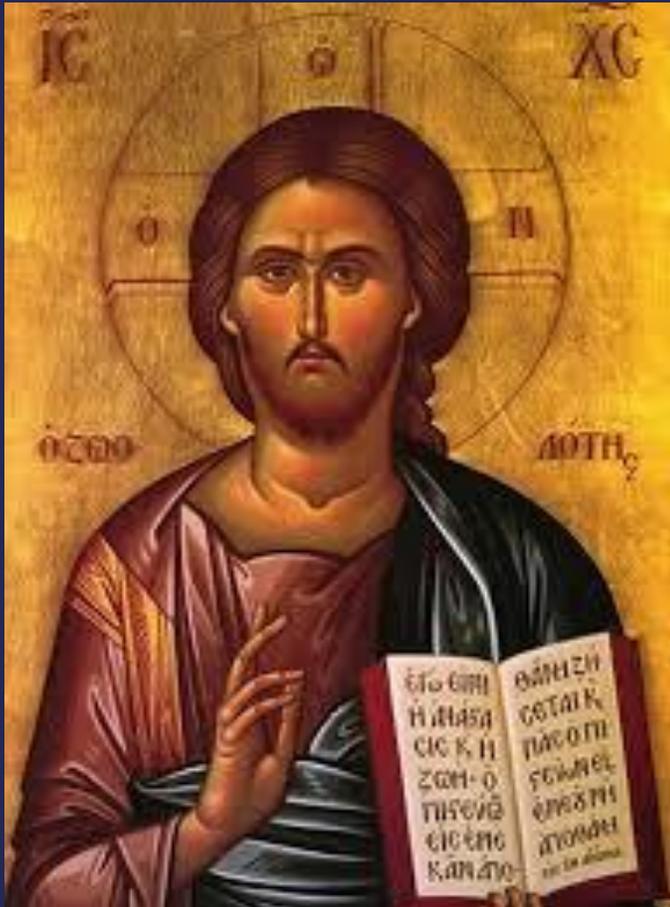


# CHURCH ETIQUETTE

St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church

Watkinsville, GA

# WHY SHOULD WE KNOW ABOUT ETIQUETTE? DOESN'T GOD LOVE US FOR WHO WE ARE?



- Of course He does! But, etiquette (reverent behavior) is the way we can show our love for Him.
  - It allows us to be engaged in our worship, mindful of Him always.
- “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord Your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” Matthew 22:37
- It allows us to express our faith in an active versus passive way.

# WHERE DOES IT BEGIN?

- Everything begins at home. How do we prepare ourselves to enter God's house?
  - Have our TV's & radios blasting? Or, even on?
  - Do work up to the last minute before leaving?
  - Make a mad dash out the door?
  - Check Facebook postings in route?

OR

Begin the day in prayer, asking God to bring peace to our hearts as we prepare to enter His house.



# WHAT ELSE MIGHT WE DO TO PREPARE?

Dress modestly and respectfully. Men: business casual, suit and tie. Women: dress or skirt, preferably not pants.

- We are going to meet our Lord and our God and so we reflect the awesomeness of this encounter by putting on our "Sunday Best". This distinguishes this day (The Lord's Day!) as important

If going to participate in communion:

- Remove lipstick, lip gloss
- Fast, no food or water from mid-night on until after communion
  - Speak with Father if you've certain constraints (e.g., health issues)

Arrive on time, even early!

- But, better late than not go at all.
- If late, we're to do our best to not disturb others when we enter

# WHEN WE ARRIVE, WE ENTER THE NARTHEX



- Refrain from talking with others
- Prepare for worship with a short prayer, such as the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”
- Make a small donation for a candle and light it from those already lit in in the narthex
  - Lit candles represent the light of Christ and the flame of the Holy Spirit.
  - It is also customary to light a candle for a saint or someone we have in our prayers.
- Venerate the icons in the Narthex with making the sign of the cross 3 times. Bend down and then kiss the icon, preferably on the hands or feet, rather than the face.
- When crossing the Narthex from one side to the other in front of the altar we are to cross ourselves.
- Wait for the greeter to open the door to the nave of the church before entering.

# WHEN WE ARRIVE, WE ENTER THE NARTHEX

Candles can also be placed in the candelabra in front of the Iconostasis (Alter Screen) as well as the "Seven-Day Candles" that are available in the Narthex for special devotional prayer. They can be lit and placed also before the icons of Christ or Theotokos at the Iconostasis and are kept lit as vigilant prayer for your personal request.

It is appropriate to make a monetary donation for these pillar candles.

# THE SIGN OF THE CROSS



This is how we hold our fingers on the right hand when ready to make the sign of the cross.

The three fingers together represent the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

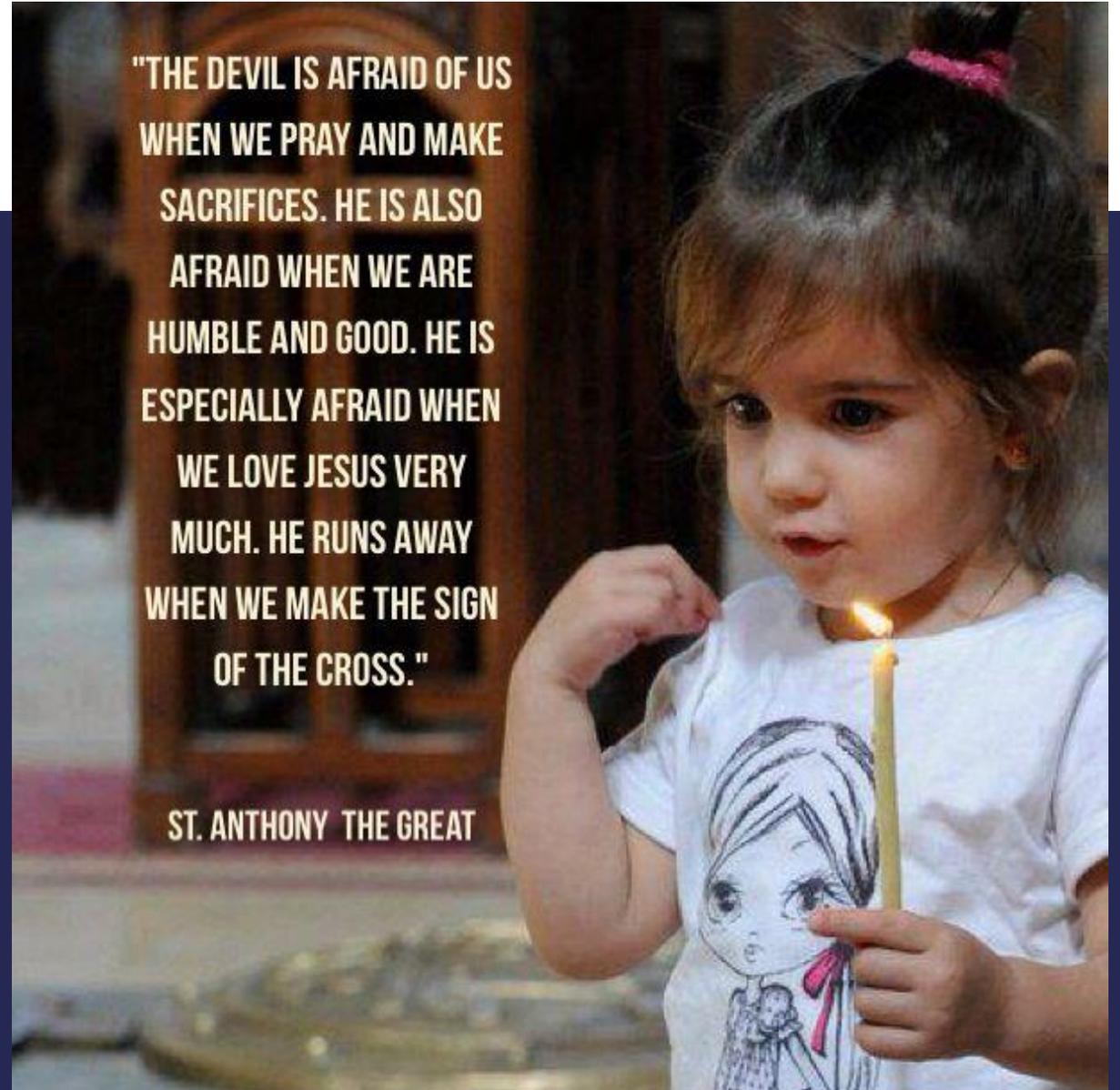
The dual nature of Christ as God and man is represented by the other two fingers bent touching the palm, as He came down to earth.

To cross ourselves, while maintaining the fingers as shown, we first touch our forehead, then the center of our chest, our right shoulder first (because Christ sits at the right hand of God) and then our left.

Do so with conviction and respect.

"THE DEVIL IS AFRAID OF US  
WHEN WE PRAY AND MAKE  
SACRIFICES. HE IS ALSO  
AFRAID WHEN WE ARE  
HUMBLE AND GOOD. HE IS  
ESPECIALLY AFRAID WHEN  
WE LOVE JESUS VERY  
MUCH. HE RUNS AWAY  
WHEN WE MAKE THE SIGN  
OF THE CROSS."

ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT



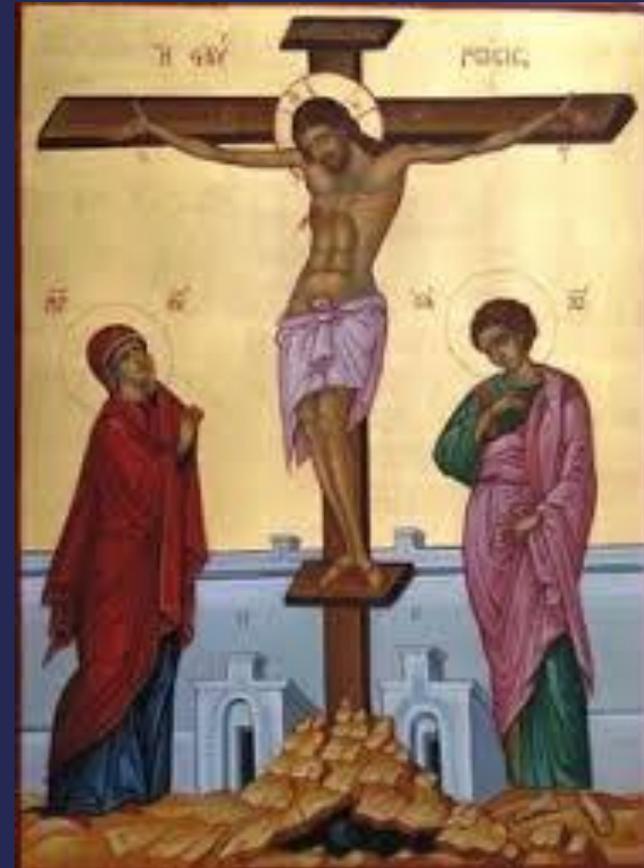
# WHEN DO WE MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

The sign of the Cross is most often made at the mention of the [Holy Trinity](#). We may also cross ourselves to show reverence for a saint, holy object, or person, to show humility or agreement, or on numerous other occasions which may vary slightly according to regional/ethnic practice or personal piety.

During the Liturgy we often make the sign of the cross as an physical "Amen" and thus can be done whenever the spirit moves you. Outside of the Divine Liturgy you can cross yourself as a "quick prayer" or as a call for God's mercy and protection or as a blessing before you begin a meal. Some of the commonly agreed upon times to make the sign of the cross during the Divine Liturgy are....

# WHEN DO WE MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS?

- When we feel the need
- Before and after prayers
- Entering and leaving the narthex and nave
- Before kissing an icon, cross, or the Gospel book
- When passing in front of the altar
- After the Epistle and Gospel are read
- At the point of "In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" in the Nicene Creed
- After kneeling for the consecration during Liturgy
- However, when the censer is moved in our direction, we bow instead of crossing ourselves



# WHEN DO WE MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS?

- When the priest says, “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” at the end of the Lord’s Prayer.
- When the priest makes the sign of the cross
- Immediately before and after partaking in Holy Communion.
- Before receiving *antidoron*, at the end of the Liturgy



- And, when you hear any of these phrases:
  - “The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”
  - “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us” (Άγιος ο Θεός , Άγιος Ισχυρός, Άγιος Αθάνατος , ελέison imás)
  - “Theotokos,” “Panayia,” or “Virgin Mary”
  - The name of a saint

In other words, when in doubt, we cross ourselves . . . It can never hurt!

# WHERE HEAVEN AND EARTH MEET



“Blessed is the  
Kingdom  
of the Father,  
and the Son,  
and the Holy Spirit.”

# ENTERING THE NAVE OF THE CHURCH

On Sundays, there is usually a greeter who knows when it is appropriate to enter the church. Please respect their guidance.

However, there are other days when a Liturgy may be celebrated and a greeter may not be present.

The following slide outlines when it is not appropriate to enter out of respect for the sacredness of the Divine Liturgy.

# WHEN NOT TO ENTER THE CHURCH

- The Priest is facing the congregation
- The Priest censes the congregation
- During the Small Entrance (Priest carries out the Holy Gospel)
- During the readings of the Epistle and the Gospel
- During the Great Entrance (Priest carries out the Holy Gifts)
- During Consecration of the Gifts (“se imnoumen”) when parishioners are kneeling
- During the Creed & the Lord’s Prayer
- During the sermon



# WHEN TO STAND, KNEEL OR BOW

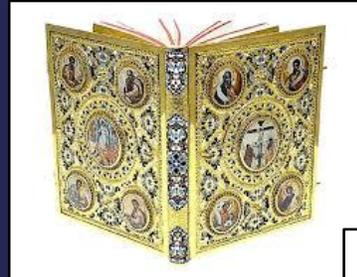
Our physical posture during corporate worship is an expression of vigilance. It conjures up the image of a soldier ready at attention to serve and do duty to the one in charge.

- **"Let us Stand, Let us be Attentive"** It is appropriate to stand all the time during worship but this may not be practical for everyone, so congregations have traditionally agreed to sit during prescribed times such as The litanies, the readings (Epistle and Old Testament) and the sermon. Follow your local congregation but also attend to your personal physical limitations. If you would like to stand more often then it is recommended to remain toward the back or sides of the church out of courtesy.
- **"The bending of one's knees"** before God has various forms. We also have various forms of prostrations, which are also called *Metanias*. A small Metania is done by making the sign of the cross and bending at the waist and touching the floor with your fingertips. A great Metania is done by prostrating completely and touching your forehead to the floor.
- **"Bow your head before God"** is another physical expression of our faith. A bow is often made by the inclining of the head and neck (also called a reverential bow).

# WHEN TO STAND OR KNEEL

## STAND

- The Doxology
- Small Entrance
- Reading of the Gospel
- The Great Entrance
- Nicene Creed
- The Lord's Prayer
- Additional times will be signaled by the priest as well as when we may sit
- When the priest is censing



## KNEEL

- During the consecration of the Gifts during, the Epiclesis (calling down of the Holy Spirit), as an expression of fervent piety.
  - This is when the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ
  - Kneeling during this time does not occur the fifty days following Easter. Kneeling is resumed on Pentecost.
- There are other times, during other services when kneeling will occur, while special prayers are read. The priest guides the congregation at these times as to when to kneel.

# SOME ADDITIONAL THINGS TO KNOW . . .

- **Crossing your legs** in church is considered improper. It is perceived as being too casual in our relationship to God while worshipping.
- **Hands in pocket** while in church and approaching the Holy Gifts are similarly seen as too casual
- **Refrain from talking to others** while in church. This can be very distracting during worship. This includes when receiving antidoron.
- **Turn off mobile devices** before entering church and refrain from looking at them while in church.
- **Avoid clapping in church** even at times of celebration. Leave this for the fellowship hall.
- **Avoid wearing lipstick** when partaking of Holy Communion and when kissing icons, crosses, the priest's hand. If you wear lipstick, blot it before engaging in these forms of worship.
- **Kiss the hand of the priest** when he extends his hand to you in a greeting or when we ask for a blessing, right hand cupped over the left. This shows respect as he touches the body of Christ.
- **Kiss / venerate holy objects** first and then kiss the priest's hand who is holding them.
- **When approaching to receive antidoron at the end of church**, it is best we refrain from talking
- **Stand up out of respect for the priest** when he walks into a room, a gathering.

# GUIDELINES NOT JUDGMENTS

For those who revere and respect the Church,  
these guidelines are welcomed.

They are not meant for judgments, pointing  
fingers, etc. They are for elevating our level of  
worship, to be mindful of Christ in our Father's  
house as we are to love and worship Him with  
our hearts, soul, and mind.

May these acts of attentiveness draw us ever  
closer to Him.



# SOURCES

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