



## Worshipping With Your Whole Being: Introduction

“We have a propensity to ignore or to forget the importance of involving our body in worship. Orthodox<sup>1</sup> worship, however, is inclusive, holistic, and dynamic. Orthodox worship involves not only all the elements of creation but also our very being, our very essence – i.e., mind,<sup>2</sup> body and spirit. In Orthodox worship, our senses are bombarded because Orthodoxy is an experience of mind, body, and soul. We must offer all – and the very best – of ourselves to God.”

– Father<sup>3</sup> James T. Paris, Dean<sup>4</sup>



*St. Vladimir of Kiev*

There's a well-known legend, preserved in *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, about the pagan Prince Vladimir of Kiev,<sup>5</sup> who in the tenth century sent a group of envoys throughout the world in order to ascertain the most authentic religion. Based on the findings of his envoys, Vladimir was determined to espouse the faith<sup>6</sup> of that people. His ambassadors traveled to the Bulgars, to Germany, and then to Rome, in each place learning about the religious practices and traditions. His envoys met with Muslims, but felt that there was no joy among them, and that their faith was very mechanical. The envoys also met with Jews and Catholics, but were still unimpressed.

Finally, they journeyed to Constantinople, where they experienced the Orthodox Divine Liturgy<sup>7</sup> in the Great Church of Christ,<sup>8</sup> known as the Church of the Holy Wisdom (or Hagia Sophia<sup>9</sup>). Upon their return, overwhelmed by the beauty they encountered, they described their experience to the prince:

“We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere on earth. We cannot describe it to you; only this we know, that God dwells there among people... We cannot forget that beauty.”<sup>10</sup>

Within a year of their report, Prince Vladimir and the Russian people were baptized into Christ by Orthodox missionaries.

Well, it seems Prince Vladimir and I have something in common: I'm a convert<sup>11</sup> as well, and when I encountered Orthodoxy at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church I was drawn into her arms and found myself at home.

I was received into the Church by Fr. Cyril on Sunday, January 15, 1989 with a number of my Protestant friends present to witness this turning point in my life. My voice kept cracking as I read the Nicene Creed<sup>12</sup> aloud for the first time as a member of the Orthodox Church.<sup>13</sup> What an awesome feeling!

Just over 21 years have passed and, like Pilgrim in *Pilgrim's Progress*, I find my road to redemption<sup>14</sup> has been beset by twists and turns. I just thank God that He uses every one of them to draw me closer to Him. Enjoy!



Before I begin, I'd like to explain a few things that you're going to encounter.

1. Sometimes there'll be more pages dedicated to vocabulary than there will be to material. There are two reasons for this. One is for converts like me who were overwhelmed by the Jesus jargon that cradle-born Orthodox believers have already internalized. By the way, if you think it's hard to even pronounce all those Greek words, you should try finding translations for them in sign language! We all need to know what we're talking about if our worship is going to be meaningful.
2. I'm also writing this for my Protestant friends who are totally unfamiliar with our form of worship. In their case, it's not just a matter of unfamiliarity with the Greek vocabulary, but a matter of words having different definitions. For example, in a Protestant church, the sanctuary is the main part of the church where the pews are. For us, it's the part behind the iconostasis. Without definitions, these can be confusing, to say the least.
3. Sometimes a chapter might be material that I've found on the Internet and didn't think I could improve on it.

I'd like to thank Fr. Ken Stavrevsky, Gus Platas, and a number of my Protestant friends who've provided me with greatly appreciated encouragement and feedback on my draft copies.

I'd also like to thank all those who've approached me and told me how my usage of sign language during the services has inspired them. I was overjoyed when I found the following on the Internet:

#### **A Mandate: Church Accessibility**

Published April 8, 2009 Church , accessibility , development , international , patristic

from **The Orthodox Christian News Service**, (Published by Ekathimerini.com) December 4, 2004

More than two months after its revolutionary decision to conduct Bible readings in Modern Greek, the Church of Greece is now planning to start services in sign language, Archbishop Christodoulos announced.

The head of the highly conservative Greek Orthodox Church told a delegation of disabled people's unions that a series of seminars on learning sign language was launched last year, and will be continued this year to enable clergymen to conduct services for deaf congregations.

**The archbishop also said all parishes have been instructed to improve church accessibility for the disabled.** "Wherever this is not yet the case, it is due to technical difficulties that we are trying to overcome as fast as possible," he said.<sup>15</sup>

Praise God!

Sincerely,

Petr Josef Chudoba



## What am I Missing Out On?

“Church exists primarily not to provide entertainment or to encourage vulnerability or to build self-esteem or to facilitate friendships but to worship God; if it fails in that, it fails.”

– Philip Yancey<sup>16</sup>

It was ten o'clock on a Sunday morning in 2010 and there I was standing during the Liturgy, wondering, “Why am I standing? And why don't I feel like I'm in Heaven?”<sup>17</sup> Where's the beauty? Where's the splendor? Where's God's presence?” The initial pride and smugness in having found the True Church had long since dissipated as a source of inspiration on Sunday mornings. The Liturgy now seemed repetitive and stiff.

I tried finding ways to “make it work.” Focusing on the words in the Liturgy book didn't help. Closing my eyes and praying<sup>18</sup> throughout the Liturgy didn't work. And going through the motions – doing all the right things because they were, well, the right things to do! – *definitely* failed to fulfill. What was the problem? Like Elisha's<sup>19</sup> servant, was I missing what was right in front of me?

“When Elisha's servant arose early and went out, the army was there, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, ‘O master, what shall we do?’ So he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are greater in number than those who are with them.’ Then Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, open the eyes of the servant and let him see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he was now able to see, and he beheld the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” (**II Kings 6:15-17, The Orthodox Study Bible**).<sup>20</sup>



Casimir Kucharek writes, “The chief purpose of the Liturgy is the glorification of the Trinity.”<sup>21</sup> The worship is totally God-centered, not man-centered. One's entire being, including the body, gets involved when participating in an Orthodox worship service.

Had I been actively worshiping God or waiting for Someone to do all the work *for* me? Evidently it was the latter! Or, as Cassius said to Brutus, “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves....”<sup>22</sup>

I'm a soccer fan. I once asked Lenin Steenkamp (the best player the Rhinos ever had), what it means to be “in the zone.” I'd heard the players mention this constantly in conversations. Lenin explained, “In the zone is being totally focused on what you are doing or trying to achieve. You are not distracted no matter what. Tuning out everything, so confident that things start working for you, you do things without even giving them much thought. You make moves and go by people with no recollection of how! Everything is positive, it just happens.”



The fault isn't in the Church. Today, as in Prince Vladimir's time, the Orthodox Church uses all the beauty of creation<sup>23</sup> to move her faithful children<sup>24</sup> to prayer and worship. We have bowing,<sup>25</sup> kneeling, prostrating,<sup>26</sup> (how else would one expect to act before an earthly king, much less the Heavenly King?) and crossing oneself. The inside of the church looks like a scene out of Revelation, with the angels<sup>27</sup> and the saints.<sup>28</sup> The chanting<sup>29</sup> and the icons<sup>30</sup> bring you into Heaven, and the incense<sup>31</sup> takes you outside of time; the icons represent the “great cloud of witnesses” from the Book of Hebrews, and the incense represents our prayers rising before the Throne of God, as in the Book of Revelation.

Everything we see, hear, smell, touch, taste, or do in the Orthodox Church has one purpose and one purpose only: to lead us closer to God. Since God created us with physical bodies and senses, He desires us to use our bodies

and senses to grow closer to Him.

Worship is so much more than standing in Church on Sunday. The word “liturgy” means the official corporate worship of the Church (*corporate* meaning what we do together as a body, as opposed to what we do as individuals). The word “liturgy” comes from the Greek *laos*, meaning “the people”, and *ergon*, meaning “work.” It means, “the people's work.” At its best, the Liturgy is never a passive experience but a participatory action, an event in which the assembled people of God actively worship together.

This was the crux of the problem: the Church is one place where you definitely don't want to be “out of work.” The following is the story of what I was dealing with and the answers that I found. Praise God!

[to be continued]

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<sup>1</sup> **Orthodox** (Gr. “correct or true belief”): The common and official name used by the Greek Christians and Eastern Christian Church. The Orthodox Church maintains her belief that she alone has kept the true Christian faith, complete and unaltered.

<sup>2</sup> **Mind:** The intelligent faculty, the inner person; often used synonymously with “heart.” There are two Greek words for mind: (1) *nous*, the mind which is separated from the sensible world and the passions (**Romans 8:7; 12:2**); and (2) *dianoia*, the intellect (**Matthew 22:37**).

<sup>3</sup> **Father:** “Father” is a title given to one’s spiritual father based on the custom of the Jews, who spoke of their father Abraham or their father David, and on the words of Paul, who called himself the father of his flock. Originally the title of bishops, the word was later applied to all clergy. See **Luke 1:73; Acts 4:25; I Corinthians 4:15**.

<sup>4</sup> [http://holytrinityphx.org/our\\_parish.htm](http://holytrinityphx.org/our_parish.htm)

<sup>5</sup> **Vladimir of Kiev:** The holy and right-believing Vladimir (Svyatoslavich), Baptizer of Kievan Rus’ (958-1015) was the Grand Prince of Kiev when Orthodoxy was introduced into present day Russia and Ukraine. He is also the grandson of St. Olga, and the father of Sts. Boris and Gleb the Passion-Bearers (and the first saints of the Russian lands). St. Vladimir changed completely after his baptism. He destroyed all the pagan statues that stood in Kievan Rus’, and replaced them with churches. He also attempted to live in peace as much as possible with his neighbors and had only one wife.

<sup>6</sup> **Faith:** The power given to us by Almighty God which enables us to believe what He has revealed. St. Paul notes in **Hebrews 11:1** that faith is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. Faith is necessary for salvation and must be accompanied by good works, (**Mark 16:16** and **James 2:17-20**). Belief and trust in Christ as one’s Savior. The effects of this faith are freedom from the power of the devil, the attainment of virtue, and progress toward perfection and union with God. One is saved by faith through grace – a living faith manifested by a righteous life.

<sup>7</sup> **Liturgy** (Gr. “a public duty or work”): The main form of worship for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Orthodox Church celebrates four different versions of the liturgy:

1. The Liturgy of St. James,
2. The Liturgy of St. Basil,
3. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which is the most common, and
4. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts performed only during the period of Great Lent

The Divine Liturgy is the Eucharistic service of the Orthodox Church.

<sup>8</sup> **Christ** (Gr. *christos*): Literally *the Anointed One*. The term is the Greek translation of Messiah which is a Hebrew word. It was used by the early believers as a proper name for the Risen Lord.

<sup>9</sup> **Hagia Sophia** (Gr. *agia sophia*): The Cathedral of Constantinople in which the Ecumenical Patriarchs and Byzantine Emperors were enthroned. It is the greatest Orthodox church, dedicated to the Holy Wisdom of God. It was built by the emperor Justinian in the year 532 A.D.; its architecture is an outstanding example of the so-called Byzantine Orthodox order.

<sup>10</sup> Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *Encountering the Mystery: Understanding Orthodox Christianity*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>11</sup> **Convert:** One who joins himself with the Orthodox Church through Baptism (if not already validly baptized), a Confession of Faith and Chrismation/Holy Eucharist.

<sup>12</sup> **Creed:** A statement of belief. Creeds in their earlier forms were used by the apostles, and many are recorded in the New Testament (**Ephesians 5:14; I Timothy 3:16; II Timothy 2:11-13**). The creed used throughout the Church was adopted at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and expanded at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. The Nicene Creed is used at baptisms, the Divine Liturgy, and in personal daily prayers. The Creed stresses the most important aspects of Christian doctrine and serves as a standard of orthodox teaching within the Church.

<sup>13</sup> **Church** (Gr. *ekklesia*): The faithful are called out of the world to be the Church: the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the New Israel, the ark of salvation, the assembly of the faithful. Through the Church, Christians are united to Christ and to each other. In this community, the believer receives the grace of God through the sacraments and hears the truth of the Gospel. This mystical transformation of people into one body in Christ takes place in the Eucharist. Because Christ is the Head of the Church, the Church is

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a reflection of the Incarnation, with both human and divine qualities (see **I Corinthians 10:16, 17; Galatians 6:16; Ephesians 4:12; 5:22-32**).

<sup>14</sup> **Redemption:** The deliverance of humanity from sin and death by Christ, who assumed humanity by His Incarnation, conquered sin and death by His life-giving death and glorious Resurrection, releases those who are in captivity to the evil one, and unites humanity to God by His Ascension (**Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:15**).

<sup>15</sup> <http://old.orthodoxnews.com/149/sign.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Philip Yancey is editor-at-large for *Christianity Today*.

<sup>17</sup> **Heaven:** The state of perfect blessedness prepared for those who love God. Eastern Orthodox cosmology perceives heaven as having different levels (**John 14:2**), the lowest of which is Paradise. At the time of creation, paradise touched the earth at the Garden of Eden. After the Fall of man, paradise was separated from the earth, and mankind forbidden entry, lest he partake of the Tree of Life and live eternally in a state of sinfulness (**Genesis 3:22-24**). At His death on the Cross, the Orthodox believe Jesus opened the door to Paradise to mankind again (**Luke 23:43**), and the Good Thief was the first to enter. Various saints have had visions of heaven (**2 Corinthians 12:2-4**). The Orthodox concept of life in heaven is described in one of the prayers for the dead: "...a place of light, a place of green pasture, a place of repose, whence all sickness, sorrow and sighing are fled away." Heaven is eternal.

<sup>18</sup> **Prayer:** Communion with God through words of praise, thanksgiving, repentance, supplication, and intercession. Prayer is "raising up the heart and mind to God" (St. John of Damascus). Usually prayer is verbal. However, prayer of the heart or in the Spirit, the highest form of prayer, is without words. See **Matthew 6:5-13; 21:22; Romans 8:26; Philippians 4:6; I Thessalonians 5:17**.

<sup>19</sup> **Elisha** (Hebrew: **עִשָּׂיָא**; "My God is salvation", Greek: **Ἐλισσαῖος**, *Elissaios* or **Ἐλισαίε**, *Elisaie*): Elisha is a prophet of the Hebrew Bible. To many Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox he is known as **Saint Eliseus**; however, the standard English form of the name has been "*Elisha*," at least since the introduction of the Authorized King James Version.

<sup>20</sup> St. Ambrose writes that Elisha's servant saw "numberless hosts of angels."

<sup>21</sup> Casimir Kucharek, *The Byzantine-Slav Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, p. 338.

<sup>22</sup> William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (I, ii, 140-141).

<sup>23</sup> **Creation** (Gr. *ktisis*): Everything made by God. The term creation is applied to the cosmos in general and to mankind in particular. Our regeneration in Christ and the resurrection of the dead are both often called the "new creation." Creation has no existence apart from God, but is nevertheless distinct from God. (That which is not created, such as divine grace, the divine energies, belongs to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.)

<sup>24</sup> **Faithful:** Congregation of believers.

<sup>25</sup> **Bowing:** From the first days, Christians have bowed at the name of Christ, or in the presence of sacred things, (**Philippians 2:10**).

<sup>26</sup> **Prostration:** A posture of reverence during prayer where one kneels and bows the head to the floor.

<sup>27</sup> **Angels** (Gr. *angelos*, "messenger"): Bodiless beings, purely spirits, created by God before man. They are superior in nature and intelligence to man; and, like man, they have understanding and free will. Throughout the Scripture, angels are messengers who carry the Word of God to Earth (e.g. Gabriel's visit to Mary, **Luke 1:26-38**). Some of them are appointed to guard the faithful (guardian angels). Angels are grouped in nine orders (*tagmata*) as follows: Angels; Archangels; Principalities; Powers; Virtues; Dominations; Thrones; Cherubim; Seraphim. In the Orthodox worship, every Monday is dedicated to the angels. (see **Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2; Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; I Thessalonians 4:16; I Peter 3:22**).

<sup>28</sup> **Saint:** A person who has merited the glorification of the Church because of a holy and pure life, exemplifying dedication to Almighty God.

<sup>29</sup> **Chant** (Gr. *echos*; Sl. *glas*): The music proper to the Orthodox services. There are eight tones or modes in the Orthodox Byzantine chant, chanted by the chanters or cantors.

<sup>30</sup> **Icon** (Gr. image): Christ is “the image of the invisible God” (**Colossians 1:15**). A Byzantine-style painting in oil on wood, canvas, paper or a wall (fresco) representing Christ, the Virgin Mary, or other Saints and scenes from the Bible. Because Christ is God who became Man, He can Himself be pictured or imaged. Thus, icons of Christ – together with those of His saints – express the reality of the Incarnation. Orthodox Christians honor or venerate icons, but never worship them, for worship is due to God alone. The honor given to icons passes on to the one represented on the icon, as a means of thanksgiving for what God has done in that person’s life.

<sup>31</sup> **Incense**: The sap of the frankincense tree, or other aromatic substances, dried and burned in honor of God. The offering of incense has been associated with the worship of God since God commanded Moses to burn incense to Him in the tabernacle. The prophet Malachi (1:11) predicts, “among the Gentiles [the Church] . . . incense shall be offered . . .” The Magi offered frankincense to the infant Christ. Incense manifests the prayers of the saints as they ascend to heaven. It is found in every revelation of the worship of God in heaven. See **Exodus 30:1-8; Matthew 2:9-11; Revelation 5:8**.