

+ New Visitors

Last Updated Wednesday, 11 February 2009

Are non-Orthodox visitors welcome?

Yes! Most of our congregation was not born into the Orthodox Church and faith. We began like many of you - with a desire to find out what the real "early Church" was, and what it believed and practiced. Many of us came from Evangelical, Reformed, Anglican, Charismatic and non-denominational Christian backgrounds. Others have come from eastern religions or through new age interests. You will find a wide diversity of faith traditions, races, age groups and ethnic groups represented at our parish.

So don't be afraid to ask questions about what we do and why (at the appropriate time, of course!)! Our small bookstore also has books and pamphlets that can help answer a variety of questions. Subjects include Christian church history, theology, catechism, Orthodox spirituality, inspiration, prayer, the lives of the Saints, and stories about others who have journeyed to the Orthodox Faith.

When you enter our church which is in a commercial park, you enter the church narthex. If you visit on a Sunday, a greeter will welcome you, hand you a bulletin, a "Welcome CD" (for new visitors), and help you navigate your way around! We have printed service texts of the Divine Liturgy available on the table along the right wall as you enter the church nave, the sacred space where the congregation worships. Our normal Sunday service is the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. You may follow the service text, or, if you prefer, simply close your eyes and enter into the Church's beautiful worship of God.

Following the Sunday Divine Liturgy, you are invited to join us for a "coffee hour" which is a good time to get to know our parish members and meet our priests! We provide a supervised "play area" for small children during coffee hour, too! If you are not interested in social interaction at first, that's fine! You are always welcome to follow your own pace and level of interest!

How long are the services?

Daily Vespers services (Evening prayers - Wednesday nights at 7:00 P.M.) are generally 35-40 minutes in length. Great Vespers (Evening prayers - Saturday nights at 6:00 P.M.) are usually 35-40 minutes in length. Matins (Morning prayers - Sunday mornings at 9:00 A.M., preceding Divine Liturgy) averages sixty minutes in length. Divine Liturgy (Sunday – 10:00 A.M.) runs about ninety minutes. We think that when you have participated in an Orthodox service you will feel like – as one visitor put it – "you have truly worshipped the living God!"

Is there a dress code?

The general rule for men and women is to dress appropriately, modestly and respectfully, as before the living God. Visitors wear everything from jeans to suits, long dresses to skirts, tee shirts to shirts with ties, dress shoes to sneakers. We ask, however, that you not wear shorts, mini-skirts, tank tops, low-cut or strapless dresses (unless covered by a sweater, etc.). Some Orthodox women wear head coverings, but this is not required. Men are asked not to wear head coverings (baseball caps, etc.) in the nave.

Is childcare provided?

Each parent is responsible to take care of their child. We have a room for nursing mothers off of the narthex. We encourage children to be present in Church for the services. This participation is part of a child's spiritual formation. However, if your baby or child gets fussy, talkative, or has a melt-down, please take him or her out of the nave until he or she is ready to return quietly!

Is Sunday school for children available?

On Sundays, we provide Sunday school in small groups for children in grades K through twelve. Sunday school is held during Matins (9:00 – 10:00 A.M.). Generally we like children to be registered for Sunday school; but if your child is a guest of a family whose child attends the Saint Barnabas Sunday school program, your child is invited to join the class as a visitor!

Standing or sitting?

The traditional posture for prayer and worship in the Orthodox Church is to stand, as before the King of the universe! In the Orthodox “old countries” there are typically no pews in the churches. Chairs or benches on the side walls are usually reserved for the elderly and infirm. In North America we tend to build our churches with pews or chairs. So you are free to sit! However, it is appropriate to stand during the Gospel reading, the Little and Great Entrances, the distribution of Holy Communion, when the priest gives a blessing, and at the Dismissal. Just follow the congregation!

Lighting candles?

Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship and piety. We light candles as we pray, making an offering to accompany our prayers. Orthodox typically light candles when coming into the church, but there are times when candles should not be lit. Candles should not be lit during the Epistle or Gospel readings, during the Little Entrance, and during the sermon. By the way, you do not have to be an Orthodox Christian to light a candle and pray in an Orthodox church!

Can non-Orthodox receive the Holy Eucharist?

Orthodox priests may only serve the Holy Eucharist to baptized members in good standing of the canonical Orthodox Church, who have recently confessed, and fasted before partaking of the Holy Eucharist. This is the ancient tradition of the Holy Church for the 2,000 years of its history. The Orthodox Church understands the Holy Eucharist as a mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, not simply as a memorial, or merely in a spiritual sense, as many other non-Orthodox Christians do. Rather than trying to accommodate to often varying “interpretations” or revisions of this and other doctrines of the ancient faith, we simply ask that you respect the ancient, apostolic tradition and join us in receiving the Fellowship bread at the veneration of the cross, at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

What is Orthodox worship music like?

Close to seventy-five percent of an Orthodox service is congregational singing. Traditionally, Orthodox do not use instruments. Usually a choir leads the people in a capella harmony, with the level of congregational response varying from parish to parish. The style of music varies as well, from very traditional Byzantine-sounding chant in some parishes, to more Western-sounding four-part harmony in a Russian church, with lots of variation in between. The music is solemn, prayerful and intended to lead the faithful to worship the living God.

For a sample selection of Orthodox music click [here](#)...

For a sample of Orthodox chant click [here](#)...

New visitors will find there are many new things to experience in a Holy Orthodox Church service! Feel free to go at your own pace, ask any questions you want, and know you are most welcome to “come and see”!