



October 29, 2003

Teleturgical Encyclical 12

The Priests and Deacons of
the Holy Metropolis of Denver

Beloved in the Lord,

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. (2 Thessalonians 2:15)

In my visits to the different parishes of this holy Metropolis, I try to discern how our priests celebrate the Divine Liturgy and how they adhere to the standard tradition which we have received from time immemorial. It is no exaggeration to say that I have heard and seen variations away from the established tradition. Therefore, it is imperative that this encyclical be read very carefully and that the innovations and variations cease. I shall go through the entire Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, pointing out the highlights.

- 1 Before beginning the Divine Liturgy, the priest is fully vested standing before the Holy Altar table:
 - a He makes three prostrations, saying each time, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and goodwill to men," repeating this doxology to God.
 - b He then says twice, "Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall declare Your praise."
- 2 If it is a Sunday, the Resurrection side of the Gospels Book is up; if it is a weekday, the Crucifixion side of the Gospels Book is up.
 - a Taking the Gospels Book in his hands, he raises it high and proclaims, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages."
 - b With the one lower corner of the Gospels Book he makes the Sign of the Cross on the Antimension.
- 3 He then offers the first set of petitions.
 - a In the third petition "For peace in the whole world ...," the concluding phrase is "... for the union of all," NOT "unity." The original Greek word is "Źnosis" not "en—tis." The petition is:
 - b "For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord."
 - c The petition for "this city" is NOT preceded by "this parish" or "community." This latter phrase is an innovation. The petition is only "this city." The petition is:
 - d "For this city, for every city and land, and for the faithful who dwell in them, let us pray to the Lord."

e The petition "For our deliverance" ends with the word "necessity" NOT "distress."
The petition is:

f "For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord."

4 In the petitions, and throughout the prayers and hymns of the Divine Liturgy and other Services, we do not translate "anthropos" as "brothers and sisters" or "men and women" but simply as "man" or "men" as appropriate to the text; by this it is understood to mean "mankind," or "all human beings." We do not need to use "gender-inclusive language" as do some Christian denominations. The point that I hope all of us keep in mind is that we must be absolutely precise and accurate in all translations, and not "read in" what we think a text should say.

a Similarly, although not part of the Divine Liturgy itself but included in the Artoklasia, in the petition for the hierarch and other clergy, the word "adelf—titos" is to be translated "brotherhood," not "brothers and sisters." The word "brotherhood" in this case refers specifically to the brotherhood of the clergy.

5 The petition "Tis Panagias" is NOT "remembering." The word remembering infers that we keep forgetting her. The original Greek word used is "mnimonefsantes" which means commemorating. The inference is to honor the Virgin Mary, not to keep forgetting her throughout the Divine Liturgy. The commemoration is:

a "Commemorating our all-holy, pure, most-blessed, and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and all our life to Christ our God."

6 If the "Soson imas" is sung either by the priest or the chanter in English, the correct phrase is not "Who rose" but "Who is risen." The Resurrection of Christ is a today experience, not merely something that took place in history. Otherwise the Sunday hymn, "Simeron sotiria" would not be sung after the introductory Doxology. The hymn tells us, "Today salvation has come to all the world."

7 The entrance hymn, "Come, let us worship ..." is never sung by the priest when he serves alone. It is sung by the clergy only when two or more priests serve (concelebrate), and they also sing the Kontakion. When the priest serves alone these hymns are sung by the chanter or the choir or the congregation, if there is no choir.

8 At the singing of the "Agios o Theos," the priest goes to the Prothesis table after the "Dynamis" is said, where he offers the prayer "Blessed is He Who comes ..." Immediately from there he goes to the High Place (usually where the wooden Crucifix is) and prays "Blessed are You Who sits upon the throne of glory ..."

9 When the word "Dynamis" is said, it is not necessary to give the translation, like "With more power," etc. The English words dynamism, dynamic, and even dynamite are understood by all.

10 At the Epistle reading, it is usually the rule for the chanter to say the first verse, not for the priest to first call out "Proshomen." This way the priest does not have to repeat for a fourth time and say "Sofia, Proshomen." The order should therefore be:

- a Chanter reads first of the two Prokeimenon Psalm verses.
- b Deacon (or Priest) says "Proshomen."
- c Chanter reads second of the two Prokeimenon Psalm verses.
- d Deacon (or Priest) says "Sofia."
- e Chanter announces the origin of the Epistle ("The reading from the Epistle of ...").
- f Deacon (or Priest) says "Proshomen."
- g Chanter reads the Epistle.

11 The word "Sofia" at the Epistle reading does not need an "editorial" by the priest who may wish to say "This is wisdom," instead of just "Wisdom." Moreover, the priest is not a critic of the writer of the Epistle to tell us if it is wisdom or not in regard to what is to be read. Furthermore, no one has the right to innovate the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Could this be a touch of Protestantism wherein everyone is an authority?

12 When a deacon serves, the Gospel reading is chanted from the pulpit (or, if there is no pulpit, from the hierarchical throne) and never from the Holy Gate.

13 The priest or the deacon who reads the Gospel lesson does not say, "A Reading from ...," but "The Reading from ..." The reading is not incidental; it is the prescribed one.

14 The pulpit is always used to proclaim the word of God and is not to be used to give instructions, or to castigate human behavior, or to complain, or to entertain. Of necessity many times a priest must use the pulpit to give pertinent announcements after the Divine Liturgy is over because of the microphone at the pulpit.

15 The Great Entrance should always be down the side (north) aisle (i.e., on the congregation's left side) and then up the middle aisle; it is not done by merely exiting the sanctuary and then immediately standing before the Beautiful Gate. The priest should intone "May the Lord our God remember all of you in His Kingdom, now and forever and to the ages of ages." Since in Orthodoxy there are no private Liturgies, and since a priest serves the needs of the people and cannot serve a Divine Liturgy with no congregation, it is understood that he should say "all of you" and not "remember us." After all, this is the correct translation of "ymon."

16 When the chalice and the paten are carried in procession, they are held high, or above the chest.

17 The kiss of peace is a practice that is reserved for the clergy concelebrating at the Holy Altar, and indicates the brotherly love that we should have for one another in the priesthood in Christ. Although at one time in the early Church it was done by both the laity and clergy, it fell out of practice because of abuse and as also was the case for the Agape Meal. If practiced today, it not only usurps a rubric currently reserved for the clergy, but when I have seen it done it is highly disruptive, causing people to think they can greet each other socially as they do at the fellowship hour. It also interrupts the solemnity of the Liturgy of the Faithful, which flows in an uninterrupted and dignified manner. Social activities belong in a social hour; at the Divine Liturgy we are called to a much more reverent and attentive behavior. At the very most, in parishes where this has been previously practiced, the faithful could simply say to those next to them, "Christ is in our midst," in a low and reverent manner.

18 At the consecration of the Holy Gifts, when the priest intones "Your own from Your own we offer to You in all and for all," some priests add words such as "Your own gifts;" this is not necessary since everything in existence belongs to God. This kind of "critiquing" is not proper

19 When *Se innoumen* is sung, it is the policy of the Archdiocese from 1950 when Archbishop Michael was Archbishop, to have everyone kneel, even on Sunday. In his encyclical, Archbishop Michael stated that the kneeling on Sundays, which takes less than two minutes, is not the kneeling of repentance, but the anticipation of the descent of the Holy Spirit Ñ as we do on the day of Pentecost and at every ordination (including those on Sundays!). Who of us has the right to stand, even on Sunday, when the Holy Spirit in a special way comes into our midst to change the bread and the wine into the Very Body and Blood of our Lord? We must not act like the "I am more Orthodox than you are" people who see externals, outer trappings, as more essential than the fervent heart. It appears to be a sad reality that the Orthodox people in Greece who do not kneel at the Epiklesis do not find that special moment any different than the rest of the Divine Liturgy. This is probably why most Greek Orthodox in Greece do not receive Holy Communion, even monthly, and if they do, it is often after the Divine Liturgy at the Deacon's doors, as a sort of afterthought. Could it be that with some clergy who do everything by rote, they do not appear to be in awe at the descent of the Holy Spirit? I remember once in Greece when I was in an altar while a priest was serving the Divine Liturgy, that he was simultaneously carrying on a conversation with another priest in the altar, while he was chanting the Divine Liturgy. Of course, he did not kneel at the Epiklesis; it would have interrupted his conversation with the other priest. It must be noted that Archbishop Michael's encyclical on kneeling has not been rescinded.

20 When the priest raises the Lamb and says, "Holy things for the holy," it is not necessary for him to add, "... for the holy people of God." For whom did Christ come into the world? Again, no amplification of Saint John Chrysostom's words is necessary. We know that Christ came into the world to restore His image in man.

21 It is understood that all eight communion prayers should be said by the clergy at the Holy Altar before they receive from the Holy Body and Sacred Blood of the Lord; (not merely the four that are written in the maroon Holy Cross Divine Liturgy book, or in the green Archdiocese hymnal).

22 After the prayer of the Ambon many priests do not go to the Prothesis table and read the Prayer of Fulfillment, "To plyroma tou nomou," which is right after the priest returns to the Sanctuary after reading the Ambon Prayer before the icon of Christ. You must never neglect to do this.

23 The Dismissal is always in the third person. We do not speak to Christ directly but commemorate Him, His holy Mother, the power of the Holy Cross, etc. We say, "May Christ our true God, through the intercessions of ..." Before that we say, "Glory to You, O God our Hope, glory to You."

Although I have not touched on everything I have observed in my visits to the parishes, I believe that I have covered most of the different variations I have witnessed. In a future letter, I will explain the proper rubrics when a bishop is officiating, presiding, or in the sanctuary praying.

Remember that according to the long-standing policy throughout the Archdiocese, the "typical," or standard, for text and rubrics is that printed in the Ieratikon printed and published by Apostoliki Diakonia in Athens. The current version that I have is the fifth edition, dated 1995. As a general rule, what is printed in the Ieratikon in red we do, and what is printed in black we say. Since there is no standard, authorized Ieratikon in English presently available, I ask that you use as a guide the translation done by Father Papadeas in his Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Unfortunately all translations are faulty to one degree or another, and I ask you to be more careful when using English. Please call me if you have questions about a specific translation.

Please read what I have written here carefully so that we may be faithful to our holy and ancient traditions. Keep in mind that these are not suggestions, but are directives so that there may be uniformity in the liturgical practices of this Metropolis. We received the teachings of our holy Faith as they have been handed down to us. It is our sacred responsibility to practice them faithfully and to pass them on to those who are coming after us without addition or subtraction.

With Paternal Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver