
Session Six

SESSION 6

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

OBJECTIVE

To teach that the Divine Liturgy is the way the Church continues to worship Christ. Through the Divine Liturgy we are celebrating His life, receiving the Eucharist, being united as the Church, and being guided to eternal life.

PREPARATION

- Become familiar with the Divine Liturgy using this article from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese website: <http://www.goarch.org/print/en/ourfaith/article7117.asp>
- Contact your parish priest and/or deacon to help with this session. They will need to prepare their vestments, etc., ahead of time.
- The leaders will organize the gathering area in stations (as illustrated below)
- Have several liturgy books on hand for participants.
- Set up the following stations at three tables in the church:

Table 1: Vestments This table will consist of the vestments of a priest and a deacon. There are a couple of ways to go about presenting this table. The priest can explain the different vestments using examples. He can also describe the process of vesting and the prayers said while doing this.

Table 2: Prothesis A priest will explain and take the participants through the various parts of the Prothesis.

Table 3: Organizing the liturgy An organizer will refer to Resource One as well as the template *LITURGY: Ordering Activity*. The activity will be distributed out of order and the job of the group will be to organize the liturgy into its present day form.

OPENING PRAYER

O Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and filling all things, the Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come, and dwell in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

ICEBREAKER

Fact, fact, fiction: Give the group some time to write down two things about themselves that are facts, and one thing that is fiction. Each group member will then share these facts about themselves and the rest of the group has to figure out which “fact” is actually fiction.

SESSION 6

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION: LITURGY BASICS

State the following in your own words:

Last week we learned about the Church and how it is the body of Christ, God's people on earth. This week we will be exploring the Liturgy a little more. The liturgy is what happens when the Church gathers in worship.

- Does anyone know where the Liturgy comes from? (*It has its roots in Jewish synagogue worship. Remember, the Christian Church was born out of Judaism, so many of our roots are found in the Jewish religion.*)
- What does the word Liturgy mean? (*It's from two Greek words meaning "work of the people."*)
- What are some essential components of the Liturgy? (*the priest, the people, the Holy Gifts, etc*)

Now, let's learn a bit more about the Liturgy, the work of us, the people.

ACTIVITY

Referring to the above table set up, the participants will be divided into four different groups. The groups will rotate every 10 minutes in a clockwise fashion. At the end of the activity, each group will have gone through each station once. This activity should take in between 30 minutes and 1 hour.

When everyone has gone through all three tables, bring everyone back together to finish the session. They may need a five or ten minute break after making the table rotations.

DISCUSS

- What's something new (or neat or interesting or weird) that you learned today? (*Accept all answers and reflect back.*)
- What do you think is the purpose of the Divine Liturgy? (*Accept all answers and reflect back. Some suggestions: to bring us closer to Christ, to offer ourselves to Christ, to relate Christ to our present lives, the Eucharist, etc*)

BRIDGE

Share the following account with participants. Pass a copy out to each person, or have one person read it aloud, etc. Explain that this is something written by a convert to the Orthodox Church.

One of the things that struck me about Orthodoxy, from the very first time at the Divine Liturgy, was the utter beauty of the services. The liturgy

SESSION 6

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

engages all the senses. The sense of reverence, penitence, and awe for the Almighty was profound. Having attended a huge Catholic Church for many years, being a part of the liturgy at a much smaller sized St. Gregory's was in stark contrast. One of the things I have always loved about worship at St. Gregory's is how much one can participate in the liturgy. Most times I felt like more of a spectator at Catholic services. After experiencing Orthodox worship, I knew this was the right way. The liturgy and other services are saturated with expressions of faith and didactic proclamations. This showed me how the early Church was able to teach the faith to those with little or no education through beautiful prayers, antiphons, and icons.

Now that I have been a member of the Orthodox church for over ten years, I worry that I have become complacent in my spiritual life. It is easy to become spiritually lazy when one becomes familiar with things and loses that awe that first inspired me. Sometimes I find myself becoming impatient with the detail to ritual, or the completeness of liturgical prayers, as I become distracted trying to watch my children in Church. But I know there is a right way to do things, and when worshiping God we can never truly do enough. I always take comfort in knowing that my Church is guiding me in the way I should go, and has stayed faithful to the foundation that Christ has established on this earth. I thank God for Orthodoxy, for the friendship and guidance I have received.

Taken from: <http://www.stgreg.org/converts.htm>

- What are some things that the writer pointed out about the Liturgy?
- What is the purpose of the Divine Liturgy?
- Do you have a favorite part of the Divine Liturgy or a personal story from the Divine Liturgy?
- The reading from the convert mentioned a lot of things about the Liturgy. He said that he sometimes lost the original zeal he had. How do you relate to that feeling?
- How does the Divine Liturgy help keep the Orthodox Faith consistent throughout history?
- Think about how your life would be if you were not allowed to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. What would you do if you knew you would be killed or persecuted for celebrating the Divine Liturgy?

SESSION 6

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

LITURGICAL PRAYER

State in your own words: Now that we know a little more about the Liturgy, let's take a look at a prayer from the Liturgy. This is a prayer said by the priest on behalf of himself and all the people. Some of us may not hear it a lot since it is often said quietly. This prayer is said shortly before the Anaphora, the part of the Liturgy where we call upon the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine to the Body and Blood.

It is proper and right to sing to You, bless You, praise You, thank You and worship You in all places of Your dominion; for You are God ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible, beyond understanding, existing forever and always the same; You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit. You brought us into being out of nothing, and when we fell, You raised us up again. You did not cease doing everything until You led us to heaven and granted us Your kingdom to come. For all these things we thank You and Your only begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit; for all things that we know and do not know, for blessings seen and unseen that have been bestowed upon us. We also thank You for this liturgy which You are pleased to accept from our hands, even though You are surrounded by thousands of Archangels and tens of thousands of Angels, by the Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, soaring with their wings, singing the victory hymn, proclaiming, crying out, and saying: *Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to God in the highest.*

- What is this prayer saying? (We are thanking God for creating us, for saving us, and for accepting the Liturgy from us.)
- What does it mean when the prayer thanks God for receiving the Liturgy from our hands? (*The Liturgy - work of the people - is our offering to God. Even though He is surrounded by heavenly angels, He also hears our prayers and our worship and accepts our humble offering.*)
- What do we offer in the Liturgy? (The bread and the wine - which become the body and the blood)
- What else do we offer in the Liturgy? (*Ultimately, ourselves and our whole lives. Another part of the Liturgy says "Let us commend ourselves, each other, and our whole lives unto Christ our God."*)

JOURNAL

Ask participants to reflect on the liturgy. During the liturgical petitions, we pray for everyday needs and things happening in the world. Have participants compose their own short liturgical prayer, based on their own (and their family's and friends') needs.

SESSION 6

WORK OF THE PEOPLE

WRAP-UP AND CHALLENGE

After liturgy, it is our goal to keep the faith and energy we gain alive. It means nothing if we go home and forget Who gives us the energy and purpose to our life. There are many ways to keep that alive.

Your Challenge: Find three people to help throughout the week. Wash their car, sit with them, visit someone at a nursing home, feed a hungry person- these are all ways to keep the Holy Spirit alive in you from Liturgy to Liturgy.

CLOSING PRAYER

O Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and filling all things, the Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come, and dwell in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit