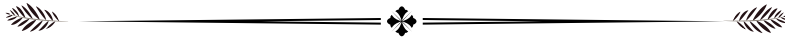




# First Things First:

## MAKING TIME FOR WHAT MATTERS MOST A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY

*Join us Wednesday evenings during Great Lent*



March 1 First Things First: *Worship*

*Dinner Sponsored by the Sunday School*

March 8 First Things First: *Community*

*Dinner Sponsored by the Choir*

March 15 First Things First: *Love*

*Dinner Sponsored by the AHEPA/Daughters*

March 22 First Things First: *Learning*

*Dinner Sponsored by the Young at Heart and Welcome Ministry*

March 29 First Things First: *Service*

*Dinner Sponsored by the Philoptochos*

April 5 First Things First: *Priorities*

*Dinner Sponsored by the Young Adults and Bible Studies*

### EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE:

- 6:00 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy
- 7:15 pm Lenten Dinner provided by one of our ministries
- 7:45 pm Presentation by Father Stavros
- 8:05 pm Small group discussion
- 8:30 pm Concluding remarks and closing prayer



GREAT LENT 2023  
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
TAMPA, FL



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**MAKING TIME FOR WHAT MATTERS MOST**  
*Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well.*  
Matthew 6:33



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## PART ONE: *Worship*

### WHAT IS WORSHIP?

- The experience of worship for Orthodox Christians is ancient, sensory, and unique. It is intended to be corporate and structured. The foundation of worship is scripturally based and has evolved into universally codified Traditions. \*Worship is a) focused on God and not on us; b) not for our enjoyment but for His glory; c) enhanced with beauty; and d) not a performance. **Hebrews 12:28**

*\*from the article "What does Orthodox Mean?: The Doctrine, Worship and Values of the Church" by Frederica Mathewes-Green*

### OLD TESTAMENT ORIGINS

- In the creation of the world, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it as a day of rest, a Sabbath. **Genesis 2:2-3**
- The practice of ritual sacrifices offered on altars goes back to the first chapters of Hebrew scriptures. **Genesis 8:20**
- Before Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt, the Passover was instituted and prefigures the Eucharist. The Passover involved the sacrifice of a lamb, the meal they shared, and specific directions. Thus they were saved by the blood of a slaughtered lamb. **Exodus 12: 21-24**
- After the Exodus, God gave Moses the Law, which instructed how and when the people were to worship and rest. The fourth of the Ten Commandments said "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." **Exodus 20:8-11**
- The ark of the Covenant was a sacred space where the Law and the Commandments were stored and from where God spoke to His people. **Exodus 25:22**
- Eventually the ark was permanently placed in the temple and people worshipped there. **1 Kings 8:6**

### JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PASSOVER

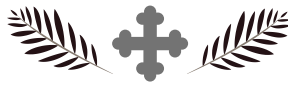
- Jesus establishes Himself as the New Covenant in the context of the Passover meal, what we now refer to as the Last Supper. No longer is there a need for a ritual sacrifice requiring the shedding of blood; we now have a spiritual sacrifice. Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God. **Matthew 26:26-28, John 1:29**
- In the early Church, the Eucharist was celebrated often, and was always in the context of community and with proper preparation. **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

### THE DIVINE LITURGY AS WORSHIP

- The Divine Liturgy was originally written by St. James in 70 A.D. In the fourth century, it was edited by St. Basil, and later edited again by St. John Chrysostom, whose liturgy we celebrate most of the time.
- The Divine Liturgy is the preeminent expression of worship of the Orthodox Faith. It is structured and filled with intentional prompts and actions, meant to engage the senses and enhance the worship experience, while leading us to an encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. **Lamentations 3:41**
- An ordained clergyman always serves as the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy. **John 20:21-22**

### THE HEART OF WORSHIP

- Worship for Orthodox Christians is not limited to the Divine Liturgy. There are many other beautiful services, such as Orthros, Vespers, Paraklesis, the cycle of Lenten services, and sacraments.
- Worship is meant to be participatory. In all of our worship services, we are invited to stand, kneel, sing, pray, bow our heads, etc. It's not merely going through the motions. **Psalms 95:6**
- There is a certain posture of worship. We are to come with humility, reverence, and preparation. **1 Chronicles 16:29**
- Above all, though, worship is meant to be joyful! **2 Chronicles 29:30**
- Our desire to enjoy fellowship with God should continue even after a worship service has ended. **John 4:20-24** One of the prayers of the Anaphora of St. John Chrysostom emphasizes that *It is proper and right to sing to You, bless You, praise You, thank You and worship You in all places of Your dominion.* **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**



## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

HEBREWS 12:28	<i>Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe;</i>
GENESIS 2:2-3	<i>2 And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation.</i>
GENESIS 8:20	<i>Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.</i>
EXODUS 12: 21-24	<i>21 Then Moses called all the elders of Israel, and said to them, "Select lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the passover lamb. 22 Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood which is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to slay the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to slay you. 24 You shall observe this rite as an ordinance for you and for your sons for ever.</i>
EXODUS 20:8-11	<i>8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; 11 for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.</i>
EXODUS 25:22	<i>There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.</i>
1 KINGS 8:6	<i>Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.</i>
MATTHEW 26:26-28	<i>26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.</i>
JOHN 1:29	<i>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!"</i>
I CORINTHIANS 11:23-26	<i>23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.</i>
LAMENTATIONS 3:41	<i>Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven</i>
JOHN 20:21-22	<i>21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."</i>
PSALM 95:6	<i>O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!</i>
1 CHRONICLES 16:29	<i>Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come before Him! Worship the Lord in holy array;</i>
2 CHRONICLES 29:30	<i>And Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.</i>
JOHN 4: 20-24	<i>20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21 Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."</i>
1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18	<i>16 Rejoice always, 17 pray constantly, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.</i>

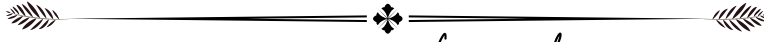


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### PART ONE: *Worship*



1. Reread this quote from the article “What does Orthodox Mean?: The Doctrine, Worship and Values of the Church” by Frederica Mathewes-Green: *Worship is a) focused on God and not on us; b) not for our enjoyment but for His glory; c) enhanced with beauty and d) not a performance.*

How do these four points speak to you and your understanding of worship?

2. We are commanded to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. What distractions get in the way of keeping a Sabbath and your worship of God?

3. What is your favorite aspect of worship in the Orthodox Church?

4. Does worship bring you joy? How can worship bring you more joy?