



Liturgy and Prayer

THE LITURGICAL, SACRAMENTAL AND PRAYER LIFE
OF A VIBRANT PARISH

The Eucharist is the Heart

- ▶ The Most Holy Eucharist is the **heart**, the **well-spring** and **source** from which all prayer flows
- ▶ It is the well-spring or “beating heart” which gives life to a parish
- ▶ At the same time, the Eucharist (Risen Christ) is also the **goal**, the **summit** and **culmination** of its life



Love for the Eucharist

- ▶ The life, health and “vibrancy” of a parish community depends upon its **attitude, understanding, celebration** and **devotion** to the Eucharist!



Attitude . . .

If the faithful believe that Divine Liturgy is . . .

- ▶ The most precious moment in earthly life;
- ▶ Not an obligation, but a gift;
- ▶ An encounter with Christ, who longs to meet us and fill us with His grace and love;
- ▶ Sunday Liturgy is essential – cannot live without it;



Then the parish is vibrant!



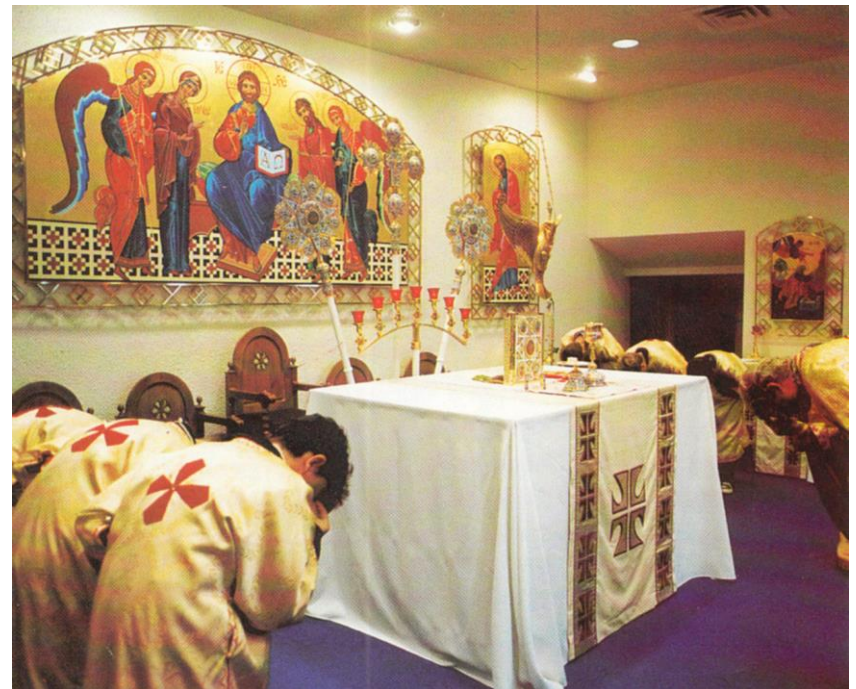
IT'S TRUE! The Divine Liturgy is . . .

- ▶ The most precious moment of day and our life
- ▶ A gift – the greatest treasure!
- ▶ A moment of encounter with the Risen Christ that nourishes us – fills us with grace and love
- ▶ Essential – can't live without the Sunday Eucharist (Assembly)
- ▶ In 303 AD, 49 martyrs of Abitene (present-day Tunisia) proclaimed: **"We cannot live without the Sunday Eucharist!"** – the preferred a martyr's death rather than miss their Sunday assembly and Liturgy

Understanding . . .

If the faithful understand:

- ▶ The meaning of each word in every prayer and petition;
- ▶ The parts and structure of the Divine Liturgy;
- ▶ The symbolism behind each liturgical action and gesture;
- ▶ What is happening spiritually and invisibly;
- ▶ The Liturgy is not entertainment, but work; it requires personal effort



The parish is vibrant!

Attentive Celebration . . .

The Divine Liturgy requires:

- ▶ **Preparation** – faithful, cantors, reader, servers, homilists, priests
- ▶ **Reverence** – everything is done with love
- ▶ **Attentive Prayer** – speaking sincerely from the heart and listen attentively
- ▶ **Active Participation** – body, soul, and spirit



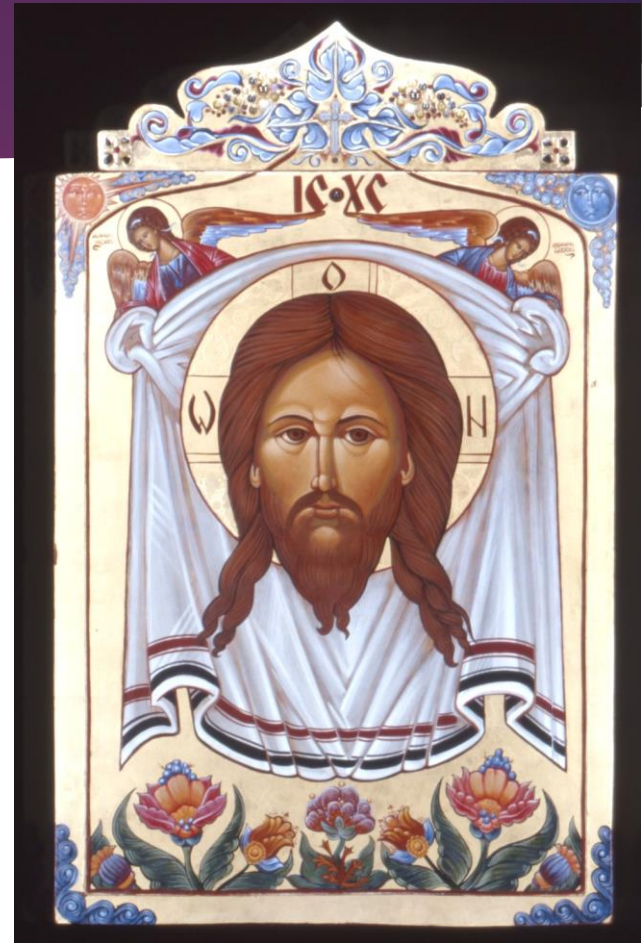
If the community struggles to make the Sunday Liturgy prayerful, reverent, beautiful and meaningful – the parish is vibrant!

Devotion . . .

Devotion is simply a deep love for Jesus – I love Jesus!

At the Divine Liturgy, there are two moments of great intimacy – the Proclamation of the Word; the reception of the Holy Gifts

- **If the faithful struggle to receive Jesus at these two moments with renewed devotion and fervent hearts** (not cold, not lukewarm)



the parish is vibrant!

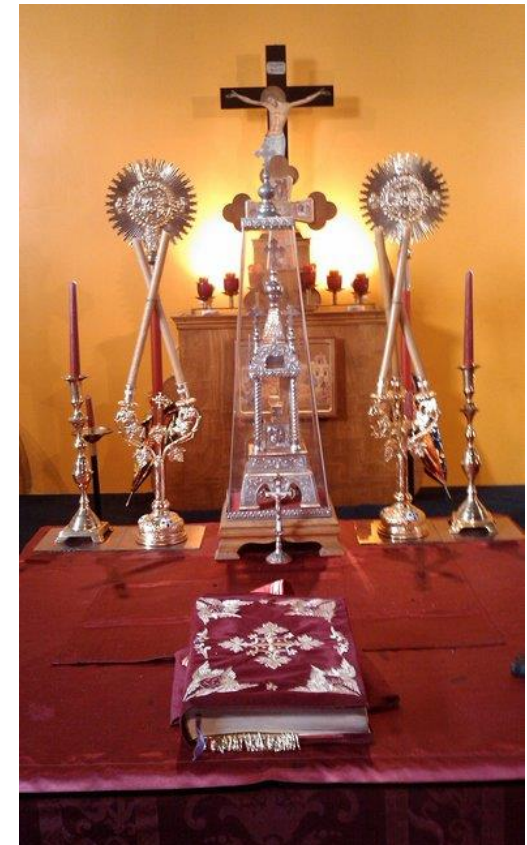
Concentric Circles of Prayer

FROM THE EUCHARIST FLOW
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF
LITURGICAL, SACRAMENTAL,
FAMILY AND PERSONAL
PRAYER



Liturgical Prayer

- ▶ The first concentric circle is **LITURGICAL PRAYER** (Communal)
- ▶ If encounter with Christ is strong at the Eucharist – this gives birth to the **desire** to gather in prayer on other occasions
- ▶ LITURGICAL PRAYER: Matins, Hours, Vespers, Compline
- ▶ DEVOTIONAL PRAYER: Molebens, Akathist Hymns, Rosary, etc.
- ▶ Liturgy in turn prepares us for a stronger encounter with Christ in the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist)



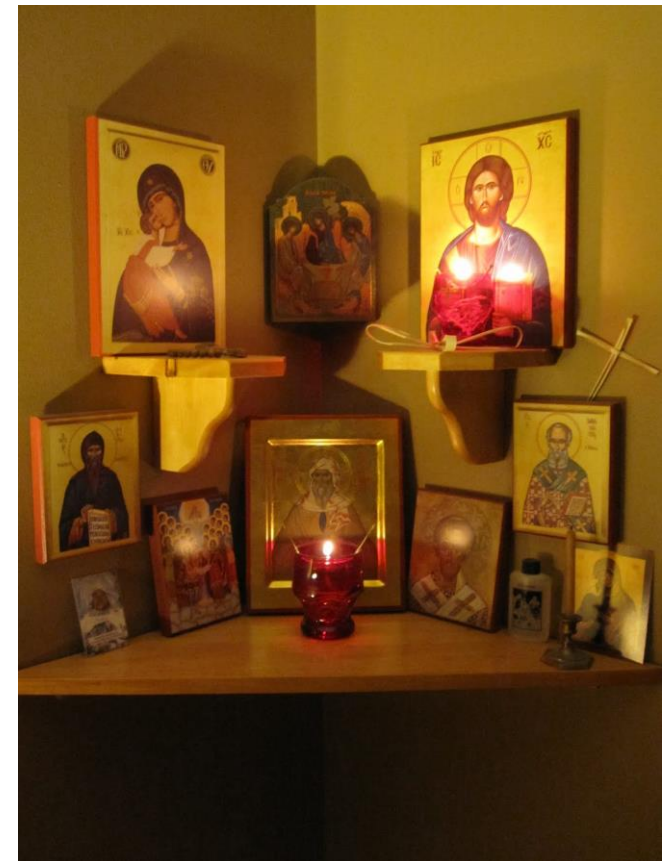
Holy Mysteries

- ▶ The second concentric circle is the celebration of HOLY MYSTERIES (SACRAMENTS), Funerals & Blessings
- ▶ The encounter with Christ in the Divine Liturgy – gives rise to the need for Baptism, Chrismation, Penance, Christian Marriage and Holy Orders
- ▶ How the Eucharist is celebrated – affects how the Holy Mysteries are celebrated (also experience of Christ)
- ▶ Encounter with Christ in the Holy Mysteries prepares us for the encounter with Christ in the Divine Liturgy



Family Prayer

- ▶ The third concentric circle is **FAMILY PRAYER** (also communal)
- ▶ If encounter with Christ is strong at the Eucharist – this gives birth to the **desire** to gather in prayer at home as a family
- ▶ The Icon Corner becomes an extension of the Church into the home (domestic church)
- ▶ Family Prayer in turn prepares us for a stronger encounter with Christ in the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist)
- ▶ The home is to be a school of prayer



Personal Prayer

- ▶ The fourth concentric circle is **PERSONAL PRAYER**
- ▶ If encounter with Christ is strong at the Eucharist – this gives birth to the **desire** to spend time alone with Jesus in prayer
- ▶ Personal daily prayer in turn prepares us for a stronger encounter with Christ in the Divine Liturgy (Eucharist)
- ▶ Our life is to be transformed into a prayerful state.



Unceasing Prayer

- ▶ Christ teaches us “to **pray always** and not to lose heart” (Lk 18:1; Lk 11:5-8)
- ▶ Apostle Paul in turn calls us to “**pray without ceasing**” (1 Thess 5:17)
- ▶ UGCC Catechism: “This life is [to be] transformed into **a prayerful state, a constant readiness of heart**. The Christian should ceaselessly cultivate this state . . . To **consecrate** the entire day to the Lord” (PAR 668)

One Divine Liturgy (Eucharist)

- ▶ The One Divine Liturgy takes place unceasingly in Heaven – the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on earth unites with the unceasing worship that takes place in **Heaven**
- ▶ “Around the throne, and each side of the throne, are the four living creatures . . . Day and night without ceasing they sing, ‘**Holy, holy holy**, the Lord God Almighty . . .’ (Rev 4:6-11)
- ▶ “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne . . . They numbered myriads and myriads and thousands of thousands, singing with full voice, ‘**Worthy is the Lamb** that was slaughtered . . . To the one seated on the throne and the Lamb be blessing and honour, glory and might forever and ever!’ (Rev 5:11-14)