Liturgy is Worship

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MATERIALS
- Photos for the focusing activity (see below)
- *Heaven on Earth* zine for each student
- *Divine Liturgy* service book for each student or small group
- *Orthodox Study Bible* for each student or small group
- Paper and pens or pencils
- Blackboard, white board, or chart paper with writing utensils

PROCEDURES

1. Focusing activity

   Pass around or display 5–6 photos or magazine clippings of popular people, events, entertainment, and consumer goods—anything that will make your students say, “That’s awesome.” To tie into the next step of the lesson, include at least one past or current *American Idol* contestant or winner.

   Possibilities include impressive athletic feats, popular entertainers in concert or on TV, must-have gadgets, opulent mansions, and the latest blockbuster movies or stars. (If students aren’t intrigued by your choices, prompt discussion by asking them who or what is in.) Finish the discussion after no more than 2–3 minutes by asking:

   • How do we show awe, appreciation, respect, admiration, devotion?

   Go to sporting events, concerts, and movies; download songs; take lessons or join teams; buy posters or other merchandise; play fantasy sports or dream about “If I were…” or “If I had…”

   • How do we show our respect, gratitude, and love to people who are actually in our lives—such as older siblings we look up to, friends who stick by our side, youth leaders and teachers who take the time to listen, parents who make sacrifices to ensure our happiness?

   We honor them in various ways.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, the treasury of blessings and the giver of life: Come and abide in us, cleanse us from all impurity, and save our souls, gracious Lord. Amen.
2. Name present praxis

Lead a short discussion:

- We can distinguish between honor, which we show to people (all of whom are created in God's image), saints, and to holy icons—this is veneration. But adoration and worship are for God alone.

- For example, consider the show American Idol. Admittedly, the show does dig up talent and make stars. But what is an idol?

  Like the golden calf (Exodus 32:4), an idol is anything—an object or person—that is worshipped instead of God.

- Let's make a list of how we worship in the Orthodox Church. When we say worship, what do we mean?

  List all ideas and descriptions on the board, without judgment; save this raw list for later discussion and revision in step 5. Give students a few minutes to describe their experience of the Divine Liturgy, e.g., prayers, hymns, veneration of icons, sign of the cross, kneeling, Holy Communion.

3. Reflect on present praxis

Explain the following, writing the key terms idolatry, veneration, and Orthodox on the board:

- The word idolatry comes from the Greek for “worship” and “figure” or “image.” Idolatry is false worship.

- We venerate icons—we do not worship these objects of wood and paint, but see them as “windows to heaven.”

- Orthodox is a compound word meaning “right” or “correct” (orthos) and “worship” or “glory” (doxa). The name we give ourselves as Christians is tied very closely to the way we worship God.

4. Access the Christian story and vision

This activity should take 5–10 minutes, using Heaven on Earth (abbreviated HE) and the following photocopied sections of the Divine Liturgy (can be printed from http://goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/liturgy_hchc) for each student or small group. Depending on the number of students and time, each student or small group could be assigned one.

- Small Entrance (HE p. 8)
- The Trisagion (HE p. 9)
- The Epiklesis during the Anaphora (HE p. 16)
- The hymn during the preparation of Holy Communion, e.g., “Praise the Lord” (HE p. 18)
- Thanksgiving after Communion and the dismissal hymn, e.g., “We Have Seen the Light” and “Blessed be the Name of the Lord” (HE p. 20)
• You may also want to include the texts of the prayers said by the priest for these moments in the Liturgy as they also praise God.

Ask students examine these liturgical hymns and sections in the Divine Liturgy. Have them circle or highlight the words that indicate worship. Reflect on the following questions for each section:

• What are the words of worship and adoration used in each of these prayers or hymns?

Examples include praise, honor, glorify, and give thanks.

• Whom do we worship in each moment or hymn?

We worship the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We honor and venerate the Theotokos, the saints, and the cross. We may bow to the priest or during censing to acknowledge and accept a blessing. We respect the chalice and other sacred objects that guide us during worship. [Sacred and sanctify mean “set apart.”]

• What specific actions during these moments show worship?

Examples include making the sign of the cross, kneeling, and “lifting up our hearts.”

5. Appropriate the story and vision

Say to students:

• Look back at the list we made earlier about worship. Is there is anything you want to revise, add, or subtract?

Give students 2–3 minutes to discuss and to bring the list in line with their findings in step 2.

• How does the Divine Liturgy guide us to worship God?

Be sure that you ask about the words of the Liturgy, the church building, and the items we use in worship.

On a white board, write the words “Orthodox worship is...” and the numbers 1–5 for a list. Ask the class to develop five sentences that describe Orthodox worship.

6. Decision for lived response

• Do we worship only in church?

We can worship God specifically and purposefully through our daily prayers. And, like the saints, we can live in a way that glorifies God—in our every thought, word, and action.

• Does worshipping God mean more than showing up in church on Sundays?

Help students solidify a definition of worship by helping them assess areas of worship they might improve on, such as praying, resisting temptations, participating parish activities (such as youth groups or Bible studies), baking prosphora, helping the poor (how many students have ever fed the homeless?), and supporting missions.

Closing Prayer

It is proper and right to sing to You, bless You, praise You, thank You, and worship You in all places of Your dominion. Amen.