

Dear Visitor:

On behalf of the Parish Council and parishioners of Holy Apostles, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to our parish.

At Holy Apostles we are on a journey to build a vibrant, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled community of faith that serves as a witness to the love that God has for us all. Just as the Holy Apostles were called by Christ to spread the "Good News" to all people, so is the vision of our parish to share the Gospel of Christ with one and all.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"
Philippians 4:13

Holy Apostles is one of several Orthodox Christian parishes in the greater Seattle area, including two other Greek Orthodox Churches; Church of the Assumption located on Capital Hill and St. Demetrios, located in the Montlake area.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to be an extended village, welcoming and encouraging both adults and children to participate in the Orthodox Christian Faith, as we grow together, like the Holy Apostles, to know, love and serve Jesus Christ.

There is no better place to begin discovering Orthodox Christianity than in a community of faith worshipping together. Today, you will experience a way of worshiping that has been passed down to us and upheld by our Church for nearly 2000 years! We hope this booklet will help to explain today's service making your worship experience with us more meaningful. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Again, welcome to Holy Apostles.

In Christ's service,

Fr. Tom Tsagalakis
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Welcome to Holy Apostles

Greek Orthodox Church



The Divine Liturgy

“Liturgy” translated from the Greek means “work of the people.” Orthodox people throughout the world join together for this “work” of worship. We not only proclaim the Kingdom of God, we believe that for the space and time of the liturgy we actually enter into the Kingdom. The Divine Liturgy is not a show, entertainment or theatre. It is a spiritual entrance into and experience of God's eternal kingdom. It is our personal and corporate expression of our sacramental and liturgical relationship with God. The Liturgy is not a static experience, but a dynamic journey ~ A journey to and through the kingdom of heaven. It is our entry into another reality.. Since worship in Orthodoxy is an expression of the entire Church, the active participation and involvement of the congregation is strongly encouraged. Please sing along and participate with us.

Worshipping with our whole being

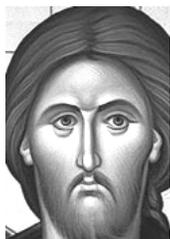
In Orthodox worship, everything points towards the heavenly. Accordingly, worship calls not only for the action of mind, the emotions, and the will, but also of the body with all its senses. So, as the Scriptures describe, in worship there are things to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Since God wants us to offer our entire being to Him in worship and service, every one of our senses are also asked to actively participate in heavenly worship.

Candles

Orthodox Christians light a candle when entering the church as a reminder of Christ's light in the world and the warmth of God's love.



Surrounded by Icons



Icons are the images of Christ, Angels, and saints which adorn the interior of the Church. They are a witness to the abiding presence of God and His Kingdom on earth. Icons are used in prayer and as a means of “windows into heaven” for the Orthodox Christian. The icon screen is not meant to separate but is there to remind us that we are outside of God's kingdom knocking and asking the Lord to allow us to come in.

The Sign of the Cross



The faithful frequently make the sign of the cross when praying, to remind themselves both of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and ever present power of the life-giving cross. We bless ourselves as we express our devotion to Christ and identify ourselves as Christians as we make this sign of the cross.

Music

The melodies you will hear have come down virtually unaltered since the beginning of Christianity and have not lost any of their beauty. Led by our chanters, our congregation sings almost everything during the Divine Liturgy. We invite you to join in. Don't be afraid; everyone is encouraged to sing. God gave you the voice you have and it is sweet music to His ears.

Incense

Incense is a special offering to God. It is also a symbol of prayer that ascends to God from human hearts which have been purified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. (Revelation 8: 3-5) You will notice that the priest offers incense to the icons and congregations to remind us that Christ is the icon (image) of the invincible God (Colossians 1:15) and we are created in the image of God. The twelve bells on the censer reminds us of the message of “Good News” proclaimed by the twelve apostles.



Posture of Prayer

One thing you may notice is that most of the people are standing. In the beginning, Christians stood rather than sat because this has always been the preferred posture for prayer. We always stand out of reverence for the Holy Scriptures when the Gospel is read. Through the years, as churches evolved, some have added seating. In the Orthodox tradition, the faithful stand through most of the worship service. If you get tired, don't hesitate to sit down.

The Liturgy of the Word

Of all the creatures God created, man alone is unique. Man alone is rational. Man is the only one to receive the divine gift of speech. Only man blesses. It is common and natural for us to gather to bless bread, oil, water, food, our homes, ourselves, and the sum total of our

existence. First, though, we bless the name of God and His eternal kingdom
~ a name above all names and the kingdom we all desire to inherit.

The Divine Liturgy begins with the words,

“Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

These first words of the Liturgy announce to us where we are and in whose presence we stand. All the sacraments, or mysteries as we Orthodox call them, begin with this same declaration. The Priest blesses the Altar Table with the Book of the gospels by making the sign of the cross with it.

The first half of the Liturgy focuses on the "Word of God" which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. During the first half of the Liturgy we sing several hymns and psalms - called 'Antiphons,' we hear readings from the Epistles and Gospels, and listen attentively to the sermon preached by our priest.

"Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God" (Colossians 3:16)

The Small Entrance

Up until this moment, we have asked Christ our God to come and save us, and we have made a short confession of who Christ is in the Hymn "The only-begotten Son and Word of God." Now we are preparing to witness the Small Entrance. The Gospel, which records the life and teachings of our Lord, will be brought in solemn procession to the center of the Church. This act is a manifestation of the beginning of Christ's public ministry, His entrance into the world. Earlier, we asked Christ to come into our midst; now He does come; present in the words, teachings, and miracles of His Gospel.

As the Priest stands in the center of the Church with the Book of Gospels held high, it is Christ Himself who stands before us. The Priest sings along with the people: "O come let us worship and bow down to Christ!" It is proper at this time to show reverence to Christ by bowing our heads as a sign of submission to God, and by marking ourselves with the sign of the Cross. These small gestures are all signs of our comprehension that Christ stands before us.

Special Hymns

After this, we sing hymns, (page numbers found in the Sunday bulletin) which honor the Resurrection, the Patron Saints of our Church of the Holy Apostles, and hymns of the saints of the day that we celebrate. All these hymns of remembrance, honor, and praise climax with the chanting of the Angelic Hymn: HOLY GOD, HOLY MIGHTY, HOLY IMMORTAL, HAVE MERCY ON US. This ancient and scriptural hymn is sung three times, just as there are three persons in the Holy Trinity. As we praise the triune God, we can only feel for ourselves a sense of awe and dependency as we ask the Trinity to have mercy on us.

Epistle and Gospel Readings

At the conclusion of this hymn we hear the proclamation of the lessons for the day. Two readings are offered at every Divine Liturgy. One is from Acts or one of the letters of the Apostles and the other is from one of the four Gospels. They are meant to be teachings and admonitions for us. At this point in the Liturgy, Christ is again in our midst and He speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures. We become like those who saw Him in His earthly life. We stand in the desert, on the mountainside, and at the seashore attentive to His teachings and messages of salvation. As we hear the words proclaimed we can acknowledge in heart and soul that He is the true Teacher and the only source of profitable wisdom.

The Sermon

After the readings, we hear our priest give a sermon, which highlights the Gospel message and how we can apply it to our daily lives.

The Cherubic Hymn

We begin this second part of the Liturgy with the *Cherubic Hymn*. "Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim and sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life giving Trinity, set aside all cares of this life, that we may receive the King of all..." This 6th century chant introduces the realities to be experienced in the next part of the Liturgy and opens the door to the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. Soon we will join the Cherubim in singing the "Holy, Holy, Holy," The priest will exhort us to lift hearts and to lay aside all earthly cares. What else can we then say but "Alleluia."

The Liturgy of the Faithful

The second half of the Liturgy, focuses on the offering of the bread and the wine to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The bread for the Communion is specially baked by a parishioner for each service. It is a small offering of thanksgiving. While we offer simple bread, Christ in turn, gives us Himself through the Holy Sacrament of Communion.

Kiss of Peace

As Christ told His followers, "Love one another, as I have loved you," the Priest proclaims, "Let us love one another, so that with one mind we may confess..." We complete the sentence: "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, One in essence and inseparable." This is what we confess and what binds us together. We confess a common faith in the Trinity with the assurance that the love of that Trinity binds us together in community. We kiss each other before we receive communion ("Greet one another with a kiss of love," 1 Peter 5:14). The usual greeting is "Christ is in our midst" and response, "He is and always shall be." Don't worry if you forget what to say. If someone extends a hand, they are warmly welcoming you into our community of faith. Exchanging the kiss of peace is a liturgical act, a sign of mystical unity. Chatting and fellowship is for later.

Our confession of Faith - The Creed

The next part of the Liturgy is a dialogue. None of the Priest's statements are complete. They require the response from the faithful. We will hear the words, "The doors, the doors; in wisdom let us be attentive!" In the history of our Church, during times of persecution, the meeting place of the Church had to be secured for fear of her enemies. It is still an ancient reminder that this part of the Liturgy that leads us to Holy Communion is reserved for those who are the baptized, chrismated, practicing faithful. It must also be mentioned that the Creed, our confession of faith, is now said before the reception of Holy Communion. We publicly declare our common faith before we are united in the Chalice. Our common cup is the visible sign of our unity in faith.

When the recitation of the Creed is complete the Priest pronounces the ancient and apostolic blessing: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." With this blessing echoing in the Church, we are called to lift up our hearts and to give thanks. This is the attitude we are called to acquire during the consecration of the Holy Gifts. It is important for us to abide in a proper state of gratitude to God as we make our simple offering of bread and wine to Him.

Holy Communion

As the conclusion of the angelic hymn (Holy, Holy Holy), our Priest calls to mind and proclaims the words spoken by our Lord at the Last Supper held in the upper room. *TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH IS BROKEN FOR YOU, FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. TAKE, DRINK, THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH IS SHED FOR YOU AND FOR MANY, FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.*



We now find ourselves in the most sublime and solemn moment of the Liturgy. We are now in the midst of two great realities. We stand with one foot in the upper room of the Last Supper and with the other foot planted at the table of the great banquet, which will be celebrated in heaven at the close of the ages. With this in mind, we make our offering to God. The Priest lifts the Holy Paten and Chalice into the air and proclaims: *THINE OWN OF THINE OWN, DO WE OFFER UNTO THEE, ON BEHALF OF ALL, AND FOR ALL.*

Isn't it ironic that all we really have to offer to God is God Himself, Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist. Truly, before God we possess nothing and have only the simple gifts He gave us to offer back to Him.

As we sing the hymn, "We praise Thee, we bless Thee..." the Priest asks God to consecrate our gifts by the Holy Spirit. No longer will our gifts be bread and wine. They are the very Body and very Blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ, consecrated by the descent and activity of the Holy Spirit.

Only Orthodox Christians may receive communion, but at the conclusion of the liturgy everyone shares in blessed bread, which is distributed at

the end of the service to all. The Eucharist is considered the Church's treasure, and it is reserved for those who have united themselves with Christ and the Church.

Conclusion of the Liturgy - When the work begins

Although our time in the Church building is coming to a close, our existence as the Body of Christ never ends. We have gathered and celebrated in prayer and sacrament so as to be made stronger to face the challenges of daily living. The work of the Liturgy is not begun until the Liturgy is concluded. As we go into the world and face the work and school week, we ought to reflect on the messages communicated to us through today's liturgical experience. The Divine Liturgy should remind us that we are the light of the world, the salt of the earth, and we must live that way. The Liturgy is the sign that we walk in light and in newness of life. Our daily living must be in accordance with what we have done here today. If this morning has passed in light and renewal then let us each live the coming week as people who are renewed by the light of the Eucharist.

We will leave the Liturgy and bring the conscience of faith into the world.

We ought to live as people of faith and conscience until we gather again in a holy Church to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the renewal that comes from them.

Receiving Bread at the end of the service

Before we leave, everyone receives blessed bread from our priest. Again, today we have worshiped with all of our senses... seeing the icons, smelling the incense, touching one another with peace, hearing the music of praise, singing with our voices and tasting the bread of life. (The bread received at the end of the service is called antithron - meaning "instead of the gifts".)

Through the grace of God, the goal of Orthodox life is "the acquisition of the Holy Spirit," the healing of soul and body, the transformation of our brokenness into wholeness, the transfiguration of the dark corners of our life into Christ-filled radiance, the participation in the worship of God by the whole creation, the surrender and unification of human creature to Divine Creator. The essence of our faith is establishing a direct, personal encounter between two persons - ourselves and God.

We come to know God by spending time with Him, in daily prayer, in divine worship, in study of his personal letter to us--the Holy Bible, through use of the spiritual disciplines and spiritual treasures handed down to us by the Apostles themselves.

ABOUT THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

While the Orthodox Church has maintained unaltered its doctrines, scriptural interpretations and apostolic faith, it has continued to be dynamically sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, avoiding any tendency of becoming a museum of artifacts. She is true to the past, fully present in the now and assured of God's promises concerning future things. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Orthodoxy has been able to transcend the ever-changing trends of every age, in order to be anchored to the unchangeable truths about God and the **unbroken link to the historic faith of Jesus and His Apostle.**

The Lord Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and disciples to keep them in truth and remind them of all He had done and taught. (John 16: 13-15) He further pledged Himself through the coming of this same Spirit to His disciples until the end of time. (Matthew.28: 18-20) The fulfillment of these promises is found in God's preservation and perpetuation of the Orthodox Church throughout the ages.