

Answers to Questions and Reflections Volume II Worship

The Orthodox Faith Series by Father Thomas Hopko

Chapter 1: The Church Building

1. God is with us.
2. The spacious vaulted ceiling embraces and unites all things, reflecting the fullness and unity of the Kingdom of God.
3. The Book of Revelation.
4. It can be referred to as the sanctuary or holy place. It stands for the Kingdom of God.
5. In the early Church, the people gathered and celebrated the Eucharist on the graves of those who lived and died for the Christian faith.
6. Icons are spiritually necessary because they bear witness to the reality of God's presence with us. When Christ took flesh and dwelled among us, He became the icon of the invisible God.
7. The two comings are Christ's coming as the Savior born of Mary, and his coming at the end of the age as King and Judge.
8. The Gospel writers or evangelists were the first to record the Good News, and the Annunciation is the first proclamation of the Good News to the world. This is why icons of the evangelists and of the Annunciation often appear on the royal gates.
9. Since there was no longer a Christian empire, the bishops as civil rulers adopted the imperial insignia and began to dress as the Christian civil rulers used to dress.
10. The 3-branch candelabra represents the persons of the Holy Trinity. The 2-branch candelabra represents the divine and human natures of Christ. *(For reflection: Though these candelabra represent the great mysteries of the Orthodox faith, they give light, not casting us into fear or darkness before them as in some "mystery religions.")*
11. Vesting is essential to worship experienced as the realization of communion with the glorious Kingdom of God.
12. Yes. In both the Old and New Testaments, incense is the symbol of rising prayers, of spiritual sacrifice, and of the sweet-smelling fragrance of the Kingdom of God.

Chapter 2: The Sacraments

1. Everything in and of the Church is considered, in the tradition of the Orthodox Church, to be mystical or sacramental. Therefore it's misleading to identify 7 specific sacraments as being different from everything else in the Church.
2. The universal meaning of baptism is "starting anew." So it has always been connected with repentance, which means a moral conversion, a "change of mind" and a change in living from something old and bad to something new and good. Even beyond this, in the Christian Church baptism becomes the act of a person's death and resurrection in and with Jesus Christ.
3. A godparent "receives" the child out of the baptismal waters and into the Orthodox Church, and thereafter cares for the godchild's spiritual life. To do this, the godparent must be a member of the Church.
4. Chrismation is our personal Pentecost: the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us. Just as Easter would have no meaning for the world without Pentecost, baptism would have no meaning for Christians without chrismation. This is why the two sacraments are always administered together.
5. Hair has been the symbol of strength since the times of the Old Testament, as reflected in the well-known statement of Samson in Judges 16: 17. Therefore, offering a cutting of hair from one's head (in the shape of the cross) is a sign of one's strength being completely in God.
6. Holy Communion.
7. He frees us from the slavery of evil, ignorance and death and transfers us into the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.
8. It means "thanksgiving." The Church uses it because the all-embracing meaning of Holy Communion is thanksgiving to God in Christ and the Holy Spirit for all that he has done in making, saving and glorifying the world.
9. The holy eucharist is a mystery which defies analysis and explanation in logical and rational terms. This mystery belongs to the Kingdom, and is therefore free from the earth-born "logic" of fallen humanity.
10. To humble themselves consciously before God, and to receive guidance in the Christian life from their pastor in the Church.

11. Sorrow for sins and for the breaking of communion with God; open and heartfelt confession; formal prayer of absolution.
12. The express purpose is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always God's will that there be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God's will be done is always the proper context of the sacrament. *(For reflection: How does this help us understand that it is not appropriate to complain that God did not answer a specific prayer for healing?)*
13. Yes, it is misleading. Nothing in the sacrament indicates that it should be administered only in "extreme" cases. Whatever the nature or gravity of the person's sickness, holy unction is the sacrament of physical, spiritual and mental healing of that person.
14. The words are not there because in Christian marriage the Holy Spirit is given to the couple so that what is begun on earth does not "part in death" but is fulfilled and most perfectly continues in the Kingdom of God.
15. Baptism.
16. It contains no oaths or vows, as a contract does. In essence it is the "baptizing and confirming" of human love in God by Christ in the Holy Spirit.
17. The Church recognizes this by having a service of second marriage.
18. Human love, in imitation of divine love, should "overflow itself" in the creation of and care for others. This usually is expressed in the procreation of children, though that is not the sole purpose of, or justification for, marriage.
19. Yes, a childless couple can live a truly Christian life together.
20. Their function is to manifest the presence and action of Christ to his people. Therefore they are not Christ's vicars, representatives or substitutes, as if he himself were absent.
21. The name comes from the fact that bishops, priests and deacons give order to the Church.
22. "Metropolitan" means "bishop of the metropolis," the main city. It refers to a bishop of the chief city of a region which has within it other bishops with their own particular dioceses. He thus guides and presides over this larger region, including more than one diocese. But no bishop in Orthodoxy is considered infallible, and no bishop possesses "powers" over and apart from his priests, deacons, people or other bishops.

23. Fr. Thomas says that the vigil service is the contemplation of the horrid reality and tragic character of death, of its power as that of sin and alienation from God. Without the realization of these facts about death we cannot fully appreciate and celebrate the victorious resurrection of Christ and his gracious gift to us of eternal life. If we don't have a "preparatory meditation" on death, it is doubtful that we can understand the Christian Gospel at all.
24. It is the prayer that the departed person be eternally alive in the "eternal rest" of the "eternal memory" of God, made possible by the resurrection of Christ. *(For reflection: Verses 50-56 of I Corinthians are a good statement of the eternal destiny of faithful Christians.)*
25. The "preparatory" vigil, with the eucharistic liturgy following, together provide the full Christian vision of life, death and resurrection in Christ, the Church and the Kingdom of God.
26. The monastic enters a monastery only to repent of sins, to serve God, and to save his or her soul according to the ideals of monastic asceticism.
27. In cenobitic monasticism, all members of the community do all things in common.
28. Anchorite.

Chapter 3: Daily Cycles of Prayer

1. We pray in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus the Son of God, and in his name, to God the Father. We can call God "our Father" because Jesus Christ taught and enabled us to do so. We can address God as Father because we are made sons of God (inheritors of the Kingdom) by the Holy Spirit.
2. We pray to the saints as helpers, intercessors and fellow members of the Church already glorified with God in his divine presence.
3. We can lament before God and question him, especially in times of tragedy and confusion, about life and the meaning of our existence. *(For reflection: The Church has always used the Book of Psalms as prayers in these kinds of circumstances. Each person can find meaningful psalms and psalm verses to include in prayer during difficult times.)*
4. To pray without intending to have communion with God and to do his will, without intending to move along the path on which prayer will take us, is spiritually dangerous.

5. We go to church to be together, to sing together, to meditate on the meaning of the faith together, to learn together, and to have union and communion together with God. Church services are not designed for private, silent prayer.
6. The evening and the following morning constitute one day.
7. The hymn tells us that Christ is the Light illumining our human darkness. He is the Light of the world and of the Kingdom of God, which shall have no evening.
8. We are proclaiming that, like Simeon, we are now being permitted by God to depart in peace, having seen God in the person of Jesus Christ. We say to God, “You are keeping your promise. You are letting me depart in peace.” It’s important to know that the words “now lettest thou” mean this—God is letting us depart in peace. They are not words asking permission to depart in peace.
9. The themes of God’s revelation and light.
10. They are related to events in the passion of Christ which took place at those particular hours of the day.
11. Compline.
12. It is done preceding the Easter Matins.

Chapter 4: The Church Year

1. The feast of the Resurrection of Christ.
2. Pentecost.
3. The *Octoechos*.
4. The *Menaion*.
5. Like Easter, It is preceded by a forty-day lent and followed by a post-feast celebration.
6. The Sunday of Zacchaeus.
7. We are called to “arise and go.” Like the son in the parable, we pull ourselves together and get ready to leave the “far country.” We go back to the home where we truly belong and will be lovingly received.

8. The parable in Matthew makes it clear that we will be judged on our deeds, on whether we served Christ through his people. Prayer and fasting are good things, but only by showing that we see Christ in each person can we be saved.
9. The promise is that if we forgive others, God will forgive us.
10. These first lines call us to begin the Lenten time with delight, spiritually rejoicing. So Lent is not to be a time of gloominess, but of renewal, joyfulness, and purification.
11. Yes, it is different. Remorse is a sense of guilt or regret for something one has done wrong. It doesn't necessarily lead to action. Repentance is the active effort to turn away from the things one has done wrong and go in a better direction; it is a "change of mind."
12. The Lenten season is one of preparation for the Resurrection through the remembrance of sin and separation from God. Therefore the regular eucharistic Divine Liturgy, which is always a paschal celebration, is not celebrated on the weekdays of Great Lent.
13. The closed gates signify our separation, through sin, from the Kingdom of God.
14. Christ himself lay dead on Saturday, the Sabbath. So in the New Testament Church it became the day to remember the dead, offering prayers for their salvation.
15. To fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, and to attain unto and adore the holy resurrection of Christ.
16. He bore witness that human beings can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit. Even in this life they can, by prayer and fasting, become participants in the uncreated light of God's divine glory.
17. Ephesians 6:12 says that we wrestle against not just flesh and blood, but against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. A violent effort is truly necessary.
18. St. Mary of Egypt repented, alone in the desert, for many years. True repentance, no matter how late in life it comes, will always lead to Christ, who gladly receives all who come to him.
19. Lazarus Saturday.
20. In beautiful poetic language the *Kontakion* describes Christ as "sitting on Thy throne in heaven and carried on a foal on earth." Thus he is both divine and human.

21. While the woman gives her wealth to Christ and kisses his feet, Judas betrays him for money with a kiss.
22. Christ's mission and God's purpose in creating the world are that we, his creatures, could come to be in intimate communion with him for eternity, sitting at table with him, eating and drinking in his unending kingdom. This is shown at the Passover meal, the Last Supper that Christ shared with his apostles.
23. Psalm 119 describes the righteous man whose life is in God's hands and who, therefore, cannot remain dead.
24. The services don't re-enact events; rather they penetrate into the eternal meaning of these saving events.
25. Though Christ lies dead in the human body, he is at the same time enthroned eternally with God the Father, and destroys death by his life-creating death. So his tomb becomes the "fountain of our resurrection."
26. The Easter night procession is, like the baptismal procession, from the darkness and death of this world to the light and life of the Kingdom.
27. These services begin in the first dark hours so that the faithful can experience the "new creation" of the world, allowing them mystically to enter the New Jerusalem which shines with Christ's light, overcoming the evil and darkness of this sinful world. *(For reflection: How does this description of the service explain why there is no "sunrise service" in the Orthodox Church's liturgical practice?)*
28. Seven is the number of earthly time, and the seventh day, the Sabbath, is the day of rest. The eighth day is the day beyond the confines of earthly time, the day which stands for the life of the world to come. It is the first day of the week, the day of the Resurrection of Christ. *(For reflection: It is important to notice that every Sunday is the day of Resurrection. Saturday, the 7th day, is the Sabbath.)*
29. The "signs" or miracles described in John's Gospel all deal with sacramental themes involving water, wine and bread. They increase the depth of understanding of the newly-baptized.
30. It signifies a temporal period of completeness and sufficiency.
31. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity were fully revealed on this day.

32. By our membership in the Church, we have received “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” in the sacrament of chrismation. We are “temples of the Holy Spirit” and God’s Spirit dwells in us.
33. The Church established this date in order to offset the pagan festival of the worship of the “Invincible Sun” on the same day.
34. Christ, on this feast day, “shines forth” as One of the Holy Trinity. The voice of the Father bears witness, and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirms the truthfulness of his word.
35. It stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God.
36. Moses encountered him as the Giver of the Law on Mount Sinai.
37. He does this so that they can know, in the resurrection, who it is that suffered for them and what it is that he, who is God, has prepared for those who love him. As the *Kontakion* states, they will know that his suffering was voluntary and that he is the “Radiance of the Father.”
38. Moses and Elijah stand for the Old Testament, Moses for the Law and Elijah for the Prophets. Christ fulfills the Law and the Prophets. (They also stand for the living and the dead. Moses died and his burial place is known. Elijah was taken alive to heaven and would appear again to announce the time of God’s salvation in Christ the Messiah.)
39. The season of summer, with the blessing of grapes and other fruits and vegetables, is the most beautiful and adequate sign of the final transfiguration of all things in Christ. It signifies the ultimate flowering and fruitfulness of all creation in the paradise of God’s unending Kingdom of Life, where all will be transformed by his glory.
40. This is precisely nine months before the celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25th.
41. For the Incarnation to take place, there had to be a person born of flesh and blood who would be spiritually capable of being the Mother of Christ. She herself had to be born of persons who were spiritually capable of being her parents. So we celebrate her parents Joachim and Anna as part of the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos.
42. The psalm and the words in Luke’s Gospel both describe a young woman who loves and serves the Lord, and say that the Lord will cause her to be celebrated or blessed by

future generations. This is why the Church considers the psalm to be a prophecy of Mary the Theotokos.

43. Her entrance brings the time of the physical temple in Jerusalem to an end. We celebrate that in the person of Christ's mother we are the house and tabernacle of the Lord.
44. Everything that is praised and glorified in Mary is a sign of what is offered to everyone in the life of the Church. All who imitate her holy life of humility, obedience and love will be "blessed" to be "more honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim" as she is. The feast of her Dormition celebrates the fact that all persons are "highly exalted" in the blessedness of the victorious Christ, and that this high exaltation has already been accomplished in Mary the Theotokos.
45. On this feast day we recall that the Cross is the only sign worthy of our total allegiance. We as Christians make our official rededication to the crucified Lord and pledge our undivided allegiance to him by the adoration of his holy feet nailed to the life-creating Cross.
46. There must be popular interest and veneration of a holy person before that person can be canonized, or before a liturgical festival can be established. Feasts and canonizations of saints always follow from the living devotion of the people.

Chapter 5: The Divine Liturgy

1. The word liturgy means common work or common action. The word church means a gathering of people chosen and called apart for a particular task. Thus the Divine Liturgy is the common action of Orthodox Christians officially gathered to constitute the Orthodox Church.
2. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated when all the members of the Church are gathered with their pastor. It's never celebrated as a "private" service, or by clergy alone. That is why the phrase "always everyone, always together" is the traditional expression of the Orthodox Church concerning the Liturgy.
3. The Divine Liturgy is always resurrectional in spirit. It is never the expression of the darkness and death of this world; rather it is the expression and experience of the eternal life of the Kingdom of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore it's never mournful or penitential.

4. The *synaxis* or gathering has its origin in the Old Testament synagogue gatherings. The eucharistic sacrifice has its origin in the Old Testament temple worship, the priestly sacrifices of the People of God, and in Passover (Pascha), the central saving event of the Old Testament.
5. The first part, the Liturgy of the Word, carries on the proclamation and meditation of the Word of God—the Gospels and apostolic writings. The second part, the Liturgy of the Faithful, is the participation of the people in the voluntary self-offering of Christ to the Father, accomplished once and for all on the Cross by the power of the Holy Spirit. In and through this unique sacrifice of Christ the people receive Holy Communion.
6. They both mean “preparation.”
7. It is called this because it stands for Christ, who is the (Bread of life...which came down from heaven” and the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 3: 24, 6: 32-35).
8. Mary the Theotokos and John the Baptist.
9. These words are key because they announce the source and goal of the divine service of the People of God, which is the Kingdom of God, brought to the world by Jesus Christ and already mystically reigning in the faithful disciples of Christ by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
10. To bless the Kingdom means to express love for it as one’s most precious possession.
11. The Great Litany.
12. The Emperor Justinian.
13. It symbolizes the Kingdom of God.
14. He is in the High Place, behind the altar table.
15. These signify the very presence of God with his People, teaching them himself through Christ the Word and the Holy Spirit.
16. The petitions of this litany are not made generally, as in the Great Litany, but specifically on behalf of those in need of God’s blessings, strength and guidance.
17. The catechumens (those not yet baptized), as well as those under penance for sins, and those not receiving Holy Communion.

18. The gifts stand for Christ, and in him for the entire world created by God, and for Life itself.
19. They are called to give themselves in sacrifice to God together with Christ.
20. They must solemnly express love and faith. They express love through the Kiss of Peace, and faith through the chanting of the Symbol of Faith, or the Creed.
21. This is because each person must confess his or her own personal faith: I believe. Each person acknowledges and accepts his or her own baptism, chrismation, and membership in the Body of Christ.
22. *Anaphora* means lifting-up or elevation.
23. Father Thomas says that this phrase is referring to Jesus Christ, the perfect peace which alone brings God's reconciling mercy.
24. The origin of these things is the failure to give thanks to God. It can be overcome if we will remember all the good things God the Father has done for us in Christ and in the Spirit, and thank him for those things. Through remembrance and thanksgiving we are taken into the very Presence of the Kingdom to the Throne of the Father, there to sing the Thrice-Holy Hymn with the angels. *(For reflection: The closing words of the eucharistic prayer are a beautiful "call to remembrance" for us. They enumerate "the things which have come to pass for us: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand of God the Father, the second and glorious coming." To remember all these things as having come to pass **for us** is indeed a reason for the deepest gratitude to God.)*
25. The elevation is the sign that the faithful Christians have been exalted together with their Lord into the Kingdom of God.
26. *Epiklesis* means calling upon, or invocation.
27. It affirms that everything good and positive in life is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.
28. The words "and all mankind" are a summing up of the remembrances, which include Mary the Theotokos, all the saints, the whole Church, and the entire universe of God's creation. Everything and everyone is embraced in this prayer.
29. Only in Christ can people be bold enough to call on God as Father. Those who have died and risen with Christ in baptism and have received the power to become sons

(inheritors) of God by the Holy Spirit are enabled to approach God as their Father. So only after baptism and chrismation was this prayer taught to people in the early Church.

30. The hot water symbolizes the living character of the Risen Christ whose body and soul are reunited and filled with the Holy Spirit in the glorified life of the Kingdom of God.

31. They presuppose the regular and normal participation of all the people in Holy Communion.

32. *Antidoron* means “in place of the gifts” and the bread is called this it used to be given only to those who did not actually receive Holy Communion at the liturgy.

33. They are called to bear witness to the Kingdom of God of which they were partakers in the Liturgy of the Church.