in chapter 7 of the Typikon. The Ustav [Typikon] about Great Vespers combined with Matins are in some editions of the Priest's Service Book, in the Octoechos and in chapter 2 of the Typikon⁶. Besides Matins, Vespers may be combined with the 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours and with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in Great Lent, with the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Great Thursday and Great Saturday and with the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom on the feast of the Annunciation if it falls on some days of Great Lent (see pp. 120-121).

13 Great Vespers not in a Vigil is served on the following days of feasts: on the first and on the all other days of Pascha, on Thomas Sunday, on the Lord's feasts of the twelve major feasts, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany and on Great Friday.

14 Besides the 68 vigils appointed in the Ustav [Typikon] (by the number of Sundays and feasts), "there are also other vigils", which are specially specified in the Ustav [Typikon], "in their order where it is written, if those present will it, if they see that by their churchlike boldness they care about their salvation. There also are other vigils for this holy temple, in the hermitage, which must exist, and in no way remains in its memory" (Ustav [Typikon], ch. 6). Besides this, the All Night Vigil should be served on the high festal days from Pascha to September 15th (P. S. Z., № 20416). For good reason (for the sake of an icon honored, e.g.,) the rector may replace the Polyeleon service with the All Night Vigil (Tserkovnie Vedomosti [Church News] 1896, 6). To serve the All Night Vigil on the eve of Pascha goes against church rules and it is not in agreement with the idea of the feast (Tserkovnie Vedomosti [Church News] 1895 1; Refer to p. 568-569). The Ustav [Typikon] offers (see ch. 2) the usual All Night Vigil (i.e. a Great Vespers combined with Matins) to serve in the evening. That is why it is not in agreement with the Ustav [Typikon] and appears to be unnatural to serve this Vigil in the 7th - 8th hour in the morning (See Litovskiiia Eparkhialniia Vedomosti [Lithuanian Diocesan News] 1895, 6)

15 Instructions in the 6th and 9th chapters of the Ustav [Typikon] (and equally also canon 51 of the Council of Laodicea) are so firm that they eliminate any assumption of the possibility of serving All Night Vigils on weekdays of the Holy Forty Day Fast. It is true that in the 6th chapter of the Typikon there is a reservation that All Night Vigils for Sundays and for the Lord's and other great feasts, "there are also other vigils, as specified by name in the Ustav [Typikon] in its order where it is written", but also this reservation should not cause any confusion about the possibility or impossibility of serving All Night Vigils on week days of the Holy Forty Day Fast, as "in the Ustav [Typikon] in the order" that on the week days of the Holy Forty Day Fast nowhere is it mentioned that the All Night Vigil is served on these days (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1890, 6).

Compline

In the service of Compline, served "on all days", are expressed in general the feelings of a Christian, going to sleep at the end of the day, guided by the light of the Gospel and with the help of grace. Besides this, with the service of Compline the Holy Church combines the memory of the descent of Jesus Christ into Hades and freeing the righteous from the power of the prince of darkness, and these memories will lead us to gratitude for all the blessings of God, and to prayer for the forgiveness of sins and granting of the Kingdom of Heaven. For this the Holy Church especially inspires us to diligently ask the All-Holy Theotokos for an intercession, as in all of life, so especially on the day of the exit of the soul from the body.

There is both Little and Great Compline.

The order of Little Compline is found in the Horologion and in the Augmented Psalter. Little Compline is served every day of the year, except on the week days of Great Lent and some other days in the year when it is necessary to serve the Great Compline. Sometimes it is served in the kellia.

Great Compline is served both separately from Matins and combined with it. The rules for Great Compline are found in the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter and in the Typikon (Jan. 6, Mar. 25, Monday of the 1st week of Great Lent and in other places). Great Compline is served separately from Matins on Tuesday (Wednesday) and Thursday (Friday) of Cheesefare week (except for cases pointed out in the Ustav [Typikon] for Feb. 2 and in chapter 28 for the temple), on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (except for Wednesday and Friday of the 5th week) on all the Sundays of Great Lent and on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week. Great Compline is combined with Matins on March 24 and on the eve of temple feasts and the imperial days if these feasts fall on those weekdays of Great Lent, which do not follow the feast. Also Great Compline is always combined with Matins on December 24 and January 6.

***S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp, (Kharkov, 1900), pp 673
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