

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES: WORSHIP – STUDY 5

I. We are making an “Offering” of ourselves – Preparation & Fulfillment (Fasting, Prayer, Almsgiving, Confession)

“Faith is not a matter of mere understanding, it... does not grow simply through investigation and study. Faith as trust in God and abandonment of oneself to Him, is closely related to love, which is God Himself. When you love, when you offer as much as you can to others, to your brother or sister – to Christ- and end up by offering your very self to God, then you know Him: you believe. Your faith increases. (Archimandrite Vasileios, Abbot of Stavronikita Monastery, Hymn of Entry).”

“Having asked for the *unity of the faith* and for the Communion of the Holy Spirit, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God (Liturgy Chrysostom).”

II. We are realizing in Worship, who we have become in Christ – His Church, *the People of God: The Many Become One*

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not communion of the body of the Christ? For we, who are many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).”

“...in the celebration of the Eucharist the Church experiences that which is promised for the *Parousia* (Second Coming), namely the eschatological (The End) unity of all in Christ...is revealed and realistically apprehended here and now in the Eucharist (Met. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*).”

“And unite us all to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and the Cup in the communion of the one Holy Spirit (St. Basil’s Liturgy).”

“And the glory which You have given Me I have given them, in order that they may be one, even as We are one: “I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one...(Jn. 17:22).”

“*there is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, adult or child, rich or poor, master or slave, etc.* To be sure Christians themselves soon came to believe that they constituted a *third race*, but this was only to show that in fact it was a non-racial race, a **people** who... (are) members of the Christian Church (Zizioulas, *Being As Communion*).”

III. The rule of worship lays down the rule of faith – *Entering Into the Joy of the Lord*

“One enters into *joy*. And we have no other means of entering into that joy, no way of understanding it, except through one action which from the beginning has been for the Church both the source and the fulfillment of joy, the very *sacrament of joy*, the Eucharist (Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*).”

“The worship of the Church was a solemn proclamation of her Faith...the Eucharist was the primary witness of the mystery of Redemption in all its fullness. The New Testament itself came to existence, as a ‘Scripture,’ in the Worshipping Church. And Scripture was read in the context of worship... (Florovsky, *The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church*).”

IV. Saturday Evening Vespers (Preparing for Sunday Liturgy) / Sunday Morning Matins (Preparing for Liturgy) For An Overview of All Services - <https://assumptionaz.org/worship>

V. The Practice of Watchfulness – Let us be attentive!

“He who reconcs with feeling of heart that he stands before God in prayer (worship) shall be an unshakable pillar...your mind should be engaged in contemplation of the words being chanted or read...”

VI. A Condition of Forgiveness: “Let us love another that with one mind we may confess” / An exchange of Peace / “Christ is in our midst” – “He is and always shall be” – Hymn: *Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity One in essence and undivided* – The Creed

VI. A Condition of Repentance – “You give wisdom and understanding to the one who asks. And you overlook not the sinner, but have established repentance as the way of salvation (Prayer of the Trisagion, Liturgy Chrysostom).”

A repentant heart acknowledges ones' unworthiness

“This practice ... in the case of infrequent, once-a-year, communion, led to the appearance in the Church of a theory according to which the communion of laity...is *impossible* without the sacrament of penance, so that confession is an *obligatory condition* — always and in all cases — for communion. I dare to affirm that this theory not only has no foundation in Tradition...”

1. **Our sinful condition:** according to the Church's teaching, no human being is sinless, with the exception of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Theotokos.

“You have granted us, your humble and unworthy servants to stand even at this hour before the glory of Your holy altar... (Prayer of the Trisagion, Liturgy Chrysostom).”

2. **Prayers for forgiveness and remission of sins is an integral part of the Liturgy itself**

The Church always considered Holy Communion itself as given ‘for the remission of sins.’ The ‘sinfulness’ which is the inescapable fate of every man ‘living in the world and wearing flesh.’ This..., so to speak, (is) ‘dissolved’ in the Church's liturgy and it is this sinfulness that the Church confesses in the prayers... before the offering of the Holy Gifts (Schmemmann, Confession & Communion).”

“Forgive our voluntary and involuntary transgressions, sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may worship You in holiness all the days of our lives (Prayer of the Trisagion, Liturgy Chrysostom).”

Fervent Litany after the Gospel: omitted but can be reinstated (they said silently while the Doxology is chanted at the conclusion of Matins and also at Vespers the evening before)

“Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health salvation, protection, forgiveness and remission of the sins of the servants of God... (Fervent litany)”

“Again and countless times we fall down before You, and we implore You, O Good One, Who loves mankind: That You, having regarded our prayer, may cleans our souls and bodies from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and grant us to stand before Your holy altar of sacrifice, free of guilt and condemnation... (Second Prayer of Faithful, read out loud)

3. At the moment of receiving the Mysteries, we ask for forgiveness of ‘sins voluntary and involuntary, those in word and in deed, committed knowingly or unknowingly,’ and we believe that, in the measure of our repentance, we receive this forgiveness (Schmemmann, Confession & Communion).”
4. Communion is given *"for the remission of sins," "for the healing of the soul and body,"* and it implies, therefore, *repentance*, the awareness of our total unworthiness, and the understanding of Communion as a heavenly gift which never can be "deserved" by an earthly being.