

Introduction: The End of the Liturgy

Theme

The end or goal of the Divine Liturgy is the union of our life with Christ. This is accomplished by our partaking of the Holy Eucharist which makes the faithful holy.

To fully participate in this grace, we need to prepare by the means the Lord has given us: Scripture and prayer.

Outline

Purpose and Goal

Scriptural Examples of Worship

Preparations

Scripture References

Exodus 19-20

2 Maccabees 2.19-32

Isaiah 6.1–9

Matthew 22.11-12

Philippians 2.12-13

Hebrews 12.12–29

Apocalypse 1.9–10

Quote

The essential act in the celebration of the holy mysteries is the transformation of the elements into the Divine Body and Blood; its aim is the sanctification of the faithful, who through these mysteries receive the remission of their sins and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

—St Nicholas Cabasilas *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*

Resources

Commentary on the Divine Liturgy; St Nicholas Cabasilas

The Heavenly Banquet: Understanding the Divine Liturgy; Fr Emmanuel Hatzidakis

Extended Edition E-mail

Scripture References

Exodus 19-20

God's appearance on Mt Sinai to give the Ten Words is contrasted with New Covenant worship in the Hebrews passage below.

2 Maccabees 2.19-32 RSV¹

While I only used the part in italics below the lengthier passage gives the context.

The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar, and further the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, and the appearances which came from heaven to those who strove zealously on behalf of Judaism, so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes, and recovered the temple famous throughout the world and freed the city and restored the laws that were about to be abolished, while the Lord with great kindness became gracious to them — all this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book. For considering the flood of numbers involved and the difficulty there is for those who wish to enter upon the narratives of history because of the mass of material, we have aimed to please those who wish to read, to make it easy for those who are inclined to memorize, and to profit all readers. For us who have undertaken the toil of abbreviating, it is no light matter but calls for sweat and loss of sleep, just as it is not easy for one who prepares a banquet and seeks the benefit of others. However, to secure the gratitude of many we will gladly endure the uncomfortable toil, leaving the responsibility for exact details to the compiler, while devoting our effort to arriving at the outlines of the condensation. For as the master builder of a new house must be concerned with the whole construction, while the one who undertakes its painting and decoration has to consider only what is suitable for its adornment, such in my judgment is the case with us. It is the duty of the original historian to occupy the ground and to discuss matters from every side and to take trouble with details, but the one who recasts the narrative should be allowed to strive for brevity of expression and to forego exhaustive treatment. *At this point therefore let us begin our narrative, adding only so much to what has already been said; for it is foolish to lengthen the preface while cutting short the history itself.*

¹ Revised Standard Version

Isaiah 6.1–9 ESV²

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost [or ‘undone’]; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

“‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’”

Hebrews 12.12–29 (referencing Exodus 19-20) ESV

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

² English Standard Version

innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire. (ESV)

Matthew 22.11-12 ESV

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.

Philippians 2.12-13 ESV

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Apocalypse 1.9–10 ESV

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet.

Quotes

The essential act in the celebration of the holy mysteries is the transformation of the elements into the Divine Body and Blood; its aim is the sanctification of the faithful, who through these mysteries receive the remission of their sins and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. As a preparation for, and contribution to, this act and this purpose we have prayers, psalms, and readings from Holy Scripture; in short, all the sacred acts and forms which are said and done before and after the consecration of the elements. While it is true that God freely gives us all holy things and that we bring him nothing, but that they are absolute graces, he does nevertheless necessarily require that we should be fit to receive and to preserve them; and he would not permit those who were not so disposed to be thus sanctified. It is in this way

that he admits us to Baptism and Confirmation [Chrismation]; in this way that he receives us at the divine banquet and allows us to participate at the solemn table. Christ, in his parable of the sower, has illustrated this way that God has of dealing with us. "A sower went forth," he says, "to sow" — not to plough the earth, but to sow: thus showing that the work of preparation must be done by us. Therefore, since in order to obtain the effects of the divine mysteries we must approach them in a state of grace and properly prepared, it was necessary that these preparations should find a place in the order of the sacred rite: and, in fact, they are found there.

St Nicholas Cabasilas: *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*

This life is given to us for repentance; do not waste it in empty pursuits.

St Isaac of Syria: *Ascetical Homilies*.

More Resources:

Walking an Ancient Path Blog: [Liturgy Quick-Start Guide](#); Lynnette Horner

[Antiochian Lectionary and Liturgics](#)

[Antiochian Daily and Occasional Prayers](#)

[An Orthodox Bible Reading Plan](#)

[Bible Reading Plan Generator](#)

[Daily Orthodox Scriptures](#) Fr Alexis Kouri reads the Orthodox Study Bible in a year

[Daily Orthodox Scriptures for Kids](#) New Testament in a year.