



# ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



REV. FR. PAUL GIRGIS  
509.845.4540 :: FRPAULGIRGIS@GMAIL.COM

2425 RIVERS ROAD, NAPLES, FLORIDA 34120  
WWW.STPAULNAPLES.ORG



HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH, ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK  
AND METROPOLITAN OF ALL NORTH AMERICA

HIS GRACE BISHOP NICHOLAS, AUXILIARY BISHOP  
OF THE DIOCESE OF MIAMI AND THE SOUTHEAST

## WELCOME VISITORS AND FAITHFUL

We are honored by your presence as our doors are open to anyone seeking the fullness of the Truth. It is our sincere desire that your participation today in the Divine Liturgy will draw you closer to Christ and His Church. We are a parish community within the Body of Christ striving to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt. 6:33) above all else. The Church is a spiritual hospital and our Lord Jesus Christ is the Great Physician who offers us healing, hope, and refuge – true life with real freedom. We answer Christ's call to repent and be transformed, healed of our brokenness, through a real spiritual life - our priority is to be in “perfect communion” with the living God.

Please make sure to sign our guest book at the visitors table in the Narthex/lobby area and join us after service for our fellowship hour in the pavilion. Fr. Paul is available to answer questions you may have about any facet of the Christian faith.

## ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Your children are welcome here. Don't worry if they wiggle or squirm a bit. Unless your child is making more noise than our priest and choir, stay put. When they need a little more room, or a short break, it is OK to walk them to the back (or out) until they are ready to return. Please enjoy the “Children's Word” (bulletin) found on the banister upon entering the Nave (worship space).

If you want to raise your children in the Church, then they have to be in the church. The entire spiritual culture of the Orthodox faith is necessary formation for everyone, whether 40 days old, 40 years old, or 40 years a senior citizen.

It can be a sacrifice to raise children in the Church, and we know it, but if your child doesn't learn to incline his/her heart in worship, and turn aside from distraction from a young age, how in the world will they survive as an older Christian in a world which is designed to distract them?

## +HOLY COMMUNION (EUCARIST)+

The Orthodox Church understands the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, to be the paramount expression of Christian unity. While it is our deepest hope that Christendom will one day fulfill Christ's desire for true unity among all those who claim His name (John 17:21), the reality of our day is that various segments of Christendom are not unified with the historic Orthodox Christian faith. Since participation in the Eucharist expresses a unity with all the dogma, teachings, and practice of the Orthodox Church, it is natural that non-Eastern Orthodox Christians (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Non-Chalcedonian/Oriental, etc.) do not approach the chalice for Holy Communion but respect the official policy of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America and canonical boundaries of the One, Holy, Catholic (Universal), and Apostolic Church - the Orthodox Christian Church. Teaching the people of Corinth about the seriousness of the Holy Eucharist, St. Paul warns:

*“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord...For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep (i.e. die).” (1 Cor. 11:27;29).*

We lovingly desire the salvation of all - not judgment and condemnation.

All Eastern Orthodox Christians are expected to prepare for the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ through recent confession, prayer, and fasting from all food/drink approximately mid-night the night before. Please speak with Fr. Paul if medical conditions preclude it.



“...PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER, THAT YOU MAY BE HEALED.  
THE EFFECTIVE, FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH.”  
(JAMES 5:16)

Please continue to pray for Fr. Joe and Kh. Diane Shaheen, Joe and the Hessney family, Christopher and the Sapp family, Al and Anna Castley, Victor and the Bard family, Ed and Marilyn Edge, Robert and Michaelene Aber, Mary Alvanette Kennan, Steve, Yulia, and Natalia Jackson, as well as the recently departed handmaid of God, Doris Hessney.

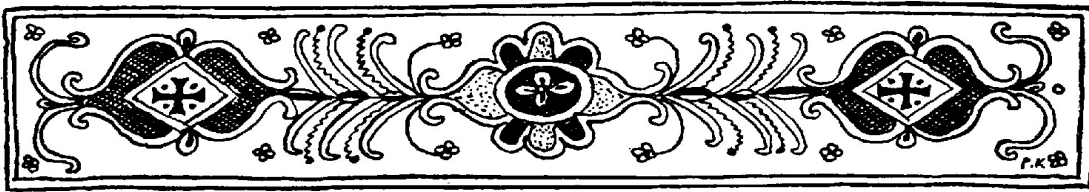
Prayers for the health of Fr. Joe and Kh. Diane Shaheen, as well as Al Castley, and in memory of Doris Hessney, have been requested by Ed and Marilyn Edge.

Prayers have been requested by Rania Eid for the peaceful repose, and memory, of her mother Cecilia, who departed this life two years ago.

Prayers for the health of Al and Anna Castley, as well as Elias and Barbara Hebeka, have been requested by Philip and Bette Ayoub.

MAY THE LORD OUR GOD HEAR OUR PRAYERS AND SEND DOWN UPON US HIS DIVINE GRACE FOR STRENGTH AND CONSOLATION.

The Nativity Fast (Nov. 15 - Dec. 25) is one of the four Canonical Fasting Seasons in the Church year. This is a joyous fast in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ. That is the reason it is less strict than other fasting periods. The fast is divided into two periods. The 1st period is November 15th through December 19th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Similarly, fish, wine, and oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays. The 2nd period is December 20th through 24th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil only on Saturday and Sunday during this period. Fasting always works in conjunction with prayer and giving alms (helping the poor, giving to worthy charities, etc.). Fasting helps us reorder the interior life, but the reordering does not occur without greater prayer and greater concern for the poor. The reordering is a clarification — we end up seeing things more clearly, we get stronger in the fight against sin and temptation. The fast always ends on a great Feast Day of our Lord. (source: [antiochian.org](http://antiochian.org))



### PARISH CLERGY

REV. FR. PAUL GIRGIS, PRESIDING PRIEST  
V. REV. FR. JOSEPH SHAHEEN, RETIRED ARCHPRIEST  
REV. DN. NICHOLAS REID, ATTACHED DEACON

### WEEKLY SERVICES

*“A sure sign of the deadening of the soul is the avoidance of church services.”  
+St. John Climacus (“The Ladder of Divine Ascent”)*

#### Saturday\*

Great Vespers 6:00PM

#### Sunday

Orthros 8:30AM  
Divine Liturgy 9:30AM

*\*Fr. Paul hears confessions after Great Vespers Saturday and by appointment.*

### WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Every Thursday 6PM-7PM **(on break until 1/3/19)**

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Nativity of Christ Service Schedule - See Flyer - (Mon - Dec. 24) Orthros 6PM; Divine Liturgy 7PM
- Synaxis of the Theotokos (12/26) - Prep. Prayers 9AM; Divine Liturgy 9:30AM
- Parish Nativity Celebration (Dec. 26) - See Flyer & any Antiochian Woman for tickets!
- Great Feast of Circumcision of the Lord & St. Basil the Great (Tues - Jan. 1)  
Orthros 8:30AM; Divine Liturgy 9:30AM w/“Vasilopita” Blessing
- “Specialty Bread Sale”: Stop by table in Narthex - Order forms also available in the Pavilion!
- 2019 Stewardship Envelopes have been mailed - Please speak with Joe Ablan if you did not receive one or simply grab a Stewardship Card located on banister in back of Nave (worship space).

*For more info, calendar of special services/events, visit: [stpaulnaples.org](http://stpaulnaples.org) or “facebook.com/stpaulnaples”*

**SUNDAY - DECEMBER 23, 2018**

**SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST (THE GENEALOGY)  
TEN MARTYRS OF CRETE; NEW-MARTYR NICHOLAS; VENERABLE NAHUM OF  
OCHRID**

**+DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM+**

### **RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE FIVE**

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

### **APOLYTIKION OF THE FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN TONE FOUR**

Be thou ready, Bethlehem, Eden hath opened unto all. Ephratha, prepare thyself, for now, behold, the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the holy Virgin. Her womb hath proved a true spiritual Paradise, wherein the divine and saving Tree is found, and as we eat thereof we shall all live, and shall not die as did Adam. For Christ is born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.

### **APOLYTIKION OF SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY IN TONE TWO**

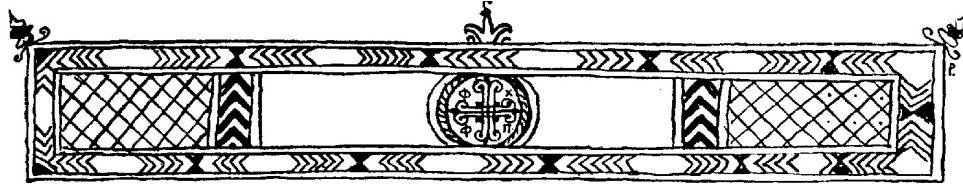
Great are the accomplishments of faith; for the three holy youths rejoiced in the fountain of flames as though at waters of rest. And the Prophet Daniel appeared a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. Wherefore, by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.

*+Now sing the apolytikion of the holy Apostle Paul+*

### **KONTAKION OF PREPARATION OF CHRIST’S NATIVITY IN TONE THREE**

On this day the Virgin cometh to the cave to give birth to God the Word ineffably, Who was before all the ages. Dance for joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the Angels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.





## THE SYNAXARION

(AN ABRIDGED COLLECTION OF THE “LIVES OF THE SAINTS”)

On December 23 in the Holy Orthodox Church we commemorate the holy Ten Martyrs of Crete; New-martyr Nicholas; and Venerable Nahum of Ochrid, enlightener of the Bulgarians.

On this day, the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, we have been enjoined by our holy and God-bearing Fathers to make commemoration of all them that from the beginning of time have been well-pleasing unto God, from Adam even unto Joseph the Betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, according to genealogy, as Luke the Evangelist hath recounted historically; and likewise for the Prophets and Prophetesses, especially of Daniel the Prophet and the three holy youths.

It is also known as the Sunday of the Holy Genealogy. We remember the aforementioned names, those in the Old Testament who were related to Christ by blood, and those who spoke of His Birth as a man. In the Divine Liturgy, we shall read of Jesus Christ’s lineage from the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In this way, the Church shows us that Christ truly became a man, taking on human nature. He was not a ghost, an apparition, a myth, a distant imagined god, or the abstract god of philosophers; such a god does not have a family tree. Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has flesh and blood, human ancestors—many of whom sinned greatly, but like David, also repented greatly. Yet, all of these righteous ones in every age had been wellpleasing to God because they loved Him. By taking on human nature, the Son of God became like us in all ways, in flesh and blood, in mind and soul, and in heart and will. He differed from us in only one way: He could not sin. Since we know that Christ’s human nature remained sinless, He is also fully divine, and He shows us the way in which we can avoid sin, and so improve and transform our human nature.

By their holy intercessions, O God, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.



## NATIVITY OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

### SERVICE SCHEDULE

#### DECEMBER 24 (MONDAY - MORNING)

**Royal Hours 9:00AM**

**Vespertal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 10:30AM**

#### **What are the Royal Hours?**

1st, 3rd, 6th, and 9th, as well as the Typical Psalms, are sung as one service. The service is read on the eves of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany, as well as on Holy Friday. It is characterized by special Psalms and hymns, as well as special Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel Readings, relating to the particular Feast or events of the day.

Historically, it was customary for the Byzantine emperor to be in attendance for the entire Service, hence the title “Royal Hours”.

#### DECEMBER 24 (MONDAY - EVENING)

**Festal Orthros 6:00PM**

**Festal Divine Liturgy of St. John 7:00PM\***

*\*Take care to abstain from all food/drink after 3:00PM (health permitting) in order to receive Holy Communion at the 7:00PM Divine Liturgy*

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#### **NATIVITY FELLOWSHIP MEAL (IMMEDIATELY AFTER DIVINE LITURGY)**

**A “fast” always concludes with a FEAST. Join us in the pavilion for delicious food and a wonderful time together celebrating this Great Feast of the Lord.**

## THE EPISTLE

(For the Sunday before the Nativity)

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our Fathers.  
For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.*

### The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews. (11:9-10, 32-40)

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.



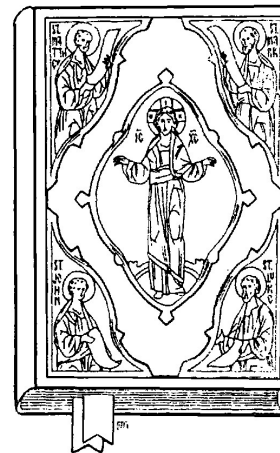
## THE GOSPEL

(For the Sunday before the Nativity: “The Genealogy”)

### The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (1:1-25)

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, Who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ were fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy

Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called His Name Jesus.



# FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

[ALSO COMMEMORATING ST. BASIL THE GREAT]

JANUARY 1, 2019

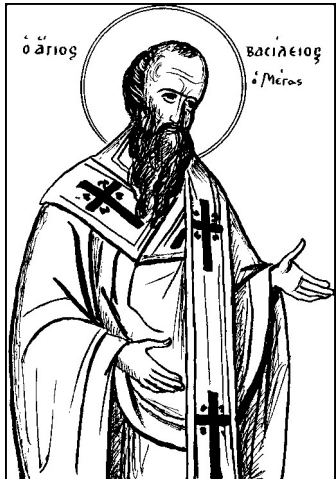
FESTAL ORTHROS 8:30AM

\*DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. BASIL 9:30AM

*\*Immediately followed by the Blessing & Cutting of the Vasilopita Bread w/Coffee*

**What is Vasilopita?** The tradition of baking and cutting a special "pita" (which can mean a loaf of bread, a cake, or even a pie) each year on January 1st is observed in honor of our holy father Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia - hence its name "Vasilopita" meaning "St. Basil's Bread." This tradition is observed in both parish churches and in the homes of the faithful. What is the meaning of this tradition and how did it begin?

For centuries upon centuries, parents, grandparents and godparents have related the following to Orthodox children about St. Basil and the Vasilopita. One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins and pieces of jewelry, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice upon his flock, St. Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He canceled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea. But now St. Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these thousands of coins and pieces of jewelry to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Master Christ and His All-Holy Mother, St. Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge pita. He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral, and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the pita, giving a piece to each person. Miraculously, each owner received in his piece of Vasilopita his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop St. Basil the Great! In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St. Basil's love and defense of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the Vasilopita each year on January 1st-- the date on which St. Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379.



(source: Antiochian.org)



A LITTLE DAILY WISDOM  
FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

*When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.  
(Psalm 4:4-5)*

**B**rother John Climacus said, "Stillness in the soul is continual worship of God, being present in the divine presence. If an awareness of the name of Jesus comes with every breath, you will discover the importance of being still."

**Be still, and put your trust in the Lord.**

*Source: "A Little Daily Wisdom from the Early Church" compiled by Bernard Bangely*





*St. Paul Parish  
Nativity Celebration  
Buffet Dinner*

*Wednesday evening, December 26, 2018*

*5:30 PM*

*The Club at the Strand  
5840 Strand Boulevard  
Naples, Florida 34110*

*Adults-\$45.00 Children - 2-6-\$8.00*

*7-15-\$20.00*

*For Reservations*

*Please contact Bessie Jarjoura at  
[ggeobess@yahoo.com](mailto:ggeobess@yahoo.com) or see her at Church*

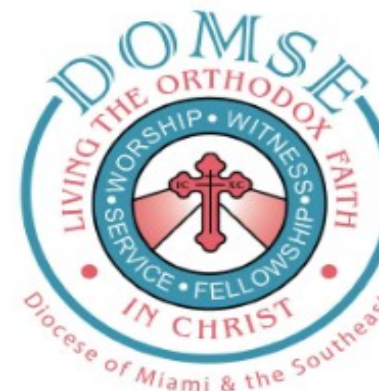
*Please make check out to "St. Paul" with  
"12/26/2018 Dinner" in the Note line*

*Cash Bar- Raffle- Open Seating  
Reservation Deadline December 17, 2018*

**Diocese Of Miami & the SouthEast**

**2019 Winter Retreat**

~ Bishop NICHOLAS, presiding, cordially invites you to attend ~



***DOMSE 2nd Annual Winter Retreat***

Hosted at St. Elias Church in Atlanta, GA

**Pastors Only: Jan. 23 - 24, 2019; all Pastors to arrive in Atlanta by Jan. 22**  
Attached Clergy & Assistant Pastors are strongly encouraged to participate & arrive on the same date!

**Clergy, Antiochian Men, Women, & Young Adults: Jan. 25 - 27, 2019**

*Note: Teen SOYO's part in the Winter Retreat will be moved to the Spring to accommodate for Winter Camp*

ALL must register! \$50 fee per person to cover meals & all other retreat expenses

**REGISTER HERE** (includes hotel info): <http://bit.ly/DMC-Winter-Retreat>

FOLLOW US on FaceBook ~ <https://www.facebook.com/DMCDOMSE/>



# ON REPETITION OF PRAYERS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

BY ARCHPRIEST PAUL M JANNAKOS

Anyone the least bit familiar with the Orthodox Church knows that repetition is a key feature of its worship.

We do things over and over again, and then, we do it yet again – one more time. As we find in the Little Litany, “Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.”

For many Americans, this seems excessively pedantic, if not outright silly. As one protestant visitor to my Church asked, “Why do you people say ‘Lord have mercy’ so many times? Don’t you believe that God hears you?” The answer, of course, is that we do believe that God hears and accepts the prayer of all those who offer their prayer in faith and in purity of heart. But, because repentance is not an instantaneous event, (though some would like to think so), and because we are so slow to learn the deeper meaning of the prayer, “Lord have mercy,” (which is the essential prayer of the Church), we are required by the Holy Spirit to continue saying it until our dying breath. The testimony of the Holy Fathers bears this out.

This is the reason why we repeat so many other things within the life of Church, not only its prayers, but its gestures too. We make the sign of the Cross and bless ourselves by doing so an infinite number of times. Can we ever sign ourselves with the Cross enough? Obviously not, at least for those who are truly serious about picking up and carrying their crosses. We venerate the icons by bowing before them and kissing them with tender lips and hearts. Will there ever be a time when we have kissed them “enough?” No, of course not. Because it is kind of like saying, “Will there ever be a time when mothers and fathers can kiss their children enough?” Or, “Will there ever be a time when husbands and wives have kissed each other enough?” One need not even answer such a question because it is plain for everyone to see.

Examples of this sort are plentiful even in the so called real world. We human beings do things on a repeated basis not only because it is practical, but because these repeated things convey value and meaning. Which just happens to be what a “ritual” is. Rituals are words, gestures, and motions (very often combined together all at once) that convey worth and significance. Let us illustrate.

Young men who court the women they love offer them flowers – a ritual of admiration. Those who are about to prepare themselves for a job interview dress up in their very best (“for men, no slip on shoes, laces only!) – a ritual of self-worth. At graduation, students dress up in cap and gown and receive a diploma from the hands of their instructors – a ritual of completion and transition.

CONTINUED...

When the President of the United States enters into a room, those in attendance stand up from their chairs – a ritual of respect for the office (not the person) of the presidency. As a child in elementary school, I remember beginning each day in class by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance – a Jeffersonian ritual of absolute faith in the principles of democratic government. Examples of this are numerous.

Yet, over the years, I have noticed that when it comes to the rites of the Church, many people are unfairly prejudiced. “It looks like spiritual robotics to me,” is what they say, or “You’re just going through the motions, along with all that religious mumbo-jumbo.”

Excuse me? Did I hear that right? Going through the motions? Religious mumbo-jumbo?

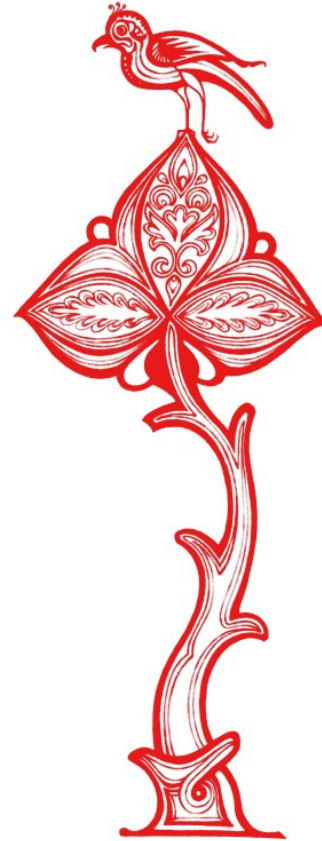
I think it is high time to set the record straight. First by saying that anyone, religious or not, can go through the motions and make it all just a bunch of mumbo jumbo. Because it is not the ritual that is dead, but the heart and motive that lie behind it. I’ve been to many baseball games where the singing of the National Anthem (yet another ritual!) is performed in an utterly dreary, perfunctory manner. “Hurry up and get on with it will you, this ain’t no opera!”

So, just because there are some who fail to understand the meaning of the Church’s rites doesn’t mean that the rites themselves are wrong. On the contrary, it is the human beings themselves that are “wrong.” Isaiah the prophet spoke well about this when he said, speaking for the Lord Himself, “These people, they honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” (Isaiah 29:13).

The Church bids us to do many things over and over only because “repetition is the mother of learning.” In the gospel, Christ, too, taught his followers how to pray, not by saying, “pray what ever you like, and in your own words,” but by saying, “When you pray, say (these words), ‘Our Father, Who art in heaven.’” (Matthew 6:5). As we take this all to heart, we learn how to humble ourselves to the gestures, practices and disciplines that belong to the Church’s being and life. Because the little things we do are important. We respond to the prayers at the Holy Liturgy by saying “Amen,” not just once, but over and over. We make prostrations before the icon of Christ, not just once, over and over. We receive the holy sacrament from the cup of the Lord, not just once, but over and over. We do so because all of these repeated things add up to inner cleansing, healing, and perfection.

Are we anymore ritualistic than the rest of the human race? I don’t think so. Its just that the rites we practice have a far more nobler purpose.





*“Watch out for complaining. It only makes situations worse and increases sorrows.”*

*+ St. Macarius of Optina*