

Preparing to Receive Holy Communion In a Worthy Manner

We need to periodically re-examine that most important of acts that we, as Orthodox Christians, “do” on a regular basis: receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ. I heard Bp. Kallistos Ware once say when he was in the Cincinnati area, that he “was a strong proponent of frequent Communion; but an equally strong opponent of casual Communion.” I am in full agreement with his balanced approach. Based upon his words and my own pastoral approach after many years in the priesthood, I would offer the following guidelines:

Being Prepared:

- ❖ We are reconciled with those who have something against us (see MATT. 5:23-24).
- ❖ Based upon “self-examination” (I COR. 11:28), we must periodically confess our sins with a certain regularity (see JAS. 5:16; I JN. 1:9-10). The fasting seasons of the liturgical year are perfect for this.
- ❖ Participate in the full cycle of Great Vespers – Divine Liturgy.
- ❖ Keep the fasting discipline of the Church: Wednesdays and Fridays and the four lenten seasons.
- ❖ Eating or drinking nothing on the morning of the Liturgy.
- ❖ Praying as part of our preparation (the pre-Communion prayers, etc.).
- ❖ Be present for the whole Divine Liturgy; but certainly no later than the Epistle and Gospel reading.
- ❖ Realizing with our mind and heart that we are receiving a gift from God, not something that we have “earned.”

Being Unprepared:

- ❖ Not having reconciled ourselves with someone who may have something against us (see MATT. 5:23–24).
- ❖ Neglecting to “examine” ourselves (I COR. 11:28) and confess our sins with any regularity or pattern.
- ❖ Being absent from the Liturgy for a period of time (Canon Law states three consecutive Sundays).
- ❖ Neglecting to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- ❖ Neglecting to keep the total fast on the morning of the Liturgy.
- ❖ Neglecting to pray as part of our preparation.
- ❖ Arriving for the Liturgy later than the Gospel.
- ❖ Believing that we have “earned” Holy Communion by keeping all the “rules” of the Church.

The observant reader will immediately notice that being unprepared is simply the opposite of the liturgical discipline outlined above as a means of approaching the Chalice in a worthy manner. Therefore let us prepare so as to be regular communicants and not casual communicants.