

or children act like children during the service. If we have difficulty accepting our relationship with others during our corporate worship, we will never be able to submit to a God who demands so much more than patience with crying infants. Communion with God requires a common union with the Christian community.

The Liturgy is not a time for private prayer or devotions, much less for quiet reflection. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Himself suggests that quiet, private prayer be accomplished in a quiet, private place—a closet, if need be. Public worship, however, is the work of all God’s People who gather with one mind and one heart and one voice in praising God.

### **LAY ASIDE ALL EARTHY CARES**

During the Liturgy we need to keep our minds and hearts on God’s presence. The Liturgy offers renewed hope and vision, not solutions. Hence, we do not bring our professional, personal, or domestic problems to the Liturgy. In fact, the Cherubic Hymn, sung at every Divine Liturgy, tells us to do the exact opposite: “Let us now lay aside all early cares so that we may receive the King of All...”

At the same time, we cannot worship God if we focus our attention exclusively on

the vestments, the rubrics, or the altar servers. The externals of our worship are designed to help us focus on God; they are not objects of attention, nor should they distract or preoccupy us.

At every Liturgy we are invited to “lift up our hearts”. Do what the Liturgy asks. Lift up your heart! Listen to the Liturgy. Recognize yourself as an important part in making the Liturgy work. Then begin—and continue—to live it every day!

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## MEANINGFUL WORSHIP



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What is the purpose of worship? This is an important question which must be answered before one can take the usual complaints seriously. Before saying what worship is, however, we need to consider what worship is not.

## **MISCONCEPTION #1 THE LITURGY IS SUPPOSED TO TEACH US ABOUT GOD.**

The word liturgy means common work or action. What is this common work? It is the worship of God. The word worship means to give reverence to God. So Christian worship, educational as it may be, is primarily designed to offer us an opportunity to give something to God—to give our praise, our reverence, and our thanksgiving for all He has given us in our daily lives.

While there is an educational aspect to worship, as the first part of the Divine Liturgy educates through the readings, homily and psalms, education is secondary to the offering of praise and thanksgiving.

## **MISCONCEPTION #2 I'M SUPPOSED TO 'GET SOMETHING' OUT OF THE LITURGY.**

Notice that the focus in this statement is on us, rather than on God. It's as if we, rather

than God, were the object of worship. It's as if we were the reason for gathering together for the Liturgy. But we aren't; God is. In worship, our attention should be on Him. If we don't "get anything" out of the Liturgy, it may very well be that we failed to "bring something" to it.

## **MISCONCEPTION #3 I DON'T LIKE THE WAY THE LITURGY IS PERFORMED.**

First of all, the Liturgy is not something to be performed. It is a celebration of God's love and an experience of His Kingdom; the Liturgy is not—nor was it ever designed to be—a performance of Christ's life, colorful and mystical rites, or ancient rituals.

The Liturgy is nothing less than our ascent to God's presence and our response of His invitation: "Come, let us worship." This fact makes our attitude of vital importance. If one's goal is to "enjoy" the service, to "learn" more about Jesus, or to "get something" other than a glimpse of eternal life, one will surely be disappointed. Such persons are focusing on themselves rather than on God.

## **MEANINGFUL WORSHIP**

Those who desire to worship better, might consider the following:

- ✧ focus on God;
- ✧ submit to God; and
- ✧ lay aside all earthly cares.

## **FOCUS ON GOD**

God is the object of our worship. We gather together to praise and thank Him, to be fed and strengthened by Him, and to render service to Him so that we might be better equipped to render service to one another. We come before Him in awe, knowing that we are unworthy to be in His presence, but, at the same time, recognizing that His all-consuming love unites us with him and with those with whom we worship. We are called to praise God and to give Him glory for the mighty things He has done. We are, above all, to thank God for the salvation He brings us, as well as for those gifts He shares with us in our daily lives.

## **SUBMIT TO GOD**

Worship is a public, not a private, affair. By submitting to God and focusing on Him in worship, we also submit to one another. Many are the parishes, for example, which wrongly segregate children in a soundproof booth because the adults can't concentrate on their "private prayers" when babies cry